

China Enters the Arctic

Icelandic Newspapers and Their Coverage on China's Arctic Policy

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Abstract

This thesis draws attention to China's information management of its Arctic policy, and the way in which China has left out information in official English-language publications that could be deemed sensitive by Western actors. This thesis examines how the news media of Iceland has reported on China's Arctic policy over two different periods, dating from 2012 - 2013 and 2018 - 2019, in order to measure whether the Chinese state has been successful in their efforts. For this study, two newspapers were chosen: *Morgunblaðið* and *Fréttablaðið*, which both have a large reader-base. The chosen methodology of qualitative content analysis along with quantitative elements was utilised in order to answer the research question. The results of this study show that the coverage of the two papers has been slightly more positive than negative over both periods, although the editorials showcase that *Morgunblaðið* remained significantly more wary of Chinese intentions throughout both periods, and only slightly more positive towards economic co-operation in the latter period. However, due to a decline in coverage of China's Arctic policy during the latter period, especially in *Fréttablaðið*, it is difficult to say for sure whether there has been a change in media discourse.

Keywords: China, Iceland, The Arctic, International Relations, Social Constructivism, Qualitative Content Analysis

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In January of 2018, The People's Republic of China released its white paper on China's Arctic policy, thus making known its official intentions in the region to the outside world. China had certainly been paying closer attention to the Arctic in the years and decades prior to the release of the paper, and various remarks and actions made by Chinese officials had illustrated the importance of the Arctic to the Chinese state. Most notably prior to the publishing of the white paper, China had successfully become an observer state of the Arctic Council back in 2013.¹ However, with the publishing of the white paper, China has sought to further cement its status as a "Near-Arctic State", and an important stakeholder in the region, as the white paper proclaims.²

China's Arctic policy has received different responses in the fields of Western academia and news media depending on what theoretical school of thought scholars and media commentators adhere to. In that regard, scholars and media commentators adhering to the theoretical schools of realism and liberalism seem to have produced the most text on the topic. However, as will be seen further on in chapter two of this thesis, several scholars have also drawn attention to a certain information gap that they believe exists between official Chinese state publications which are published in English and aimed at Western audiences as well as Chinese-language publications that are aimed at domestic audiences.^{3,4,5}

Likewise, China's Arctic white paper has also been criticised by scholars who adhere to this strand of thought for leaving out information that could be deemed sensitive by Arctic actors, such as the national-security significance of the Arctic for the Chinese state, as it is seen as being unfit for foreign consumption.⁶ As a result, the author believes that China's efforts to omit these sensitive topics can be seen as an attempt by Chinese officials to try to construct a unique Arctic identity specifically for Western consumption. As Chinese officials try to manage the information flow pertaining to China's Arctic policy in order to counter

¹ Arctic Council, "Observers," <https://www.arctic-council.org/en/about-us/arctic-council/observers> (accessed August 12, 2019).

² The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Full Text: China's Arctic Policy," last modified January 26, 2018, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm (accessed February 3, 2019).

³ Anne-Marie Brady, *China As a Polar Great Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 34.

⁴ Linda Jakobson and Jingchao Peng, *China's Arctic Aspirations*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 34, (Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Stockholms internationella fredsforskningsinstitut), (2012)), 16.

⁵ Jichang Lulu, "The Arctic White Paper and China's Arctic Strategy," *Asia Dialogue*, February 12, 2018, <http://theasiadialogue.com/2018/02/12/icy-xi-speak-and-northerly-exoprop-the-arctic-white-paper/> (accessed February 2, 2019).

⁶ Ibid.

negative coverage, it will be of a thing to note how successful these efforts have been before and after the publication of the white paper.

This thesis will try to assess how successful China's information management has been by looking at newspapers from a single Arctic nation, more specifically Iceland, in order to understand how China's Arctic policy has been reported on. As such, news articles and editorials from the two Icelandic newspapers selected will be analysed over two different periods. The newspapers in question were chosen as they are each thought to represent different types of media discourse. As such, the more conservative paper, *Morgunblaðið*, is expected to showcase bias towards the realist viewpoint, whereas the more liberal paper, *Fréttablaðið*, is expected to showcase bias towards the liberal viewpoint. The periods in question were then chosen to coincide with the year leading up to China's successful bid as an observer state in the Arctic Council, and a year after the publishing of China's Arctic white paper. It is a thing to note that during the former period a Chinese investor by the name of Huang Nubo sought to buy 300 square kilometres of land called *Grímsstaðir á fjöllum*, a remote place in the northeast of Iceland, before later scrapping his plans.⁷ Icelandic news media prominently covered the topic. No similar case was present during the latter period.

1.2. Research Question and Theoretical Approach

The aim of this thesis is to assess how successful China's information management regarding its Arctic policy has been in Iceland, before and after the publication of the white paper. The main research question that this study thus aims to answer is: *How has Icelandic news media reported on China's Arctic policy?*

Here, the definition of what constitutes China's Arctic policy warrants a clarification. China's Arctic policy as described in the white paper outlines China's plans in the region, and how it will approach other Arctic nations. This includes plans on infrastructure development, resource extraction, and research endeavours in the region.⁸ As such, news articles were specifically sought out that reported on Chinese investment in Iceland or in other nations that are members of the Arctic council, or where domestic actors actively sought out Chinese investment. The search also included news articles that reported on Chinese research in the Arctic, bilateral ties of Arctic nations with China, or editorials from the selected newspapers in which China's Arctic policy is mentioned.

⁷ The China Story, "Huang Nubo Tries to Buy Iceland," <https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2013/chapter-2-revolution-to-riches/huang-nubo-tries-to-buy-iceland/> (accessed August 13, 2019).

⁸ The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Full Text: China's Arctic Policy."

Furthermore, three sub-questions were devised in order to arrive at a more comprehensive answer to the main research question. They are as follows:

1. *Does news media echo the same realist/liberalist divide as evident within Western academic literature and news media?*

This sub-question aims to look at the tone in the news articles covering China's Arctic policy and answer whether the Icelandic papers mainly follow the trend as seen in Western media discourse. Has the coverage been mainly favourable, unfavourable, or neutral? This will be done by uncovering what the news articles report on, how they report on it, and what opinions they present.

2. *What themes can be extracted from the news articles?*

Looking at the themes that might be extracted from the news articles allows for a more thorough analysis of how China and China's Arctic policy has been perceived in Iceland. By answering this question, information that otherwise might have gone unnoticed will be uncovered in order to better understand if there were any main talking points in the news articles during the two periods. It will be of interest to note whether the themes that will be extracted might have any impact on China's implementation of its Arctic policy in Iceland.

3. *Has media discourse differed after the introduction of China's official white paper on the Arctic?*

In order to better understand the effects of China's information management on the reporting of China's Arctic policy in Icelandic newspapers, it is essential to understand whether there has been a change in coverage over time. It will be interesting to see whether the publication of China's white paper has resulted in a change in perception amongst the newspapers.

In answering the research question, and sub-research questions, the thesis takes a social constructivist approach. A social constructivist position asserts that the meaning of social phenomena is constantly being shifted through social interaction.⁹ As such, the author believes that the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of constructivism provide for a suitable set of tools in order to analyse how China's Arctic policy (and to a large extent China's Arctic identity) has been perceived and reported on in the Icelandic newspapers over the different periods.

⁹ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 4. ed. (Oxford University Press, 2012), 33.

Accordingly, the author finds objectivism to be unsuitable as an ontological basis for this study as such a position assumes that reality is pre-given and independent of agency, rather than being shaped and reconstructed through social interaction.¹⁰ Hence, this thesis is to a large extent qualitative in nature. However, the author uses a methodological approach which incorporates quantitative elements to a certain degree in conjunction with qualitative content analysis. Here, the quantitative elements were used to triangulate the findings and give them greater validity.¹¹

This thesis will in the following chapters seek to answer how China's Arctic policy has been reported on in Icelandic newspapers, whether the reports echo the realist-liberalist divide that is dominant in Western academic and media discourse, what themes can be extracted from the news articles, and whether there has been a change in media discourse over the two periods. As will be explored in chapter two, much of China's Arctic policy is constructed specifically for Western audiences. As such it will be interesting to note to what extent the Icelandic newspapers publish views that can be deemed wary of China's intentions and to what extent they publish views that are less critical of China's Arctic policy. Answers to these questions might help to better understand whether China's information management has been successful in Iceland, and it might also illustrate the potential difficulties China faces when trying to carry out its Arctic policy in the region.

1.3. Disposition

This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter two provides a background on how previous research and news media has reported on China's Arctic policy, and the theoretical underpinnings of those writings. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach, along with ethical considerations, limitations and reflexivity. Chapter four presents the findings of the thesis. Finally, chapter five offers a conclusion to this study.

¹⁰ Ibid, 32–33.

¹¹ Ibid, 633.

2. Review of Academic Literature and Media Discourse

This chapter reviews Western academic literature and media discourse on China's Arctic policy in order to analyse how it has been framed theoretically. As previously mentioned, Chinese policymakers have stressed that the focus of their Arctic policy is mainly on scientific co-operation and investment. According to these policymakers, China does not seek to be a revisionist power in the region. Nonetheless, China's Arctic policy has been a topic of hot debate in the West, both within scholarly circles and amongst political and media commentators alike. Largely, the literature on China's Arctic policy can be categorised into four different viewpoints out of which there are two that most scholars and media commentators adhere to.

The chapter starts with a closer look at how China's Arctic policy has been framed by different groups within academia and the media alike and how these viewpoints relate to a different theoretical school of thought within international relations. Ultimately, by engaging in a systematic review of how China's Arctic policy has been depicted will serve to identify areas that need further research.

2.1. Differing Views

The *first* viewpoint centres around China's Arctic policy as being a precursor to a more revisionist China in which Beijing seeks to challenge the status quo in the region in order to gain access to new shipping lanes and resources. This is allegedly done for the purposes of asserting Chinese interests in the Arctic.¹² This literature is prominently wary of China's intentions in the region and is predominantly realist in its analysis.

Realism has long been one of the leading theoretical frameworks in the field of international relations. Its theoretical underpinnings stretch back hundreds of years to such notable figures as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, while its more well-known modern proponents include the likes of Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer. This is due to realism being far from a unified body of thought and its definition can vary considerably.¹³

¹² Elizabeth Economy, "The Four Drivers Of Beijing's Emerging Arctic Play And What The World Needs To Do," *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabetheconomy/2014/04/04/the-four-drivers-of-beijings-emerging-arctic-play-and-what-the-world-needs-to-do/> (accessed January 28, 2019).

¹³ William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3, accessed February 15, 2019, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199219322.003.0007.

