

MASTER THESIS DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Arctic specialization

*Why do the US and EU Arctic policies converge? An
Arctic perspective on the liberal world order.*

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Aalborg University, 2023

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INTRODUCTION

A thesis like any other study regarding the Arctic, when looked at from a current international perspective, cannot ignore the Ukrainian issue. Especially when dealing with the Arctic, this situation raises multiple questions; first and perhaps foremost among these questions is that of the ending of the so-called Arctic Exceptionalism. However, this thesis does not intend to give an answer to such a query which has in this short period already been dwelt on repeatedly over this past couple of years, whereas there is still less recent IR literature to be found about the actual outcomes, awaiting patiently before making attempts to predict the future from a theoretical standpoint. This thesis tries to bring together from a more pragmatic approach the actual political measures issued by two of the most relevant parties in international politics, namely the US and the EU, precisely in the current world context. The policies respond to the present situation and are valuable statements for academia to use for its own endeavors. Here the aim is to understand these documents in light of particular IR theories which might provide innovative and unexpected conclusions to the foreseeable future. Analyzing where the US and EU stand and what they stand for, where, when and why they might converge or split ways instead.

For many years now the term Arctic Exceptionalism has been used to refer to the Arctic as a peaceful region with pragmatic-cooperative relations among actors. However, as Padrtova warns, with the increasing geopolitical importance of the region, interactions among actors are on the rise and thus the current status quo might be threatened. The character of mutual relations among the Arctic states is to some extent related to their individual foreign policy traditions and orientations. Mutually friendly relations among Arctic states (conditioned historically and culturally) can be observed, as well as antagonisms and unresolved disputes in the Arctic Ocean.¹

The exceptionally peaceful character of the region can be attributed mainly to special interests in cooperation, which now is once again under threat but had already been previously in 2014 as a forerunner situation. The securitization of the Arctic due to present circumstances seems to have begun in view of the current security dynamics of the circumpolar countries in such a way that “Arctic exceptionalism will not be able to muster quite the same strength as it had before great power tensions between the US, Russia and China broke out.”² This exceptionalism with the Arctic Council in its center, was supported by a lasting American hegemony which allowed this situation to arise but that due to current events will either be close to an end or it might surprisingly persevere against the major upheavals.

The end of the Cold War signaled a major shift in systemic arrangement, as the system went from being bipolar to the world entering what was often referred to as the “unipolar moment.” The era of unipolarity and American hegemony in the international system has been marked by stability in an interstate sense³. However, the status of the United States as systemic hegemon has been in decline due to economic, military and political strains placed on American power

¹ Padrtova, Barbora. "Applying conventional theoretical approaches to the Arctic." *The Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security* London: Routledge (2020).

² Olesen, Mikkel Runge. "The end of Arctic exceptionalism? A review of the academic debates and what the Arctic prospects mean for the Kingdom of Denmark." *Danish Foreign Policy Review* (2020)

capabilities. This decrease in relative power preponderance has been even further exacerbated by an economic recession and the nation's inability to stabilize its markets. Thus, the United States is no longer able to prevent other nations from balancing their power, and so a multipolar systemic arrangement is increasingly likely. Many believe that the effects this shift might have on state foreign and defense strategy-making, especially towards the Arctic region is very likely to increase security competition in the system as a whole, and the Arctic will be at the epicenter of such conflict due to the anarchic structure of the international system and it will be left to states to secure their own territorial assertions through hard power and forceful means.³

However, in May 2008, the five states adjacent to the Arctic Ocean, the so-called Arctic Five, signed the Ilulissat Declaration, in which they declared their shared intention to cooperate and settle the allocation of sovereign rights in the Arctic Ocean on the basis of international law and scientifically valid geodata. The declaration was a reaction to a growing concern among scholars and politicians about the potential for conflict and an increasing militarization of the Arctic region. The summit was a turning point where the five Arctic states with Arctic coastlines, including the US and Russia, managed to reach an understanding with each other to solve their Arctic disputes using international law including UNCLOS (even if the US never has ratified the Convention). Furthermore, some of the thorniest issues among the Arctic states.

But then in 2014 the Ukraine Crisis happened, turning Russian-Western relations upside down almost overnight. Since 2014, we have seen substantial Western, Ukraine-related sanctions being imposed on the Russian Arctic, as well as the scaling down of military cooperation between Russia and the West in the region. Russia itself put a greater priority on the region and increasingly used the Arctic as the setting for grand publicity stunts, including relatively large-scale snap military exercises, while NATO had been conducting naval exercises as far north as Iceland.⁴ In May 2019 comments from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo concerning not just Russian, but also Chinese, intentions and behavior in the Arctic, combined with the failed attempt by Donald Trump to buy Greenland in August 2019, signal both increased US strategic interests in the region and an inclination to pursue them. The Pentagon's Arctic Strategy of June 2019 further cements this point by warning about the Arctic being used as a 'potential vector both for attacks on the homeland and for US power projection'.⁵

Professor Rob Huebert while acknowledging the conciliatory dialogue between the Arctic countries questions their sincerity as there being mismatch between state rhetoric and investment in Arctic military capabilities. Regarding Russia, he points out that a Russian military recovery as a consequence of its economic recovery was to be expected, and that much of Russia's capabilities for strategic deterrence happen to be located in the Arctic despite not attributing this to Russian scheming since all Arctic states stand to lose from a confrontation,⁶ stressing the dangers of spillover following the Ukraine crisis because of its likeliness to have very negative implications

³ Murray, Robert W. "Arctic politics in the emerging multipolar system: challenges and consequences." *The Polar Journal* 2.1 (2012)

⁴ Olesen, Mikkel Runge. "The end of Arctic exceptionalism? A review of the academic debates and what the Arctic prospects mean for the Kingdom of Denmark." *Danish Foreign Policy Review* (2020)

⁵ *ibidem*

⁶ Huebert, Robert N. "The newly emerging Arctic security environment." (2010).

for cooperation, even if Russia chose not to respond in the Arctic due to their special interest in a stable Arctic. Some even suggested that ‘Arctic exceptionalism’ was merely the consequence of temporary Russian weakness. Many believe that the Ukraine crisis has damaged Arctic cooperation in several ways, creating distrust of Russian intentions, harming established practices of cooperation and undermining regional organizations committed to Arctic stability.

Adding to that, the role of the Arctic in Russian foreign policy cannot be understated. According to Russia’s 2008 Arctic policy document, the region back then was already seen as the epicenter of Russia’s military and socio-economic development. In response to Russian offensive posturing and the inability of the United States to dissuade security competition in the area, middle and minor powers also began to use hard power as a means of trying to enforce their sovereignty. Norway, Sweden and Denmark started to put an emphasis on hard power capabilities to extend and defend northern claims as well as Canada. They rapidly and dramatically increased in (Arctic) defense spending with immediate budget boosts. Not only were there Western sanctions on Russian oil and gas but Western research institutions had also even boycotted Arctic research collaboration at a certain point. The international community soon realized that the Arctic – like every other region – has a long and complex history.⁷

Interestingly enough, when talking about Arctic players given that the majority of security relations in the Arctic region relate primarily to the area of the Arctic Ocean (demarcation of the continental shelf, maritime limitations, exploration and exploitation of natural resources, and usage of new shipping routes), the United States might in some respect even be considered a weaker player. One of the reasons for this might be the non-ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), which precludes the country from formally raising any claim regarding the continental shelf, unlike other Arctic states. This limitation puts the United States in a weaker bargaining position in the debate about the future of the Arctic. Although the United States and Russia are two nuclear powers, they both play the role of regional powers. Neither of them dominates Arctic regional security relations so it is a multipolar complex region.⁸

A notably distinct perspective of this same period is the one presented by Michael Byers, offering insights into the impact of the Ukraine crisis [however referring to 2014] on international cooperation in the twenty-first century. For the purpose of his analysis, he adopts Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘complex interdependence’.⁹

He sustains that during an international crisis, a pre-existing state of complex interdependence can help to preserve cooperation. A concept which provides the analytical breadth necessary for a multifactorial situation of regional cooperation and conflict. It finds that Arctic international relations had achieved a state of complex interdependence by 2014, and that some important elements of interdependence then disappear. But while most military and economic

⁷ Shadian, Jessica M. *The politics of Arctic sovereignty: oil, ice, and Inuit governance*. Routledge, 2014.

⁸ Padrtova, Barbora. "Applying conventional theoretical approaches to the Arctic." *The Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security London: Routledge* (2020).

⁹Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press.

cooperation between Russia and Western states was suspended, many aspects of regional cooperation continued, including on search and rescue, fisheries, continental shelves, navigation and in the Arctic Council. The question is, why has Arctic cooperation continued in some issue areas while breaking down in others.¹⁰

In some issue areas, continued cooperation can be explained simply on the basis of state interests. However in others the situation may be more complicated. What is argued here is if during an international crisis, a pre-existing state of complex interdependence can help preserve cooperation, drawing on Keohane and Nye's discussion of the 'political processes of complex interdependence'¹¹.

As they explained, the characteristics of complex interdependence 'give rise to distinctive political processes, which translate power resources into power as control over outcomes'. These political processes should be particularly relevant during crises, when control over outcomes becomes more important to states.¹²

Complex interdependence, as a concept exhibits three fundamental characteristics. Firstly, it emphasizes the absence of stable hierarchies in state policies. Secondly, it underscores the existence of multiple channels through which societies engage with one another. Thirdly, it diminishes the role of military force, accentuating the significance of non-military means thereby shaping the dynamics of international relations.

Therefore, military security no longer dominates the political agenda, states no longer monopolize contacts between societies and governments use military force less often.

The characteristics of complex interdependence provide less-powerful states with opportunities to influence more-powerful ones.¹³

Keohane and Nye explained, 'in many contemporary situations, the use of force is so costly, and its threat so difficult to make credible, that a military strategy is an act of desperation'.¹⁴

Moreover, the multiplicity of issues, actors, channels of contact and associated interdependencies ensures that a change in one dimension of a state-to-state relationship does not necessarily lead to changes in other dimensions. For example, a disruption of cooperation in the

¹⁰ Byers, Michael "Crises and international cooperation: an Arctic case study." *Concept Complex Interdependence - Keohane*, International Relations 2017, Vol. 31, University of British Columbia.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press.

¹³ Byers, Michael "Crises and international cooperation: an Arctic case study." *Concept Complex Interdependence - Keohane*, International Relations 2017, Vol. 31, University of British Columbia.

¹⁴ Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press.

military sphere will not necessarily disrupt cooperation in the environmental or economic spheres.¹⁵

Some time ago, Njord Wegge suggested that complex interdependence could be used for analysing Arctic international relations.

The Council has exhibited all the characteristics of complex interdependence, including an absence of issue-hierarchy. According to its founding document it 'should not deal with matters related to military security', and has instead focused on environmental protection and sustainable development.¹⁶

Regarding energy relations between Russia and the EU, for instance, these involve a matrix of transnational channels of contact, including multiple departments and agencies in dozens of national governments as well as hundreds of companies. Transnational channels of contact between state and corporate interests can also be seen in the Northern Sea Route, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans via Russia's northern coast.¹⁷

Another example of trans-governmentalism and transnationalism concerns the indigenous groups who have been accorded the status of 'permanent participants' in the Arctic Council. The growing acknowledgement and concern for the indigenous groups is also apparent in the US National Strategy for the Arctic Region and the European Joint Communication.

The Arctic now seems to be located partway along the spectrum between the complex interdependence and realist ideal types.¹⁸ Issue areas are often separated from each other in situations of complex interdependence. This makes it more difficult for states to engage in linkage strategies when a crisis erupts – strategies that might otherwise cause the crisis to spread. The separation of issue areas also creates space for the continued operation of agenda setting, which in situations of complex interdependence is determined *not by threats to security*, but by collective action problems, international institutions, trans-governmental and transnational channels of contact, and domestic politics. Finally, international institutions can play significant roles during complex interdependence, both as agenda setters and as venues for coalition formation – sometimes as a result of rules or processes that provide access and influence to less-powerful states or non-state actors. International institutions, consequently, may act as stabilizing features during a crisis.¹⁹

However, States will sometimes deliberately avoid linkage, as the Arctic states did by specifying that the Arctic Council 'should not deal with matters related to military security'.²⁰

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Byers, Michael "Crises and international cooperation: an Arctic case study." *Concept Complex Interdependence* - Keohane, International Relations 2017, Vol. 31, University of British Columbia.

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

The fact that across the world a new nationalist mindset has emerged that views international institutions and globalization as threats to national sovereignty and identity rather than opportunities to achieve security and prosperity remains as vital today as at any time in the modern age. In the long course of history, liberal democracy has hit hard times before, only to rebound and gain ground. It has done so thanks to the appeal of its basic values and its unique capacities to effectively grapple with the problems of modernity and globalization.²¹

The grand project of liberal internationalism in the modern era has been to build a world order that is open, loosely rules-based, and oriented toward progressive ideas. Creating an international "space" for liberal democracy, preserving rights and protections within and between countries, and balancing conflicting values such as liberty and equality, openness and social solidarity, and sovereignty and interdependence. These are the guiding aims that have propelled liberal internationalism through the upheavals of the past two centuries. Today this project is in crisis, threatened from the outside by illiberal challengers and from the inside by nationalist-populist movements. However, I aim to defend with John G. Ikenberry, that in a twenty-first century marked by rising economic and security interdependence, liberal internationalism, reformed and reimagined, remains the most viable project to protect liberal democracy,²² also in the case at hand concerning the Arctic.

