

# Russian Foreign Policy-Making in the Arctic: a Critical Analysis of the Influence of the Ukraine Crisis



Author: Maxime Ditters  
Student number: 20161644  
Supervisor: Lill Rastad Bjørst

## **Abstract**

Russian Foreign Policy-Making in the Arctic: a Critical Analysis of the Influence of the Ukraine Crisis. This thesis focuses on providing an analytical overview of Russian foreign policy-making, the events unfolding during the Ukraine Crisis of 2013, as well as what interests Russia has in the Arctic region with regards to natural resource extraction and security issues. Russian militarisation expansion in the Arctic as a result of the Ukraine Crisis is analysed using foreign policy analysis in a theoretical framework consisting of realism and constructivism.

The thesis first provides a thorough introduction on Arctic related matters such as a definition of what geographic area constitutes the Arctic region and which stakeholders the Arctic has (Arctic littoral states such as Denmark, the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Sweden). Moreover, the introduction provides the reader with an outline of how the Arctic waters have been governed since before and after the introduction of UNCLOS, which also meant the introduction of exclusive economic zones (EEZ). Further chapters of this thesis elaborate on the importance of these EEZs due to the natural resources found in the Arctic seabed, which in large provide incentives for states to stake their claim of the region. Lastly, the introduction provides a brief overview of an important actor in Arctic politics: the Arctic Council.

Chapter two consists of a literature review that introduces the reader to previously existing research on the Arctic and in particular to Russia's foreign policy approach to the region. Chapter three and four provide both an extensive research design and theoretical framework upon which the analysis in chapter five is built. The research design includes a problem formulation, methodology and research methods, research data used and the limitations encountered by the author. The research is of an empirical nature with both dependent and independent variables.

The theoretical framework moves on to explain the concepts of foreign policy analysis, realism and constructivism. The theories of realism and constructivism were applied because they enabled a well-rounded analysis of the complex subject matter of the thesis.

Realism focuses on state power relations in an anarchic international system, constructivism places events in a historical context that influences international relations.

In chapter five the analysis is divided into three subchapters, namely: Russian foreign policy, which focuses on explaining factors that influence Russia's overall approach to foreign policy, such as the need for prestige and the perceived importance of regaining its former superpower status, while placing them into the theoretical framework. The second subchapter focuses on the Ukraine Crisis that started in 2013, and analyses the events that took place and the resulting sanctions placed on Russia and which counter-measures Russia took and how these events had spillover effects into other geopolitical regions such as the Arctic. The third subchapter elaborates on the extensive interests Russia has in the Arctic. This is based on both political and economic incentives that play an important role in Russia's overall policy-making. Further aspects that are highlighted in the analysis are statements made by high-level Russian and Western politicians on the events that unfolded in Ukraine, and eastward NATO expansion into Russia's near-abroad territory, which is seen as a severe threat. Russia's militarisation process in the Arctic and the underlying reasons and motives for this are also analysed within the framework of realism and constructivism.

Lastly, there is a concluding chapter summing up all findings and briefly discussing possible future scenarios for the region. The author of this paper believes that the Arctic, while often seen as a zone of potential conflict, is unlikely to actually become the stage of conflict between Russia and Western or NATO countries. This is because all parties involved are more benefitted by a remaining peaceful and stable climate of cooperation rather than conflict.

## **Table of Contents**

Abstract	
1. Introduction	Page 5
2. Literature Review	Page 8
3. Research Design	Page 12
3.1 Problem Formulation	Page 12
3.2 Methodology and Research Methods	Page 13
3.3 Research Data	Page 14
3.4 Limitations	Page 15
4. Theoretical Framework	Page 16
4.1 Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)	Page 16
4.2 Realism	Page 17
4.3 Constructivism	Page 20
5. Analysis	Page 23
5.1 Russian Foreign Policy	Page 23
5.2 The Ukraine Crisis	Page 33
5.3 Russian Interests in the Arctic	Page 40
6. Conclusion	Page 44
References	Page 48

## **1. Introduction**

While vast, remote and subject to harsh conditions, the Arctic region is often referred to as a political subsystem within the larger global political system. This is due to varying territorial claims of the region, and certain geographical areas having been disputed for many decades by the five Arctic coastal states (Norway, Russia, Canada, Denmark and the United States). Within the scientific community there are multiple definitions of where or what the Arctic region is and starts (McGee, 2018). For the purposes of this thesis the definition that is adhered to is that the Arctic tree line marks the outer limits of the region.

Most states adhered to a “freedom of the seas” doctrine for many centuries, which entailed limited sovereignty along shorelines but ‘open access’ to the ocean by all states and private companies. This doctrine sufficed until technological advancement and climate change meant newly gained opportunities in accessing natural resources in the seabed and as such conflicts of interest arose. Therefore, in 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), or the Law of the Sea, was introduced to the international community in an attempt to address maritime issues such as territorial water limits, exclusive economic zones and navigational rights (Hermann & Raspotnik, 2016).

Under UNCLOS, which came into effect in 1982 (McGee, 2018), all countries have the exclusive rights to all natural resources present in or underneath the seabed up to two hundred nautical miles beyond the shoreline. Additionally, this region of exclusive economic rights can be extended by 350 nautical miles from the natural shoreline when it can be proven that the area is part of the country’s continental shelf. As such, the Arctic states have been mapping their territories in the Arctic region in order to secure their claim in the region. While the territorial parameters identified in UNCLOS could help clarify access and exploitation rights to large parts of the Arctic, certain areas of the region and the Arctic Ocean are still contested between the Arctic states (King, unknown).

Furthermore, another prominent intergovernmental organisation that aims to promote cooperation amongst the Arctic States (and Arctic indigenous communities) is the Arctic Council. Member states are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway,

Sweden, the United States and the Russian Federation. In addition to member states the Arctic Council offers Permanent Participation status to six organisations that represent indigenous peoples. Moreover, observer status can be granted to non-Arctic states and intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organisations when it is determined that these organisations can contribute to the Council's work. The Council works through six Working Groups that each focus on a different field, such as: emissions reduction, adverse effects of climate change, sustainability challenges, and the protection of the marine environment. While the Council has successfully facilitated negotiations to legally binding agreements, such as the '*Agreement on Enhancing International Scientific Cooperation*' which was signed in 2017 and the '*Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic*' which came into effect in 2013 (Arctic Council, 2017), it in itself does not have any legal power or a budget for its own programmes. Lastly, the Arctic Council's directive explicitly excludes military security from its areas of involvement (Arctic Council, 2018).

Even though the Arctic Council does not engage in military security issues, current events show that there is potential for military conflict in the region. The Russian Federation in particular has been showing significant military activity in the Arctic region. Recent military build up in the Arctic by the Russian Federation is now the biggest since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and in some areas in the Arctic Russia now has more military capabilities than the Soviet Union once had (Osborn, 2017).

As part of domestic and foreign Arctic policy, Russian President Vladimir Putin has implemented a scheme of opening up formerly abandoned Soviet military and air bases on distant and remote islands in the Arctic, as well as establishing new ones. Additionally, the Russian fleet of icebreakers is to be extended from 40 to 51 (Gramer, 2017). Moreover, the Arctic Shamrock and Northern Clover military bases form the Northern most military presence.

The reason Russia's military presence in the North is perceived as aggressive is that the Arctic borders of Russia's territory are regarded as the most stable borders the nation has, and heavy military presence is therefore deemed unnecessary (McGee, 2018). Russia on the other hand argues that the military build in the Arctic is crucial for its economic development, national security and the security of its trading partners (McGee, 2018).

According to some scholars, such as Rotnem (2018), it can be argued that Russia's Arctic strategy is motivated in part by economic incentives and in part by political incentives. The economic reasons spring from the presence and potential exploitation of natural resources, while the political reasons can be traced to Russia's desire to enhance its status vis-à-vis the West (Rotnem, 2018, p. 1). Furthermore, in addition to the possible extraction of natural resources in the Arctic region, Russia dreams of accessing and controlling the Northern Sea Route to ship goods from Europe to Asia when the sea ice has receded as a result of climate change. Plans for a Northern Sea Route can be traced back to Soviet times, but only now are they close to realisation (McGee, 2018).

Moreover, Russia's relations with the West also greatly influence its strategy in the Arctic. The events leading up to and the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis exemplify this very well. Before the Ukraine crisis in 2014 the political situation in the Arctic was mostly characterised by cooperation and collaboration (Rotnem, 2018, p. 1-3), but after the West implemented sanctions on Russia, as a result of the events in Ukraine, more tensions arose. Russian policy in the Arctic became more confrontational due to its deteriorating relations with the West and the perceived threat the West posed (Rotnem, 2018, p. 1).

Based on the information above, the following research questions have been formulated: *How can Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic region since the Ukraine Crisis started in 2013 be explained with regards to its militarisation process?*

1. What influence do political issues such as the Ukraine Crisis have on Russian policy-making in the Arctic?
2. What are Russia's motives regarding its foreign policy-making?

## **2. Literature Review**

Scholars and academics have long sought to understand and analyse the Russian Federation's foreign policy and foreign policy making process. This previous research is often in regards to Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic region and in relation to how its foreign policy is affected by potential spill over effects from geopolitical situations in other regions.

This chapter of this thesis aims to place this research and its research questions in the wider research field. The purpose of this is to organise and classify gaps in the existing literature by identifying main arguments established by scholars and to organise these perspectives by contrasting views and major points of contestation (Lamont, 2015, p. 64-76).

First of all, scholars like Rotnem (2018) and Keil (2013) both analyse Russian foreign policy in the Arctic with the starting assumption that the natural resources in the region are a key factor in policy decision making processes. Rotnem (2018, p. 1) argues that Russia's Arctic strategy is motivated by both political and economic reasons. The economic reasons are strongly tied to climate change and the opportunities this offers regarding the extraction of natural resources and the Northern Sea Route (Rotnem, 2018, p. 3), and the political reasons spring from a Russian need to enhance its status vis-à-vis the West (Rotnem, 2018, p. 2).

Rotnem further argues that Russia approach to the Arctic was largely collaborative before the start of the Ukraine Crisis but that this changed to a more conflict seeking approach after 2013 (Rotnem, 2018, p. 3). The Russian Federation has showcased its military might in the Arctic after the start of the Ukraine Crisis in 2013, through for example the 'Vostok exercises'; the largest military manoeuvres since the Soviet era, which President Putin stated were a direct response to Western/NATO threats after the Ukraine Crisis. Further, Russia has adopted a more nationalist approach by appointing a "fervent nationalist" as head of the Arctic Commission in response to the perceived threat from NATO countries in the region (Rotnem, 2018, p 8-11). However, Rotnem (2018, p. 11) states that Russia might have come to the conclusion that a less confrontational approach might be more beneficial. Meaning, open conflicts in the Arctic are unlikely to occur in the near future.