International relations (IR) scholar William C. Wohlforth argues that realist scholars tend to converge around four central propositions. First, politics take place within and between groups. Globally, the most important human groups are states.¹⁴ Second, when states act politically, they are driven by egoism. This means that states are driven by narrow self-interest, a behaviour which is deeply ingrained in human nature.¹⁵ Third, states conduct their business in a state of anarchy as there is no higher body of governance to arbitrate the behaviour of states internationally. This anarchic self-help system exacerbates the egoistic nature of states while imposing certain constraints on their ability to achieve their goals.¹⁶ Fourth and last, international relations are largely a politics of power and security. Since some states have more social, and material powers than others, politics unfold “[...] in the shadow of the potential use of material power to coerce”.¹⁷ To sum up, the realist viewpoint thus largely sees China’s recent interest in the Arctic as a threat, rather than as an opportunity for closer co-operation.

Scholars and commentators adhering to the *second* viewpoint mainly view institutions, such as the Arctic Council, as key for a meaningful dialogue between Western countries and China. Furthermore, China’s interest in the region is rather seen as a source of economic opportunities than a threat, thus offering a counter-argument to the realist viewpoint. These writings are therefore more liberal in tone.

Liberalist international theory has its roots in the liberal tradition which can be traced back to the earliest beginnings of Western history. However, liberalism first appeared as a full-fledged political doctrine in early modern times, exemplified by the works of the philosopher John Locke, and later by the writings of John Stuart Mill.¹⁸ At first, most liberalist academics were not international relations scholars but by the mid-twentieth century, a liberalist international relations theory had started to emerge.¹⁹

Liberalism as an international theory has been described by IR scholars Mark W. Zacher and Richard A. Matthew as having three central characteristics. First, international relations are slowly being transformed so as to promote greater human freedom. Through co-

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 3–4.

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸ Edwin van de Haar, *Classical Liberalism and International Relations Theory: Hume, Smith, Mises, and Hayek (The Palgrave Macmillan History of International Thought Series)*, (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17–18.

¹⁹ Mark W. Zacher and Richard A. Matthew, “Liberal International Theory: Common Threads, Divergent Strands” in *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neo-Liberal Challenge*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 108.

operation, like institutions or economic interdependence, for example, the conditions of peace, prosperity, and justice can be met.²⁰ Second, the growth of international co-operation is needed to maximise potential benefits and minimise possible disagreements that may arise from interactions and interdependencies. Co-operation may thus help to realise greater peace, welfare, and justice.²¹ Third and last, the process of modernisation plays a large role in liberal international theory. Since the late seventeenth-century modernisation has resulted in the possibility for humankind's dramatic improvement in moral character and material welfare.²²

The realist and liberalist viewpoints are by far those that most scholars and media commentators adhere to and most text that is produced on China and the Arctic is largely realist or liberal in its analysis. Despite this, two other strands of literature exist that also have to be taken into account.

The *third* viewpoint can mainly be found within academia rather than news media and has produced notably less literature than the previous two viewpoints. This strand of the literature prominently focuses on China's Arctic identity and norm making in the Arctic. Drawing from the ideas of the constructivist IR scholar Alexander Wendt, scholars adhering to this viewpoint use the analytical tools of social constructivism to analyse how China has conducted its Arctic policy, and how it has been received internationally.

Constructivism as an international relations theory is perhaps best known by the writings of Alexander Wendt who in 1995 asked the question why five North Korean nuclear weapons were more threatening to the United States than five hundred British nuclear weapons. According to Wendt, this stems from the fact that the United States are friends with the British and not with North Korea.²³ This observation forms the basis of the constructivist school of thought.

Constructivism has four distinct features that distinguish it from the other theoretical approaches, according to IR scholar Ian Hurd. First, constructivism is an alternative to materialism. That is why five hundred British nuclear weapons are less harmful in the eyes of the United States than five North Korean nuclear bombs. The theory thus posits the argument that meaning is socially constructed and can never be permanently fixed in place.²⁴ Second, interests are socially constructed, rather than fixed. Hurd remarks that “[t]he social

²⁰ Ibid, 109.

²¹ Ibid, 110.

²² Ibid.

²³ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 73.

²⁴ Ian Hurd, “Constructivism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed, Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3, accessed February 21, 2019, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199219322.003.0017.

constitution of interests encompasses all the ways that actors' interests and identities might be influenced by their interactions with others and with their social environment".²⁵ Third, agents can affect their structure, and structures can affect agents. As states and the international environment are mutually constituted, international norms, for example, can both be the creation of state actors while simultaneously restricting state behaviour.²⁶ Fourth and last, the condition of anarchy in the world system is not by itself indicative of how states will behave.²⁷ As Wendt said, "[s]tates act differently toward enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not".²⁸

Along with these three viewpoints, a distinct *fourth* type of literature also exists that prominently looks at domestic Chinese literature and Chinese-language sources in order to better understand China's Arctic policy. As with the constructivist viewpoint, this literature is mainly found within academia. Scholars and commentators adhering to this viewpoint focus on China's expanding role in the Arctic and its potential resource extraction, as well as the security issues that stem from China's engagement with Arctic nations, much like the realist literature. But what sets this viewpoint apart from that previous literature is its interest in domestic Chinese policy papers and Chinese-language material on the Arctic. This viewpoint is attentive to the differences between Chinese- and English-language materials that the Chinese state produces and how it chooses what information is available to Western nations. As a result, topics that might be seen as sensitive in the West are often left out of English-language materials produced by the Chinese state.²⁹ As such, this literature is certainly realist, but it might be said to be frequently informed by a constructivist perspective in the way it focuses on how the Chinese state produces an Arctic identity specifically for Western consumption.

In the following subchapters 2.2. - 2.5. a brief selection of the Western academic literature and global media discourse will be reviewed. Lastly, subchapter 2.6. will provide a summary of chapter 2.

²⁵ Ibid, 6.

²⁶ Ibid, 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 397.

²⁹ Jichang Lulu, "The Arctic White Paper and China's Arctic Strategy."

2.2. The Realist View

Much has been written on China's Arctic policy from a realist standpoint that views China as a revisionist power in the Arctic. This viewpoint assumes that China will become increasingly active in Arctic affairs as its global capabilities grow, leading to a scenario where the Chinese state will seek to challenge the status quo in the region in order to further its own interests. Here, scholars and commentators have, for example, drawn attention to how China seeks to project its formidable power in the Arctic in order to gain resources and secure its goals in the region, and how Arctic actors have to be wary of China's intentions.

IR scholars Stephen Blank and Younkyoo Kim argue that the recent bolstering of China's navy is an indication that China seeks to project its power well beyond its shores and mention the Arctic as a possible region of interest. These capabilities will no doubt cause problems to US interests and their allies. This also applies to Russia whose sovereignty in the region might face a threat from Chinese intentions as Moscow has classified the Arctic as a vital state interest.³⁰ Moreover, Chinese intentions have been made clear by the way China has acted internationally, such as when the People's Liberation Army Rear Admiral Yin Zhou's stated that the Arctic should belong to all the people around the world and that no state should have sovereignty over it. This, in turn, has made it difficult to trust the sincerity of Chinese officials when they later proclaimed that China respected the sovereignty of all Arctic states, following the acceptance of the "Nuuk Criteria" prior to its ascension to an observer state status in the Arctic Council.³¹

These sentiments are echoed by China scholar Elizabeth Economy who argues that both the statement from admiral Yin and the way in which Chinese officials have labelled China as a "near-Arctic state" (despite no part of China actually touching the Arctic) signal a larger intent of the Chinese state in Arctic affairs. She also remarks that the four main reasons for China's interest in the region: resources, trade, climate change, and strategic interests, don't mean much when looked at on their own. But when looked at collectively, they "[...] suggest a more significant drive to assert Chinese interests in the region."³²

China's Arctic ambitions also pose some security concerns according to the former Icelandic diplomat Einar Benediktsson, and former US diplomat Thomas R. Pickering. In an

³⁰ Stephen Blank and Younkyoo Kim, "The Arctic and New Security Challenges in Asia," *Pacific Focus* 28, no. 3 (2013): 321.

³¹ *Ibid*, 330.

³² Economy, "The Four Drivers Of Beijing's Emerging Arctic Play And What The World Needs To Do."

op-ed published in the New York Times in 2013, they argue that China is likely to become a major resource extractor in the Arctic region, noting that China has made efforts in recent years to gain access to mineral and energy resources all over the world. They assume that China's growing interest in the region is due to the abundance of resources found there, and because of that, they oppose this growing Chinese interest in both Greenland and Iceland. They also argue that China's interest in Iceland might result in the construction of support facilities for China and might thus be a stepping stone for a more assertive China "[...] with potential use for naval vessels patrolling the Arctic and the Northeast Polar Passage."³³

Furthermore, Roger W. Robinson, Jr. warns of the potential risk that Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) pose to Arctic nations who want to do business with China. Robertson writes that despite the fact that Chinese SOEs have often declared that they have no hidden governmental agenda when approaching the Arctic nations for business opportunities, this is certainly not the case. China's long game, he argues, involves SOEs gathering intelligence for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as well as serving as reconnaissance units for future PLA endeavours in the region.³⁴

2.3. The Liberal View

This strand of literature and media discourse perceives China's intentions in the Arctic in a more favourable light and emphasises the role of institutions and economic co-operation when engaging with China in the Arctic. Additionally, scholars and commentators adhering to the liberal view often write that China has received unwarranted criticism towards its Arctic policy.

London School of Economics professor Robert Wade stressed the importance of the economic opportunities that may present themselves in the Arctic due to rising sea temperatures back in 2008. In an opinion article published in the Financial Times, Wade specifically mentioned Iceland as a possible benefactor of these opportunities if the northern sea route were to open up even further. Iceland's ideal location for the building of a seaport that would connect the country with Asia and Iceland's amiable relationship with China are

³³ Einar Benediktsson and Thomas R. Pickering, "China Knocks on Iceland's Door," *The New York Times*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/13/opinion/china-knocks-on-icelands-door.html> (accessed January 29, 2019).