The recent rise of illiberal forces and leaders is certainly worrisome. Yet it is too soon to write the obituary of liberalism as a theory of international relations, liberal democracy as a system of government, or the liberal order as the overarching framework for global politics. The liberal vision of nation-states cooperating.

The Biden-Harris administration released a *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* on October 7th, 2022, superseding the 2013 edition, that focuses on four pillars for the next decade: security, the environment, sustainable economic development, and international governance.²³

In response to the new strategy, Malte Humpert, the Arctic Institute's Founder and Senior Fellow, stated that "The new U.S. national strategy for the Arctic suggests that rising geopolitical tension resulting from the war in Ukraine will spell an end to Arctic exceptionalism. The region is likely to see less international cooperation and expanded military activity, by Russia, China, the US and its NATO allies, in the coming years."

The updated US National Strategy for the Arctic Region provides a purposeful and insightful roadmap to both advance and communicate the nation's interests in the region. It also

²¹ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

²² Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

²³ The Arctic Institute "The Arctic Institute Reacts to the new U.S. National Strategy for the Arctic" [Press Release](#) October 17, [United States](#), 2022

offers a practical and aspirational vision for the country's role in creating, with like-minded nations and partners, a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Arctic – for both Arctic and non-Arctic nations.”²⁴

This important new policy marks a strong and clarifying shift in the US's focus in the Arctic over recent years. The new strategy addresses major challenges that the Arctic has been increasingly facing since the US Arctic strategy of 2013. It provides for greater involvement of the Alaska Native Peoples, more international cooperation with US allies and partners, and it must be seen in the context of the current turbulent geopolitical context.

Under the Trump Administration, US reputation as an Arctic State reached exceptionally low levels. As expressed at the time by Dr. Victoria Hermann: “With no strong fleet of icebreakers, no Arctic Ambassador, and no climate change policy, America is arguably the weakest circumpolar nation”²⁵

In January 2021, the US Army Arctic Strategy was launched, entitled: “Regaining dominance in the Arctic”, and it aimed to increase the US Army's ability to operate in extreme cold weather. The Department of Defense's Arctic Strategy was launched, focusing on national security, protecting the US interests in the North and projecting military strength, while acknowledging the implications of climate change.²⁶

Then, in October 2022, in line with President Bidens's policy priorities, a long expected new US Arctic Strategy was launched, based on the President's wish to have science-based driven policies. It does not deny the realities of climate change – on the contrary. It promotes clean energy, bans offshore drilling in the Arctic, and – due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and consequent geopolitical developments – it has put security on top of its Arctic policy.²⁷

The Biden Administration brought back key-institutions, such as the Arctic Executive Steering Committee and revitalized the US Arctic Research Commission (USARC). Also, it is interesting to note that the new US Arctic Strategy was led by the National Security Council.²⁸

Previously, in October 2021, the European Commission had also released a revised version of the European Union's (EU) Arctic policy, a revision that took place after the extensive European Green Deal.

As it states right at the beginning, the EU also believes that a safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous Arctic is important. Considering it to be significant not just for the Arctic itself, but for the EU and the entire world. It mentions the Arctic states holding the primary

²⁴ Coninx, Marie-Anne “The New US Arctic Strategy. Welcome back, America!” (December 2022)
(<https://www.eqmontinstitute.be/the-new-us-arctic-strategy-welcome-back-america>)

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ ibid

²⁸ ibid

responsibility for tackling issues within their territories, many of which do not respect borders, and therefore require regional or multilateral cooperation to be addressed effectively.²⁹

Its implementation is meant to help the Union deliver the targets defined by the EU Green Deal and meet its geopolitical interests as well.

However, there has been a suspension of regional cooperation with Russia. The EU has joined member states and key like-minded partners in suspending Russia and Belarus from the activities of various regional cooperation frameworks in response to what it claims to be Russia's unprecedented military aggression against Ukraine and the involvement of Belarus in an unprovoked and unjustified aggression.³⁰

The EU's policy appears to, *mutatis mutandis*, mirror a similar model to that of its American counterpart. While it was released a year earlier, it's worth noting that the EU does not have the status of an Arctic state. However, the EU does wield substantial influence in Arctic affairs and holds relevant interests in the region; taking into account that three of its member states are Arctic nations, with Denmark being one of the aforementioned A-5 group.

The EU characterizes itself as a geopolitical power with a strategic and day-to-day interest in the region. The new policy surprises with a rather confident, almost perky tone. Present Arctic change is conceptualized in geopolitical terms, referring to geopolitical competition and a changing geopolitical environment that calls for the EU's full engagement in Arctic matters as a geopolitical necessity.³¹

The American new strategy states from the outset, and the European document does similarly, that "the US seeks an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative". Some wondered why the US would make such a statement assuming that "Arctic exceptionalism" no longer exists.

This thesis intends to deal with exactly that question. Not constrained to the matter of Arctic exceptionalism as such, as previously mentioned, but rather with a feasible and even strengthened cooperation in the Arctic, empowered by the nature of the existent liberal world order and the interdependence between the Western world and consequently the Arctic states.

Ruling out pessimistic realist projections our purpose is to hypothesize about a sustained cooperation between most of the Arctic in the nearer and farther future, accepting the core assumptions of neoliberal trends which believe that this is not only possible but is what follows the natural path set up by the liberal world order the West has lived in for many decades now; and we will be grounding these beliefs in the context of the recently released Arctic policies by the US

²⁹ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021).

³⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-arctic_en

³¹ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021)

government and the EU. Documents that can be readily understood within the framework of such theories and can provide a more optimistic rationale for explaining the potential outcome of the current Arctic situation, without compromising on realism. Through the analysis of these policies within the context of neoliberal theories, one might arrive at the conclusion that while Arctic exceptionalism in its purity might no longer persist, international cooperation linked to interdependence in the context of a liberal order is key to Arctic success.

This thesis poses the question regarding why these Arctic political documents, issued by the US government and the European Commission, align to support the continuity of the liberal international order.

Given that liberal democracies have survived and flourished in the face of far greater challenges—*the Great Depression, the Axis powers, and the international communist movement*. Quoting Ikenberry once more “the solutions to today’s problems are more liberal democracy and more liberal order. Liberalism is unique among the major theories of international relations in its protean vision of interdependence and cooperation—features of the modern world that will only become more important as the century unfolds.”³²

³² Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

METHODOLOGY

Regarding the methodology used in this thesis, it involves a case study focused on the most recent Arctic policies issued by the United States government and the European Union's Commission. The research methods employed are qualitative in nature. The policies serve as the foundation for the study wherein they have been analyzed and contrasted, questioned by different various theoretical approaches in order to ascertain if and how they align with their main tenets. It's important to clarify that this isn't a direct comparative analysis between these documents. Firstly, because having been considered there are more similarities than differences from the perspective I would like to portray, however that still would allow for a comparative study; secondly, the point was not so much to discuss the different scientific technicalities that the documents contain but instead to find the political aspects in which they converge, which holds more interest from an IR point of view. Therefore a case study was a more appropriate tool or fitting approach to that effect.

Given the objective of analyzing the policy content, a narrative analysis is employed, specifically content analysis. This method helps identify specific patterns, themes, and their prioritization within the overall narrative. Other forms of narrative analysis were considered but ultimately dismissed for the sake of brevity and precision. Due to the nature of the texts, some elements of discourse analysis are naturally present due to the contextual aspects under scrutiny, but it is not the primary methodological approach. Critical analysis, while seemingly appropriate, was also disregarded. This is because our goal is not to demonstrate the use of a specific narrative to shape norms or the role of the narrative itself, but rather to understand their implications. Therefore, a thematic analysis is employed to interpret these strategies in relation to the research question, following a deductive approach outlined by the theoretical framework in this section.

The sources consulted have been numerous. However, finding up-to-date and relevant literature, especially regarding the policies themselves, has proven challenging due to the rapid development of global events and the recency of these policies. This challenge is more pronounced for the US National Strategy compared to the European policy. In contrast, a wealth of articles exists concerning previous Arctic policies, often with a focus on climate change rather than security. It appears that scholars and political analysts are awaiting the outcomes of the current complex historical moment.

As for theoretical works, only a few are current. While this may seem to complicate matters, it can also be seen as a challenge to enrich the analytical work by applying theories to the present era, thus offering a nuanced perspective.

THEORIES

In order to fundament our views on which are the most relevant or distinctive elements in the abovementioned European and North-American strategies, the choice of theory has been rather involved and taken a great deal of the research time.

Applying the Copenhagen's School Securitization theory, for instance, was tempting from the very beginning, and could easily be used to explain relevant aspects of these policies, however it didn't respond exactly to the ontological nature of the study which was not of perceptions of threats but of actual political actions; how the law-makers meant to realistically deal with the situation and its possible changes and outcomes, foreseeing and planning in foresight the overall consequences of the recent global instability.

Realist views in their different variants were also easy to shape around these policies if changing completely the perspective. However, my own views tend to sympathize more with Liberal Theories and therefore supported my research mainly with the Liberal Theories albeit using innovative liberal trends which provide interesting perspectives. Within Liberalism as well, all the nuances and various schools of thought, which might highlight and explain specifics very accurately, also had to be sorted out to find those I was more inclined to agree with. I will argue in favor of a firm position basically helped by two Liberal Theories, namely Structural Liberalism and Liberal Institutionalism or Internationalism. Significant names of these Liberal trends whose trend of thought have been followed throughout this study would be, among others, Robert O. Keohane, Joseph Nye, the internationalist John Ikenberry with his particular view about the present world order and its near future, focusing on the current American Administration. This does not mean that there will not be quotes from multiple other theorists. Realist thought will also be used frequently used especially for contrast purposes but the study will mainly use Liberal theories to sustain its predicaments.

Regarding the Liberal Theories specifically, the attempt to classify them which was an aim when starting to write this piece of research became gradually more difficult as well as unnecessary. Many of these theorists' positions have evolved throughout the years making it quite complex and useless to try to classify them according to a static train of thought. Their beliefs have progressed in the past decades according to the reality of international affairs on which they reflect their research. Hence, instead of trying to make neat distinctions between such close-connected theories I've tried to use them as a whole, taking whatever was most convenient from whichever of them at any given time, pointing out their adequacy and applicability to the current situation. It has in turn been an exercise in unifying "complex" liberal and neo-liberal theories without the need to make forced distinctions between them, since it seemed more interesting to me to acknowledge them jointly because of what they have in common and that way allow to better explain.

Conversely, this study will not extend its theoretical framework to include all strands of liberal thought. For instance, Constitutional Liberalism, despite its practical utility, was omitted due to its focus on domestic or intra-national matters, which proved overly restrictive in the context of international perspectives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Using Keohane's own words: *Labels play a large role in contemporary writing on international relations: He acknowledges that appellations such as "realist," "neorealist," or "liberal", and I'll add "neoliberal", "institutionalist" or "structuralist" pervade the literature. Th[ey]are conceptual tags [that might] help to focus issues and stimulate debate, but when they are obsolete or inappropriate, they obscure more than they clarify. [His] own work has variously been described as "neorealist" and as "liberal," but in [his] view these labels are misleading descriptions both of [his] own writings and of works that [he] regard[s] as intellectually congenial.*³³ *Afterwards he will be classified as a Structural Liberal as well... And that is why I will constraint the theories that will mainly be used in this study to Liberal theories but without attempting to catch every glimpse of difference between one tendency or another, rather using them at my convenience when useful; undoubtedly mentioning the authors but not necessarily trying to make them fit into a specific, narrow and invariable school of thought to no particular avail; especially having introduced them already from the start.*

Moravcsik, for instance, remarks that institutionalist theories of regimes, which we will refer to - commonly treated as liberal due to ideological and historical connotations- are in fact based on assumptions closer to realism than to liberalism.³⁴

However, and as has previously been mentioned in the Methodological section, the arguments suggested in this study are mainly those known as Liberal. To aggregate all the Liberal scholars as one big group is quite daring, especially when we are talking about such a vast group which includes thinkers, economists, or politicians among others, and it being such a long list of prominent names throughout a long history which supersedes the IR field greatly.