Keil (2013) aims to clarify whether more conflicts or more cooperation will occur in the Arctic in the near future by taking a rational-institutionalist and constructivist approach. Keil (2013, p. 180) mentions the delicate balancing act the Russian Federation faces to on one hand protect its resources by severely limiting foreign involvement while on the other hand being dependent on foreign expertise and capital to extract the resources. Moreover, while Arctic resources are the most conflict prone asset in the region, the five littoral Arctic states have different levels of interest in the region. Both the US and Canada are unlikely since the two states have their own vast resource base and the Arctic resource base are thus of secondary importance (Keil, 2013, p. 164; 179; 180).

Moreover, Rahbek-Clemensen (2017) calls the events that have taken place in Ukraine since early 2014 the main cause for a fundamental crisis in East-West relations. This, in part, is due to the fact that Russian intervention in Crimea violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity (Rahbek-Clemensen, 2017, p. 1). This scholar uses defensive realism to analyse how likely conflict spill over to the Arctic is. States tend to punish opposing states for conflicts in regions other than the original conflict when the conflict is deemed important enough. The paper states that factors that are taken into consideration in previous research are often globalisation and states' material interests and that while this results in meaningful analyses, other factors such as domestic politics and cultural values need not be left out (Rahbek-Clemensen, 2017, p. 11).

Russia aims to be a great power and to avoid Western influence in its 'near abroad' as much as possible. The potential for regional conflicts depends on the interests of the great powers involved. Therefore, conflict spill over to the Arctic is unlikely, according to Rahbek-Clemensen (2017), since the two great powers involved (United States and Russia) both benefit more from maintaining a peaceful situation. The US aims for global stability while Russia is actively trying to maintain stability to protect its Arctic energy interests (Rahbek-Clemensen, 2017, p. 9-11). However, sanctions imposed on Russia as a result of the Ukraine Crisis may spark a change in policy from Russia (Rahbek-Clemensen, 2017, p. 11).

Further, Jensen & Skedsmo (2010) did comparative research on Russian and Norwegian discourses regarding foreign policy making in the Arctic. The authors claim that discussion on Arctic related matters do not feature prominently in Russian public discourse. However, President Putin has commented on the region frequently and states that Russia needs to be strong and show its assertiveness (Jensen & Skedsmo, 2010, p. 445). The authors' further analysis shows that President Putin sees foreign policy as a "*zero-sum game*" in which one state's wins always result in another state's loss, and states' interests always and automatically clash with each other. Further, the authors agree that the West still interprets all of Russia's actions in Cold War terms: with much suspicion, when Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic is generally cautious (Jensen & Skedsmo, 2010, p. 445, 446).

An opposing view is held and explained by Ward (2015). In his article Ward (2010) takes the stance that the Russian Federation sees the Arctic as a new battleground with its 'opponents' but that this view is not shared by the other powers in the Arctic region. Examples given to reinforce this view are Russia's planes breaching Swedish and Danish airspace and Russia's increase in warplane flights in Norwegian coastal airspace. Moreover, President Putin's order to reopen the Novosibirsk Islands, sending multiple warships and nuclear ice-breakers to the Arctic region are also mentioned to corroborate the narrative of an aggressive policy (Ward, 2010). The author further argues that NATO should show more dominance and acknowledge its territory in the Arctic instead of maintaining a policy of maintaining a policy of not recognising Russia's actions (Ward, 2010).

Also, Negrouk (2015), focuses on the Arctic region and its natural resources from the perspective of this offering opportunities to improve Russian relations with the US – instead of focusing on the matter as seeing potential conflicts. The article lays out details on Russian collaboration with India and China to extract resources due to Russia's technical inability to do so without foreign input. As Rahbek-Clemensen (2017, p. 2) suggests, Russia was forced to cooperate with countries like China after the Ukraine crisis, due to sanctions imposed by the West, in order to gain short-term advantages, even though China poses a long-term threat.

Negrouk (2015) further argues that previous collaborations between the US and Russia in the Arctic were mutually beneficial, but that such collaborations were cancelled due to the Ukraine Crisis. Moreover, incentives to cooperate are decreasing, which means Russia could effectively adopt a more aggressive policy (Negrouk, 2015). Finally, Negrouk (2015) argues that current sanctions imposed on Russia also negatively affect American companies as well as trade relations between Russia and the US.

Finally, Omelicheva (2016) did a research on Russian foreign policy by taking on a critical geopolitics perspective. According to this scholar Russia's annexation of Crimea was not an isolated decision but rather justified by geo-cultural considerations (Omelicheva, 2016, p. 720). This is because the Russian Federation acts according to the conviction that it is engaged in a geopolitical and civilizational conflict with the West. For Russia, coming out of this conflict as the victor is crucial in order to maintain its national identity and status in international politics (Omelicheva, 2016, p. 721). It is this view and desire to be a great power that motivates Russian foreign policy decisions. Moreover, Russia sees itself as a crusader for all Russian people and not the Russian population on Russian territory. It is in this framework that Russian intervention in Crimea should be understood. Russia sees itself as a saviour on a mission to safeguard the Russian speaking world (Omelicheva, 2016, p. 719-722).

All in all, this chapter has attempted to outline different research perspectives on Russian foreign policy as explored by various authors. As explained above, views and opinions differ amongst experts on whether the Arctic will be the stage of spill over of conflicts originating in different geographical regions, or alternatively; the region offers more collaboration between Russia and the West, or whether the region will be largely unaffected by politics elsewhere.

### **3. Research Design**

The following chapter of this thesis intends to provide a clear overview of the research design chosen to explore and analyse the area of interest and to answer the research questions. First the problem formulation guiding the research process and the chosen methodological stances are introduced, after which this chapter moves on to outlining the research methods applied. Further, sub-chapter 3.3 presents the research data chosen for the analysis is introduced and presented. Finally, limitations encountered in the research process are disclosed in the final sub-chapter of this chapter.

#### **3.1 Problem Formulation**

In order to explore and be able to analyse the topic of interest in this thesis, namely Russia foreign policy in the Arctic region, with regards to the larger geopolitical climate and in relation to political issues in other geographic regions, the following problem formulation has been formulated:

*How can Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic region since the Ukraine Crisis started in 2013 be explained with regards to its militarisation process?*

- 1. What influence do political issues such as the Ukraine Crisis have on Russian policy-making in the Arctic?**
- 2. What are Russia's motives regarding its foreign policy-making?**

This problem formulation consists of one main research question with two sub-questions in order to gain a more complete and holistic insight on the research topic. The main research question concerns the overall foreign policy, and in particular the militarisation process, of the Russian Federation with regards to the Arctic region. The first sub-question focuses on how conflicts in other regions, with a focus on the Ukraine crisis in this thesis, affect geopolitics in the Arctic. The second sub-question aims to clarify Russia's underlying motives with regards to its Arctic policy. Hence, this research aims to elucidate a complex topic that encompasses many different aspects that affect geopolitics in the Arctic.

As such, this thesis aims to provide a clear analysis of Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic, how this is influenced by political entanglements elsewhere, as well as potential underlying motives of policy choices made by the Russian state.

### **3.2 Methodology and Research Methods**

As the chosen problem formulation focuses on explaining Russia's foreign policy and underlying motives for this with regards to its relation to the other Arctic states in an factually grounded manner, the methodological stance of this research is that of an empirical nature. The scope of the research allows for an analysis between multiple variables in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between these variables (Lamont, 2015, p. 36). The independent variable in this research is Russia's foreign policy choices in the Arctic region, and the dependent variables are Russia's relations with the other Arctic states and political spill over effects from other regions.

The scope of this research is Russian foreign policy and its motives in relation to geopolitical spill over effects from other regions. In order to be able to provide a comprehensive, complete and accurate analysis on the research topic, this thesis places the topic in a historical perspective in a background information chapter since current policy decision making could partially be motivated by past events such as the Cold War and more recent East-West tensions in relation to particularly the Ukraine crisis. Another discussion that is addressed in this background information chapter is the debate between scholars on peaceful coexistence in the Arctic versus the Arctic being the military stage where political tensions originating from other geographic regions display themselves.

In order to approach the chosen research topic, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) using secondary data is carried out. Acknowledging the complexity of the political situation and Russia's policy in the Arctic with regards to its militarisation process, within a current and historical framework, this Foreign Policy Analysis is done with a deductive approach to the theory. Meaning that the analysis of this thesis is structured according to aspects and arguments springing from the selected theories (Bryman, 2012, p. 24).

In order to be able to provide a more thorough and broader understanding of the research topic, it is analysed using both realism and constructivism as its theoretical framework. Both theories, as well as Foreign Policy Analysis will be explained in greater detail in chapter 4.

The two theories of realism and constructivism were chosen because the author of this paper is confident that by applying its two different approaches will enable a well-rounded analysis of the topic of this thesis. While realism focuses mainly on state power relations and states' need for self-protection as a result of an anarchic international system, constructivism takes into account the importance of historical events on current international relations.

### **3.3 Research Data**

In order to carry out the analysis section of this research, qualitative secondary is used. Moreover, the data accessed is acquired through archival and document-based-research (Lamont, 2015, p. 80). By working with secondary data, it is possible to access and assess different types of data as well as multiple sources, and thereby providing a better understanding of the chosen research topic. While the author of this paper does not speak Russian, bias is aimed to be minimised by accessing different sources that themselves do not have a clear 'Western' or 'Eastern' bias.

Although using secondary data poses limitations, which will be explained in sub-chapter 3.4, there are clear benefits of using this type of data for this study. As such, academic books with a focus on Russian foreign policy and Russian geopolitics are accessed. Moreover, peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals, web pages such as the official NATO, Arctic Council and European Commission websites, formal statements by political actors and reports released by governmental bodies NGOs are accessed for data.

### **3.4 Limitations**

The following section of this chapter focuses on the limitations encountered by the researcher during the compilation of this paper. First of all, even though the secondary data that is used in the analysis of the research topic is compiled with great care to avoid as much data bias as possible, it is crucial to keep in mind that there is no such thing as a complete data set. Due to the complexity of the research topic, the origins of which span a long timeframe even when the focus lies on a more specific timeframe, it is impossible to present a picture that can be called complete. Furthermore, every source of data is biased in its essence since it was created from its producer's point of view or underlying motivation, meaning that no data source can be called truly objective, which motivates a critical reading of existing literature (Thomson, 2012, p. 101).

Although the aim of this thesis is to provide the reader with a complete critical reading and analysis of Russian foreign policy in the Arctic, a certain bias is unavoidable. This is because the researcher has spent her entire life and academic career in the European Union and therefore has been exposed to mostly Western oriented accounts and narratives of geopolitical situations. Moreover, the researcher does not speak or understand the Russian language and therefore cannot analyse any data available in this language – possibly adding to the bias mentioned before. However, being aware of such limitations does counter them somewhat because countermeasures can be taken. For example, the researcher will keep such biases in mind when interpreting data and will also explicitly search for Russian sources available in English.