³⁴ Roger W. Robinson Jr., *China's "Long Con" in the Arctic*, (Ottawa: MacDonald-Laurier Institute, 2013), 7, <http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/MLIChina%27sLongConInTheArctic09-13Draft4-1.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2019).

thus mentioned as good reasons for further economic co-operation between the two countries.³⁵

The theme of co-operation is also prevalent in a recent paper published for the Finnish government in 2019 titled *China in the Arctic and the Opportunities and Challenges for Chinese-Finnish Arctic Co-operation*. In it several scholars write in detail about the future of Sino-Finnish co-operation. The report acknowledges that despite there being considerable hope amongst Finnish actors that Chinese investors could facilitate economic development, especially in northern Finland, there are still significant anxieties about the Chinese government gaining too great of a long-term influence on the northern economy. This might affect the current, largely positive attitude towards Chinese investors. Furthermore, the environmental and social performance of Chinese businesses, as well as their reliability and investment plans feasibilities have been called into question.³⁶

However, the authors of the paper also recognise that Chinese investors have significantly improved their track record in recent years.³⁷ Moreover, co-operation between Finland and China is on the rise with Finnish companies operating in China, and Chinese investment starting to come to Finland. Thus, Sino-Finnish co-operation projects show significant potential for the future of collaboration between Finnish and Chinese actors. Although Chinese infrastructure projects in Finland have raised concerns due to feasibility issues and challenges related to their financing, the authors mention Chinese investment in the Finnish biofuel and tourism industry as a potential avenue for further co-operation between the two nations. As it stands, such endeavours have yet to be realised. However, the most promising area of business for Finland is the design and construction of polar class vessels and components for Chinese actors. Here, projects have already been realised and successfully completed, paving the way for a potential further growth in this sector for Finnish companies.³⁸

On a similar note, Scholar Frédéric Lasserre has written about China's role in the Arctic council from a Canadian position. In the paper, a policy paper written mainly for Canadian domestic consumption, Lasserre writes about how the potential benefits of China's

³⁵ Robert Wade, "A Warmer Arctic Ocean Needs Shipping Rules," *Financial Times*, last modified January 15, 2008, <https://www.ft.com/content/1c415b68-c374-11dc-b083-0000779fd2ac> (accessed May 13, 2019).

³⁶ Timo Koivurova et al., *China in the Arctic; and the Opportunities and Challenges for Chinese-Finnish Arctic Co-Operation*, (Helsinki: Finland's Prime Minister's Office, 2019), 91, http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161371/8-2019-China_Arctic_andFinland.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed June 24, 2019).

³⁷ *Ibid*, 91.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 90-91.

ascension to an observer state status in the Arctic council is a potential opportunity for Canada, rather than a cause for concern as many have argued. Lasserre claims that Canada could do well to engage with China within the Arctic Council by “[...] working on building a common ground with China and taking its concerns and interests into account [...]”.³⁹ Even though the Arctic Council has its limitations, he says, it certainly offers an opportunity for dialogue and co-operation. This is especially important for Canada as the two countries share interests that overlap. Thus, China’s presence in the Arctic Council could be a real opportunity for Canada to advance its interests in collaboration with China.⁴⁰

In another study written by Lasserre, along with scholar Pierre-Louis Têtua, Chinese investment in Greenland is the topic of choice. In the paper they challenge the notion that Chinese presence in the country signals a larger intent by a resource-hungry China, and as such they believe that the negativity towards China is unwarranted. Their study of Chinese interests in Greenland relied on a multilevel survey which reached 15 companies, regulating bodies, and financial institutions, including representatives from all but one of the Chinese mining companies active in Greenland at the time.⁴¹ Their findings revealed that Greenland is far from a major focus of Chinese mining companies who remarked that Greenland’s extreme and remote location made it rather undesirable for mining operations. Moreover, given the recent drop in commodity prices as well as high costs in operating a mine in the country, Têtua and Lasserre conclude that a major Chinese-led mining boom is unlikely as of right now.⁴²

2.4. The Constructivist View

As previously mentioned, this particular strand of literature can mainly be found within academia and has produced less content than the realist and liberalist viewpoints. Scholars adhering to this school of thought often focus on China’s Arctic identity and how international norms can affect China’s behaviour in the Arctic.

In their paper *China’s Developing Arctic Policies: Myths and Misconceptions*, published in 2015, scholars Su Ping and Marc Lanteigne look at some of the claims written

³⁹ Frédéric Lasserre, *China and the Arctic: Threat or Cooperation Potential for Canada?*, (Toronto: Canadian International Council, China Papers no. 11, 2010), 11, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.475.2735&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (accessed February 2, 2019).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pierre-Louis Têtua and Frédéric Lasserre, “Chinese Investment in Greenland’s Mining Industry: Toward a New Framework for Foreign Direct Investment,” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 4, no. 3 (July 2017): 662–663.

⁴² Ibid, 669.

by those who see China's Arctic policy in a more negative light. In their minds, China's Arctic policy has received an unwarranted amount of criticism due to China's rising power status which has resulted in China being seen as a challenger in the region.⁴³ One of the more common misconceptions that Ping and Lanteigne observe has been towards China's relationship with Greenland. China's involvement has come under heavy scrutiny by observers, even though other nations such as Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, and the United Kingdom have also expressed interest in joint mining ventures in the country without receiving similar scrutiny. Moreover, when news surfaced that the British mining company London Mining would likely partner with a Chinese company for a potential mining venture at the Isua site in Greenland in 2012, a heated debate began about the potential implications of a Chinese workforce being stationed in Greenland. Thus, commentators feared that China was now "marching towards Greenland." This led to some reports stating that hundreds of Chinese miners had already arrived in the country. In the end a spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry had to address the controversy as no Chinese worker had set foot in Greenland at the time. Chinese economic interests in Greenland have thus according to them been "[...] subjected to misinformation and occasional alarmism".⁴⁴

Another misconception they mention is the idea that Beijing might not respect or recognise the rights of the Arctic states and that China in fact considers the Arctic strictly as an international space in which any state has the right pursue its economic interests. This idea, they argue, comes from the mistranslation of the comments made by PLA Rear Admiral Yin Zhou's which subsequently were taken out of context. In fact, his comment was not about the whole Arctic Ocean being global commons, but rather the central part of the region which lies outside of the exclusive economic zones of the Arctic nations.⁴⁵ Su and Lanteigne also note that if China were to take unilateral action and dispatch military vessels in the region, the consequences would be far too risky as the diplomatic cost would far outweigh the security benefit in question.⁴⁶

They observe that we are witnessing a phenomenon in which China's official Arctic identity is clashing with the revisionist identity of China which has been created by the West. This has led to many of the misconceptions in question.⁴⁷ In order to amend the situation,

⁴³ Marc Lanteigne and Su Ping, "China's Developing Arctic Policies: Myths and Misconceptions," *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (May 2015): 17, accessed January 31, 2019, doi: 10.5278/ojs.jcir.v3i1.1144.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

they call for the release of an official white paper on China's Arctic policy (subsequently released in January of 2018), which would educate the international community on China's official policy and thus help to remove some of the misconceptions surrounding China's goals in the region.⁴⁸

In another paper written solely by Lanteigne titled *'Have You Entered the Storehouse of the Snow?' China as a Norm Entrepreneur in the Arctic*, published in 2017, he shifts his focus to China's norm making capabilities. According to him, China has been trying to develop a norm which seeks to identify the Arctic as an international space in order not to be excluded from the region. As China is a relatively new actor in the Arctic, Chinese policymakers are concerned that other states might not accept China as an Arctic player in the region. Moreover, its lack of history of previous participation in the regions' affairs and its geography are a cause of concern. Thus, China's evolving Arctic identity and geography hinders it from being a unilateral norm-maker in the region.⁴⁹

To combat this, China has become a norm entrepreneur in the Arctic, promoting the idea of a larger inclusion of global actors in order to solve the key issues facing the region. Thus, Chinese policymakers have emphasised the need for more non-Arctic participants in order for the Arctic to "[...] remain stable and also to evolve and thrive". Therefore, China wishes to portray itself as a partner in the development of scientific and economic endeavours and will oppose any attempts to exclude it from any multilateral forms of Arctic co-operation.⁵⁰

2.5. China's Information Management

Amongst the Western literature on China's Arctic policy, there are some scholars that have looked prominently at Chinese-language sources in their writings. As previously mentioned, these commentators are largely realist in their own outlook, but their writings frequently deal with how China constructs a specific Arctic identity for Western consumption. As such it might be said to be fundamentally informed by a constructivist perspective.

One of the scholars who analyses Chinese-language sources in her writings is Anne-Marie Brady, whose 2017 book *China as a Polar Great Power* looks in detail at China's Arctic Policy. Brady draws on a multitude of Chinese-language source materials, including classified policy papers, discussion documents, and primary source materials. Her findings

⁴⁸ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁹ Marc Lanteigne, "'Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow?'" China as a Norm Entrepreneur in the Arctic," *Polar Record* 53, no. 2 (March 2017): 126.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

indicate that there is a certain information gap between Chinese-language information and English-language information produced in China. As such, sources in Chinese explain to the public that China's interest in the Arctic is a part of the state's efforts to secure Arctic resources in the future which will ultimately provide to be beneficial for the economy. China's endeavours in the Arctic are also portrayed for domestic audiences as being representative of China's improved international standing and might.⁵¹ This is evident by comments made by both scholars and PLA media commentators alike.^{52,53}

However, information aimed at foreigners promote a different message altogether in order to steer away from negative coverage of China's interests in the region. Brady remarks that the director of the China Arctic and Antarctic Administration (CAA), Qu Tanzhou, has said that it is important for the international community to make a certain "psychological adjustment" in order to accept China's place in polar affairs. Until then, it is important for China to uphold a careful information management in order to achieve this global "adjustment" in public opinion.⁵⁴

In this context, Scholars Linda Jakobson and Jingchao Peng also note that Chinese Arctic scholars have since late 2011 taken a more subdued public stance in their analysis of China's rights and interests in the Arctic. This was certainly not the case before as assertive comments were frequently aired by Chinese analysts before that time. Since then several Chinese scholars have advocated that China should try to avoid issues that are sensitive to the Arctic states, such as resource exploration. Instead they should try to focus on climate change considerations which are not nearly as sensitive.⁵⁵ This led to CAA director Qu Tanzhou to inform an annual national polar research meeting in 2011 that the words "evaluation of polar resource potential" should be dropped altogether from China's Five-Year Plan's polar project in order to combat negative Western views of China's resource interests in both the Arctic and the Antarctic.⁵⁶

Another notable figure that prominently writes on China's Arctic policy is an independent researcher who writes under the penname Jichang Lulu. In his writings he further illustrates the non-transparent nature of China's Arctic policy as it is presented to outside observers. Before China released its official Arctic white paper, which serves as China's official policy paper on the Arctic, several commentators such as Marc Lanteigne

⁵¹ Brady, *China As a Polar Great Power*, 34.

⁵² *Ibid*, 39.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 78.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 34–35.