Liberalism is sometimes identified as a belief in the superiority of markets to state regulation of an economy. Thus defined, liberalism would be a highly inappropriate label for what we are referring to here, which stresses the importance of international institutions, constructed by states, in facilitating mutually beneficial policy coordination among governments. Another conception of liberalism associates it with a belief in the value of individual freedom. Although subscrib[ing] to such a belief, that is not particularly relevant to the present analysis of international relations. One could believe in the value of individual liberty and remain either a realist or neorealist in one's analysis of world politics. But liberalism also serves as a set of guiding principles for contemporary social science. As a guide to social scientific thought, it stresses the role of human-created institutions in affecting how aggregations of individuals make collective decisions. It emphasizes the importance of changeable political processes rather than simply of immutable structures, and it rests on a belief in at least the possibility of cumulative progress in human affairs. In this sense,

³³ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays In International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

³⁴ Moravcsik, Andrew "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics. *International organization* 51.4 (1997)

it reflects a liberal spirit. Institutions change as a result of human action, and the changes in expectations and processes that result can exert profound effects on state behavior.³⁵

Liberal IR theory elaborates the basic insight that state-society relations--the relationship between governments and the domestic and transnational social context in which they are embedded--are the most fundamental determinant of state behavior in world politics. In the liberal view state-society relations influence state behavior by shaping "national preferences" --the fundamental social purposes that underlie state strategies--not, as realism argues, the configuration of national capabilities.³⁶

Liberal theory, moreover, explains important phenomena overlooked by alternative theories, including the substantive content of foreign policy, historical change, and the distinctiveness of interstate relations among modern Western states.³⁷

Liberal theory is analytically prior to both realism and institutionalism because it defines the conditions under which their assumptions hold. If this proposed reformulation of liberal IR theory meets the criteria or core assumptions: Primacy of Societal Actors, Representation and State Preferences, Interdependence and the International System meaning that the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behavior, as moravcsik argues it does, there is good reason to accord it a paradigmatic position empirically coequal with and analytically prior to realism and institutionalism, in theory and research on world politics.³⁸

For liberals, state behavior reflects varying patterns of state preferences. States require a "purpose," a perceived underlying stake in the matter at hand, in order to provoke conflict, propose cooperation, or take any other significant foreign policy action. The precise nature of these stakes drives policy. This is not to assert that each state simply pursues its ideal policy, oblivious of others; instead, each state seeks to realize *its* distinctive preferences under varying constraints imposed by the preferences of *other states*.³⁹

However, Realism and liberalism both have their roots in a utilitarian view of the world, in which individual actors pursue their own interests by responding to incentives. Both doctrines view politics as a process of political and economic exchange, characterized by bargaining. Broadly speaking, both realism and liberalism are consistent with the assumption that most state behavior can be interpreted as rational, or at least intelligent, activity. Realism and liberalism are therefore not two incommensurable paradigms with different conceptions of the nature of political action. Nevertheless, realist and liberal theory are in several respects sharply at odds with one another. The realist-liberal dispute focuses especially on the goals of actors in world politics and on the nature of their environment. Realism emphasizes states' demands for power and security and the dangers to states' survival. Military force is therefore, for realism, the most important power

³⁵ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays in International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

³⁶ Moravcsik, Andrew "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics. *International organization* 51.4 (1997)

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *ibid*

resource in world politics. States must rely ultimately on their own resources and must strive to maintain their relative positions in the system, even at high economic cost. Liberalism also examines state action but directs its attention to other groups as well. For liberal thinkers, economic incentives are important as well as concerns for security.⁴⁰

As Deudney and Ikenberry say in their article “Liberal World: the Resilient Order”, modern liberalism holds that world politics requires new levels of political integration in response to relentlessly rising interdependence.⁴¹ Liberal Institutionalism is basically characterized by an emphasis on the role of international institutions, multilateralism, and the promotion of liberal democratic values in shaping international order. This perspective awards a prominent role to institutions, regional, national and international, and organizations in promoting cooperation and managing conflicts among States. It advocates for a rule-based international order, arguing that such an order benefits both powerful and less powerful states by providing stability and predictability. It strongly believes in liberal democracy *shaping* and promoting a stable international order. It argues that liberal democracies are more likely to uphold international norms, engage in peaceful conflict resolution and cooperate on issues, highlighting human rights. Consequently, it supports the idea of multilateralism where States work together through international organizations and agreements to address common challenges, deeming it a more effective and legitimate approach than unilateralism or power politics.

Hence, the theories that support most of the hypothesis and analysis of this study are modern variations or nuanced views of liberalism usually referred to as Liberal Institutionalism or Internationalism and Structural Liberalism. Nametags which are less relevant than the beliefs they stand for. Progressive versions of the classical Liberal, albeit preserving its fundamental tenets, which favor a liberal world order and a highly interdependent state system which fosters and encourages international cooperation.

Placing these theoretical approaches in a historical context, Liberal Institutionalism emerged as a distinct perspective within international relations theory in the mid-20th century, particularly following World War II. It was closely associated with the development of particular international institutions during this period. Conversely, Structural Liberalism has its roots in a broader liberal tradition in international relations and political theory.

While both Liberal Institutionalism and Structural Liberalism share most of their liberal principles, they differ in their focus and scope of analysis in spite of its irrelevance for our purposes.

Deudney and Ikenberry develop a theory of liberal international order that captures its major structures, institutions, and practices.⁴²

⁴⁰ Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press

⁴¹ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

⁴² Dudney, Daniel, and G. John, Ikenberry "The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order," *Review of International Studies* (1999), Copyright © British International Studies Association.

A theory of 'structural liberalism' that more adequately captures the unique features of this Western order in a way that builds on the strengths but goes beyond the weaknesses of realist and liberal theories. Since they argue that the existing liberal theories do not give sufficient prominence to nor attempt to explain the prevalence of co-binding security practices over traditional balancing, the distinctive system-structural features of the West, the peculiarly penetrated and reciprocal nature of American hegemony, the role of capitalism in overcoming the problem of relative gains, and the distinctive civic political identity that pervades these societies. In contrast, structural liberalism seeks to capture the major components of the Western political order and their inter-relationships. Core dimensions of the Western political order.⁴³

On the other hand, the core of neorealist theory is that states in an anarchical system will pursue a strategy of balancing, states seeking security will balance against other states that they perceive to be threats to their security. Internally, it takes the form of the domestic mobilization of power resources (via armament and the generation of state capacity). Externally, balancing typically takes the form of *ad hoc*, counter hegemonic alliances in which states join together with other states that fear for their security from threatening or powerful states.⁴⁴

The realist view neglects a distinctive practice that liberal states have pioneered, and which has given the West a distinctive structure unlike anarchy. Liberal states practice co-binding—that is, they attempt to tie one another down by locking each other into institutions that mutually constrain one another. This practice of co-binding constraint can be either asymmetrical or symmetrical. Asymmetrical binding is characteristic of hegemony or empire, but liberal states practice a more mutual and reciprocal co-binding that overcomes the effects of anarchy without producing hierarchy. This practice of co-binding does not ignore the problems and dynamics of anarchy, but rather aims to overcome them. By establishing institutions of mutual constraint, co-binding reduces the risks and uncertainties associated with anarchy. It is a practice that aims to tie potential threatening states down into predictable and restrained patterns of behavior, and it makes unnecessary balancing against such potential threats.⁴⁵

Co-binding practices are particularly suited to liberal states. When co-binding is successful, it reduces the necessity for units to have strong and autonomous state apparatuses. Moreover, democratic and liberal states are particularly well suited to engage in co-binding, because their internal structures more readily lend themselves to the establishment of institutions that constrain state autonomy.⁴⁶

From this follows the known as Democratic Peace Theory which is strongly supported by these liberalist authors and suggests that democracies are less likely to engage in armed conflicts with

⁴³ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

⁴⁴ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays in International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ *ibid*

each other. Concept, however, that can be traced back to classical broader liberal tradition as far as Immanuel Kant his "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch." ⁴⁷

Cooperation, on the other hand, is not antithetical to hegemony; on the contrary, hegemony depends on a certain kind of asymmetrical cooperation, which successful hegemony support and maintain.

The Hegemonic stability theory was named by Robert Keohane for the notion that the international system is more likely to remain stable when a single nation-state is the dominant world power, or hegemon. Despite rebutting this theory in his reference work *After Hegemony*, where he used insights from the new institutional economics to argue that the international system could remain stable in the absence of a hegemon, suggesting that international cooperation could be sustained through repeated interactions, transparency, and monitoring. ⁴⁸

However, in accounting for the creation of international regimes, hegemony often plays an important role, even a crucial one. ⁴⁹

Theory of hegemonic stability says that order in world politics is typically created by a single dominant power.

According to political economy, this theory is defined by a superiority of resources. Hegemonic power must have control over raw materials, sources of capital, markets and competitive advantages in the production of high valued goods. Raw materials justify territorial expansion and imperialism. The size of the market allows for potential economic power. Hold a large market for imports. And, in general the competitive advantage will be based on a technological superiority of a leading country. ⁵⁰

However, in recent history the crucial factor in producing discord lay in American politics not in the material factors. ⁵¹

A more refined version of hegemonic stability theory does not automatically link power and leadership. Instead, it defines Hegemony as the situation in which one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations and willing to do so. ⁵²

Cooperation only makes sense if cooperation and discord are not determined simply by interests and power. ⁵³

Cooperation must be distinguished from harmony, though. Harmony refers to a situation in which actors' policies automatically facilitate the attainment of others' goals. However, where harmony

⁴⁷ Kant, Immanuel. "1991'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch'." *Kant: Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1795).

⁴⁸ Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton university press, 1984.

⁴⁹ id

⁵⁰ id

⁵¹ id

⁵² id

⁵³ id

reigns cooperation is unnecessary. Therefore, cooperation and harmony are by no means identical and ought not to be confused with one another.⁵⁴

Cooperation requires that the actions of separate individuals or organizations be brought into conformity with one another through a process of negotiation, which is often referred to as “policy coordination”. So, cooperation occurs when actors adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination. In more formal terms, intergovernmental cooperation takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of a process of policy coordination.⁵⁵

Conversely, if no attempts are made by actors to adjust their policies to each others’ objectives the result is discord. And discord often leads to efforts to induce others to change their policies; these attempts meet resistance that result in policy conflict.⁵⁶

Cooperation therefore does not imply an absence of conflict. Negotiation and bargaining often take place. Since cooperation should not be viewed as the absence of conflict, but rather as a reaction to conflict or potential conflict. Without the specter of conflict there would be no need for cooperation.⁵⁷

Hegemony is related in complex ways to cooperation and to institutions such as international regimes. Successful hegemonic leadership itself depends on a certain form of asymmetrical cooperation. The hegemon plays a distinctive role, providing its partners with leadership in return for deference; but unlike an imperial power it cannot make and enforce rules without a certain degree of consent from other sovereign states. [...] Indeed, the hegemon may have to invest resources in institutions in order to ensure that its preferred rules will guide the behavior of other countries.⁵⁸

Cooperation may be fostered by hegemony and hegemons require cooperation to make and enforce rules. Hegemony and cooperation are not alternatives; on the contrary, they are often found in symbiotic relationships with one another.⁵⁹

Gilpin will say that global political economy is shaped by the distribution of power among states, and economic competition between states is an important driver of political conflict and cooperation. The role of international institutions is mediating these conflicts and managing the global economy.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ id

⁵⁵ id

⁵⁶ id

⁵⁷ id

⁵⁸ id

⁵⁹ id

⁶⁰ Gilpin, Robert G. “The political economy of international relations” Princeton University Press, (2016)

Neorealists declare that "in a condition of anarchy, relative gain is more important than absolute gain"⁶¹ and that "the fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities"⁶²

The assumption of the neorealist argument is that the only alternative to anarchy is hierarchy, but in fact liberal states have developed co-binding institutions and practices that make it possible to moderate anarchy without producing hierarchy. The extensive institutions that liberal states have built can be explained as the mechanisms by which they have sought to avoid the need to forego absolute gains in order to pursue relative gains.⁶³

Western states also have political reasons to maintain an open economic order: free trade can spread and strengthen liberal democracy. The architects of the liberal system perceived that a world populated by liberal states would be much more compatible with American interests and the survival of democracy and capitalism in the United States.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the neorealist statements are theoretically plausible whenever states expect all others to be hostile and deceptive but are not when applied to situations in which substantial mutual gains can be realized through cooperation and in which governments do not expect others to threaten them with force.⁶⁵

Joseph S. Nye who contributed extensively to the concept of "soft power" within the context of structural liberalism argues that states can achieve their objectives through attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion.⁶⁶

In fact, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's, prominent scholars *used insistently in our study*, joint work on the concept of "complex interdependence" is essential to define Structural Liberalism.⁶⁷

It is important to recognize that "complex interdependence," is very different from "interdependence,". "Interdependence" is a very broad term that refers to "situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries". It is as applicable to the political-military interdependence between the Soviet Union and the United States, for instance. "Complex interdependence," by contrast, is an ideal or hypothetical type of international system, deliberately constructed to contrast with a "realist" ideal type on the basis of realist assumptions about the nature of international politics. Complex interdependence refers to a

⁶¹ Waltz, Kenneth *"Man, the state, and war: A theoretical analysis"* Columbia University Press, 1959

⁶² Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays in International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

⁶³Dudney, Daniel, and G. John, Ikenberry "The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order," Review of International Studies (1999), Copyright © British International Studies Association.

⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁵ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays in International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

⁶⁶ Nye, Joseph S. "Soft Power." Foreign Policy, No. 80 (1990)

⁶⁷Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," International Organization, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press

situation among a number of countries in which multiple channels of contact connect societies (that is, states do not monopolize these contacts); there is no hierarchy of issues; however, it is noteworthy that Keohane and Nye themselves assert "we do not argue ... that complex interdependence faithfully reflects world political reality. Quite the contrary; both it and the realist portrait are ideal types. Most situations will fall somewhere between these two extremes."⁶⁸

[P]ower is an important element in relationships among states (as well as between states and nonstate actors), but this power does not derive from the use or threat of force toward one another. Complex interdependence exemplifies the role of expectations and conventions in world politics—and therefore of institutionalization. (k essays) Complex interdependence, developed as a notion by Nye and Keohane in the 1970s, that increasingly characterizes relationships among democratic industrialized countries.⁶⁹

However, Neoliberal institutionalism shares some important intellectual commitments with neorealism or “Structural Realism”, as Keohane will sustain. Like neorealists, neoliberal institutionalists seek to explain behavioral regularities by examining the nature of the decentralized international system and taking state power seriously.⁷⁰

Finally, neoliberal institutionalists agree with neorealists that by understanding the structure of an international system, as defined by neorealists, "to the extent that dynamics of a system limit the freedom of its units, their behavior and the outcomes of their behavior become predictable" as Waltz notes. This is not to say that they become perfectly predictable: "Systems theories explain why different units behave similarly and, despite their variations, produce outcomes that fall within expected ranges. Conversely, theories at the unit level tell us why different units behave differently despite their similar placement in a system"⁷¹ Since no systems theory can be expected to account for the behavior of the units, we also have to look at policies and the exercise of state power—topics that require detailed empirical investigation and historical research.⁷²

Yet despite these affinities with neorealism,⁷³ neoliberal institutionalists share the neorealists' objective of explaining state behavior insofar as possible through an understanding of the nature of the international system, the neorealist conception of structure is too narrow and confining.

⁶⁸ Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press

⁶⁹ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, *Essays in International Relations Theory*," Routledge, 1989, New York

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ Waltz, Kenneth "Theory of International Politics" (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979)

⁷² Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, *Essays in International Relations Theory*," Routledge, 1989, New York

⁷³ Keohane, Robert O. "Neorealism and its Critics" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986)

Neorealism can account only for changes that result from shifts in relative state capabilities. Capabilities for Waltz refer principally to the economic resources and productivity of states, on the one hand, and to their military strength on the other.⁷⁴

The third major theme concerns international regimes, which are defined as "governing arrangements that affect relationships of interdependence". Keohane and Nye do acknowledge that the concept of international regimes was indebted to the work of John Ruggie, who defined Regimes as "sets of mutual expectations, generally agreed-to rules, regulations and plans, in accordance with which organizational energies and financial commitments are allocated."⁷⁵(Despite a claim made by Susan Strange, social scientists did not invent this concept: it has a long history in international law).⁷⁶

In *Power and Interdependence*, though, the authors elaborate a conception of international regimes that offers four roughly-sketched models which purport to account for changes in those regimes. One model relies on economic and technological change. Two are structural: one uses overall power structure to predict outcomes, the other relies on the distribution of power within issue-areas. The fourth is an "international organization model," in which networks of relationships, norms, and institutions are important, independent factors helping to explain international regime change.⁷⁷

Most significant issues in international relations are both political and economic. Regimes are principally constructed by governments who seek to further the interests of their states. They seek wealth and power, and perhaps other values as well, no matter how much they may indulge in rhetoric about global welfare or a world safe for interdependence. So, it emphasizes the internal characteristics of the strong state.⁷⁸

One last note is on Economic openness, a major feature of the Western order is the prevalence of capitalist economies and international institutions dedicated to economic openness.⁷⁹

Advanced capitalism creates such high prospects for absolute gains that states attempt to mitigate anarchy between themselves so as to avoid the need to pursue relative gains. Liberal states have pursued economic openness for political ends, using free trade as an instrument to alter and maintain the preferences and features of other states that are politically and strategically congenial⁸⁰

So, a Western strategic alliance would then be less concerned with relative gains

⁷⁴ Waltz, Kenneth "Theory of International Politics" (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979)

⁷⁵ Ruggie, John G. *Regimes International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order* International Organization, Vol. 36, No. 2, International Regimes (Spring, 1982)

⁷⁶ Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," International Organization, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1984)

⁷⁹ Ikenberry, G. John. "Why the liberal world order will survive." *Ethics & International Affairs* 32.1 (2018)

⁸⁰ *ibid*

considerations than unallied states. Allied states are not as sensitive to relative shifts in economic advance that might result from free trade. Similarly, realist theorists argue that military allies see relative gains by each other as adding to the overall strength of the alliance.⁸¹

Liberals also advance powerful arguments about the sources of open economies. In particular, the 'embedded liberalism' argument holds that liberal states in the 20th century have committed themselves to ambitious goals of social welfare and economic stability, which in turn requires them to pursue foreign economic policies that maintain a congenial international environment for the realization of these goals. This argument situates the preference for open economic policies in the domestic structures of advanced industrial societies. As long as Western welfare states retain their commitment to high employment and social welfare, the theory expects that they will remain committed to liberal foreign economic policies.⁸²

⁸¹ *ibid*

⁸² *ibid*

POLICY ANALYSIS

The United States, by virtue of Alaska, is an Arctic nation and has substantial interests in the region. In recent years, the effects of climate change, technological advancements, and economic opportunities have driven increasing interest and activity in the Arctic region. In addition, there has been an escalation of great power competition between the United States, Russia, and China, which seeks Arctic resources, among other things. This competition has introduced tension into the Arctic's geopolitical environment.⁸³

In the Arctic, warming temperatures and melting sea ice have opened new shipping routes but have also increased climate risks and international economic competition. Addressing these issues is a strategic priority for the U.S. government.⁸⁴

U.S. and foreign stakeholders identified factors that may help advance U.S. priorities, such as creating a new Ambassador for the Arctic region and providing scientific and other expertise at the Arctic Council—a forum that promotes cooperation among Arctic countries. But stakeholders also noted that challenges in interagency coordination and other areas may make some U.S. priorities harder to achieve.⁸⁵

[The] updated Arctic strategy serves as a framework for guiding its approach to addressing emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. While many federal entities engage with foreign partners on Arctic issues, the Department of State serves as the lead for Arctic diplomacy efforts. The Biden administration announced that an existing Arctic coordinator position at State would be elevated to an Ambassador-at-Large.⁸⁶

According to the US Coast Guard it was great timing for the White House and the Pentagon to release three important national strategy documents; first, the “National Strategy for the Arctic Region,” in their own words, an update of its 2013 predecessor; the “National Security Strategy”; and the “National Defense Strategy.”

The 2010 NSS, which guided the previous 2013 national Arctic strategy, held *a single* short paragraph on the Arctic, right at the end of the main body of the strategy, that simply said: The United States is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic region, where we seek to meet our national security needs, protect the environment, responsibly manage resources, account for indigenous communities, support scientific research, and strengthen international cooperation on a wide range of issues.⁸⁷

⁸³ Kenney, Chelsa L., dir., “Arctic Region: Factors That Facilitate and Hinder the Advancement of U.S. Priorities” GAO (Published: Sep 06, 2023)

⁸⁴ idem

⁸⁵ idem

⁸⁶ idem

⁸⁷ Russell, Tony “Hot Takes on the New Arctic Strategy: What’s Changed and What it Could Mean for the U.S. Coast Guard” (March 2022)

However, much has change since then. Huebert called the US a “reluctant” Arctic nation referring himself to the previous US strategy from 2009. Back then he would state “While the Arctic is important to the United States, that fact has seldom reached the attention of US policymakers and the US public. This is about to change.” And clearly it has. It is now thirteen years later, despite this not being a comparative study between previous and current US policies. Nevertheless, what is significant is the role the Arctic has already and is going to have in the foreseeable future quite evidently. US interests in the region might have not been as important at other times but the Arctic was central to the United States’ nuclear deterrent posture during the Cold War for instance, and is now rising above many other issues due to the various aspects that are currently involved in the High North.⁸⁸

The Arctic is changing fundamentally due to climate change, resource development (in particular, energy), globalization, and geopolitical factors. The task of developing this policy has been challenged by the reality of a changing Arctic. The United States has to deal not only with the low priority traditionally given to the Arctic, but also with the fact that the Arctic is changing in ways that are not yet understood.⁸⁹ This which was said by Huebert in reference to the 2009 policy still stands.

Former President Trump refocused US Arctic policy, limiting it mainly to national security, and oil and gas development. He favored oil drilling in Alaska. The US upset the Arctic Council Ministerial in 2019 by preventing it from adopting a final Declaration because of its reference to climate change. State Secretary Pompeo stunned Arctic stakeholders with the US’s very aggressive stand towards Russia and China, using unusual confrontational language at such gatherings, normally marked by a positive Arctic spirit.⁹⁰

On October 7, 2022 the White House released its National Strategy for the Arctic Region. This Strategy replaces and updating the 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region released by the Obama Administration.

The Strategy is a reaction to the changed geopolitical situation following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022⁹¹. The new Strategy outlines four mutually reinforcing pillars to organize action: security, climate change and environmental protection, sustainable economic development, and international cooperation and governance. It relies on five principles to guide actions within the four pillars: consult, coordinate, and co-manage with Alaska Native tribes and communities; deepen relationships with allies and partners; plan for long lead-time

⁸⁸ Huebert, Robert N. “United States Arctic policy; The Reluctant Arctic Power” *SPP Briefing Papers Vol 2 Issue2* (May 2009)

⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁹⁰ Coninx, Marie-Anne “The New US Arctic Strategy. Welcome back, America!” (December 2022)

⁹¹ Kirchner, Stefan “Governance and Security in a Divided Arctic: the New National Strategy for the Arctic Region” Volume: 27 Issue:1 (January 2023)

investments; cultivate cross-sectoral coalitions and innovative ideas; and commit to a whole of government, evidence-based approach.⁹²

There are four adjectives describing straight away what the US wishes for the Arctic, it aims for a Peaceful, Stable, Prosperous and Cooperative Region. It articulates an affirmative U.S. agenda for the next ten years; addressing the climate crisis with greater urgency and directing new investments in sustainable development to improve livelihoods for Arctic residents, while conserving the environment. It also acknowledges increasing strategic competition in the Arctic since 2013, exacerbated by what is qualified as an unprovoked war in Ukraine by Russia, and seeks to position the United States to both effectively compete and manage tensions.⁹³

It acknowledges a US international leadership role in what it regards as a tense and *complex* period, and mentions, nonetheless, the importance of pursuing U.S. interests.

The National strategy is intended to serve as a framework to guide the U.S. government's approach to tackling emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. And the work will be guided by five principles that should be applied across all four pillars.

One does observe how similar these pillars are to the sections contained in the European Joint Communication.

It might also be useful to read the new US Arctic Strategy in conjunction with the new US National Security Strategy, also launched in October 2022 which enumerates the US security strategy per region, referring to the Arctic as “Maintaining a peaceful Arctic”, reiterating strong language related to Russia and China.

So, increased cooperation at home, but also new and particularly welcoming, is the US strategy for strengthening relations outside US borders, including more cooperation and support of US allies in the European Arctic. This new strategy will enable increased cooperation between like-minded. Europeans should also use this unique opportunity to intensify transatlantic relations in this unique field of strategic importance, the Arctic.⁹⁴

Dr. Andreas Østhagen, Senior Fellow at the Arctic Institute highlighted that “in looking at the security aspects, it is clear that the tone is sober and even worried. Russia is rightly highlighted as the main concern. Moreover, the policy makes a distinction between homeland defense in cooperation with Canada, and supporting allies in the European Arctic. The question is what this means in practice, i.e. how the various branches of the US government will follow up these priorities.”⁹⁵

⁹² Wilson Institute Unpacking the 2022 US National Strategy for the Arctic Region (Oct. 25, 2022) (<https://youtu.be/B-gDEuap48>)

⁹³US National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region October 7, 2022 the White House

⁹⁴ Coninx, Marie-Anne “The New US Arctic Strategy. Welcome back, America!” (December 2022)

⁹⁵ The Arctic Institute “The Arctic Institute Reacts to the new U.S. National Strategy for the Arctic” Press Release October 17, United States, 2022

Coming at the back of its recently announced decision to appoint an Arctic ambassador, White House's newly released Arctic strategy represents a marked departure from the 2013 document in which geopolitical contests were mentioned in passing only. In contrast, the new strategy directly singles out China and Russia as two major competitors and potential challengers of the status quo in the Arctic in the coming years. By highlighting the expanded scope of Chinese and Russian investments in and plans for the Arctic, the document casts doubt over the true strategic intentions of Beijing and Moscow Arctic strategies and calls for increased vigilance amongst western allies. However, it is interesting to note that the document does not make any reference to a potential Chinese and Russian partnership in the Arctic.

Similar to the 2013 document, climate change is considered to be the main enabler of increased presence and interest in the Arctic but one can detect a change in what counts as valuable Arctic resources. Unlike the previous document in which oil and gas was mentioned alongside the region's vast deposits of critical minerals, one can find no mention of oil and gas in the new document. However, the new strategy falls short of accounting for the strategic importance of the region as a future data hub both as a host to an increased number of data centers and a transit point for undersea cables.