A structured analysis is facilitated by the chosen methodological stance of a deductive approach. Using FPA, realism and constructivism allows this research to touch upon various relevant aspects, but this approach in its nature is also limited in the sense that the chosen theories greatly narrow down the aspects that can be discovered in the research process, and it could prevent the research uncovering aspects of the research topic that could have been uncovered using different theories (Lamont, 2015, p. 13-14).

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of realism and constructivism, and both are applied to the scope of the research through foreign policy analysis (FPA). The following chapter and its sub-chapters aim to provide an explanation of FPA and what it entails and also give a thorough outline of the chosen theories. The theoretical framework sets the foundation for the analysis chapter of this thesis, and as such the author of this paper aims to explain and emphasise the link between the scope of the research, namely Russian foreign policy in the Arctic, and the theories.

##### **4.1 Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)**

In addition to using the theories of realism and constructivism as explained below, the analysis chapter of this thesis is based on the application of the concepts of foreign policy analysis. As such, the following paragraphs provide a concise outline of what FPA consists of.

At its core foreign policy analysis examines how foreign policy comes to exist and how foreign policy decisions are made. Not unlike constructivism theory, FPA makes the assumption that foreign policy decision-making is highly influenced by human beings and their ideas, values and priorities. Also, FPA tends to take a decision-making approach in its analysis. Meaning that it examines decisions that are made, and focus on people and units that a state comprises of. Examples of such units are the President or head of state, ministers and departments within governments. A state's national interest is seen as the collective interest of these various players and its decision-making processes do not necessarily adhere to rational thought (Hudson & Vore, 1995, p. 210).

Using this approach to the analysis of foreign policy adds much detail to the analysis of international relations overall, because it takes into account the personal characteristics, legislative politics, discourse, problem representation, opposition groups and domestic incentives that affect foreign policy (Hudson & Vore, 1995, p. 211). Because of this it is possible to find underlying reasons for how decision makers respond to uncertainty and change in their environment (Hudson & Vore, 1995, p. 225).



Moreover, as Hudson and Vore (1995, p. 227) argue, foreign policy making is a complex two-level paradigm. Decisions made on an international level affect the domestic situation and vice versa. Therefore, choices made in one arena are often used to deliberately affect the situation in the other.

All in all, foreign policy analysis allows researchers to interlink three factors. It allows for an analysis of strategic choice, modelling the two-level paradigm of decision-making, and offers insights into explaining democratic peace and why democratic states do not go to war with each other (Hudson & Vore, 1995, p. 228).

#### **4.2 Realism Theory**

First of all, realism is a complex concept that can be divided into many different strands but a broad definition can be formulated as it being a theory that is based on three core assumptions. The first core assumption is referred to as '*groupism*'. The assumption of groupism refers to nation states and considers them the most important and influential actors in the international political system. Building on this, the strongest form of cohesion within the international society is nationalism. Secondly, '*egoism*' is identified as the second core assumption. Egoism refers to the idea amongst scholars that all states act with their own interest as the highest priority. This means that all policy choices, both domestic and foreign, are essentially motivated by what would be the best possible outcome for the state. The third core assumption is that of '*power-centrism*', and this relates to the concept of power in the international system. In this assumption it is presumed that power is the main and central feature of international politics. Combining the three core assumptions as explained above it can be concluded that a state's collective interest is what guides its policy-making. Lastly, not only does the state's interest guide its foreign and domestic policy, it is also often prioritised over moral or ethical concerns (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36-38).

Additionally, as mentioned above, realism is a broad concept consisting of different strands and as such another distinction can be made between human-nature realism or *classical realism* and *structural realism*. Classical realism, as supported most prominently by Hans Morgenthau, regards power and the pursuit of it as something innately human. Therefore, all human beings and states pursue power because power is seen as an end-goal in itself (Open University, 2014).

Building on this, Morgenthau built the argument that there are three approaches to foreign policy that states engage in: *the policy of status quo, the policy of imperialism and the policy of prestige* (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001, p. 6).

The policy of status quo refers to the idea that all states have power, how much varying between states, and that each state is concerned with maintaining this level of power and place in the international system. The policy of imperialism on the other hand moves beyond the paradigm of maintaining the power, as in this scenario states try to increase and expand their power and influence over other states. Finally, the policy of prestige combines the previous two policy approaches and adds public displays of showcasing the state's power (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001, p. 6-7).

The second broad strand of realism, as mentioned above, is *structural realism*. The most striking difference lies in that while classical realism points to human nature as a driver for states' pursuit of power, structural realism argues that it is the nature of the international system that forces states to pursue power. The international system is anarchic in the sense that there exists no higher authority than a nation-state, and this causes much uncertainty and distrust between nation-states, which then in turn drives a security competition (Open University, 2014).

Additionally, Waltz has argued that acquiring and increasing power is not an innately human characteristic, but that the value of power is instead a dominant one in a state. This argument was made after an analysis of domestic politics within states, and it was said that the value of power is mainly found within socio-political institutions in society. Waltz moved on to state that both domestic and foreign policy are a result of the combination between geographic positioning and national history (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001, p. 7). All in all, based on this classical and structural realism differ in the sense that the anarchic international system is seen as the main contributor to instability rather than a human drive for power acquisition.

A further distinction within structural realism can be made between *offensive* and *defensive* realism. Offensive realists act upon the conviction that states can never be entirely certain that peaceful situations will remain peaceful.

This is argued to be due to the absence of a higher authority than a nation-state or, in other words, the anarchic nature of the international system and the lack of a so-called 'world government' states have to report to. This anarchic nature of the international system leads to a situation in which nation-states are never fully capable of trusting other nation-states, resulting in much distrust, and attempts at expanding and strengthening the state is seen as a protective measure to secure its own position by weakening other states (Open University, 2014).

Moreover, John Mearsheimer, one of the most well respected scholars of structural realism, argues that the uncertainty within the international system leads to states acting in an aggressive manner purely out of the desire for security. Mearsheimer has put this argument in five premises: "*1. A world government does not exist. 2. Every state is capable of using force against another state. 3. States can never assume that it will not be confronted with force from another state. 4. Every state wishes and seeks to maintain its territory and authority over it. 5. States act in a rational manner*" (Wagner, 2007, p. 13). Powerful incentives for states to act offensively are identified when these five premises are combined. Also, being the strongest and most powerful state in the international system is considered the safest option, and therefore justifies a state's pursuit for hegemony (Wagner, 2007, p. 13-14).

Defensive realism is most concerned with the survival of the nation-state (Open University, 2014). Defensive realists argue that the safest option to ensure the state's survival is to follow a moderate policy, as publically showing too much power will have negative outcomes due to the unpredictable nature of the international system. Also, in defensive realism, a stronger group identity and cohesion in the form of treaties and alliances is encouraged because it is strategically more challenging to conquer and subjugate these states (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36; Rynning & Guzzini, 2001, p. 8).

A key concept in defensive realism is a *balance of power*, and this balance of power is desired by all states. This concept concerns states aspiring to and having similar military capabilities in order to create the most stable international system possible, because no state will have the capabilities to overpower and dominate over another state.

The prospect of creating a balance of power is what makes it attractive for nation-states to enter into alliances with other nation-states, as it is believed that this will prevent possible future conflicts (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36-40).

Moreover, *balance of threat*, *hegemonic stability theory* and *power transition theory* are further key concepts in realism theory. The concept of a balance of threat refers to the notion that nation-states will balance their power against that of potentially threatening nation-states. The 'threat' here refers not only to military might but also to economic power and geographic location, as well as whether actions taken by states are considered aggressive or passive by other states (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36-40).

The key concept of hegemonic stability theory considers the possibility of powerful states seeking hegemony over other states in the international system. Within hegemonic stability theory it is reasoned that stability in the international system is ensured as long as the distribution of power ensures the authority of states (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36-40).

The third key concept as mentioned above, power transition theory, concerns warfare within the international system. According to power transition theory, powerful states will always prefer and attempt to maintain their dominance and leadership position. This position is in part upheld by the passivity of less powerful states, because they choose to not contest the dominant state's position unless they themselves become powerful enough to successfully challenge the dominant state and take over the leadership position (Wohlforth, 2012, p. 36-40).

### **4.3 Constructivism**

Constructivism arose in the 1980s as a challenge to the leading theories of international relations at the time: neoliberalism and neorealism. Constructivism theory concerns itself most with the investigation of the correlation between actors and structures as well as their interests and social capabilities in order to determine construct norms and state identities. Constructivists distinguish themselves from neoliberals and neo-realists in the sense that an analysis of the research subject and their social abilities is not avoided (Haas, 1990).

Constructivism argues that perceived reality is in fact a social construct of human beings due to the influence of previous knowledge, language, social norms and symbols (Barnett, 2005, p. 259).

Every actor's identity, from small actors in daily personal interactions to large actors in the international system of nation-states, constitutes a socially constructed view of reality. Consequently, policy making and decision making processes of nation-states always reflect some level of self-perception, beliefs, interests and expectations (Tandilashvili, 2015).

Constructivism and realism differ most in the sense that while realists assume that international structures are mostly built out of the distribution of material capabilities, constructivists argue that international structures are built from social relationships. As such, constructivists argue, common knowledge, expectations and shared understanding define nation-states' relations in many situations. Meaning that the international system shapes states' behaviour through the "*distribution of ideas and knowledge*", rather than "*the distribution of power and interest*" (Wendt, 1995, p. 73).

Whether a state is seen as a hegemon, a pre-accession country for large intergovernmental organisations, as a recipient of humanitarian aid, or as a threat due to frowned upon alliances affects its position in the international community since its identity functions as starting point for interests by and for other states (Wendt, 1995, p. 72-76). However, these social structures only apply when interacting in familiar behavioural patterns. When the pattern of familiar behavioural patterns is broken, common manners of interaction also cease to exist. The end of the Cold War with the dissolution of the Soviet Union is an example of such social structures disappearing (Wendt, 1992, p. 397).

Furthermore, in constructivism the social construction of reality greatly determines perception of both the world and self. Therefore, it also affects the view of which actor is defined as a friend and which as a foe, and this is relevant on all levels of society, including within large international organisations such as NATO and their membership policy.

Actors make a constant cost-benefit calculation of interests and actions, and the outcome is defined by what is considered acceptable behaviour according to previously generated norms and structures (Wendt, 1995, p. 71-74). Also, actions in the form of statements and policy forming by nation-states reflect their self-perception in addition to norms, beliefs and expectations (Tandilashvili, 2015). It is constructivists' goal to uncover the human invented reality while not disregarding its formation process and origins, in order to gain a better understanding of an actor's identity and interest as to make it possible to explain actions taken.