⁵⁵ Jakobson and Peng, *China's Arctic Aspirations*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 15.

had called for a white paper of that nature to help observers better understand China's Arctic intentions. Jichang notes that the white paper is more interesting for what it doesn't say, rather than for what it says. The paper does in fact mention some key themes that Western scholars and commentators alike have discussed, such as natural-resource acquisition, alternative trade routes, and state support for investment, to name a few. But "[...] the national-security motivation and the Arctic's integration within larger polar and maritime policy, both present in Chinese-language materials, are left out of this document".⁵⁷

Jichang comments that the reasons why the white paper chooses to omit the national-security significance of the Arctic is because that information, in the eyes of Beijing officials, is unfit for foreign consumption. However, this information is currently being presented to domestic audiences. This, according to Jichang, is a sign that the white paper serves primarily as an intentional message aimed at foreign observers, and its effectiveness should therefore be judged by its success in managing global discourse.⁵⁸

According to Jichang, China's global discourse management has been rather successful at the local levels of government regarding the Nordic nations. This is in contrast to how China has been portrayed in Nordic news media outlets which often feature critical views of China's intentions in the region. However, at the local level there exists a considerable optimism that engagement with China could result in potential benefits, especially since Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is now prominently part of China's Arctic policy agenda.⁵⁹ This has often resulted in blind faith in "BRI prodigality" amongst local policymakers.⁶⁰ Hence, the favourable environment that has followed in the wake of China's successful discourse management is inherently a problem, according to Jichang. If due diligence against Chinese interests in the region is not observed by local politicians, "[China] can help avoid scrutiny of the more controversial political or military aspects of co-operation projects".⁶¹

The importance of due diligence according to Jichang was evident when officials in Lysekil, a small municipality in Sweden, were contacted by a group of Chinese investors in November of 2017. The investors introduced plans to build a new deep sea port in the town, as well as expanding upon road infrastructure amongst other things. The investors had requested that Lysekil officials would response to their plans within ten days, but before they

⁵⁷ Jichang Lulu, "The Arctic White Paper and China's Arctic Strategy."

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Full Text: China's Arctic Policy."

⁶⁰ Jichang Lulu, "Confined Discourse Management and Localised Interactions in the Nordics," October 21, 2018, <https://jichanglulu.wordpress.com/2018/10/21/localisation/> (accessed February 3, 2019).

⁶¹ Ibid.

could give their answer the news broke out of their meeting. Jichang notes that it is highly likely that the group of investors demanded such a short response time from the local officials because they were aware of the risk that the project would be derailed if the media and the public would get news of the meeting. Soon enough, security implications regarding the project were brought up and investigative journalism revealed that the owner of the company the investors represented had strong ties to both the CCP and the PLA. The investors later dropped the project.⁶²

2.6. Review of Academic Literature and Media Discourse: Summary

When it comes to the four main viewpoints found within Western academic literature and media, the realist and liberalist schools of thought certainly produce the most text. While realist scholars and media commentators tend to emphasise in their writings that China will become more assertive in the region, liberal scholars and commentators are more likely to downplay these fears and instead focus on the roles of institutions and economic co-operation as a means of building a common ground between the Arctic nations and China.

The other two viewpoints have produced less volume of text as they are not as prominent as the realist and liberal viewpoints. The constructivist strand of thought can mainly be found within academia and focuses on China's Arctic identity and norm making in the region. The fourth viewpoint is also prominently found within academia and is largely realist, but it can be said that this literature is frequently informed by a constructivist perspective. This strand of literature looks at the information discrepancy between official Chinese-language sources produced within China and English-language documents published by the state. As Anne-Marie Brady notes, when it comes to China's Arctic policy, careful information management is deemed necessary by Chinese officials in order to guide global public opinion.⁶³ As such, it will be interesting to note whether the recently introduced white paper will have an influence on the media discourse of the two newspapers.

The different viewpoints on display in this chapter paint a picture of China's Arctic policy as being highly non-transparent in nature and partially inaccessible to foreign observers. With the introduction of Anne-Marie Brady's book, *China as a Polar Great Power*, China's Arctic policy became much more accessible for researchers and analysts as it highlights the current discussion being undertaken in the field by Chinese policymakers.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Brady, *China As a Polar Great Power*, 34–35.

According to Brady, China does not see its presence in the Arctic as being aggressive, but rather defensive as it is merely trying to secure resources to feed and fuel its population in the years to come; a notion that the author agrees with. In order for Chinese interests to be secured in the Arctic however, the Chinese state must protect itself from a negative public image in order to secure its interests in the region, such as through investment endeavours and co-operation projects.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ibid, 265.

3. Methodological Approach

The methodological chapter starts with the introduction of newspaper reports as the main empirical focus of this thesis, followed by information about the two newspapers chosen for the data collection and the reasons behind their selection. Subsequently, information about the databases the newspaper articles were accessed through will be presented along with the search terms used to acquire them. After that, the chosen methodological approach of qualitative content analysis with quantitative elements will be introduced to the reader followed by a short discussion on why it was chosen. Finally, the chapter ends with thoughts on ethical considerations, limitations, and reflexivity.

3.1. Why Newspaper Reports?

Before going into the aspects of the methodology used in this thesis, a discussion is needed on why newspaper articles were selected as the main empirical data. As previously established in the chapter on academic literature and media discourse, Chinese officials essentially seek to engage in an information management of sorts via their English-language publications. This is done in order for China to be viewed in a more positive light by Arctic actors and to steer away from negative coverage in the West. China's Arctic policy can thus be seen as an attempt at constructing an Arctic identity specifically for Western consumption.

With the recent introduction of China's Arctic white paper there now exists a gap in the literature which begs the question whether there has been a noticeable change in the perception of China amongst Arctic actors. Initially the author of this thesis wanted to conduct interviews with Nordic policy makers and local politicians in order to better understand how China's Arctic endeavours have been perceived amongst Nordic actors. Unfortunately, this proved to be too much of an undertaking. Additionally, due to the political sensitivity of the topic as seen for example by the Lysekil incident in Sweden, it was deemed improbable that reaching out to policy makers and local politicians would prove fruitful. As a result, newspapers were chosen as the main empirical data source. By comparing the tone, and themes of the selected news articles and editorials before and after the white paper was published it is the hope of the author that this gap in the literature can be addressed.

As the author stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, he adheres to a social constructivist worldview which in turn informs the choice of his empirical data. As China tries to alter how it is perceived by promoting a Chinese Arctic identity that appears non-

threatening to Arctic actors it will be of interest to note how Icelandic newspapers cover China's Arctic policy in their writings. By analysing Icelandic newspaper articles written on the topic it thus becomes possible to gain a greater insight into whether Chinese officials have been successful in their global information management or not, which in turn might help to illustrate the difficulties or non-difficulties for the Chinese state to carry out its policy in Iceland in the future.

Within the field of public opinion research there exist scholars that argue that news media influences public opinion. The way in which China is represented in Icelandic news media might thus be indicative of the greater Icelandic public opinion. Theories on news media and public opinion do by no means concur on the degree to which news media represents public opinion, or to what extent public opinion is influenced by news media.⁶⁵⁶⁶ But although scholars might disagree on how and if news media influences, or is indicative of the public opinion, Chinese officials do seem to be concerned of negative publicity. In this regard Brady notes that the Western "China threat rhetoric" is being taken very seriously by Chinese scholars and officials as it has the potential of preventing China's active participation in Arctic co-operation regimes. As such, the improvement of China's international image is key in order to achieve China's national goals in the region.⁶⁷ As confirmed by a recent public opinion survey amongst the nationals of Arctic nations, it is evident that China might in this regard be facing an uphill battle. When asked which country the participants would be the least comfortable dealing with on Arctic issues, China ranked second to last, only behind Russia.⁶⁸ This indicates that Chinese officials indeed have a hard task ahead of them. It remains to be seen whether the Icelandic newspapers have contributed to the negative publicity which Chinese officials want to avoid, and whether the introduction of the white paper has in any way shifted the public perception in Iceland.

⁶⁵ Thomas E. Patterson, "The News as a Reflection of Public Opinion," in *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach and Michael W. Traugott (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), 38, <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/sage-hdbk-public-opinion-research> (accessed July 21, 2019).

⁶⁶ Hans Mathias Kepplinger, "Effects of the News Media on Public Opinion," in *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach and Michael W. Traugott (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), 193–194, <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/sage-hdbk-public-opinion-research> (accessed July 21, 2019).

⁶⁷ Brady, *China As a Polar Great Power*, 40.

⁶⁸ EKOS Research Associates, *Rethinking the Top of the World: Arctic Public Opinion Survey, Vol. 2* (Toronto: The Gordon Foundation, June 1, 2015), 61, http://gordonfoundation.ca/app/uploads/2017/03/APO_Survey_Volume-2_WEB.pdf/ (accessed July 21, 2019).

3.2. Data Collection

This thesis will rely on newspaper articles and editorials collected from two Icelandic daily newspapers in hopes of answering the research question and sub-research questions. The two newspapers in question are the freely distributed *Fréttablaðið* and the subscription-based *Morgunblaðið*, which are both published six times a week. These papers are the two leading newspapers in Iceland with *Fréttablaðið* having enjoyed a 39,7% reader base in December 2018 amongst readers aged 18-49 while *Morgunblaðið* enjoyed a reader base of 24,5% amongst readers aged 18-49 during the same period.⁶⁹

As established in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the research question seeks to answer how Icelandic news media has reported on China's Arctic policy. As discussed in the previous chapter on the review of academic literature and media discourse, the writings of Western media commentators seem to be prominently grounded in either a realist or liberalist strand of thought. Thus, it will be interesting to note how, if, and to what a degree the news articles and editorials follow that general trend. As such, *Morgunblaðið* was chosen due to its supposedly conservative leanings and *Fréttablaðið* was in turn chosen due to its purportedly less conservative nature and more liberal leanings.^{70 71}

As they each are thought to represent different types of media discourse, it is expected that the more conservative *Morgunblaðið* will showcase bias in their reporting towards the realist viewpoint, whereas *Fréttablaðið* is expected to showcase bias towards the liberal viewpoint. That is not to say that the author believes that everyone adhering to a conservative viewpoint is a realist, and everyone adhering to a more liberal viewpoint is a liberalist. Rather, the more liberal paper is expected to be more open to Chinese investment, and closer economic ties with China, while the more conservative paper is expected to be less inclined to allow for Chinese investment at the expense of national security considerations. The choosing of these particular newspapers should thus help to illustrate whether media reporting does follow the trend seen in chapter two, and if so to what extent.

Initially, it was the author's intention to include newspapers from other Nordic countries besides Iceland. Ultimately this proved to be too much of an undertaking due to time constraints and the limited size of the thesis itself. Moreover, in the eyes of the author, this would have resulted in an analysis that would not have been as detailed if more

⁶⁹ Gallup, "Prentmiðlar," <https://www.gallup.is/nidurstodur/fjolmidlar/prentmidlar/> (accessed July 16, 2019).