The looming prospect of a changing environment in the region, furthermore, is thought to create both opportunities and challenges. To benefit from the emerging opportunities and to effectively address the upcoming challenges, however, the United States' priority now lies with increased cooperation with U.S. partners and allies at home and abroad. The document tellingly prioritizes cooperation and dialogue with Alaska Natives. "This represents a significant shift from the 2013 national strategy, as well as many other federal Arctic documents, which often list Indigenous engagement as a last line of effort rather than a high-priority one." How the US government intends to foster intra- and international cooperation is less certain, however, given that the document does not discuss the role of non-Arctic states in regional governance, nor does it put forward any institutional alternative to the Arctic Council. While the U.S. has pledged to continue to support the Arctic Council, it is safe to assume that the US government no longer views the Council as a preferred platform for the conduct of high table diplomacy, though.⁹⁶

However, in June 2023, the Arctic Council resumed its work after a year's suspension in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Council is a pillar of the institutional architecture of the region; the main framework for cooperation between the Arctic states that also involves the North's indigenous peoples in issues of environmental protection and sustainable development.⁹⁷

Since 2013 the EU has been applying for full observer status to the Council; however, it has only been permitted to observe the organization's activities without a formalization of its role. At the same time, however, to be able to play an active role in the region, the EU's strategy must

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ Cinciripini, Luca "The Arctic within EU Strategies: A Renewed Centrality" (2023)

cover the full width of the Arctic institutional architecture, which encompasses a plurality of diplomatic, legal and institutional instruments that go beyond the framework of the Council.⁹⁸

Regarding the management of the American policies, stakeholders identified five factors that facilitated and five factors that hindered the federal government's management of U.S. Arctic priorities. For example, stakeholders identified U.S. Arctic expertise and engagement as factors that facilitated its influence in the Arctic Council. However, some stakeholders said that the Arctic Executive Steering Committee and the broader federal government face various challenges related to interagency coordination that hinder implementation of U.S. Arctic priorities outlined in the 2022 strategy.

Stakeholders identified three factors pertaining to State's structures that facilitated and two factors that hindered State's management of U.S. Arctic priorities. For example, stakeholders identified continuity within the Senior Arctic Official position and supporting office as a factor that has deepened institutional knowledge for Arctic Council work, facilitating efforts to promote U.S. priorities.⁹⁹

What cannot go without mention is that the content of the new Strategy has implications for international governance of the Arctic with particular reference to the changing security environment. Security is the first pillar of the Strategy, which should be understood in the classical sense of “hard” security, i.e., the defence of national territory. In this context, the Strategy emphasizes cooperation with allies and partners. The seven Western Arctic states are commonly referred to as the Arctic Seven (A7). The terms “allies” and “partners” refer to the Western Arctic member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Canada, Denmark (with regard to Greenland), Iceland, and Norway), and currently Finland and Sweden as well.¹⁰⁰

The new U.S. Arctic Strategy highlights the commitment of the United States to “deter threats to the U.S. homeland and our allies.” Joining NATO means the normalization of relations between Finland and Sweden with their European neighbours, while it simultaneously portends a significant political shift since Sweden and Finland had long been neutral, indicating the severity of the security situation for the Arctic region.¹⁰¹

However, the second and third Pillars devoted to Climate, Environment, and Sustainable Development concern the not less important protection of the environment of the Arctic. They both are directly concerned with the interests and needs of local communities in the Arctic, and with the well-being of the people who live there, in particular local communities in Alaska.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ Kenney, Chelsa L., dir., “Arctic Region: Factors That Facilitate and Hinder the Advancement of U.S. Priorities” GAO (Published: Sep 06, 2023)

¹⁰⁰ Kirchner, Stefan “Governance and Security in a Divided Arctic: the New National Strategy for the Arctic Region” Volume: 27 Issue:1 (January 2023)

¹⁰¹ *idem*

¹⁰² *idem*

Notably, strategic objective 2.3 calls for more research on climate change in order to inform policy decisions, emphasizing the important role of science in policy- (and, eventually, law-) making in the Arctic.¹⁰³

These pillars cover core topics of the work of the Arctic Council, too. The international governance of the Arctic is often seen as limited to areas of shared concern. Hence, the emphasis on climate change will be most welcomed by America's Arctic allies and partners, especially because the joint position of the United States and Russia on climate change during the 2019 Arctic Council ministerial meeting had been perceived as very disruptive.¹⁰⁴

In Pillar 4 regarding International Cooperation and Governance the White House provides a brief but important vision of the importance of international law for the governance of the Arctic. The fourth pillar is particularly relevant from our perspective.

This year has seen the most significant deterioration in Arctic international relations since the end of the first Cold War. This situation has had an effect on the governance of the Arctic, but fortunately has not modified the international legal treaties that apply to the region. The obligations contained in them continue to be in force. Including, among others, treaties of notable importance such as the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic or the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA), as well as global standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).¹⁰⁵

The emphasis on cooperation is also visible in the five cross-cutting principles that inform the Strategy as a whole. These principles include cooperation among the U.S. federal governments and sub-national actors such as indigenous communities in Alaska, and with other allied Arctic states. The latter aspect is particularly important at present times.¹⁰⁶

The new Strategy is a tool for the protection of the Arctic Council as an institution, which is a stated goal of the Biden administration as well. The same applies to other institutions, such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, and the international treaties that form the Arctic-made core of International Arctic Law. The Strategy emphasizes that U.S. activities are guided by international law to vigorously defend U.S. interests, which are best served by widespread adherence to the international rule of law.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ idem

¹⁰⁴ idem

¹⁰⁵ idem

¹⁰⁶ idem

¹⁰⁷ idem

On 13 October 2021, the European Union's Arctic policy was updated with the publication of the Joint Communication on *A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic*, issued by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy.¹⁰⁸

Although the policy was previous to any economic boom and fortunately no Arctic conflict has yet materialized, Russia keeps exporting more and more of her Arctic natural gas and modernizes her Arctic military structures. EU policymakers felt that enough had changed so that a new iteration of their Arctic policy was needed.

The European Union's Arctic policy aims to help preserve the Arctic as a region of peaceful cooperation, to slow the effects of climate change, and to support the sustainable development of Arctic regions to the benefit of Arctic communities, not least Indigenous Peoples, and future generations.¹⁰⁹

In today's Arctic setting, climate change and its ever-eroding effects on the region serve (again, similar to 2008) as the EU's articulated access point of regional legitimation: "Climate change and melting ice are leading to greater geopolitical interest with a high potential for increased strategic competition".¹¹⁰

One must also be careful not to overstate the impact of many of the (strategic) statements included in the Arctic policy. The document is by nature primarily a compilation – an umbrella policy – of what the EU does and how some action items are relevant for the Arctic. The Joint Communication could be primarily read as a sign of the change that is already happening within the EU.¹¹¹

Perhaps it is the European Green Deal and the EU's overall objective of strategic autonomy that should be treated as the EU's actual "Arctic policy", with the 2021 Arctic policy statement being merely an explanatory note.¹¹²

In the EU's institutional and legislative corpus, the Arctic resides within the realm of 'soft policy' (that is, it is not written into the Treaties, has no distinct budget line, nor set rule book on how to protect or develop the Arctic). It comes along more accurately as the expression of the prevalent political mindset of those drafting such policies and the public discourse they are exposed to. Hence, the Union's Arctic policy statements are never to be characterized as strategy.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021)

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ *id*

¹¹¹ *id*

¹¹² *id*

¹¹³ *id*

This contrasts importantly with the US Arctic document which is presented precisely as a National Strategy.

The EU presents itself as a more self-confident actor in the Arctic, taking stock of its economic and environment impacts, while retaining the previous definition of the scope of its Arctic engagement. This includes climate and environment, developmental issues in the European Arctic, and international cooperation within and relevant for the region. At the same time, however, one of the key objectives of the new policy statement is to position the EU's Arctic engagement within the landscape of the European Green Deal (EDG) and the newly found self-portrayal of the EU as a geopolitical actor.¹¹⁴

Interestingly enough the EU confidently sets itself as a “legislator for part of the European Arctic”. The increased self-confidence (fragile confidence, though) in the Arctic context seems to be one of the key themes of the 2021 policy statement, opening with a clear and concise declaration: “the EU is in the Arctic” – no space for discussion and disagreement allowed. The question of the EU's formal observer status in the Arctic Council is barely mentioned. On one hand, the EU acts as an “observer in principle” in this high-level forum, notwithstanding the formal status. On the other hand, this formal observer status has been seen as a seal of approval by the Arctic states and Indigenous peoples of the Arctic credentials and justified interests of other states and entities. (Such a formal seal of approval is all but irrelevant, nonetheless, for a polity that clearly considers itself an Arctic actor, and which affects the region primarily via its internal actions and policies).¹¹⁵

The EU's Arctic self-confidence might be a result of a strong belief – clear also from other statements – that the European Green Deal transforms the European Union into a global and Arctic actor – an actor that is strong enough to address the contradictions related to its involvement in Arctic affairs, *a geopolitical power*. In particular, the EU is more confident in highlighting its ability to affect developments in the Arctic by the exercise of its very own market power. The most visible aspect here is certainly the proposition of not opening any new fossil fuels extraction in the Arctic.¹¹⁶

The basis for this EU image lies in identifying climate change mitigation as one of the key themes of global (geo)politics. Energy relations and the extraction of resources are to be tangibly shaped by climate concerns, affecting the strengths and weaknesses of international players. That could also create more space for a strange *non-Westphalian supranational entity*.

In particular, we are yet to see how this new confidence influences the EU's relations with its Arctic partners. The US importantly, which regard themselves mutually as allies and consistently addresses to work together in a partnership with all of those willing.

¹¹⁴ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021)

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ *ibid*

It is a complex supranational polity which continues to regularly reflect how it influences the various Arctics, identifies the regional status-quo, puts those developments in an EU policy context and communicates its own regional role to both Arctic and international partners, as well as its own citizens (and probably particularly those).¹¹⁷

While many things appear constant, there are indeed new emphasis in the 2021 Joint Communication: adopting a (new) geopolitical lens, clearly acknowledging the EU's role in managing its Arctic economic and environmental footprint, advocating an effective ban on new Arctic hydrocarbon projects, as well as a stronger than ever emphasis on critical minerals.¹¹⁸

However, an update of the EU Arctic Policy of 2021 will likely be necessary, integrating it with the principles outlined in the Strategic Compass of 2022.¹¹⁹

The profound transformation of the Arctic security scenario that has taken place in recent years and that has been reflected in the EU's Arctic Policy, moving beyond a framework based solely on environmental aspects, still requires the EU to consolidate an Arctic security community held together by common and shared values, and capable of integrating the institutional architecture of the region. The EU's awareness of the Arctic's evolving security dimension and its growing strategic importance may however stimulate the promotion of a security dimension in the existing Arctic frameworks. This should complement attention on environmental and sustainable development issues, without abandoning them. Arctic security, in fact, must be understood in a broad sense that includes several aspects, spanning from environmental security to economic, military, societal and political security. In this sense, Arctic governance becomes key also to limiting the influence of external decision-making centers on regional policies, potentially reproducing exogenous confrontation dynamics in the Arctic too.¹²⁰

As a matter of fact, there is an important gap related precisely to the EU's environmental and economic impacts in the Arctic. Although concrete examples where Arctic impacts need to be considered are given in the new policy paper, the recognition and assessment of such footprint is not followed by creating mechanisms for taking account of impacts within EU policymaking.¹²¹ Raspotnik will even comment that "*For the sake of context, the Mediterranean Sea appears to be more visible in the Commission's regulatory impact assessment.*"¹²²

In brief, the EU Arctic policy statement contains more novel aspects than expected, albeit much is a question of emphasis rather than content. The EU is clearer about its environmental and economic footprint in the Arctic and appears increasingly aware of being capable of addressing

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

¹¹⁸ *ibid*

¹¹⁹ Cinciripini, Luca "The Arctic within EU Strategies: A Renewed Centrality" (2023)

¹²⁰ *ibid*

¹²¹ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021)

¹²² *idem*

through internal actions at least some of these impacts. It remains to be seen if Arctic considerations play any role in future regulatory and policy developments.¹²³

¹²³ *ibid*

ANALYSIS

Liberals argue that a world with more liberal democratic capitalist states will be more peaceful, prosperous, and respectful of human rights¹²⁴

Giving a mere glance at both sets of policies, it is evident that they both respond to a liberal approach. They set off by stating that they are seeking a “Safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous” in the case of Europe, and a “peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative” Arctic in the American text. In the European Joint Communication even the headline stands for a stronger engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic. These policies make a clear statement of intentions right from the outset in an obvious peace seeking prosperity tone. Since we do not intend to further a discursive analysis but rather to take the content of the wording as an honest purpose, it does undoubtedly seem like a foremost liberal approach is set forth from the commencement.

Liberals are often portrayed as having overly optimistic- even utopian- assumptions about the path of human history¹²⁵ which could come across as awkward especially for today’s fractured political moment. The timing of these declarations is not haphazard, and it is precisely at this somber time that the US government and its European counterpart choose to manifest their intentions in that direction.

However, Liberalism is essentially pragmatic. Modern liberals embrace democratic governments, market-based economic systems, and international institutions not out of idealism but because they believe these arrangements are better suited to realizing human interests in the modern world than any alternatives. Indeed, in thinking about world order, the variable that matters most for liberal thinkers is interdependence. For the first time in history, global institutions are now necessary to realize basic human interests; intense forms of interdependence that were once present only on a smaller scale are now present on a global scale. For example, environmental problems used to be contained largely within countries or regions¹²⁶, now and very particularly in the Arctic, environmental issues are much beyond its latitude, not only worldwide, causing the global temperature to rise with its devastating effects for the Arctic, but the ice melting has and will bring even more tragic consequences to other parts of the planet.

As in their predecessors, one of the most prominent sections in both policies is devoted to environmental issues as has been pointed out in the policy analysis section. The US strategy’s second pillar out of four is Climate Change and Environmental Protection. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that the U.S. government connects its environmental affairs mainly with national policies regarding Alaska. It’s mentions are related to Alaskan communities and the State of Alaska in its efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. There *is* a final mention to reduce

¹²⁴ Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020)

¹²⁵ *ibid*

¹²⁶ *ibid*

emissions from the Arctic as part of broader global mitigation efforts, to improve scientific understanding, and to conserve Arctic ecosystems as well.