In the 1990s, as part of constructivist theory, *Social Identity Theory (SIT)* was developed. SIT is concerned with investigating the formation process of new identities of social groups after familiar behavioural patterns cease to exist (Mercer, 1995, p. 229). Within Social Identity Theory there are three strategies regarding foreign policy, namely: *social mobility*, *social competition* and *social creativity*, which all take a different approach to regaining a country's great power status.

Social mobility describes the adoption of certain values, practices, institutions and ideologies of a higher status group of countries in an attempt to gain access to the 'elite' group. Social competition can be understood as a nation-state trying to equal or surpass the perceived dominant group or country with the goal of surpassing their dominance. This is often attempted through military demonstration, rivalry over contested territories, or even military intervention. Russia's annexation of Crimea can be considered an example of social competition. Lastly, in social creativity it is tried to replace negative features by reframing them as positive achievements – often done by emphasising newly formed institutions, norms, regimes or development models (Mercer, 1995, p. 229-232).

## 5. Analysis

The following chapter of this thesis provides answers to the formulated research questions according to the theoretical framework of realism and constructivism. The research questions are as follows: *How can Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic region since the Ukraine Crisis started in 2013 be explained with regards to its militarisation process?*

1. What influence do political issues such as the Ukraine Crisis have on Russian policy-making in the Arctic?
2. What are Russia's motives regarding its foreign policy-making?

### 5.1 Russian Foreign Policy

Russian President Putin made the following statement regarding Russia's Arctic foreign policy at 'The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue' forum:

*"Russia believes that there is no potential for conflict in the Arctic. International law clearly specifies the rights of littoral and other states and provides a firm foundation for cooperation in addressing various issues, including such sensitive ones as the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean and the prevention of unregulated high seas fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean, which is surrounded by the exclusive economic zones of the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia.*

*I would like to reiterate that Russia is open to constructive cooperation and does its utmost to create a proper environment for its effective development. We have drafted a fairly extensive economic programme for the Arctic designed for many years to come."* (Putin, 2017)

What can be observed from this statement is that Putin vehemently denies a possible conflict occurring in the Arctic, which is unlike his overall realist approach to foreign policy matters because in this statement Putin emphasises cooperation with other Arctic states. Also, Russia has increased its military presence in the Arctic under President Putin, but in this statement cooperation and development with the other Arctic littoral states are emphasised.

While the research questions focus on the era of Russian foreign policy making in the Arctic in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis starting in 2013, it is crucial to first provide a critical analysis of Russian foreign policy making in a broader historical and contextual setting.

This is because much recent policy making springs from Russia's constructivist perception of history and its place in the international system. Therefore, this analytical subchapter will focus on the factors driving and influencing Russian foreign policy decision-making, in addition to placing Russian foreign policy in an appropriate historical framework.

First of all, up until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia was classified as a superpower in global politics and the leading economic superpower over its territory (Mearsheimer 2014, p. 5-6). Since 1991 however, taking into consideration the loss of territory and the diminished strength of the nation, Russia is more accurately described as a great power (Buzan, 2003, p. 389). This decreased status classification can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including economic decline and loss of military might in areas such as the Arctic. Moreover, a key characterising feature of Russian foreign policy-making that national identity and self-determination have a strong influence (Lo, 2002). Furthermore, Buzan, (2003, p. 405) argues that the Russian Federation is negatively affected by its own perceived lack of recognition on a global level, and while every nation-state's foreign policy is affected by its self-perception and history, this affects Russian foreign policy to a higher degree. As Heller (2010) argues, Russia's decision-making processes and behaviour are based on recognition, national honour and its historic experiences.

The above strongly correlates and fits in with many of the key aspects of constructivism theory. One of the elements of constructivism theory is *Social Identity Theory (SIT)*. As explained more thoroughly in chapter 4, SIT is used to investigate the identity of social groups after familiar behavioural patterns cease to exist. The behavioural pattern that ceased to exist after 1991 when the Russian Federation was re-established is that Russia was no longer a superpower and was forced to give up many of its satellite nations. Since international as well as domestic status and recognition play important roles in Russian society and politics, its foreign policy is largely based on regaining this former status of a superpower. Russia's approach to regaining this former glory fits very well within the category of *social competition* within social identity theory.



This is because within the *social competition* category states tend to try to surpass or equal the perceived dominant state or group of states within the international system by military demonstration or intervention, or by showing rivalry over contested territories (Mercer, 1995, p.229-232).

One clear example of such policy-making showed by Russia is the annexation of Crimea after the Ukraine Crisis in 2013, but this will be discussed further in upcoming sections of this chapter. Moreover, Russia has on other occasions also not hesitated to showcase its military might in areas where NATO and Russian interests intersect (McFaul, 1999).

Another example of showcasing Russian might in contested areas is the infamous planting of the Russian flag on the Arctic seabed in 2007. In the beginning of August 2007, mini-submarines descended to 4,300 metres below the sea in order to plant a Russian flag on the underwater Lomonosov ridge, which is claimed by Canada, Denmark and Russia (Parfitt, 2007; CBC News, 2017). The symbolic action was controversial because in doing so the Russian Federation 'claimed' the oil and gas resources worth billions of dollars, and the action sparked disagreement from the international community (Parfitt, 2007).

Furthermore, despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an important part of Russian foreign policy-making is the concept of *near abroad*. This indicates that it is difficult to draw a distinct line between domestic and regional policy, and as such it is difficult to establish where Russia sees its geographic boundaries (Buzan, 2003, p. 435). This concept of near abroad has been adopted into legislature by Russian authorities by establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and as the right to intervene in the post-Soviet space when necessary in order to protect the rights of ethnic Russians (Simão, 2016, p. 492).

Russian interests in the CIS have been documented in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2016 in article 55: "*Russia builds friendly relations with each CIS member State based on equality, mutual benefit, respect and taking into account each other's interests...*"(The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016).

The article from the Foreign Policy Concept and the claim that Russia has granted itself the right to intervene in its *near abroad space* above can be interpreted from both a constructivist and realist point of view. Firstly, Vladimir Putin made the following statement in 2005: *“First and foremost it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century ... As for the Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory.”* (Putin, 2005). Combining this statement and the fact that Russia has created legislation to intervene in former Soviet States indicates that Russian foreign policy making under President Putin gravitates towards claiming to or attempting to have the same level of influence over these territories as before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This can be seen as an active attempt at trying to increase Russia’s sphere of influence by openly contesting territories of independent states, and in the case of Crimea; Ukraine, using military intervention (Mercer, 1995, p. 229-232).

Moreover, Putin’s statement shows that his personal opinion is that Russia as it is now would perhaps be better off if the Soviet Union still existed. In this case it is President Putin’s personal opinion and interpretation of history that is affecting the Russian Federation’s foreign policy since this constructivist view of the past is influencing current events. Meaning that his perception of reality and the ‘greatness’ of the Soviet Union affect his social construction of reality and his view of the role of international actors (Wenst, 1995, p. 71-74).

From a realist point of view it can be argued that by maintaining a strong sphere of influence over its former territory Russia is acting in an offensive manner by attempting to preserve a system of satellite states because a state can never be sure that a peaceful situation will stay peaceful. As Mearsheimer argues, states can never be completely sure that other sates will not seek out confrontation, and each state seeks to maintain its territory and to keep authority over it (Wagner, 2007, p. 13-14).

Also, Mearsheimer (2014, p. 56) argues that great powers are consistent in that they are always concerned about potential threats close to their territory. This idea is further supported by the Eastward enlargement of both the EU and NATO, both of which the West claims are not aimed at threatening Russia, but it is Russia's constructivist interpretation of events that decides which actions are seen as threats (Wendt, 1995, p. 71-74), so maintaining a buffer zone between Russia and these Western institutions would provide Russia with additional safety.

Furthermore, different schools of thought to foreign policy can be identified within Russian politics: 1. *Pro-Western idealists*, 2. *Pro-Western pragmatists*, 3. *Anti-Western pragmatists*, and 4. *Anti-Western Ideologues* (McFaul, 1999). The following paragraphs will elaborate briefly on all four groups since each has influenced Russian politics over the last two decades.

#### 1. Pro-Western Idealists

When Russia became an independent state in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first president of the Russian Federation; Boris Yeltsin and his newly formed government were largely responsible for forming the new Russian domestic and foreign policy and positioning the state in the international system (McFaul, 1999). Due to the circumstances under which the Russian democrats had had to secure the state's political development away from totalitarian rule, Yeltsin and many other politicians in leadership roles assumed a Western inspired ideology based on liberal ideas of democracy, capitalism and self-determination. This was mainly because capitalist Western states were generally successful and prosperous, so Russian politicians aimed to replicate this. One of the main goals of Russian foreign policy, according to the pro-Western school of thought, is building more partnerships with the Western institutions, such as the EU, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and NATO. Moreover, while widely different from current Russian foreign policy, it was during this period that Russian leadership was also refraining from opposing NATO enlargement (Sergunin, 2007, p. 47).

Part of the transition from the Soviet system to the current Russian system is that the former Soviet Union had to give up large parts of its naval fleet, including in the Arctic region. The size of the naval fleet diminished because Russia had to give up many of its vessels to several Eastern European countries that were part of the former USSR, and, more importantly, the Russian economy had to be built from scratch; meaning that many ships simply fell into disrepair (Bender, 2016). What this meant is that the formerly heavily militarised Arctic region went from a region of strategic confrontation to an arena of potential cooperation; especially since the pro-Western idealists supported entering into more alliances with the West.

However, even though Russian leadership had adopted pro-Western oriented policy, Russia had problems positioning itself in the international system of liberal states (Buzan, 2003, p. 405), since the West was reluctant to accept Russia into its institutions (Sergunin, 2007, p.50). As a response to this, the policy approach changed to the so-called “*Eurasianism*” approach, which offered an alternative to pro-Western ideologies, and the main goal of this was to consolidate Russian public opinion and the political elite (Sergunin, 2007, p. 50).

Therefore, as is pointed out in structural realism, there is much distrust in the international system due to the absence of a higher authority than a nation-state. As such, a security competition between states is often the result (Open University, 2014). As the Russian state changed its political system from being a communist, authoritarian state to becoming a more democratic capitalist state, the existing behavioural structures disintegrated as well (Wendt, 1992, p.397). However, the reaction from the West was to continue its perception of Russia and its policy from a former Cold War point of view, and therefore Russia could not find a suitable role in the system.

## 2. Pro-Western Pragmatists

Much of the strong motivation to pursue a largely liberal and integrationist foreign policy faded by the end of Russia’s first year of independence (McFaul, 1999). As a result of a lack of support and assistance from the West, Russia’s policy approach changed to a slightly more anti-Western stance that was part of Soviet policy as well.