⁷⁰ Valgerður Jóhannsdóttir and Jón Gunnar Ólafsson, "The Icelandic News Media in Times of Crisis and Change," *Icelandic Review of Politics & Administration* 14, no. 1 (May 2018): 192–193.

⁷¹ Birgir Guðmundsson, "Pólítísk markaðsfjölmiðlun," *Stjórnámál og stjórnsýsla* 9, no. 2 (December 2013): 522–523.

newspapers from different Nordic countries would have been included. In the end, Iceland was chosen due to the authors' language proficiency in Icelandic, knowledge of Icelandic political- and media landscape, as well as the fact that he had easy access to the newspapers in question.

For the collection of the newspaper articles, two different websites had to be used as there exists no single database on the internet that stores news articles from both newspapers. In the case of *Fréttablaðið*, the Icelandic database Tímarit.is was used.⁷² This database stores the entirety of *Fréttablaðið*'s back catalogue of issues, all in open access. Newer issues from *Morgunblaðið* were accessed through the paper's own website via a subscription account that had access to these issues.⁷³ In the cases of articles from *Morgunblaðið*, old and new, the internal search engine of the paper's own website was used to search for the articles. However, articles which were more than three years old were not available through the paper's own website and had to be accessed through Tímarit.is.

In order to analyse the impact of China's white paper on the reporting of the newspapers, two periods were selected. One was selected from before the white paper was published, and the other one after it was published. The first period from which news articles were selected from was chosen to be the year leading up to China's acceptance as an observer state in the Nordic Council. As such, this period covers news articles dating from the 15th of May of 2012, until China gained observer status on the 15th of May in 2013. The second period covers the year after the white paper was published, from the 26th of January in 2018, until the 26th of January in 2019.

Before the search terms of the data collection were established, common terms within the news articles from both periods regarding China's Arctic policy were compared against each other. This was done by initially using the search term "China" in order to get as many results in each period as possible and then specifically looking for articles that reported on China's Arctic policy. Here, articles and editorials that either mentioned Chinese investment in the Arctic, reports on Chinese research or Arctic Council matters, or China's bilateral relations with Arctic states were of importance to the author.

Different formatting for the search terms had to be used for the two datasets due to the different search engines in use by the two online databases. This did not seem to have any effects on the results of the searches conducted. For searches within Tímarit.is (for news

⁷² Tímarit.is, "About," http://timarit.is/about_init.jsp?navsel=3&lang=en (accessed May 15, 2019).

⁷³ Morgunblaðið, "Lesi Morgunblaðið – Yfirlit," <https://www.mbl.is/mogginn/bladid/yfirlit/> (accessed May 15, 2019).

articles from *Fréttablaðið*) the following search terms were used: Kína OR kín* AND (norðurslóð* OR fjárfest*).⁷⁴

For searches within mbl.is, *Morgunblaðið's* webpage, searches were exclusively made for the newspaper edition of *Morgunblaðið*, thus excluding any online news articles from mbl.is. Furthermore, the search for news articles was exclusively made for articles in the *news, business, editorials* and *the business paper* sections of the newspaper. This was done to exclude results from within irrelevant sections of the paper, such as articles from the *sport* or *cultural* section. The following search terms were then used in the search: Kín* AND (fjárfest* OR norðurslóð*).⁷⁵

After the searches had been conducted, articles that still did not mention either Chinese investment in the Arctic, reports on Chinese research or Arctic Council matters, or China's bilateral relations with Arctic states were excluded from the final collection of news articles.

The final dataset for *Fréttablaðið* included 21 articles from the 2012-2013 period, while only one article was found given the search terms from the 2018-2019 period, a total of 22 articles. Out of the final 22 articles, five were editorials, all from 2012-2013. The final dataset for *Morgunblaðið* included 42 articles from the 2012-2013 period, and 13 articles from the 2018-2019 period, a total of 55 articles. The editorials were four in total, two from 2012-2013 and two from 2018-2019. Therefore, the total number of news articles from both newspapers were 74, out of which there were nine editorials.

3.3. Method of Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was chosen as the main method of analysis for the editorials that were collected. This method of analysis was in turn supplemented with the use of the qualitative data analysis software NVivo which was used to code the data and extract themes from the whole dataset.

Qualitative content analysis is possibly the most frequently used methodological form of analysis when analysing documents and is used to search for underlying themes in the chosen text.⁷⁶ More often than not qualitative content analysis can be a flexible process, especially when compared to a quantitative form of content analysis. For example, qualitative content analysis can be more flexible in the sense that the researcher can constantly review

⁷⁴ Translation: Kína: China; Norðurslóð: Arctic; Fjárfesting: Investment.

⁷⁵ Note, only the formatting has changed, not the search terms.

⁷⁶ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 557.

and amend his categories or themes that he is able to extract from the text. As such, qualitative content analysis isn't as rigid as quantitative content analysis which mostly deals with "[...] applying predefined categories to the sources".⁷⁷ Furthermore, more so than quantitative methods of analysis, "[...] the employment of a more fine-grained analysis allows a greater sensitivity of the nature and content of specific themes".⁷⁸ This means that in qualitative content analysis the researcher is frequently moving between stages of conceptualisation, the collection of data, the analysis, and interpretation of the data.⁷⁹

The use of qualitative content analysis when analysing newspapers is a common method when trying to extract themes from newspaper articles. While quantitative content analysis could certainly have been used by the author, it would have been at the expense of a more detailed approach when searching for specific themes in the data. In regard to this thesis, specific attention was paid as to whether realist or liberalist viewpoints were dominant within the collected news articles.

Although not used exclusively, elements of quantitative nature were also chosen for the analysis of the data, in conjunction with the qualitative methodology. This mixed-method approach is not uncommon as "[...] maintaining a strict distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis is not always useful or possible".⁸⁰ For instance, some studies have shown how researchers using qualitative content analysis can certainly include quantitative elements in their analysis.⁸¹⁸² This is especially true when analysing the frequency, such as a particular tone in media reporting over time, and may further help to triangulate the findings and give them greater validity.⁸³⁸⁴ As sub-research question three asks whether there has been a change in media discourse following the introduction of China's Arctic white paper it was deemed necessary by the author to also include quantitative elements in the analysis.

After the news articles had been collected, the data was then inputted into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo for coding. For the devising of the coding frame itself, a flexible

⁷⁷ Ibid, 559.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 553.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 559.

⁸⁰ Florian Kaefer, Juliet Roper, and Paresha Sinha, "A Software-Assisted Qualitative Content Analysis of News Articles: Example and Reflections," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16, no. 2 (May 2015), accessed May 16, 2019, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2123/3815>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1283–1284, accessed May 16, 2019, doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687.

⁸³ Kaefer, Roper, and Sinha, "A Software-Assisted Qualitative Content Analysis of News Articles."

⁸⁴ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 633.

approach was adopted that relied both on deductive and inductive coding. A deductive coding approach entails “[...] to start with a specific set of themes, keywords or theoretical ideas in mind, and then to explore whether and how these are mentioned in the sources”.⁸⁵

As such the initial coding frame was devised with the realist and liberalist viewpoints in mind in order to see whether and how these viewpoints existed in the news articles. Here, it must be noted that the coding frame was made to assess whether the news articles contained views that saw China’s presence in the Arctic mainly as a threat, as an opportunity, or whether they were neutral. This is certainly a simplification of the realist and liberalist school of thought as both are more complex, more varied and less binary. However, in order to get a clearer picture of whether the tone in coverage was negative or positive towards China during the two periods, this method of simplicity was chosen. The inductive approach to the coding then took place afterwards to identify other concepts and themes within the text.⁸⁶ Here, new nodes were created for emerging themes and concepts.

After each article had been coded, they were assigned an overall tone. This was done so that later, the data could be searched “[...] for patterns across specific groups or subgroups within the project” - in this case across the two newspapers under scrutiny.⁸⁷ These tones were either *favourable*, *unfavourable*, or *neutral* according to their topic and/or viewpoints expressed in the article. For example, articles which predominantly mentioned Chinese Arctic research or Chinese investment opportunities were assigned a favourable connotation, while articles which were mainly wary of China’s intentions and critical of China’s presence in the region were assigned an unfavourable connotation. Articles that only briefly mentioned China or articles that were focused on other issues different from the main realist and liberal topics were assigned a neutral connotation. Moreover, if both a favourable and unfavourable argument was present within a single article, the tone of the article was decided upon according to which argument was given more coverage.

⁸⁵ Kaefer, Roper, and Sinha, “A Software-Assisted Qualitative Content Analysis of News Articles.”

⁸⁶ Pat Bazeley and Kristi Jackson, *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, 2nd ed., (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2013), 72.

⁸⁷ Stuart P. Robertson, “The Qualitative Research Process as a Journey Mapping Your Course with Qualitative Research Software,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (August 2008): 85.

3.4. Ethical Considerations, Limitations, and Reflexivity

The collection of the data in this thesis was carried out per the ethical guidelines set forth by the Swedish Research Council.⁸⁸ As the data only consists of publicly available newspaper articles, ethical considerations regarding harm to participants, lack of informed consent, the invasion of privacy, or the deception of participants, do not apply.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the author is aware that utmost care must be taken in order to produce a study of quality as failing to do so can be considered unethical.⁹⁰

The topic of reflexivity is also important to mention in this section as it is a constant reminder to the author to reflect on his background, as well as the implications of the method that he chooses, his values, biases and decisions when producing knowledge about the social world.⁹¹ The introduction of quantitative elements, in conjunction with the qualitative content analysis, is in this regard an effort to make the findings more unbiased and reliable. Moreover, the author acknowledges that he has also been careful in not letting his own personal and political views interfere with the findings of the thesis. This is especially important in the qualitative section of chapter four where viewpoints within the news articles are chosen to be presented in more detail and analysed by the author. Additionally, regarding limitations to this thesis the author acknowledges that utmost care was taken in translating quotes from the Icelandic news articles to English in chapter four of this thesis so as not to introduce any errors in the translated text.

With the methods chapter concluded, chapter four on analysis and findings will look at the empirical data in more detail before the author presents the findings of the thesis.

⁸⁸ Vetenskapsrådet, *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning*, (Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, <http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf> (accessed May 17, 2019).

⁸⁹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 135.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 143–144.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 393.

4. Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, the newspaper articles will be analysed, and the findings presented. As previously explained in the methodological chapter of this thesis the analysis will be in the form of a mixed-method approach. As such, qualitative content analysis along with quantitative elements will be utilised in order to answer the research question and to assess how China's Arctic policy has been reported on and received in Iceland. Moreover, the author will be analysing the data through a social constructivist framework in order to assess how successful China has been in constructing a Chinese Arctic identity.