The European document, on the other hand, is not only a result of the Green Deal but one of the European's main focuses of attention is environment because of the legitimation climate change represents for the EU, as examined more thoroughly in the previous section regarding the policies. In the second paragraph of its introduction it mentions Climate Change because of the importance it confers to it. It recalls it as the broadest threat the Arctic is facing and goes into scientific aspects behind global warming.

The fact that the main threats perceived in the Arctic come from global warming and not from military powers motivate a clear shift in world politics conceptions.

Without going into Securitizations considerations, keeping a focus on what Realists at this moment might point out, due to other tensions and recognizable threats, it is the interdependence and joint responsibility which reflect on a need of cooperation that is emphasized here. Liberal Internationalism puts down a set of ideas about how to navigate liberal democracy in a modernizing world. A set of convictions that openness is good for all countries properly managed and that liberal multilateral institutions facilitate cooperation, that liberal democracies have special capacities to cooperate, and fourthly, in a world of rising economic, security and environmental interdependence, nations cannot solve their problems alone. They can only solve them together. "many challenges extend beyond national borders and the region's boundaries, and can be more effectively addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation."¹²⁷

This dynamic of constant change and ever-increasing interdependence is only accelerating yet climate change will also require unprecedented levels of international cooperation. With the rise of bioweapons and cyberwarfare, the capabilities to wreak, mass destruction technologies will be a vital national security imperative for all countries.¹²⁸

It does not mean that the current political context and concretely the Russian doings in the High North are being ignored. On the contrary, liberals just like realists, recognize that it is often human nature to seek power, which is why they advocate constitutional and legal restraints.¹²⁹

Unlike its backward-looking nationalist and realist rivals, liberalism has a pragmatic adaptability and a penchant for institutional innovations that are vital for responding to such emerging challenges as artificial intelligence, cyberwarfare, and genetic engineering.¹³⁰

Far from idealistic, rather based on historical facts and accounts of reality throughout the last centuries and invoked by these political documents despite the Russian aggression, they encourage cooperation especially among like-minded partners which definitely include each other

¹²⁷ Joint Communication on a stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic

¹²⁸ Cinciripini, Luca "The Arctic within EU Strategies: A Renewed Centrality" (2023)

¹²⁹ Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020)

¹³⁰ idem

in an important way. Purposedly outcasting force and coercion. Furthermore, the Arctic Council has resumed its activity under Norway's leadership.

“Despite current tensions stemming from Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States seeks an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative. A peaceful Arctic will have guardrails to manage competition and resolve disputes without force or coercion”,¹³¹ declares the US Strategy.

The US National Strategy clearly states that stability results from countries acting responsibly and in accordance with international law, rules, norms, and standards¹³², and its fourth pillar refers to International Cooperation and Governance: Sustain Arctic Institutions and Uphold International Law.¹³³

Creating an international "space" for liberal democracy, preserving rights and protections within and between countries, and balancing conflicting values such as liberty and equality, openness and social solidarity, and sovereignty and interdependence—these are the guiding aims that have propelled liberal internationalism through the upheavals of the past two centuries. G. John Ikenberry argues that in a twenty-first century marked by rising economic and security interdependence, liberal internationalism—reformed and reimagined—remains the most viable project to protect liberal democracy.¹³⁴

In this context, the EU's role as legislator for part of the European Arctic must also be taken into account.

The liberal multilateral institutionalism contrasts with regional power. Which could easily be placed in the Arctic. However, there might be a certain fear because, as Ikenberry wisely recounts, liberal Internationalism is ambivalent, free trade, the hegemonic projects that it attached itself to, the Cold War, great power politics were deeply invasive and oppressive in many parts of the world. This is the part of tragedy it does involve, great upside forces and advancement but also deeply entangled with empire. However, it must be noticed and emphasized that in its multilateral institutional form it is not an empire itself. As Ikenberry will also reinforce, even the liberal international order in its manifestation in the American era is not simply the most recent version of empire as critics have argued. It has been crudely imperialistic, there's no question, but there is also this other feature to it that has a more opened, bargained, reciprocal aspect. Its own national interest tried to breakthrough the empire, tied to a post-imperial project by having to open itself to access new global markets. And, from a theoretical stance, though, one can dissociate the beliefs from other powers or regimes it might have been attached to at various times.

¹³¹ US National Strategy for the Arctic Region, *the White House*, October 2022

¹³² *ibid*

¹³³ *ibid*

¹³⁴ Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020)

There is no guarantee that liberal democracies will successfully rise to the occasion, but to count them out would contradict repeated historical experiences. Liberal democracies have repeatedly recovered from crises even resulting from their own excesses.

Interestingly, in his article *the Liberal Order, the Resilient Order* this very author had already predicted some years ago the present world situation when saying that “If history is any guide, today’s illiberal populists and authoritarians will evoke resistance and counter-movements”.¹³⁵ So, difficulties caused by Russia, for instance, or even political groups in traditionally liberal countries should not undermine what these liberal theories are trying to prove.

After World War II, the United States and liberal states in Europe sought to bind themselves through NATO. Liberal democracies already back then joined together to create an international order that reflected their shared interests,¹³⁶ now in a context where seven out of eight of the Arctic countries already share joint views even at a military level, Finland’s recent NATO membership from April this year is rather significant as well as Sweden’s pending approval to join. NATO is the most important co-binding institution in the West and is going through a constant enlargement process. Although the Soviet threat provided much of the political impetus to form NATO, and at current times also prompted the wish of other Arctic countries to join, the alliance always had in the minds of its most active advocates the additional purpose of constraining the Western European states vis-a-vis each other and tying the United States into Europe.¹³⁷ A simple analogy would be most applicable here, and particularly when throughout their Arctic policies, the US as well as the EU repeatedly call for cooperation, seeking it especially from their allies and like-minded partners.

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke for U.S. allies when he called on the international community to “step up our game and build the twenty-first-century world order, based on the perennial principles we established together after World War II.

It merits mentioning that the NATO alliance went beyond the traditional realist conception of an *ad hoc* defense alliance, because it created an elaborate organization and drew states into joint force planning, international military command structures, and established a complex trans-governmental political process for making political and military decisions. The co-binding character of this alliance is manifested in the remarkable effort that its member states made to give their commitment a semi-permanent status—to lock themselves in so as to make it difficult to exit.¹³⁸

Something noteworthy in the case of liberal democracy itself is that the order that emerged to accompany it cannot be easily undone. For one thing, it is deeply embedded. Hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people have geared their activities and expectations to the order’s *institutions and incentives*. However unappealing aspects of it may be, replacing the liberal order

¹³⁵ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹³⁶ Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020)

¹³⁷ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹³⁸ *ibid*

with something significantly different would be extremely difficult. Growing interdependence makes the order especially difficult to overturn.¹³⁹

Furthermore, although liberalism as an ideology emerged in the West, its values have become universal. However, historically as free markets spread economic inequality grew, but following Biden's polity "the remedy for the problems of liberal democracy is more liberal democracy."

To foster a sense of liberal democratic identity, there is a need to promote national public service.¹⁴⁰ This is a relevant aspect connected to the American strategy regarding Alaska. The third pillar is devoted to Sustainable Economic Development which fundamentally refers to improving livelihoods in Alaska, including Alaska Native communities, by investing in infrastructure, improved access to services, and support for growing economic sectors. But does not exclude working with allies and partners to expand high-standard investment and sustainable development across the Arctic region, according to the National Strategy.¹⁴¹

Liberalism has been deeply committed to the progressive improvement of the human condition through scientific discovery and technological advancements.¹⁴² And that is a commitment which is notably evident in both political documents. We have delved more deeply into some of these aspects while analyzing the policies, so it is another very visible area where the ideology articulated and its practical implementation by liberal powers in the Arctic emphatically align.

Liberal democratic capitalist societies have thrived and expanded because they have been particularly adept at stimulating and exploiting innovation and at coping with their spillover effects and negative externalities. In short, liberal modernity excels at both harvesting the fruits of modern advance and guarding against its dangers.¹⁴³

The challenges of modernity are of crucial importance for the Arctic. Both in terms of communications, infrastructure and maritime transport. The melting of the ice and permafrost thaw, with its numerous effects, mainly negative, endangering entire ecosystems, but with the possibilities that it also enables in terms of obtaining highly coveted resources in invaluable amounts and for the provision of new trade routes cannot be ignored.

Both policies place special emphasis on new technologies and infrastructure, but they must be related to energy and resource extraction, which are of paramount economic and environmental importance in the region. This affects various levels and different areas, so an Arctic policy cannot help but be complex and ambitious, addressing all these elements simultaneously, with enormous economic consequences, impacting not only the industry but people's livelihoods, as well as the devastating environmental effects that certain activities can cause.

¹³⁹ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*

¹⁴¹ US National Strategy for the Arctic Region, *the White House*, October 2022

¹⁴² Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹⁴³ *ibid*

In Josep Borrell's, vice-president of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, own words "The impact of climate change, security issues and rivalries are growing in the Arctic regions. So is the need for cooperation and multilateral agreements."¹⁴⁴

According to Borrell, Arctic regions are a perfect illustration of why the EU Green Deal is needed, and of how broadly Europe's geopolitical interests must be conceived. He will reiterate that a safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous Arctic is important not just for the Arctic itself, but also for the European Union and actually the whole world.

It is worth mentioning that the Commission's vice-president only uses a logical sequence when referring to achieving carbon neutrality by stating that the only way to address the crisis is through national measures combined with international cooperation, as has been acknowledged by liberal internationalist theorists for decades. He keeps on saying that the EU is pushing hard to reform its internal policies but the European Union only accounts for a small percentage of global emissions, so the EU must work with all its partners around the world, and not least the Arctic states, to reach the aims of the Paris Agreement.

In connection with climate change, there is also a lot of attention these days on hard security issues and on competition for resources in the Arctic region. Russia, for instance, is rebuilding many of its Arctic military capabilities that had fallen into disrepair at the end of the Cold War.

The US together with NATO forces have carried out exercises in Arctic waters, and China is becoming increasingly interested in the economic potential of the region and the possibilities for shipping offered by the melting of boreal sea ice. In its 2018 Arctic policy China even described itself as a 'near Arctic state'. These developments cannot be separated from global geopolitical dynamics.¹⁴⁵

"There is also a lot of attention these days on hard security issues and on competition for resources in the Arctic region"¹⁴⁶

However, what is most remarkable is that the vice-president of the EU Commission will proceed to declare that "with growing competition for resources and influence, it is more important than ever that international cooperation remains the norm in the Arctic region. So, while others may push for nationalist approaches and power projection, the EU must continue to bang the drum for regional and multilateral cooperation to solve related challenges".¹⁴⁷

Reintroducing Ikenberry's obduracy about the likeliness of the international order persisting in the Arctic in connection with the Commission's vice-president's remarks, since he argues that its survival does not depend on all of its members being liberal democracies.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Borrell, Josep "The Arctic, a key region for the EU and global security" (2021)

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*

¹⁴⁸ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

In a historical account Ikenberry goes back to the return of isolationism, the rise of illiberal regimes such as China and Russia, and the general recession of liberal democracy in many parts of the world which appear to bode ill for the liberal international order. But he emphatically states that contrary to conventional wisdom, many of its institutions are not uniquely liberal in character. Rather, they are Westphalian, in that they are designed merely to solve problems of sovereign states, whether they be democratic or authoritarian.¹⁴⁹ An illustrative example of this is the building of international institutions by democracies cooperating with the Soviet Union through world organizations during the Cold War. More recently, the signatories of the Paris Climate Agreement, for instance, also include autocracies such as China, Iran or Russia. These Westphalian approaches have also thrived when governing the commons, such as the ocean, the atmosphere, outer space or Antarctica.¹⁵⁰

Such agreements are not challenges to the sovereignty of the states that create them but collective measures to solve problems they cannot address on their own.¹⁵¹

Most institutions in the liberal order do not demand that their backers be liberal democracies; they only require that they be status quo powers and capable of fulfilling their commitments. They do not challenge the Westphalian system. The UN, for example, enshrines the principle of state sovereignty and, through the permanent members of the Security Council, the notion of great-power decision-making. All of this makes the order more durable. Because much of international cooperation has nothing at all to do with liberalism or democracy.¹⁵²

The liberal order itself was built in part to contain the threat of the Soviet Union and international communism,¹⁵³ so if Russia ends up competing in the Arctic with the liberal democracies, they will again face pressure to champion their values, to undertake domestic reforms and strengthen their international alliances. Which seems to be what they turned to by the policies, and more specifically the US Strategy which is national implying its international power dimension as a sovereign state as well as its domestic consequent implications. An unfortunate renewed ideological rivalry could be good news for the liberal International order.

Such a proposition which daring and unexpectedly manages to reverse the outcome unexpectedly still keeps in line with the position both EU and US manifest by strengthening the alliances.