Nevertheless, the Russian economy had been in decline; meaning the state had grown increasingly weaker (McFaul, 1999), and the switch to capitalism gave large oil companies, mineral exporters and bankers the opportunity to become more influential in foreign policy decision-making and they would benefit from continued engagement with the West (McFaul, 1999). These groups ensured that the trade deals made with the West would ultimately benefit Russia. Moreover, it was not only large corporations that promoted positive relations with the West, but governors, non-governmental organisations, trade unions and women's organisations were also involved in this process. During this period, polls showed that a large majority of Russian citizens also agreed that maintaining good relations with the West should remain an objective for Russia.

Maintaining ties with the West is further justified by applying realism to the occurrence. Firstly, it is strategically more logical for Russia to form alliances with other states because it is more difficult to subjugate and conquer states that are part of ratified treaties and alliances (Wohlforth, 2012, p.36). Since the Russian state was in economic decline and therefore weakened as a whole, strengthening economic ties with other nation states was an ideal manner of strengthening the state through economic recovery as well as entering alliances.

Furthermore, as the strategic importance of the Arctic region had faded since the end of the Cold War, and as such the region had become an area of potential collaboration. This expressed itself through a new and more civilised international agenda of research cooperation, climate change goals and economic interests (Østerud & Hønneland, 2013, p. 159). While some Cold War tensions remained, they were considered less acute and this resulted to the Arctic changing from being a potential conflict zone with a heavy military presence to being a region of cooperation and exploitation of natural resources. However, the latter has brought with it many new sources of potential tension due to questions of jurisdiction and contested territory (Østerud & Hønneland, 2013, p. 159), but this will be elaborated on in further sections of this chapter.

### 3. Anti-Western Pragmatists

The third group or school of thought that can be identified in Russian foreign policy-making is that of the anti-Western pragmatists, and it is this group that has been most prevalent and influential recently. This group differs in its approach to relations with the West in the sense that it does not believe that Russia would benefit from adopting a pro-Western policy or from increased integration with the West (McFaul, 1999), which greatly influences Russia's foreign policy strategy in all regions but also particularly with regards to its foreign policy in the Arctic. Rather, the common belief amongst anti-Western pragmatists is that politics is a zero-sum game in which there can be only one winner, so this means that Russia's interests always automatically clash with those of its competitors. As Jensen & Skedsmo (2010, p. 445-446) also point out, this idea is supported by President Putin and implemented in his approach to foreign policy.

Therefore, a heavy focus lies on attempting to weaken the US or NATO. This can be explained in multiple manners. First, Russia's problematic relations with the US and NATO lies in the complex history of Russia/Western relations. Until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia and the US were openly considered enemies during the entirety of the Cold War, and therefore Russia is merely acting according to the principles of offensive realism by trying to weaken the US. NATO expansion into former Soviet territory, and Russia's sphere of influence or 'near abroad', is interpreted as a direct threat to Russia because of its constructivist interpretation of past events in light of the Cold War period during which the two states considered each other to be their nation's biggest threat (Wendt, 1995, p. 71-74; Mearhsheimer, 2014, p. 5-6). Secondly, Russia is trying to regain its former status of a superpower and is in doing so attempting to change the current unipolar system with the US as its hegemon into a bipolar system (McFaul, 1999).

The above goals were put into multiple Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation. In the early 2000s, President Putin introduced renewed realism, pragmatism and patriotism into Russian foreign policy. He also re-emphasised a Eurasianism tendency in policy-making.

In the Foreign Policy Concept of 2000, key matters that are highlighted are, amongst other things, strengthening relations with CIS member states, solidifying Russia's strong position in the international system and to make Russia a superpower again (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2000). Another Foreign Policy Concept was published in 2008, and this emphasises again that Russia does not approve of US activities in its 'near abroad', and that countermeasures will be taken if Russian interests are not respected (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008).

When President Putin was re-elected in 2012, he once again supported his previous foreign policy design. Unsurprisingly, Russian foreign policy was formulated in such a manner that it opposed US politics; NATO expansion plans were heavily criticised. Moreover, in the Foreign Policy Concepts from 2012 and 2016, the post-Soviet territories remain a crucial point of importance. Apart from this, further development of the Eurasian Economic Union and more integration of the BRICS are highlighted as future priorities of foreign policy (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2012; The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2016).

Even though the official Russian foreign policy documents under Putin's presidency all have a strong tendency to oppose US/Western/NATO politics, certain statements by high-ranking Russian officials indicate the willingness to cooperate internationally in the Arctic region. Minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov underscored Russia's satisfaction with current international and legal frameworks existing with regards to the Arctic (Staun, 2015).

Lavrov further stated that the Arctic states' strategies that are anchored in the Arctic Council will be "*fully secured only through close cooperation with partners in the region.*" (Staun, 2015). What this means is that even though many official Russian documents take a hard realist line, in practice Russian politicians choose a cooperative, and therefore peaceful, approach to the geopolitical situation in the Arctic; referring to international agreements made between the Arctic States in the Arctic Council.

However, it is important to note that ‘Russia’s national security strategy until 2020’ from 2009 specifically indicates that “*Under conditions of competition for resources, it is not excluded that arising problems may be resolved using military force...*” (Staun, 2015). Further, President Putin compared threats against Russia’s national security with threats in the Arctic. Putin also stated that: “*The possibilities for further expansion of NATO to the East are being explored; and there is a danger of the militarisation of the Arctic*” (Staun, 2015). Additionally, in 2014, President Putin made a speech to the National Youth Forum and in this the presence of US submarines in the Arctic region near Norway was emphasised (Staun, 2015). So, based on the statements and documents above, it becomes clear that for President Putin the Arctic is a geopolitical situation with a high military-security character. Therefore, Russia will defend itself to the perceived Western threats where necessary in order to protect its sovereignty over its territory and to protect its claim to the resources present in the region, which corroborates with realism theory in the sense that Russia acts in response to the anarchical nature of the international system. President Putin’s statement further aligns with realism theory with regards to taking into account future possible military conflicts as a result of hostile actions by other nation states, because a state can never be sure that a current peaceful situation will not change into a hostile situation.

All in all, current Russian foreign policy gives precedence to increasing Russian influence in global politics by solidifying its own status and to promote further integration of the CIS countries (Dragneva-Lewers & Wolczuk, p. 19). A distinct example of how seriously Russia takes its ‘near abroad territories’ and Western influence in this space is the Ukraine crisis. Russia’s reaction to possible NATO expansion into Ukraine, and therefore post-Soviet space, was intended to mark the border for the Western alliance and to indicate how seriously Russia takes this aspect of its policy (Allison, 2014, p. 1268).



#### 4. Anti-Western Ideologues

The fourth and last school of thought common in Russian foreign policy is that of anti-Western ideologues. This group shares many attributes with the third group of anti-Western pragmatists, but there are several main differences. Similarities between the two include that both groups see international relations as a realist battle of balance-of-power between Russia and the West (McFaul, 1999).

However, while the anti-Western pragmatists see material interests as the most important motivation in foreign policy, the anti-Western ideologues also emphasise the importance of protecting ethnicity, civilisational distinctions and reputation (McFaul, 1999). For example, a prominent ideology within this school of thought is that it is Russia's duty to protect Slavic nations from NATO enlargement.

Moreover, people that fall under this category are often members of fascist groups such as the Russian National Union, which believes that Russian foreign policy must openly be guided by strictly anti-Western, anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic motivations (McFaul, 1999).

All in all, Russian foreign policy has been characterised by multiple streams of influence, with most significant influence from Anti-Western pragmatists with the support of Vladimir Putin. The Western dimension of Russian foreign policy has been problematic since before the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Current problems faced by both nations spring from constructivist interpretations of historic and recent events while attempting to both secure their place as a dominant force in global politics.

#### **5.2 The Ukraine Crisis**

The Ukraine Crisis that started in 2013 proved to be a significant point of contestation between the West and Russia, and this conflict had some significant spill-over effects in the Arctic region. This subchapter will therefore provide a critical analysis, of the events leading up to and unfolding during the Ukraine Crisis and its immediate aftermath, by analysing the events within the theoretical framework of realism and constructivism.

First of all, Ukraine was in the midst of negotiations for the Association Agreement with the European Union when Ukrainian President Yanukovich suspended this process in 2013, and this is what is considered as the start of the Ukraine Crisis (Dragneva-Lewers & Wolczuk, 2015, p. 94). As a direct result of halting these negotiations, mass protests broke out in Ukraine's capital of Kiev. These protests are widely known as the 'Euromaidan', and the demonstrators demanded closer ties with the European Union.

Ukrainian President Yanukovich, elected in 2010, had strong ties to Russia and its leadership, and while Ukraine was negotiating an Association Agreement with the EU, it was also negotiating closer economic ties to Russia. This included possibly joining the Eurasian Customs Union (EACU), and the signing of a treaty extending Russia's lease of its Black Sea Fleet in Crimea for an additional 25 years in return for lowered gas prices (Voytyuk, 2011, p. 178-179).

Since politics, in the eyes of many politicians with realist views, is a zero-sum game (Jensen & Skedsmo, 2010, p. 445, 446), the negotiations with the Eastern and Western partners were mutually exclusive; reaching an agreement with one would automatically dispel opportunities with the other.

The Euromaidan protests on Independence Square in Kiev continued and turned violent in February of 2014 when snipers fired bullets at protesters. Several days after this a compromise was found between President Yanukovich and the opposition leaders and a new interim president and prime minister were nominated. The EU decided to put sanctions on Yanukovich and his close associates, who consequently went into hiding in Russia (Delcour & Kostanyan, 2014, p.9).

The EU Association Agreement was internationally seen as a sign of Ukrainian modernisation. Further, due to the nature of the protests, the Maidan is regarded as a conflict between the pro-Russian Ukrainian government and its Western opposition. Unlike Yanukovich' government's pro-Russia objectives, the new government had strong pro-Western objectives and opposed furthering its close relations with Russia.

An example of such policy was the proposal to abolish Russian as an official language in Ukraine, meaning Russia would lose much of its influence in the country. Russia interpreted the new government of Ukraine as illegitimate and considered the overthrow of Yanukovich a coup organised by the US and the West (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 1).

The Crisis developed with the appearance of unidentified combat soldiers appearing in the Crimean capital of Simferopol. The Kremlin eventually admitted that these soldiers were Russian, and therefore admitted Russian involvement in the annexation of the region. Crimea had been disputed territory since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Russia had been reluctant to agree on the borders established in 1991 (Wolczuk, 2002, p. 28).

Crimea has historically been a region with a large presence of an ethnic Russian population that has claimed strong cultural and historic ties to Russia (BBC News, 2014a). This is combination with the chaos that ensued in consequence of the Maidan protests and overthrow of the government provided Russia with the opportunity to invade and annex Crimea.

In order to maintain the façade of legitimacy, a referendum was held in March 2014 amongst the Crimean population, and 97% of the population voted to become part of Russia. This referendum has widely been denounced as illegal by the European Union, the United States and Ukraine itself (BBC News, 2014b). Nevertheless, President Putin signed legislation to make the annexation of Crimea official.