We will start with a chapter on the quantitative results, after which the qualitative results will follow. In the end a summary of the chapter will be presented.

4.1. Quantitative Results

Here, the results from the NVivo coding process of the newspaper articles will be presented. First, results from the period dating from the 15th of May 2012 until the 15th of May 2013 will be given, followed by the results from the second period dating from the 26th of January 2018 until the 26th of January 2019. A short discussion will follow the results of both periods.

4.1.1. Quantitative Results: Period No. 1

As discussed in chapter three on the methodological approach of this thesis, the newspaper articles were inputted into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo and then given an overall connotation based on their tone. Those connotations were either favourable, unfavourable, or neutral.

As can be seen in Figure 1 below, out of the 42 news articles and editorials published in *Morgunblaðið* during this time, 22 were labelled as favourable, 15 as unfavourable, and 5 as neutral. As such, 52,4% of the articles had a favourable connotation, 35,7% had an unfavourable connotation, and 11,9% had a neutral connotation.

The articles published in *Fréttablaðið* were 21 in total. Ten were labelled as favourable, six were labelled as unfavourable, and five were labelled as neutral. This means that 47,6% of the articles had a favourable connotation, 28,6% had an unfavourable connotation, and 23,8% had a neutral connotation.

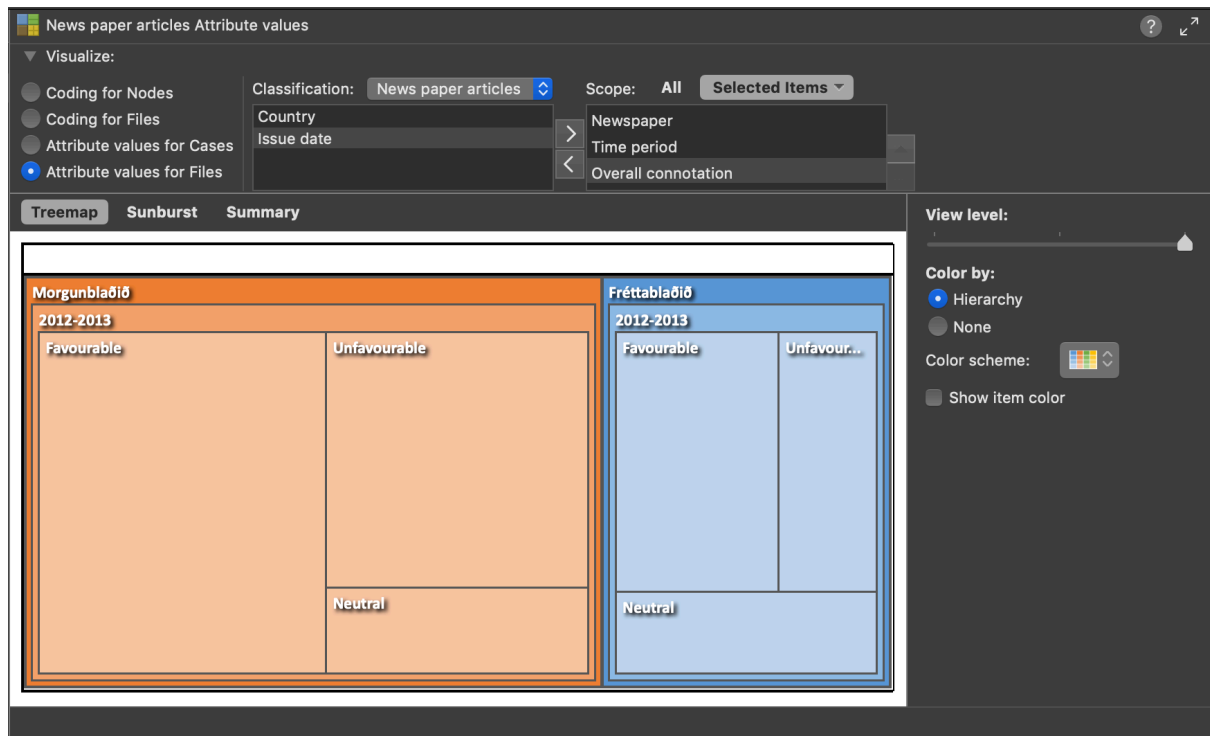


Figure 1 - Quantitative Results During Period No. 1
 Variance in the overall connotation of news articles during period no. 1 as visualised by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Articles from Morgunblaðið are coloured in orange while articles from Fréttablaðið are coloured in blue .

As discussed in chapter 3.2. on data collection, it was predicted that the more conservative *Morgunblaðið* would showcase bias towards the realist viewpoint. However, *Fréttablaðið* was predicted to be more biased towards the liberal viewpoint. As it turned out articles in *Morgunblaðið* during period no. 1 were more favourable than unfavourable. This can be largely attributed to quite a few news articles that focused on Chinese research in the Arctic, Sino-Icelandic co-operation research projects, and articles that focused on the possible economic benefits that Huang Nubo’s investment project in Iceland could bring. Despite this, a large portion of the articles were certainly unfavourable, sharing some of the sentiment found within the realist viewpoint. These unfavourable articles published views that mainly focused on the possible link between independent Chinese investors in the region and the CCP, concern towards China’s future ambitions in the region, Chinese resource extraction, and criticism towards further economic co-operation with China without due diligence.

While *Morgunblaðið* was expected to showcase bias towards the realist viewpoint it was predicted that the opposite would occur with *Fréttablaðið*. Articles published in the latter paper were certainly more positive than negative, with the subject matter of the more positive articles being very similar to those written in *Morgunblaðið* during this time. These articles

focused mainly on Chinese research in the region, Sino-Icelandic co-operation research projects in the Arctic, positive views on institutional co-operation with China in Arctic regimes, the positives of Huang Nubo's investment project, and a critique of the realist discourse. The unfavourable views published in *Fréttablaðið* were also akin to those published by *Morgunblaðið*, with the most prominent viewpoints being the possible link between the CCP and private Chinese Arctic investors, concern about China's future ambitions, and future Chinese resource extraction in the region.

A small portion of the articles from both newspapers were labelled as neutral, most of them being descriptive in nature but the new themes that emerged from the analysis were also coded as neutral. These themes will be further discussed in chapter 4.4. on emerging themes.

4.1.2. Quantitative Results: Period No. 2

As can be seen in Figure 2 below the results from period no. 2 were quite different from those in period no. 1. Starting with *Morgunblaðið*, out of the total of 13 articles dating from this period, 7 were labelled as favourable, 3 as unfavourable, and 3 as neutral. Therefore, 53,8% of the articles were favourable, 23,1% were unfavourable, and 23,1% were neutral. The favourable articles focused mostly on Chinese research co-operation in the region, institutional co-operation, and economic co-operation. Most of the unfavourable articles focused on China's possible resource extraction in the region, China's future ambitions, and the possible ties between Chinese investors and the CCP.

As is evident the number of articles collected during period no. 2 were significantly lower by using the same search terms as before. During this time there was only one article published in *Fréttablaðið*. This news article reported that the Swedish Security Service had recently been wary of recent Chinese investments in the country as they could lead to the Chinese army gaining access to Swedish technology, amongst other things. While the article mentioned that experts thought it was only normal that Chinese companies sought investment opportunities on this side of the world, the unfavourable coverage was given more space in the article. As such, it was labelled unfavourable.

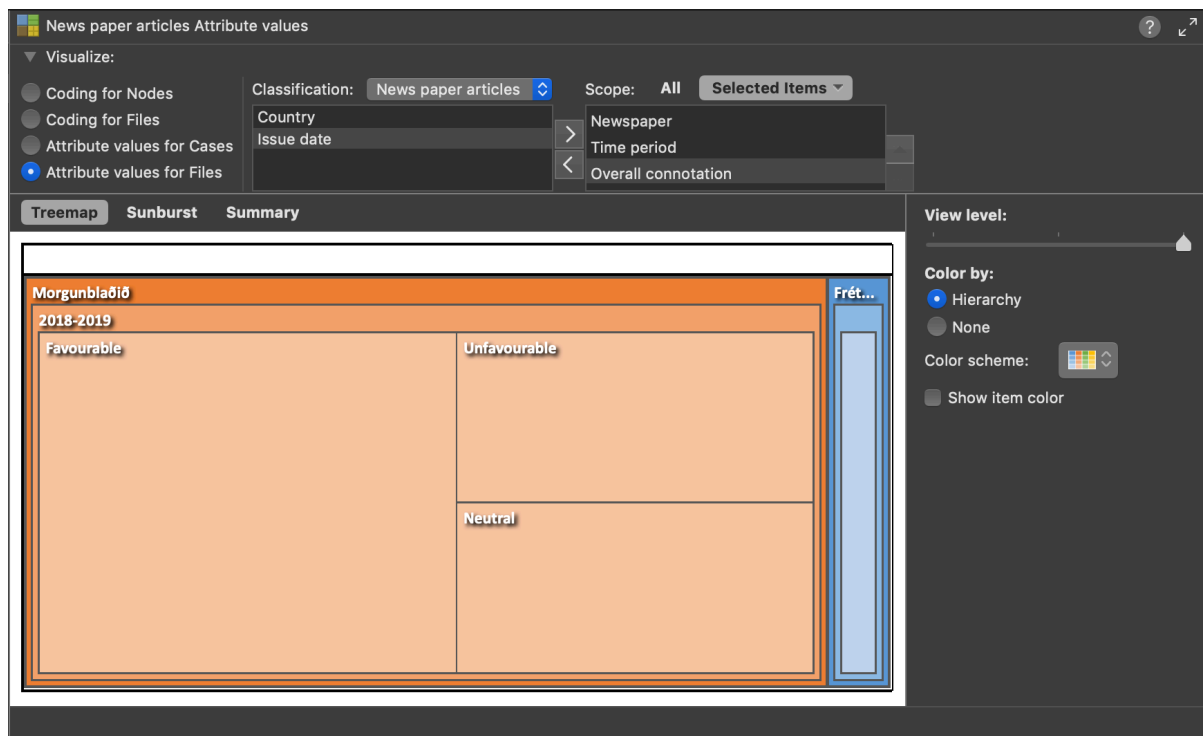


Figure 2. Quantitative Results During Period No. 2

Variance in the overall connotation of news articles during period no. 2 as visualised by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Notice that only one article was published in the *Fréttablaðið* newspaper during this time.

The substantial decline in coverage between the two periods was understandable given the significant media attention that Huang Nubo's case received in the Icelandic newspapers during period no. 1. During period no. 2 there were no similar cases of Chinese investors trying to buy land or invest to the same degree in Iceland. However, the substantial decline in coverage of China's Arctic policy by both *Morgunblaðið*, and more so *Fréttablaðið*, was unexpected and shows that the newspapers were significantly less interested in the topic than before. This might furthermore point to a general lack of interest from Icelandic news media on the topic of China's Arctic policy.