To conclude this point, one more note pointed out once again by liberal internationalists is that liberal international order, although treated as ephemeral and fragile, is actually quite resilient. It did not emerge by accident; it was the product of deeply held interests. Over the decades, the activities and interests of countless actors—corporations, civic groups, and government bureaucracies—have become intricately entangled in these complicated institutions.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*

¹⁵⁰ *id*

¹⁵¹ *id*

¹⁵² *id*

¹⁵³ *id*

¹⁵⁴ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

Returning to the policies, and more specifically, to the coordination among them. Intergovernmental cooperation occurs when the policies being implemented by one government are seen by its counterparts as contributing to the achievement of their own goals, as a consequence of a process involving policy coordination.

US economic interests abroad have depended on establishing a political environment in which capitalism could flourish, and that American political and security interests depended on economic recovery in Europe, among other places.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, at other times, historically American influence and prestige were enhanced by leading a successful collective effort to ensure energy security.¹⁵⁶

Most governments still adhere to the traditional propositions stating that wealth is an absolutely essential means to power, whether for security or for aggression; power is essential or valuable as a means to the acquisition or retention of wealth; wealth and power are each proper ultimate ends of national policy; there is a long-run harmony between these ends, although in particular circumstances there might be economic trade-offs in the short-run.¹⁵⁷

A state invests in power resources when it binds allies to itself or creates international regimes in which it plays a central role. Cooperation, according to Keohane, in world political economy, however, is less an effort to implement high ideals than as a means of attaining self-interested economic and political goals.¹⁵⁸

States are the crucial actors that not only seek wealth and power directly but strive to construct frameworks of rules and practices that will enable them to secure these objectives in the future.¹⁵⁹

The United States basically shaped the system, as much as the system shaped *it*, and it retained greater lee-way for autonomous action than other countries as well.¹⁶⁰

Such historical references must be taken into account to understand the current situation. However, in recent history the crucial factor creating conflict has been American politics not the material factors, as Keohane mentioned already.

If the US were to want a more prominent leading position in the Arctic it should then be closer to becoming powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, following Keohane's distinction between hegemony and leadership.

As also previously mentioned, concerns are typically of a dual nature, encompassing both political and economic dimensions. Regimes are predominantly crafted by governments with the

¹⁵⁵Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1984)

¹⁵⁶ id

¹⁵⁷ id

¹⁵⁸ id

¹⁵⁹ id

¹⁶⁰ id

primary objective of advancing the interests of their respective nations. Their pursuit revolves around the attainment of wealth and power, and conceivably, other values, notwithstanding the rhetoric they may employ regarding global well-being or a world conducive to interdependence. Consequently, the emphasis rests on the intrinsic attributes of influential states.

Hence, a Western strategic coalition would exhibit a diminished preoccupation with matters of relative gains in comparison to non-aligned states. States in an alliance context tend to display a reduced sensitivity towards the relative shifts in economic advance that may ensue from unrestricted trade. In a similar way, proponents of realism contend that military allies perceive mutual relative gains as contributing to the overall potency of the alliance.

I do sustain with Ikenberry that Biden's Administration does *follows cooperative interests* and therefore is not only a power-seeking America but a partner-seeking America which is aware of a new global order and its responsibilities towards the future.

However, while the Arctic states bear the principal duty for addressing matters within their boundaries, it is evident that many of these concerns are most effectively resolved through regional and multilateral collaboration.

Even though the United States' relative power is waning, the international system that the country has sustained for seven decades is remarkably durable. As long as interdependence—economic, security-related, and environmental—continues to grow in the Arctic, the peoples and governments of the Arctic States and globally, will be compelled to work together to solve problems or suffer grievous harm. By necessity, these efforts will build on and strengthen the institutions of the liberal order.¹⁶¹

Even if that is not the case anymore it is interesting to reflect on the question of American's nature as an hegemon for our theoretical purposes, since maintaining a liberal order for Arctic matters at present times might be of utmost importance. It has a distinctively liberal cast because it has been more consensual, cooperative, and integrative than it has been coercive. The distinctive features of this system—particularly its transparency, the diffusion of power into many hands, and the multiple points of access to policy-making—have enabled Western European and other allies to participate in policymaking for the overall system. As a result, American hegemony has been highly legitimate and has been an 'empire by invitation'.¹⁶²

When a liberal state is hegemonic [...] transnational relations are the vehicles by which subordinate actors in the system represent their interests to the hegemonic power and the vehicle through which consensus between the hegemon and lesser powers is achieved. Thus, these transnational relations are a vital component of the operation of the system. A system which provides transparency, access, representation, and communication and consensus-building mechanisms for subordinate states to achieve effective

¹⁶¹ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹⁶² *ibid*

representation.¹⁶³ Therefore, a very suitable system for the specific context of the Arctic.

A complex communication system is continuously shaping preferences and thus moderating the divergence of interests among actors in the system. Transnational networks also serve to forge a consensus and lobby policymakers throughout the system. In hegemonic systems infused with transnational relations, the legitimacy of asymmetrical relationships is enhanced. Such processes endow the relations with a degree of acceptability by the weaker powers. This in turn reduces the tendency for weaker powers to resist. Such legitimacy endows hegemonic systems with a greater degree of stability and resilience producing a fundamentally reciprocal political order.¹⁶⁴

A distinctive feature of the American state is its decentralized structure, which provides numerous points of access to competing groups, both domestic and foreign. The fundamental character of the American liberal state is that it is elaborately articulated and accessible to groups and forces emerging from civil societies.¹⁶⁵

The concept at play entails the extrapolation of these inherent features of the American system onto the sphere of the Arctic. This would canalize the inclusion of the diverse Arctic states, regions as well as the indigenous communities, within the framework of this system. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, in Keohane's view, liberal states precisely practice a more mutual and reciprocal co-binding that overcomes the effects of anarchy without producing hierarchy; a symmetrical co-binding which tries to overcome the problems and dynamics of anarchy by establishing institutions of mutual constraint. Co-binding practices are particularly suited to democratic and liberal states because their internal structures more readily lend themselves to the establishment of institutions that constrain state autonomy, and when successful, it reduces the necessity for units to have strong and autonomous state apparatuses.¹⁶⁶

The EU could be used as a prime example of a co-binding system. Over half a century ago, the desire to overcome the dynamics of anarchy also gave rise to an agenda for economic co-binding, in Europe. The European union movement explicitly sought to achieve economic interdependence between Germany and her neighbors so as to make strategic military competition much more costly and difficult to undertake. The first fruit of this program, the European Coal and Steel Community, effectively pooled these heavy industries that had been essential for war making. In its administration of the Marshall Plan, the United States sought to encourage the creation of joint economic organizations in order to create economic interdependencies that crossed over the traditional lines of hostilities between European states. The United States also supported the creation of political institutions of European union, so as to bind the European states together and foreclose a return to the syndromes of anarchy. American supporters of European reconstruction as well as European advocates of the European community

¹⁶³ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions and State Power, Essays in International Relations Theory," Routledge, 1989, New York

explicitly sought to create European institutions that were more like the United States than the traditional Westphalian states in anarchy.¹⁶⁷

The fact that the Joint Communication does not even mention Brexit as something that affects the EU's role in the Arctic is certainly not a sign of EU confidence. Brexit is an issue for the EU's Arctic role. The EU has lost major institutions that were an intrinsic part of its contribution to Arctic affairs, such as Arctic research capacities including the British Antarctic Survey, maritime insurance companies, military and search and rescue capabilities, as well as the UK's exclusive economic zone. The latter added to the Commission's weight in fisheries negotiations with North Atlantic partners. Most of all, Brexit is the sign of the constant existential threat to the EU and its basic pillars.¹⁶⁸

An equally notable factor is the rapid degradation of the intergovernmental cooperation architecture that had previously managed to guarantee the stability of the Arctic region. As Russia is the largest Arctic country by geographical size, Moscow plays a major role in the various regional cooperation frameworks, thus having substantial leverage in shaping local policies. This implies on the EU side the necessity to carefully reflect on the multilateral avenues at its disposal in the region, and how to best exploit them to promote its interests. Alongside the Arctic Council, which has long been the focus of the EU's attention, other instruments exist, such as the Northern Dimension Policy (NDP), through which the EU can carve out a comprehensive Arctic role for itself.¹⁶⁹

The EU's attempt to obtain the role of formal observer in the Arctic Council is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. Arctic governance, however, encompasses a plurality of institutions and instruments, and of political, diplomatic and legal tools, through which Arctic policies are promoted and adopted beyond the Arctic Council framework. For example, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, of which the European Commission is a member (in addition to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Russia, Norway and Sweden) constitutes another inter-governmental body aimed at promoting stability and sustainable development. Another example is the NDP, adopted in the late 1990s by the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between Brussels and the Nordic countries. Its projects are mainly focused on four areas: environment, culture, transport and logistics, and public health and social well-being.¹⁷⁰

While the mandates of the Arctic Council and NDP are broadly similar, there are differences in membership and geographical focus. While Brussels has limited participation in the Arctic Council, it plays a leading role in the NDP. Here, the North American component is absent, which may give the EU greater freedom of initiative, but at the same time deprives Brussels of

¹⁶⁷ Ikenberry, G. John, "A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020)

¹⁶⁸ Stępień, Adam, and Andreas Raspotnik. "Continuity with Great Confidence: The European Union's 2021 Arctic Policy Update." (2021)

¹⁶⁹ Cinciripini, Luca "The Arctic within EU Strategies: A Renewed Centrality" (2023)

¹⁷⁰ Cinciripini, Luca "The Arctic within EU Strategies: A Renewed Centrality" (2023)

allies. This different geographical focus may nonetheless represent an opportunity, as it offers the possibility for the EU to promote a common strategic framing of the Arctic and the Baltic, connecting two contexts that are facing similar challenges.¹⁷¹

Similar to the Arctic Council, the NDP was also suspended following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with no signs of recovery so far. Nevertheless, its very existence demonstrates that there may be a plurality of instruments at the EU's disposal to carve out a meaningful role for itself in the region and promote a strong security community.¹⁷²

Lastly, the Joint Communication conclusion commits the EU to increased engagement in and around the Arctic region, in response to the array of challenges the region faces, encompassing geopolitical, environmental, economic, security, and social aspects. Furthermore, the EU is dedicated to collaborating with other stakeholders to offer new opportunities within the region. The EU's actions in the Arctic are set to expand, comprising both ongoing efforts and new areas of expertise. As part of its policy, the EU wishes to cooperate with all key partners and stakeholders, both in the Arctic and beyond. This approach acknowledges the shared responsibility of working towards a safe, sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful Arctic, which is in the interest of the entire world."

Shifting focus to strategies that can prevent the High North from being ensnared in self-interested politics, Robert Keohane's concept of political regimes holds particular appeal.¹⁷³

Due to the diverse interests and many open questions regarding the exploitation of resources, security or the extension of the continental shelves, it is difficult to build an institutional framework that leads to common policies. Foreign policy that implements a political regime could help to surmount that mistrust and build the foundation for a political system in the Arctic.¹⁷⁴

A central assumption is that a regime itself is not a political actor, but states can use it as a certain tool to put through their interests more easily. Hence, a regime would function as some sort of 'catalyst for cooperation'. By this means, cooperation is based on specific 'issue areas' within a policy area. The more complex the problem area is, the stronger is the interdependence of the actors. As the Arctic is a highly diversified and multifaceted issue area, the density of interdependence is rather high.¹⁷⁵

Another 'hope-for effect' of a regime is the higher transparency, as well as the continuous exchange of information. If all members of the regime have the same influx of information about what the others are doing, the non-compliance with (informal) norms becomes less likely.¹⁷⁶

Another reason why the Arctic states should follow an open information policy is what Keohane calls 'the shadow of the future'. As policymaking in the Arctic is still relatively young,

¹⁷¹ id

¹⁷² id

¹⁷³ Schulze, Vincent-Gregor "The Shadow of the Future: The Demand for an Arctic Regime" 2017

¹⁷⁴ id

¹⁷⁵ id

¹⁷⁶ id

and the institutionalization is still in progress, today's decisions are determining the Arctic future massively. A regime that acts as a catalyst to cooperation can prevent decisions which lead to unintended consequences that, in the worst case, are irreversible.¹⁷⁷

Applied to the Arctic, it is preferable for the states to follow an agenda of transparency, as well as to build up an effective system for exchanging information. Currently, this already works on a 'soft power' level through the University of the Arctic and the track-II-diplomacy offered by the Arctic Circle Assembly, and other sub-regional organizations such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. By this means, diplomatic misunderstandings or conflicts are avertible through a current stream of reliable information among all regime actors, and institutionalized by a system of repeat consultations.¹⁷⁸

It is often argued that the costs of cooperation, compared to its benefits are too high. When we look at European integration, high costs are a regularly reiterated argument against closer cooperation. In fact, regimes help in reducing the transaction costs between its members and within an issue area. By the establishment of defined procedures for negotiations based on institutional frameworks, the conclusion of agreements will be accelerated. As the agreements come into force earlier, the 'shadow of the future' will be averted.¹⁷⁹

As Schulze foresaw in his article *The Shadow of the Future: The Demand for an Arctic Regime*, neorealist approaches and Regime Theory are still highly controversial. This holds significant value, as reconsidering these approaches within the context of the future Arctic is poised to unlock new venues for policy makers, academics, and notably the peoples who will be directly impacted by the transformations in the Arctic.