Moreover, Ukraine's western borders were subject to Russian military drills, and in April of 2014 activist movements started in the eastern city of Donetsk. Pro-Russian activists proclaimed '*the Republic of Donetsk*' after occupying major government buildings and, mirroring the events in Crimea, demanded a referendum. The Ukrainian government responded to the separatists by commencing an 'anti-terror operation'. Further, Petro Poroshenko won the 2014 presidential elections, but Russia did not recognise this outcome because the elections were not held in most of eastern Ukraine (OSCE, 2014).

The conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine escalated further when observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) were kidnapped and both sides suffered fatalities. The US and EU placed more economic sanctions on Russia while offering financial support to Ukraine (BBC News, 2014b). Despite the chaos created by the Ukraine Crisis, the Association Agreement with the EU was ratified in June 2014.

Nevertheless, the fighting in the eastern part of Ukraine persisted and the situation escalated entirely when Malaysia Airlines MH17 was shot down over east Ukraine in July 2014, resulting in the loss of 298 lives (BBC News, 2014c). New and extended sanctions against Russia were announced that same month. Sanctions that were placed on Ukraine by the EU and US are designed to target Russia's state finances, energy and military sectors (BBC News, 2014b). A distinction can be made between diplomatic measures, restrictive measures and economic measures (Europa.eu, 2018).

For example, under these sanctions Russian banks are not allowed to raise long-term loans in the EU, export bans were placed on certain military equipment and the EU stopped exporting oil and industry technology. The sanctions further affected the major Russian state oil firms of Rosneft, Transneft and Gazprom (BBC News, 2014c), which proved to be an important development with regards to Russia's Arctic energy extraction ambitions.

There are several arguments Russia uses to justify its actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. One main claim that is often reiterated is the "*responsibility to protect ethnic Russians and compatriots, and the reclamation of sacred territory*" (Dragneva-Lewers & Wolczuk, 2015, p. 103). As mentioned above, Russia argued that the new Ukrainian government disregarded the rights and needs of ethnic Russians living on Ukrainian territory. The annexation of Crimea was interpreted by Russia as a return to the status-quo since the region used to belong to Russia in the past, and President Putin further bases his arguments on the *historical and cultural relations* between Russia and Crimea (Tandilashvili, 2015, p. 9).

The above can be explained using constructivism theory, since international relations are strongly influenced by social norms and states' identities, as well as an exchange of ideas and perceptions rather than a distribution of material capabilities (Wendt, 1995, p.73; Tandilashvili, 2015, p. 9). Russia and Crimea share a long history and rich cultural background, and it is this together with Russia's self-imposed obligation to protect and serve the Russian population living in former Soviet territories that were used as arguments for military interference.

Another reason for a strong Russian military response to the events in the Ukraine Crisis is Russia's constructivist interpretation of the events. Russia saw the overthrow of the Yanukovich government as a Western plot to adjust Ukraine's geopolitical orientation from being pro-Russian to becoming pro-Western with the purpose of weakening the Kremlin's influence in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Yakovlev-Golani, 2011, p. 390). The Western attempt to alter Ukraine's geopolitical orientation was interpreted as the first step to eventually also having a similar influence in Moscow, which would be severely threatening to Russia. Therefore, immediate and severe countermeasures were taken (Yakovlev-Golani, 2011, p.390).

The Ukraine Crisis can also be analysed using realism theory. Realism theory states that all states ultimately want national security above all else and that this is only guaranteed when the state remains powerful. As Mearsheimer (2014, p. 1-3) argues, the Ukraine Crisis can be seen as a direct result of the West's desire for NATO and EU eastward expansion. President Putin sees Ukraine's desire to join NATO and the EU as a direct threat to Russia because this would signify the eastward expansion of Western alliances directly into Russia's 'near abroad' (Mearsheimer, 2014, p.1-3). The developing relations between Ukraine and the West caused much insecurity for the Kremlin, and in order to protect its status, national interests and security, Russia took advantage of the political turmoil within Ukraine. This claim of severity of the warming relations between Ukraine and the West is supported by reports of Putin making the following statement: "*If Ukraine were to be admitted to NATO, that country [Ukraine] would simply cease to exist*" (Yakovlev-Golani, 2011, p. 391).

Furthermore, great powers have a tendency to apply a policy of military and economic expansion when the benefits outweigh the costs (Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 78-93; Tandilashvili, 2015, p. 7). In the case of Russian interference in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea the benefits outweigh the costs for Russia. The overall costs have been substantial in the form of heavy economic and political sanctions as well as the damage to the Kremlin's reputation. However, the advantage of keeping its strategic access to its naval base in Sevastopol, while at the same time preventing NATO from establishing a naval base here (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 1), and staying the dominant force in the region is bigger than the drawbacks.

The effects of the Ukraine Crisis, as explained above, have been vast and far reaching to the extent that its consequences have created a so-called ripple effect into other geopolitical arenas. One of the unlikely areas in which the tensions from the Ukraine Crisis have been visible is the Arctic. At the time when the political situation was most tense in 2014 Canada, who was then the chair of the Arctic Council, boycotted working-group level meetings of the organisation in what was called "*a principled stand against Russian actions in Ukraine*" (Quaile, 2014), making it increasingly difficult for the Council to manage cooperation between the Arctic States. Moreover, Russian officials were excluded from partaking in a scheduled meeting of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum in Nova Scotia.

President Putin reacted to the sanctions placed on Russia as a result of its actions in Ukraine by implementing more air patrols along the borders of the NATO states, which include members of the Arctic Council, because the sanctions were interpreted as being of a hostile nature (Myers, 2015). The Arctic Council is meant to be an intergovernmental organisation that does not get involved in military and security matters, but this proved to be increasingly difficult after the Ukraine Crisis (Myers, 2015).

Given Russia's geographic positioning and size, its presence in the Arctic Region is extensive and all Arctic States, including Russia, would benefit from collaboration (Østhagen, 2014).

Also, the Arctic states see it as their obligation to respond to Russian actions with regards to Ukraine, but many of them are dependent on Russian partnerships in the Arctic. For Russia these partnerships are also important since Russia has high economic stakes in the Arctic due to the natural resources present in the region (Clemensen, 2017, p. 2).

Further, when the Ukraine Crisis began in 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would increase its military presence in the Arctic. More military exercises were ordered and plans for a new naval base and military equipment were unveiled. This means that Russia might have the upper hand in a potential arms race (Leyden-Sussler, 2014).

The promise of increasing Russian military presence in the Arctic has been a constant in Russian policy-making since the measures were first announced. President Putin assured the Russian Federal Assembly in March 2018 that its scientific research as well as its military infrastructure will continue to be developed. He further stated that: *“Our Arctic fleet has been, remains and will be the strongest one in the world”* (RT, 2018). Putin further commented on the development of the Northern Sea Route, and stated that traffic through this route will be ten times higher in 2024 than it is currently (RT, 2018). Maintaining dominance in the Arctic is an important realist inspired policy objective for the Russian Federation under President Putin.

According to NATO’s Defence Economist, the sanctions the West imposed on Russia in 2014 *“have been a success in terms of the proximate goal of inflicting damage on the Russian economy”* (Christie, 2016). In offensive realism it is believed that nation states can never be completely sure that peaceful situations remain peaceful. The situation in Ukraine was interpreted by the West as a possible prelude to more severe security threats originating from Russian policy. Placing heavy sanctions influencing Russian international trade was a realist reaction to a threatening situation (Open University, 2014). However, as Mearsheimer (2014, p. 2;6) argues, a different interpretation of the events could be that there is simply a clash in political strategy. The Western strategy is focused on acting in a liberal manner; aiming for more economic interdependence, and spreading democracy and rule of law, while the Kremlin is acting in a more realist mind-set (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 2;6).

### **5.3 Russian Interests in the Arctic**

Despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the significant loss of territory that came with this, the Russian Federation is still one of the largest countries in the world. Not only is it one of the largest countries in the world, but it is also one of the most prominent Arctic states with 24,140 kilometres of coastline above the Arctic Circle. This coastline spans from Barents Sea in the West to the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk in the East. Moreover, out of its 143.5 million inhabitants, approximately two million live in the Arctic region (The Arctic Institute, 2018).

The Arctic region is estimated to contain 13% of global undiscovered oil resources and up to 30% of global undiscovered natural gas resources. Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in Arctic waters, as identified under UNCLOS, is expected to contain up to two thirds of Russian oil and gas resources. This large presence of natural resources in Russia's exclusive economic zone means that Russia's interest in the Arctic is largely motivated by economic incentives. However, as mentioned before, Russia is highly interested in regaining its former superpower status and building a strong economy would help pursue this goal, so its political interests in the Arctic are intertwined with its economic interests on a larger scale than to just protect its borders.

It is not uncommon for these numbers to be used to argue that future conflicts will occur in the Arctic because of it, but it is crucial to mention that only a small percentage of these resources lie in disputed territories. In fact, Russia is in control of over half of the natural resources found in the Arctic; a large majority amongst the littoral states (Devyatkin, 2018c).

Even though large parts of Russian territory lie in the Arctic region, the nation is actively seeking out cooperation partners to extract the natural resources of oil and gas. Developing mutually beneficial extraction collaborations is crucial for Russia because it is astronomically expensive and complicated to unilaterally pursue mining endeavours in the harsh Arctic region due to remoteness and climate concerns (The Devyatkin, 2018c).



The United States and Russia planned a partnership to develop gas and oil extraction fields in the Russian and American Arctic in 2012 through the large energy companies ExxonMobile and Rosneft. This proposed partnership was worth up to 500 billion American Dollars, and included access to the Russian Arctic for the American company with export tax exemptions.

However, the sanctions placed on Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis in 2013 prevented the deal to become official (Devyatkin, 2018c). As mentioned above, the sanctions put in place on Russia were designed to weaken the Russian economy, but this example shows that the US economy was also negatively affected by the measures taken. When the new US government was put into place in 2017, speculations arose that the US administration would either reduce sanctions or reintroduce the energy deal that was almost made in 2012. This proved to be unrealistic when ExxonMobil was not granted permission to drill in the Russian Arctic Sea (Devyatkin, 2018c). What this shows is that despite its strong realist influences in policy-making, Russia was open to cooperate with the West in matters relating to the Arctic.

This Russian openness to foreign investments is further exemplified through the successful collaborations reached in 2016 and 2017 between the British Petroleum (BP) company and the Russian Rosneft to extract gas and oil from Western Siberia and in the Yamal-Nenets region (The Arctic Institute, 2018d). Since Russia depends on foreign cooperation in its mission to access the resources in the Arctic, it was forced to also look eastward for investments after the 2014 sanctions. As such, Russian companies moved to sign agreements with the China Development Bank and the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation after Western companies were forced to pull out of potential deals after the events in Crimea (Devyatkin, 2018c).