It is difficult to assess whether the media discourse has differed after the introduction of the white paper. As the results show both newspapers published more favourable articles during period no. 1 than unfavourable articles, with *Morgunblaðið* having a little bit higher percentage of unfavourable articles than *Fréttablaðið* during this time. However, since only 14 articles in total were found during period no. 2, compared to the 63 articles during period no. 1, the quantitative results must be deemed inconclusive due to the small sample size collected between 2018 and 2019. As this is the case it will be of a thing to note whether the qualitative analysis might give a better answer to this particular sub-question. As such, the

editorials from *Morgunblaðið* from both periods will be compared in order to assess whether there has been a change in tone following the publication of the white paper.

4.2. Qualitative Results

In this portion of the thesis, the editorials of the newspapers will be looked at in detail in order to answer both the research question and the sub-research questions. First, the editorials from period no. 1 will be analysed before we move on to editorials from period no 2. At last a discussion will follow the analysis, and the editorials from the two different periods will be compared together. The editorials from both periods will be analysed using the chosen methodology of qualitative content analysis.

4.2.1. Editorials From Period No. 1

As previously made clear in chapter 3.2. on the data collection, there were five editorials within the collected data. Within period no. 1 there were seven editorials in total, two from *Morgunblaðið* and five from *Fréttablaðið*. We will first start with a look at the editorials from *Morgunblaðið*.

Morgunblaðið

Editorials in *Morgunblaðið* are published anonymously but are most likely written by one of the members of the senior editorial staff. On the 27th of July in 2012, the first of the two editorials from *Morgunblaðið* was published, titled: “Concerning Chinese Real Estate Tycoons”.⁹² In the editorial itself, the contents of an op-ed article are recounted which was published in the paper the previous day by Elín Hirst, a well-known Icelandic journalist. In the op-ed article the journalist Miles Yu of Washington Times tells Elín Hirst that in China there exists no such thing as a private investment:

“All of these so called Chinese real estate tycoons that invest abroad are either current or former high-ranking officials in the Chinese Communist Party. Every single one of these investment companies has a department or a cell in the Chinese Communist Party looking over their back. The Chinese government can take over these companies at any given moment.”⁹³

In a later segment of the editorial Huang Nubo’s alleged connection with the Chinese Communist Party are brought up:

⁹² All quotations of the Icelandic newspaper articles and editorials are the author’s translations unless stated otherwise.

⁹³ *Morgunblaðið*, “Um Kínverska fasteignajöfra,” July 27, 2012.

[...] it is necessary for the people of Iceland to know what they are dealing with when a Chinese man with access to a large amounts of money plans both extensive activities in Iceland and wants to gain control of a significant portion of land. If in fact he is a direct or an indirect emissary of the Chinese government, as has been suggested, then the Icelandic government must take that into consideration when it makes a decision about his plans.⁹⁴

As can be seen in the first editorial in *Morgunblaðið*, Huang Nubo's investment plan is met with severe scepticism and it assumed that he might be a messenger for the Chinese government. This sentiment is the central theme of the editorial as seen in the subheading below the title of the editorial which is written in large bold letters. It reads: "The relationship between Chinese investors and the Chinese government must be acknowledged".⁹⁵

The second editorial from *Morgunblaðið* was published on the 30th of July in 2012 and only briefly mentions China and the Arctic. This editorial is also sceptical of Huang's intentions and is critical of the way the Icelandic government is handling the case. The person writing the editorial asks: "Are the plans of the Chinese investors so sensitive that they won't stand up to scrutiny in the light of day?", and remarks that Huang Nubo is seeking to gain control over a large area of land.⁹⁶ As such, the editorial is critical of the proposed plans in *Grímsstaðir*, which the author believes are too secretive.

Fréttablaðið

The first editorial from *Fréttablaðið* was published on the 30th of May in 2012 and is written by Ólafur Þ. Stephensen, then the newspaper's editor. The editorial only briefly mentions China and the Arctic and is descriptive in nature, only stating that China has set its eyes on the region.⁹⁷ As a result, it does not warrant further analysis.

The second editorial from *Fréttablaðið* was published on the 4th of June in 2012, is written by Ólafur Þ. Stephensen, and is titled: "Let's overcome our feeling of inferiority". The editorial, which is largely favourable, is written about Huang Nubo's investment plans in Iceland:

If some are to be believed one might think that a large swath of land is soon to be conquered by China, that Huang is going to restrict the access to water and resources

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Morgunblaðið*, "Pukur forystumannanna," July 30, 2012.

⁹⁷ Ólafur Þ. Stephensen, "Fyllt upp í tómarúm," *Fréttablaðið*, May 30, 2012.

on the premises, that his proposed hotel will be a military camp in disguise, and the project a preparation for the seizure of power by the eastern superpower.⁹⁸

As is evident the editorial staunchly criticises the more realist commentators and their stance towards the proposed plans in *Grímsstaðir*. But although Stephensen uses the editorial to criticise those who adhere to a more realist viewpoint, he nonetheless acknowledges that due diligence must be observed in this case. He says: “Even though the Icelandic government should be wary of China’s long-term interests in the Arctic, the Chinese investor Huang Nubo should be treated just like other investors who have good ideas on how to boost Icelandic business and economy”.⁹⁹

Stephensen continues next by discussing how the Icelandic law should ensure that the land is used in a sustainable way for the benefit of the Icelandic people. Furthermore, he argues that the nation should be able to trust itself in ruling within its own jurisdiction and that Icelanders should have a reason for joy when foreign investors are willing to comply to Icelandic laws and operate within the country.¹⁰⁰ He ends the editorial on a similar topic by saying: “But we must also assume that foreign investors comply with the national law and are good members of society, just as Icelandic investors who invest in China, in other European countries, or wherever they see investment opportunities”.¹⁰¹

The third editorial from *Fréttablaðið* was published on the 15th of June in 2012 and is once again credited to Ólafur Þ. Stephensen. It is titled: “Let’s not mince matters with China” and is written on the topic of China and the Arctic Council. Stephensen chooses to focus his writings on China’s proposed observer status in the Arctic Council back in 2012 and China’s recent condemnation of Norway for having awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo in 2010. Stephensen argues that:

Iceland should surely maintain good relations with China, and it should also continue to grow its business connection with this powerful country. However, we should in no way try to take advantage of the fact that China has tried to butter us up following the freeze in communications with one of our closest allies. We should likewise tell China, without mincing our words, that we condemn the human right violations in China, that we support the cause of Chinese dissidents like Liu, and that we protest the actions of the Chinese government in trying to punish those that wouldn’t give in to their demands during the events leading up to the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ólafur Þ. Stephensen, “Ekki bugast af vanmetakennd,” *Fréttablaðið*, April 6, 2012.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ólafur Þ. Stephensen, “Tölum tæpitungulaust við Kína,” *Fréttablaðið*, December 10, 2012.

Stephensen then ends the editorial in a condemning tone: “If the Chinese government is interested in formal co-operation with Western democracies that respect human rights, then they must also understand and respect how human rights work. Otherwise, China has no right to partake in this collaboration”.¹⁰³

The fourth and fifth editorials only mention China’s Arctic policy briefly. The fourth editorial which is about Iceland’s then-recent economic recovery, published on the 2nd of August in 2012 and written by Óli Kristján Ármannsson, mentions that “[...] it is likely that the Chinese government is meddling in every small matter at home, even in the business of private businessmen”.¹⁰⁴

The fifth and last editorial which is titled: “Contempt for the foreign” was published on the 12th of October in 2012 and is written by Þórður Snær Júlíusson. The editorial is highly critical of what the author believes is rampant xenophobia taking root in Icelandic society at the time of writing. He touches upon the case of Huang Nubo by saying: “Most recently, a Chinese man wanted to construct a hotel and a golf course at a very windy and remote location. He has fully complied to the national law. Still, some would believe that the man is the true incarnation of evil and that he wants to destroy Icelandic society as we know it in order to create a “Lebensraum” for the Chinese People’s Republic”.¹⁰⁵

4.2.2. Editorials From Period No. 2

During period no. 2 there were only two editorials, both from *Morgunblaðið*. The first editorial was published on the 5th of February in 2018 and is titled: “The Silk Road paved to the North”. The editorial starts with a discussion on Xi Jinping’s grip on power and how he apparently wants to project China’s influence to a greater extent internationally than ever before. The expansion of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative to include the Arctic as well is thus seen as an extension of this policy:

One of the building blocks of Xi’s plans is the so-called “silk road”, a special initiative where China has invested substantial resources in infrastructure development at home and abroad, with the aim to make China’s most prominent trade routes safer and more efficient for the exporting of the multitude of goods that are produced in China. The initiative covers Asia, Europe, and even Africa, where China as an extensive presence.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Óli Kristján Ármannsson, “Krónan styrkist,” *Fréttablaðið*, February 8, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Þórður Snær Júlíusson, “Andúð á erlendu,” *Fréttablaðið*, December 10, 2012.

¹⁰⁶ *Morgunblaðið*, “Silkivegurinn lagður til norðurs,” May 2, 2018.

The editorial continues that the Arctic silk road could matter a great deal to China as it has the potential to drastically cut shipping times to Europe compared to the traditional shipping route via the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Lastly, the recent introduction of China's Arctic white paper is touched upon at the end of the editorial:

China's interest in the Arctic has been known for quite some time. With the introduction of the white paper, it is now finally confirmed that China is willing to spend a considerable amount of resources to safeguard its interests in the region in the coming years and decades in the hope of securing its presence here.

The member states of the Arctic Council, Iceland included, now have to think carefully about how they chose to conduct their relations with China. It is only natural to exploit the benefits of China's increased attention in the region, and the changing circumstances that this attention entails, but it has to be done with both eyes wide open as we must never forget who we are dealing with.¹⁰⁷

The second editorial, which is published on the 14th of July in 2018 and titled: "Persecution in China" only briefly mentions China and the Arctic. This time, China's alleged ill-treatment of the Uighur people in Xinjiang province is the focus of the editorial. It mentions that Xinjiang province is a key component in China's Belt and Road Initiative which, amongst other things, connects China with Europe through infrastructure projects, investments, and commerce. The editorial ends on the following words: "The situation in Xinjiang can be called many things. A police state is one. But the words "fairness and justice", which China wants to be their guiding principle as they claim a leadership role on the world stage is certainly not one of them".¹⁰⁸

4.2.3. Analysis of the Editorials From Both Periods

Overall, the contents of the editorials were largely consistent with the expected outcome. The editorials collected from *Morgunblaðið* were biased towards the realist argument, while the editorials collected from *Fréttablaðið* were biased towards the liberal argument.