¹⁷⁷ Schulze, Vincent-Gregor "The Shadow of the Future: The Demand for an Arctic Regime" 2017

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*

CONCLUSION

“It is not inevitable that history will end with the triumph of liberalism, but it is inevitable that a decent world order will be liberal.”¹⁸⁰

The question about why the Arctic recent Arctic policies issued by the US and the EU converge must be linked to the possibility of the liberal world order as we know it continuing in the future, based on cooperation and interdependence, should be the concluding question.

Sharing many of John Ikenberry’s thoughts on the matter, the global landscape is currently in a state of transition, and the established order that has persisted for the past seventy-five years is evidently under considerable strain and experiencing multifaceted crises. Broadly considering this situation, the shadow of global warming has engendered a more widespread erosion of confidence in collective solutions to shared challenges. The multilateral perspective held by liberal internationalists suggests a discernible decline in its effectiveness compared to earlier periods. Recent events, such as the growing friction with illiberal major powers that actively oppose the Western liberal-oriented order, notably Russia and China, have dashed any optimism for their rapid democratic transition and support for the liberal global order. Instead, these powers have reinforced their authoritarian systems and flouted established norms, creating an atmosphere of significant instability and uncertainty in the present international order.

Basic questions about what are the sources and what has been the history of this order may help predict if liberal democracy can make a comeback; can capitalism and democracy be brought back into balance in the context of inequality and dysfunction and dislocation; and what is the future of liberal internationalism or institutionalism, understood as a mode of organizing the world in a cooperative organization of the global system.

Looking back to place today in a broader historical context and in doing so drawing the observation that the liberal international order did not begin in 1989 nor even really in 1945, that it has been a longer struggle by liberal democratic states and partners over at least 200 years to work towards building a global order that would be congenial for the emerging polities of liberal democracies. There have been extraordinary moments of golden eras and crises. If one looks over the longer period, the unipolar liberal moment looks more anomalous than the greater period of strong contestation. The liberal order has been through an agonistic story of challenge, conflict, and adaptation. In the decade of the 1940s when there was such great disruption in the global system that liberal democracy was close to extinction, trying to make sense of a world that had just seen the Great Depression, a World War, the rise of fascism and of totalitarianism, the Holocaust and the dropping of the atomic bomb, all within a very small part of world history; and yet that generation of liberals wanted to rebuild open societies and took it as their own task to do so. So, drawing from that period, a lesson from the way liberal democracies have struggled in the

¹⁸⁰ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order" *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

past and found solutions, now too we can be persuaded into believing that through liberalism, as a way of projecting the world, with its fair share of well-deserved criticism, can still go forward.

The Biden administration, which we can use as a current paradigm, in many ways is the embodiment of what we might believe is an earnest, well-meaning American administration that wishes the liberal order to progress and might allow us to draw some diagnostic conclusions.

First and foremost, though, the notion of a liberal democracy order should be re-oriented as to understand why we stand for a “world for democracy”. This, which became in Woodrow Wilson’s words a slogan for a program of spreading democracy worldwide should be read as to make the world safe for liberal democracy to survive. Safety is key to create an environment, a geopolitical setting for liberal democracies to endure. However, Ikenberry reminds us not to think about the global order as a whole but as a subset of that order, instead. An ecosystem in which liberal democracies and other hybrid regimes are working to create rules and institutions to manage their mutual vulnerabilities.

Liberal democracies are incredibly complicated. They are built around principles that are inconsistent or antagonistic, liberty and equality, individualism and community, sovereignty and interdependence. The flaws are inherently built into the system, and indeed celebrated, since that also allows the system’s politics to engage in a balancing and trade-off exercise and to aggregate their power when dealing with larger environmental and geopolitical crises.

Liberal institutionalism should now be reshaped as a pragmatic opportunistic problem-solving tradition. Not ignoring, however, the difficulties it is now enduring. There is a deep sense that the present and close future are somber.

One can identify three recent events when liberal order has faced questions about its viability. The Iraq War resulted from a liberal unipolar America. A failure that discredited part of the internationalist elites in Washington; the 2008 financial crisis also had that effect for internationalist elites on the democratic side, a crisis that weakened the ability of American leaders to rise and advocate for the consideration national interest in global, internationalist terms; and lastly, the liberal bet on China.

One of the new, significant challenges for the global liberal order, particularly relevant to us due to its current importance and its repercussions on the Arctic, is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This event, once again, raises the question of the most effective approach, even in the long term. It underscores the importance of preserving the established world order, strengthening international cooperation institutions, and fortifying a model that, despite its fluctuations, has consistently yielded positive outcomes, as examined in this research.

The liberal order can account for some great historical accomplishments, such the reopening of the world economy after WWII, creating a framework for Germany and Japan to reorient their great power status that even today are positively different than the other traditional great powers. Also, and only feasible because of this framework were Germany and France able to overcome their historic differences and start with the Coal and Steel Community and create a

foundation for the launching of the European Union. Trilateral cooperation took root during and after the Cold War and then came the so-called G7 countries.

It served as a platform that offered a form of hospitable reception to nations in the midst of transitions, spanning across East Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Southern Europe, and beyond. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the number of democracies witnessed a twofold increase, and these states discovered refuge, where they could access security, economic support, and various other benefits. Notably, even China has experienced its most prosperous decades in over two millennia, operating under the umbrella of what was formerly referred to as "Pax Americana." Consequently, this framework has provided China with opportunities as well.

From this evidence, we could learn important lessons while also maintaining our faith in the historical success of the global liberal order. This order has effectively established a diverse coalition that comprises a multi-layered platform comprehending numerous institutions, spanning economic, security, political, and environmental aspects. It has demonstrated the ability to forge problem-solving capabilities through integration and various forms of collaboration.

One could argue that it experienced a success marred by shortcomings. During the Cold War, for instance, the liberal order, formerly referred to as the "free world," constituted a coalition of countries within the framework of a bipolar world order. This arrangement gave rise to shared incentives and capabilities among these states, transforming them into a mutual aid society, primarily for security purposes. This structure, in turn, facilitated intergovernmental relations to manage interdependence. Within this alliance system, the distinct character of the liberal order was clearly defined, determining which countries belonged to it and which did not. It specified the implications of membership and the requirements for accession. However, with the end of the Cold War, this system began to unravel. The liberal order transitioned into a system that allowed countries, such as China, to exploit specific aspects of the complex network of institutions while avoiding a complete embrace of its accompanying rights and responsibilities. Notably, the logic of conditionality, a key element of the liberal order's success, has faltered. To ensure the continuation of the liberal order, it must undergo a process of reinvention and reconstruction for the upcoming era, preserving its "club-like" character.

In this context, we find that President Biden's allusions, and particularly in the American National Arctic Strategy, aligning with the European Arctic policy within the framework of the evolving geopolitical landscape. These alignments pertain to the concept of democratic nations collectively perceiving the world as structured around a coalition of liberal democracies, which collectively drive the reformative agenda. This approach deliberately avoids any semblance of bloc-oriented thinking akin to the Cold War era. Instead, it underscores the potential of nations to collaborate effectively and jointly define the future of the new global order. The key determinant lies in the capacity of a group of states to forge resilient coalitions, partnerships or alignments, that can exert substantial influence over political developments to aim them in the right direction.

Both Arctic policies highlight the shared commitment of the United States and the European Union to foster connections with like-minded nations. However, this should be approached as a two-level strategy, involving not only strengthening ties with similar nations but

also extending outreach to other countries, notably Russia and China. In line with the ideas expressed by Ikenberry, it is vital to recognize that the global milieu is not confined to a zero-sum paradigm. It is a complex domain where numerous interconnected relationships and multifaceted issues require collective efforts, even in cases where there may be disagreements on values and other aspects. But what there is no doubt about is that the Arctic extends beyond the responsibility of any single region, government agency¹⁸¹ or even nation.

During his time in the Obama administration, President Biden, in his diplomatic capacity, played a crucial role in establishing partnerships, particularly in tackling intricate and complex issues. He actively cultivated an extensive network of relationships. Therefore, it came as no surprise when he repeatedly emphasized the terms "partnership" and "alliance" in his address to the United Nations in early October. This choice of language highlights a deliberate strategy aimed at nurturing a broad coalition.

Secondly, there is a firm conviction that liberal democracy is confronting substantial challenges, with the United States being a particular focal point. A genuine worry exists that there could be a notable regression or a resurgence of leadership akin to that of former President Trump, potentially leading to a more dysfunctional and quasi-authoritarian system. This prevailing unease accentuates the urgency to demonstrate the effectiveness of democracy before other forces regain strength. Within this context, democracy plays an indispensable role in determining the success of the international order. The aspiration to protect institutions founded on open societies, fundamental rights, and freedoms remains intrinsic to our vision for the future in the 21st century.

Finally, there is a distinct and purposeful emphasis on China, referenced repeatedly throughout the study due to its Arctic aspirations, characterized by strategic competition, or systemic rivalry as has also been called. It transcends the military dimension and encompasses a competition involving the clash of ideas, modernity projects, and the race for technological supremacy. It is an overarching competition on whether our governance systems and institutions adhere to the principles of liberal democracy or veer towards autocracy.

In this context, it is essential to acknowledge that multilateralism and international institutions are not neutral when it comes to values and norms. They play a vital role in the ongoing struggle over principles and regulations, especially in relation to next-generation technology. The significance of coalition partners cannot be overstated, as they provide both critical mass and platforms, as well as the advantages associated with pioneering efforts. Therefore, in a world where alternative ideologies to liberal democracy are a serious concern it compels nations to reevaluate and reaffirm their convictions and choices.

The architects of the liberal system perceived that a world populated by liberal states would be much more compatible with American interests and the survival of democracy and capitalism in the United States.¹⁸² The West's common civic identity is intimately associated with capitalism, and its business and commodity cultures. As Susan

¹⁸¹ US National Strategy for the Arctic Region, the White House, October 2023

¹⁸² Ikenberry, John G. "Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Fall 1989)

Strange argues, capitalism has generated a distinctive ‘business civilization’.¹⁸³ Across the advanced industrial world, capitalism has produced a culture of market rationality that permeates all aspects of life.¹⁸⁴

However, hegemonic leadership is unlikely to be revived currently for the United States, and during peacetime, weaker countries have tended to gain on the hegemon rather than vice-versa.¹⁸⁵ Although hegemony can facilitate cooperation, it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for it. And post-hegemonic cooperation can also exist, especially by developing institutions and practices that enable them to cooperate more effectively without renouncing the pursuit of self-interest.¹⁸⁶ If the US were to want a more prominent leading position in the Arctic it should then be closer to becoming powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, following Kohane’s distinction between hegemony and leadership.

International cooperations among the advanced industrialized countries since the end of World War II has probably been the longest in history. Certainly the extent and complexity of efforts to coordinate state economic policies has also been much greater. Yet cooperation remains scarce relative to discord because of the growth of international economic interdependence and the involvement of governments in the operation of modern capitalist economies, have created more points of potential friction. However, the existence of common interests can lead to cooperation.¹⁸⁷

And quoting Keohane and Nye, ‘*relative to cost*, there is no guarantee that military means will be more effective than economic ones to achieve a given purpose’¹⁸⁸

Nevertheless, in advanced market-economies, these interests are manifold. Countries are engaged with each other in extensive relationships of interdependence and their governments’ policies reflect the belief that they benefit from those ties. Furthermore, they’re on friendly political terms; thus, political-military conflicts between them complicate the politics of economic transactions.¹⁸⁹ The argument that I have come to sustain with Keohane is that interdependence is what creates interest in cooperation.

The idea that concerns us involves extending the fundamental characteristics of the American system into the context of the Arctic region. This approach aims to incorporate the various Arctic states, regions, and indigenous communities into the framework of this system.

These Arctic policies serve to reaffirm the liberal theories presented herein. They exemplify the practical application of the ideological framework advanced by scholars who have upheld a strong foundation in solid liberal values for a significant span of time, emphasizing state interdependence at various levels, a free-market economy, the protection of human rights, and,

¹⁸³ Strange, Susan "States and Markets" (New York: Blackwell, 1988)

¹⁸⁴ Ikenberry, John G. "Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Fall 1989)

¹⁸⁵ Gilpin, Robert G. "War and Change in World Politics" (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

¹⁸⁶ Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1984)

¹⁸⁷ Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1984)

¹⁸⁸ Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye "Power and Interdependence," *International Organization*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Autumn, 1987), Published by The MIT Press.

¹⁸⁹ Keohane, Robert O. "After hegemony" Vol. 54. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1984)

crucially, in the context discussed here, the cooperation among states sustaining common structures and institutions that enable collective prosperity.

The weakness of theory, but the hope for policy, lies in the fact that people/governments adapt their strategies to reality. Adaptative strategies of institution-building can also change reality, thereby fostering mutually beneficial cooperation.

However, although liberalism as an ideology emerged in the West, its values have become universal and much of international cooperation has nothing at all to do with liberalism or democracy.¹⁹⁰

As Shultz recounts in his article *The Shadow of the Future: The Demand for an Arctic Regime*, Neorealist approaches, the Regime Theory and Robert Keohane are still highly controversial and the content of heated discussions on the field of International Relations. This is good because rethinking these approaches in the context of the future Arctic will open new opportunities for policy makers, scholars and, not to forget, the people who will be affected by the changes in the Arctic.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. "Liberal world: The resilient order." *Foreign Aff.* 97 (2018)

¹⁹¹ Schulze, Vincent-Gregor "The Shadow of the Future: The Demand for an Arctic Regime" 2017

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