Besides obvious economic reasons, one realist interpretation of Russia's determination to push forward extraction developments in the Arctic is because one of Russia's main policy objectives is to regain its former status as a *superpower* and therefore gain prestige (Alexandrov, 2009, p. 110-118; Lasserre et al., 2012; Devyatkin, 2018a). Another interpretation can also be attributed to this phenomenon using the constructivist Social Identity Theory.

Russia is involved in a social competition with the current hegemon of the international system; the US. The Kremlin's activities in the Arctic regarding its economic endeavours as well as its military actions indicate intentions to rivalling or surpassing the hegemon in the system (Mercer, 1995, p. 229-232).

Furthermore, in official Russian documents, such as the 'Basics of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic Region', declare that the main policy objective in the region is closely linked to attaining the highest level of defence and security (Devyatkin, 2018b). 'The State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period Until 2020 and Beyond', published in 2008, is another important document guiding the Kremlin's Arctic strategy. This document prioritises the continuity of the Arctic being a zone of peaceful cooperation, but an emphasis is also placed on achieving this through a "*persistent build-up and modernisation of military capabilities*" (Devyatkin, 2018b).

In 2013, shortly before the Ukraine Crisis unfolded, President Putin approved the 'Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic and the Provision of National Security for the Period Until 2020'. This contains, simply put, an expansion of the 2008 strategy. However, it does include more detailed descriptions of how security in the Arctic is to be achieved. Priority is put on protecting Russian territory, its population and critical facilities. In order to achieve this, the naval, air force and army presence in the Arctic must be advanced and modernised by improving the air service and airport network and by building a modern information and telecommunication infrastructure (Devyatkin, 2018b).

Also, Russia's foreign policy is more firmly secured in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation from 2016. This piece of legislation is most decisive in Russia's foreign Arctic policy, and it states that a main objective of Russian foreign policy in the region is to "*consolidate the Russian Federation's position as a centre of influence*" (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. 2016).

Lastly, Since Russia's Arctic coastline spans over 24,140 kilometres (The Arctic Institute, 2018); this is Russia's largest external border. The impenetrable region previously needed little military supervision since the end of the Cold War.

However, with the ice melting due to climate change, the situation is changing considerably. Russia's militarisation process in the Arctic can therefore be explained using realism theory. Since the international system is anarchic in nature, Russia cannot be sure that the peaceful situation will continue to exist.

Many of the Arctic states are members of either NATO or the EU, or in Denmark's case of both, and the Ukraine Crisis showcased to what extent Russia sees these Western institutions as a threat to its sovereignty. The following statement by President Putin indicates this: "*If Ukraine were to be admitted to NATO, that country [Ukraine] would simply cease to exist*" (Yakovlev-Golani, 2011, p. 391). Having this in mind, it becomes apparent that Russia is willing to take military measures to protect its interests when the West 'trespasses' into its territory or sphere of influence and becomes a perceived threat. Therefore, the melting ice and the geopolitical tensions make it unsurprising that Russia is building up its military presence in the Arctic.

## 6. Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to explain and critically analyse Russian foreign policy making in the Arctic with regards to the so-called Ukraine Crisis of 2013 and Russia's militarisation process in the region. The research questions that guided the research process are as follows: *How can Russia's foreign policy in the Arctic region since the Ukraine Crisis started in 2013 be explained with regards to its militarisation process?*

1. What influence do political issues such as the Ukraine Crisis have on Russian policy-making in the Arctic?
2. What are Russia's motives regarding its foreign policy-making?

First, an overall analytical overview of Russian foreign policy-making was provided in order to place the topic in an appropriate contextual and historical setting. From this it became clear that President Putin prioritises the Arctic as a region of potential development and extraction of natural resources made possible through international cooperation. However, subchapter 5.1 places Russian foreign policy-making in a historical setting starting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union of 1991, as Russian politics are heavily influenced by its constructivist views of past events and perceived status.

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has lost its status as a superpower and is instead deemed a great power. Russia is negatively affected by its lack of international recognition, since this affects its political decision-making processes and international behaviour. As fits well into an aspect of constructivism theory: *Social Identity Theory*, Russian foreign policy is largely focused on regaining its status as a superpower through showcasing military might or political intervention in order to equal or surpass its political rivals. Actions that exemplify such ambitions are the planting of the Russian flag on the Arctic seabed and Russian intervention in Crimea.

Moreover, Russian foreign policy making can be divided into four schools of thought that have affected Russian politics since 1991: Pro-Western Idealists, Pro-Western Pragmatists, Anti-Western Pragmatists and Anti-Western Ideologues.

Current president of the Russian Federation: Vladimir Putin and his administration fall under the category of ‘Anti-Western Pragmatists’, and it is this category that has been most influential in recent years.

Main beliefs of this group include, but are not limited to, advocating for fewer alliances between Russia and the West, because it is believed that Russia does not necessarily benefit from this. This approach is anchored in multiple key government documents, such as Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation, that heavily criticise eastward NATO and EU expansion plans. President Putin has further made statements regarding Russian interests in the Arctic indicating that Russia will not hesitate to defend its Arctic territories with military force when necessary, indicating that he sees the region through a military-security framework.

Another important aspect of Russian foreign policy is its protection of its ‘*near abroad*’, which is what ultimately greatly influenced the events in Ukraine in 2013. As Ukrainian President Yanukovich halted the negotiations for the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013, the Ukraine Crisis started. Pro-Russian President Yanukovich was ousted after months of violent protests and was replaced with a government with strong pro-Western tendencies. Russia saw the events unfolding in Ukraine as a Western plot to change Ukraine’s political alliances from leaning towards Russian influence to becoming pro-Western and limit Russian influence over its former Soviet satellite state. Russia then took advantage of the political chaos ensuing in Ukraine and invaded and later annexed Crimea.

Heavy sanctions were placed on Russia, targeted at weakening its economy, and Canada boycotted working group meetings of the Arctic Council. Therefore, the Ukraine Crisis significantly impacted Russian politics in geopolitical areas other than Ukraine. President Putin responded by ordering increased air patrols along the Northern borders of the Arctic NATO states, which includes members of the Arctic Council. Moreover, the Kremlin announced an increased military presence in the Arctic, when the Ukraine Crisis began in 2013, through an increased number of military exercises and new naval bases as well as opening former Soviet naval bases.

Russia's size and geographic positioning mean that it is the largest Arctic state, and therefore it is also the nation that has most to gain from the Arctic. 13% of the world's undiscovered oil resources and up to 30% of the undiscovered natural gas resources are expected to be located in the Arctic. Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is thought to contain approximately two thirds of this. This large presence of natural resources in Russia's EEZ is the foundation of Russia's economic interest in the Arctic region, and its economic interest in the region is intertwined with its political interest in the region since economic gains can lead to political gains in terms of more influence in the international system.

Despite an increased distrust between Russia and the West, Russian military presence in the Arctic, and sanctions placed on the Russian state by Western institutions, such as the EU and NATO, the Russian Federation is actively seeking out international partnerships to extract the natural resources present in the region. This is due to the cost and difficulty of unilaterally mining these resources in the harsh Arctic climate.

The aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis and the sanctions placed on Russia meant that Western companies, such as ExxonMobile, were forced to back out of a deal with Russian energy giant Rosneft worth up to 500 billion American Dollars. Therefore, Russia has increasingly looked to China for foreign investment opportunities.

As mentioned before, Russian foreign policy-making is heavily influenced by the desire to regain its former status of a superpower. A realist interpretation of Russia's determination to access the resources in the Arctic is the monetary worth of the region's gas and oil supplies. Extracting the resources would greatly increase Russia's economy and as such its own perceived prestige in the international system.

This desire to regain a superpower status in part also explains Russia's increased military presence in the region. As the West's interference in Ukraine in 2013 was constructed as a direct threat to Russia's influence over its 'near abroad' space, it reinforced its Northern borders because the country cannot be sure that the current peaceful situation will remain peaceful. Russia's reinforced northern borders through an increased military presence provide more security from further perceived threats by the West through for example NATO, while at the same time safeguarding its natural resources in the region.

Finally, despite the arguments that can be made for the Arctic potentially being a one of future conflict due to the militarisation process Russia has committed to, the author of this thesis believes it is unlikely for the situation to escalate and lead to a conflict using military power. This is because all states with a stake in the Arctic are benefitted by an on-going peaceful situation due, in part, to the presence of resources in the region. Also, the sanctions placed on Russia as a result of the situation in Ukraine are unlikely to last for an unlimited time, and the tensions will most likely decrease once the sanctions are withdrawn.

## References

- Alexandrov, O. (2009). *Labyrinths of Arctic Policy*. *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7 (3): 110-118.
- Allison, R. (2014). Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules, *International Affairs*, 90: 6, Retrieved on 17.12.2017 from: [http://commonweb.unifr.ch/artsdean/pub/gestens/f/as/files/4760/39349\\_202339.pdf](http://commonweb.unifr.ch/artsdean/pub/gestens/f/as/files/4760/39349_202339.pdf).
- Arctic Council. (2017). *Agreements*. Retrieved from: <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work/agreements>. Accessed on 22 April 2018.
- Arctic Council (2018). The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder. Retrieved from: <https://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us>. Accessed on: 8 April 2018
- Barnett, M. (2015). Social Constructivism. *The Globalization of World Politics. An introduction to international relations*. third editions. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BBC News. (2014a). *Ukraine's sharp divisions*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26387353>. Accessed on 12 May 2018
- BBC News. (2014b). *How far do EU-US sanctions on Russia go?*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28400218>. Accessed on: 5 May 2018
- BBC News. (2014c). *Ukraine Crisis: Timeline*. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>. Accessed on: 4 May 2018
- Bender, J. (2016). *This graphic shows how tiny the Russian Navy is compared to the former Soviet Fleet*. Business Insider. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessinsider.com/size-of-russian-navy-compared-to-soviet-fleet-2016-3?r=US&IR=T&IR=T>. Accessed on 11 May 2018
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Buzan, B. (2003). The Post-Soviet Space: a regional security complex around Russia. *Regions and Powers: The structure of international security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CBC News. (2017). *Arctic rocks could prove Canada has greater claim over resources in the North*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/arctic-rocks-canada-north-resources-1.4440796>. Accessed on: 11 May 2018
- Dragneva-Lewers, R., & Wolczuk, K. (2015). *Ukraine between the EU and Russia*. Houndmills [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Europa.eu. (2018). *EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis*. European Union Newsroom. Retrieved from: [https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis\\_en](https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis_en). Accessed on: 5 May 2018



- Devyatkin, P. (2018a). *Russia's Arctic Strategy: Aimed at Conflict or Cooperation? (Part I)*. The Arctic Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/russias-arctic-strategy-aimed-conflict-cooperation-part-one/>. Accessed on: 5 May 2018
- Devyatkin, P. (2018b). *Russia's Arctic Strategy: Military and Security (Part II)*. The Arctic Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/russias-arctic-military-and-security-part-two/>. Accessed on: 5 May 2018
- Devyatkin, P. (2018c). *Russia's Arctic Strategy: Energy Extraction (Part III)*. The Arctic Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/russias-arctic-strategy-energy-extraction-part-three/>. Accessed on: 5 May 2018
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. (2000). Retrieved from: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>. Accessed on: 3 May 2018
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. (2008). Retrieved from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>. Accessed on: 3 May 2018
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. (2012). Retrieved from: [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186). Accessed on: 3 May 2018
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. (2016). Retrieved from: [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248). Accessed on: 3 May 2018
- Gramer, R. (2017). *Here's What Russia's Military Build-Up in the Arctic Looks Like*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/25/heres-what-russias-military-build-up-in-the-arctic-looks-like-trump-oil-military-high-north-infographic-map/>. Accessed on: 12 May 2018
- Heller, R., (2010). *Subjectivity matters. Reconsidering Russia's Relations with the West*. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg.
- Hermann, V., Raspotnik, A. (2016). *A Quick Start Guide to the Arctic and UNCLOS*. The Arctic Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/quick-start-guide-arctic-unclos/> Accessed on: 9 April 2018
- Hudson, V.M.; Vore, C.S. (1995). *Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. Mershon International Studies Review. 39, 209-238. Retrieved from: [https://watermark.silverchair.com/39-Supplement\\_2-209.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kKhW\\_Ercy7Dm3ZL\\_9Cf3qfKAc485ysgAAAb4wggG6BgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggGrMIIBpwIBADCCAaAGCSqGSib3DQEHATAeBgIghkGBZQMEEAS4wEQQMCTvaC6SBMLqg0GRRAgEQgIIBcbNERMa\\_-gp8LG3z0RA-ohJ7plDJ2XwclDR3I4RPu0VjwIPA0vefCzNimDYmrcxOG8pjbGcwmM5n\\_vF6Z-uEOOQhkywGPZv8nZbW0DM1Uhrh4P-eb-G1PR-g2zpLaZJD-P2RmTeh0XBZiHoE9UOMrkYgIGFV1MAZtfSHKzG9UkEhGqqwUpip6B9GWpzP3Xyo0wJLWWp94zSIRSlhVr0ePkuMVUDg-](https://watermark.silverchair.com/39-Supplement_2-209.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kKhW_Ercy7Dm3ZL_9Cf3qfKAc485ysgAAAb4wggG6BgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggGrMIIBpwIBADCCAaAGCSqGSib3DQEHATAeBgIghkGBZQMEEAS4wEQQMCTvaC6SBMLqg0GRRAgEQgIIBcbNERMa_-gp8LG3z0RA-ohJ7plDJ2XwclDR3I4RPu0VjwIPA0vefCzNimDYmrcxOG8pjbGcwmM5n_vF6Z-uEOOQhkywGPZv8nZbW0DM1Uhrh4P-eb-G1PR-g2zpLaZJD-P2RmTeh0XBZiHoE9UOMrkYgIGFV1MAZtfSHKzG9UkEhGqqwUpip6B9GWpzP3Xyo0wJLWWp94zSIRSlhVr0ePkuMVUDg-)

[3w5FMnbf7d9MY29EGr0qH7vDOmuO2j9d9KIQEV\\_V5o9xXus3Qigs69luoUMKJ  
XlppGSN\\_oiJ0XWIOg64\\_nXR2FVDtRHu7GroKOF1V4v6RFXMReYxnNp-  
zN3hIKC\\_Vjk1WGRDSG32HR1FgW2cR2ePF03WSvp1OR2ngd5zr1h6\\_Jx2cO3BIS  
fLnhy68f3gXXvVNdb3UdTbR5U\\_fh3mmI47LU-FLF2EhN9mP-  
oCPIkmxiSKSyUOo3ZduylQFcXcHcvPhzUqm7CkwrGFfPeZA](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315555555) Accessed on: 31  
March 2018

Jensen, L.C.; Skedsmo, P.W. (2010). *Approaching the North: Norwegian and Russian foreign policy discourses on the European Arctic*. *Polar Research* 29:3, 439-450.  
DOI: 10.3402/polar.v29i3.6073

Keil, K. (2014). *The Arctic: A new region of conflict? The case of oil and gas. Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 49 (2) 162-190

King, H.M. (unknown). *Who owns the Arctic?*. Retrieved from:  
<https://geology.com/articles/who-owns-the-arctic.shtml>. Accessed on: 18 March 2018

Lamont, C. (2015). *Research Methods in International Relations*. London: Sage Publications

Lasserre, F., Le Roy J., Garon, R. (2012). *Is There an Arms Race in the Arctic?*, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 14 (3&4).

Leyden-Sussler, L. (2014). *Canada's Arctic Council Protest: Ripple Effect?* *World Policy*. Retrieved from: <https://worldpolicy.org/2014/05/07/canadas-arctic-council-protest-ripple-effect/>. Accessed on: 4 May 2018

Lo, B (2002). *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era. Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*. Palgrave Macmillan.

McFaul, M. (1999). *What Are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from:  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/1999/05/01/what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-424>. Accessed on: 26 April 2018

Mearsheimer, J. (2013). Structural Realism. ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mearsheimer, J. (2014). *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from:  
<http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/Ukraine%20Article%20in%20Foreign%20Affairs.pdf>. Accessed on: 1 May 2018

Myers, S.L. (2015). *Arctic Council Meeting Starts Amid Russia Tensions*. *New York Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/25/us/politics/arctic-council-meeting-russia.html>. Accessed on: 4 May 2018

Open University (ouLearn). (2014, October 4). *Structural Realism – International Relations (1/7)* (Video File). Retrieved from:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXIIDh6rD18> Accessed on 23 April 2017

- Osborn, A. (2017). *Putin's Russia in biggest Arctic military push since Soviet fall*. Reuters. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight/putins-russia-in-biggest-arctic-military-push-since-soviet-fall-idUSKBN15E0W0>. Accessed on: 15 March 2018
- OSCE (2014). Early Presidential Election 25 May 2014 OSCE/ODIHR Election, *Observation Mission Final Report*. Retrieved from: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/120549?download=true>. Accessed on 3 May 2018
- McFaul, M. (1999). *What Are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from: <https://carnegieendowment.org/1999/05/01/what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-424>. Accessed on: 1 May 2018
- McGee, R. (2018). *Russia's Arctic Development: Problems and Priorities*. Retrieved from: <http://geohistory.today/russia-arctic-development-power/>. Accessed on: 19 March 2018
- Mercer, J. (1995). Anarchy and Identity. *International Organization* Vol. 49, No. 2. Retrieved on 08.12.2017 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2706971.pdf>
- Negrouk, K.V. (2015). *Opportunity in the Arctic: Defrosting Russia and America's Chilly Relationship*. The National Interest. Retrieved from: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/opportunity-the-arctic-defrosting-russia-americas-chilly-12017>. Accessed on: 19 April 2018
- Omelicheva, M.Y. (2016). *Critical geopolitics on Russian foreign policy: Uncovering the imagery of Moscow's international relations*. *International Politics*. Vol. 53 (6) 708-726.
- Østerud, Ø., Hønneland, G. (2013). *Geopolitics and International Governance in the Arctic*. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*. Vol. 5, 2/2014: 156-176
- Østhagen, A. (2014). *Ukraine Crisis and the Arctic: Penalties or Reconciliation?*. The Arctic Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/impact-ukraine-crisis-arctic/>. Accessed on 4 May 2018
- Parfitt, T. (2007). *Russia plants flag on North Pole Seabed*. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/aug/02/russia.arctic>. Accessed on: 11 May 2018
- Putin, V.V. (2005). *Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation* <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>
- Putin, V.V. (2017). *The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue international forum. President of Russia*. Retrieved from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54149>. Accessed on: 10 May 2018

- Quaile, I. (2014). *Ukraine crisis reaches into the Arctic*. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from: <http://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-crisis-reaches-into-the-arctic/a-17640376>. Accessed on: 4 May 2018
- Rahbek-Clemensen, J. (2016). *The Ukraine Crisis Moves North. Is Arctic conflict spill-over driven by material interests?* Polar Record 53 (268): 1-15
- Rotnem, T.E. (2018). *Putin's Arctic Strategy. Collaboration or Conflict after Ukraine?* Problems of Post-Communism. Vol. 65 (1). 1-17
- RT. (2018). *Putin: Russia's Arctic Fleet is strongest in the world & will continue to be*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rt.com/news/420158-putin-arctic-fleet-strongest/>. Accessed on: 4 May 2018
- Rynning, S., Guzzini, S. (2001). *Realism and Foreign Policy Analysis*. COPRI Working Papers: Copenhagen University
- Sergunin, A. (2007). *International Relations in Post-Soviet Russia: Trends and Problems*. Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University Press.
- Simão, L. (2016). The Ukrainian Conflict in Russian Foreign Policy: Rethinking the Interconnections Between Domestic and Foreign Policy Strategies. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. 27:3, 491:511. DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2016.1175141
- Staun, J. (2015). *Russia's Strategy in the Arctic*. The Royal Danish Defence College. Retrieved from: [https://pure.fak.dk/ws/files/7120599/Russias\\_Strategy\\_in\\_the\\_Arctic.pdf](https://pure.fak.dk/ws/files/7120599/Russias_Strategy_in_the_Arctic.pdf). Accessed on: 10 May 2018
- Tandilashvili, D. (2015). *Classical Realist and Norm-Based Constructivist Analysis of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Annexation of Crimea*. Volume XLIX fall 2015 number 1 Retrieved from: <https://wp.towson.edu/iajournal/files/2016/06/SPRING16FALL15ISSUEpt2-1jhiif4.pdf>. Accessed on: 3 May 2018
- The Arctic Institute. (2018a). Russia. Retrieved from: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/countries/russia/>. Accessed on 5 May 2018
- Thomsen, T. L. (2012). *Irregular Migration: Mismatch between Conceptualizations and Lived Experiences*. *Qualitative Studies*, 3(2), 97-114
- Wagner, R. H. (2007). *War and the State: The Theory of International Politics*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press
- Ward, A. (2015). *Is Russia Destined to Dominate the Arctic?* The National Interest. Retrieved from: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/russia-destined-dominate-the-arctic-12716>. Accessed on: 17 April 2018
- Wendt, A. (1995). Constructing International Politics. *International Security* Vol. 20, No. 1. Retrieved on 04.12.2017 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539217>

Wohlforth, W. C. (2012). *Realism and Foreign Policy*. in Smith, S., Hadfield, A. & Dunne, T. (2nd Edition), *Foreign Policy Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 35-44

Wolczuk, R., & British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies Staff (2002). *Ukraine's Foreign and Security Policy 1991-2000*, London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Yakovlev-Golani, H. (2011). Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation in the Slavic Triangle. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*. 53:2-4.