The contents of the two editorials from *Morgunblaðið* from period no. 1 were both largely realist. The first editorial heavily implied that Huang Nubo, the Chinese private investor, could have ties with the CCP, thus insinuating that he might in fact be a puppet for the Chinese government. This viewpoint similarly echoes the viewpoint of Roger W. Robinson, Jr, mentioned in chapter two, who warned of the potential risk of Chinese SOEs having ties to the CCP. The second editorial from period no. 2, which only briefly mentioned China and the Arctic, was also critical of Huang Nubo's intentions and called into question

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *Morgunblaðið*, "Ofsóknir í Kína," July 14, 2018.

whether his aims had any ulterior motives. Both editorials were therefore biased towards the realist viewpoint and critical of both Huang Nubo's investment plan and of the intentions of the Chinese government in the region.

The contents of the editorials from *Fréttablaðið* were mostly skewed to the liberal viewpoint. However, there were certain editorials that expressed views that don't necessarily conform to the liberal viewpoint as established in chapter two. Firstly, the editorial from the 30th of July only briefly mentioned China and the Arctic and was descriptive in nature. Secondly, the editorial titled: "Let's not mince matters with China" was certainly liberal to an extent. The editorial was, for an example, positive towards Chinese co-operation in Arctic affairs, as well as the potential benefits that China's observer status in the Arctic Council could have on the Icelandic economy. However, China's treatment of Norway during that period and China's human rights record are heavily criticised in the editorial and, according to the author, stand in the way of China deserving to be an observer state in the Arctic Council. Thirdly, and in a more realist fashion, Óli Kristján Ármannsson's editorial from the 2nd of August in 2012 briefly mentioned that it could well be that the Chinese government is closely linked to Huang Nubo.

The remaining two editorials from *Fréttablaðið* were certainly more liberal in tone and both were heavily critical of commentators adhering to the more realist viewpoint. Similarly to the other liberalist literature presented in chapter two, both these editorials are interested in furthering economic co-operation with both Chinese investors and the Chinese state, all the while criticising the more realist commentators who were wary of Chinese intentions in the country. While Ólafur Þ. Stephensen's article: "Let's overcome our feeling of inferiority" certainly acknowledges that the Icelandic government should be wary of Chinese future ambitions in the region, he doesn't implicate Huang Nubo with the CCP. Neither does Þórður Snær Júlíusson in his editorial: "Contempt for the foreign".

The two editorials from period no. 2 which were both from *Morgunblaðið*, were both critical of the Chinese state. The second editorial from *Morgunblaðið* during this time was heavily critical of the perceived human rights issues in China, much like the editorial from period no. 1 from *Fréttablaðið* titled: "Let's not mince matters with China". As such, the perceived human rights abuses in Xinjiang province are seen as standing in the way of China becoming a global world leader. The emphasis on human rights by both papers will be further touched upon in chapter 4.4. on emerging themes.

The contents of the other editorial from *Morgunblaðið* during period no. 2 was much more in line with the realist viewpoint. Here, the author of the editorial acknowledged the

potential economic benefits that China's increased Arctic presence could have on the Icelandic economy. Still, China's Arctic white paper did not reduce the authors fear of China's future ambitions in the region, on the contrary, the author sees the white paper as a signal that China will become more assertive in the region in the coming years. This echoes the viewpoints of the realist scholars Stephen Blank, Younkyoo Kim, and Elizabeth Economy, mentioned in chapter two, who all distrust official statements by Chinese government officials regarding the Arctic and believe that China will become more assertive in the region in the coming years.

As previously made clear, *Fréttablaðið* did not publish any editorials during period no. 2 given the search terms established in chapter 3.2. As such, it is only possible to compare editorials from both periods from *Morgunblaðið* in order to assess whether the tone in coverage has differed since the introduction of China's Arctic white paper. As seen during period no. 1 the editorials in *Morgunblaðið* were largely realist and highly critical of the investment efforts of Huang Nubo, the editorials published during period. no 2 were also critical and biased towards the realist viewpoint. However, the editorial from period no. 2 titled: "The Silk Road paved to the North" was slightly more positive towards economic co-operation than the editorials in the previous period. Nonetheless, they still remained critical of China during the latter period.

As with the quantitative portion of this analysis chapter, the sample size of the editorials in the qualitative portion of this chapter is small and as a result, it is difficult to draw a definite conclusion from the data. Nonetheless, despite the small sample size, the author does see a small increase in positivity towards economic co-operation that was not present in the earlier period. Still, as before, the editorials still remained overtly critical during period no. 2. As such it seems like the introduction of China's white paper has not significantly changed the tone of the editorials in *Morgunblaðið* as the editorials still remained critical of China's Arctic policy.

4.3. Emerging Themes

During the coding of the data, two main themes emerged from the news articles. First, the theme of *human rights critique* towards China was an apparent theme within two editorials and illustrates that China's alleged human right abuses are not tolerated by both newspapers. The first editorial was titled: "Let's not mince matters with China", published in *Fréttablaðið*

during period no. 1, and the second one was titled: “Persecution in China” and was published in *Morgunblaðið* during period no. 2.

For both of the authors, the alleged human rights abuses of the Chinese government did warrant severe criticism. In the *Fréttablaðið* editorial, China’s human right abuses were seen as standing in the way of China gaining observer status in the Arctic Council amongst other Western democracies that respect human rights. Similarly, the editorial in *Morgunblaðið* questioned China’s leadership role on the world stage due to China’s human rights abuses of the Uighur people in Xinjiang province. China’s human right record was therefore seen as a big hindrance in the eyes of the authors of both newspapers, during both periods, when it came to China’s international co-operation with the Western world.

The other theme that was prominent within the data was a theme that the author has chosen to call the *parliament - municipality debate*. This theme illustrates the discourse taking place between certain ministers (mainly the Minister of the Interior) of the Icelandic parliament and local policymakers during the time when Huang Nubo’s proposed investment plan in *Grímsstaðir* was prominently in the news. In Iceland, local authorities are self-governed and granted special status under Article 78 of the Constitution of Iceland. This means that they determine their own affairs to a large extent.¹⁰⁹

In an interview in *Fréttablaðið* on the 27th of July in 2012, Ögmundur Jónasson, then the Minister of the Interior in Iceland for the Left-Green Movement criticised the way in which local authorities had handled the proposed plans in *Grímsstaðir*. In the interview, he said: “We need to reconsider [...] the involvement of Chinese investors who want to buy or rent land in this country, as well as thoroughly discuss the future development of the Northeast region with the relevant local authorities”.¹¹⁰ Here, the Minister of the Interior is discontent with the way in which the local authorities in the Northeast of Iceland have openly welcomed the Chinese investor without seemingly much criticism. He furthermore states that: “This case is not a private matter of the municipalities involved because it matters to every citizen of the country.”¹¹¹

Further on in the interview, the Minister of the Interior delivers another highly critical comment of the way in which the private investor has been welcomed by local officials, as well as insinuating that Huang Nubo has links with the Chinese government:

¹⁰⁹ Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, “Icelandic Association of Local Authorities,” <https://www.samband.is/english/> (accessed August 11, 2019).

¹¹⁰ Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé, “Áhersla á mannúð og réttindi,” *Fréttablaðið*, July 27, 2012.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

When a millionaire who has close ties with the Chinese state, one of the greatest superpowers in the world, is talking about enormous construction projects at the edge of the wilderness of Iceland, along with a great number of buildings as well as an airport, and his [Icelandic] representative is talking about building a huge container port and oil refinery, and thinks that it is only natural that the Chinese state is involved in the development of the project, is it not then a good idea to take time out and pause a little?¹¹²

As seen in this interview, along with being heavily critical towards the local authorities and how they welcomed Huang Nubo's investment, the Minister of the Interior also believes that Huang might have close ties to the Chinese government, which he believes might be a security concern for the Icelandic state. Much like the Lysekil example in Sweden, security concerns were raised with Huang Nubo's investment project which ultimately resulted in critical coverage in Icelandic newspapers as seen in this interview.

4.4. Analysis and Findings: Summary

The Icelandic newspapers *Fréttablaðið* and *Morgunblaðið* did not differ drastically from one another when the data was analysed from a quantitative point of view. Articles in *Morgunblaðið* from periods no. 1 and 2 were more favourable than unfavourable in both instances and the articles from *Fréttablaðið* from period no. 1 were also more favourable than unfavourable in their coverage. During period no. 2 there was a significant decline in coverage in both *Fréttablaðið* and *Morgunblaðið*, and as a result, there was only one article found in *Fréttablaðið* using the research parameters during that time frame.

Although the author did not notice any notable differences in the tone of the coverage of the two newspapers during both periods when analysed quantitatively, this changed when the selection of editorials from both papers were analysed qualitatively. The editorials from *Morgunblaðið* were more biased towards the realist viewpoint, while the editorials from *Fréttablaðið* were more biased towards the liberal viewpoint.

Due to the small sample size that was collected during period no. 2, this thesis, unfortunately, offers inconclusive evidence as to whether the media discourse regarding China's Arctic policy has differed after the introduction of China's white paper. However, the author did see a small increase in positivity in one editorial from *Morgunblaðið* towards economic co-operation following the introduction of the white paper. Other than that, the editorials in *Morgunblaðið* during both periods were overtly negative.

¹¹² Ibid.

It can be argued that China's information management, used in order for the Chinese state to protect itself from negative publicity, and to produce an Arctic identity does seem to have been a moderate success. When all the news articles in the data collection from both *Morgunblaðið* and *Fréttablaðið* during the two periods were looked at quantitatively, the articles were more favourable than unfavourable. More often than not, these favourable news articles covered news on Chinese research co-operation programs in the Arctic, or news on economic or institutional co-operation with China. However, as the editorials have illustrated, China has been the target of some heavy criticism towards its Arctic policy, and as such, Chinese officials still face considerable opposition and scepticism in Iceland.

A lack of, or a decline in coverage, could be favourable to the Chinese state and Chinese investors. During Huang Nubo's case he was constantly being linked to the CCP, and his intentions were often reported in a negative light. During period no. 2 there was no similar case and as a result, the coverage of China's Arctic policy dropped significantly. As a result, the media isn't preoccupied with China at the moment which might be helpful if Chinese actors want to carry out investment efforts in Iceland. However, sudden media attention might trigger negative coverage in the same way the media covered Huang Nubo's plans. In that kind of a scenario, human rights issues might certainly be brought up, amongst other negative coverage, which is sure to affect investment efforts, as well as the construction of an amiable Arctic identity.

As the findings of this thesis suggest, local policymakers might be more susceptible to Chinese investment efforts. As a result, it might be in the best interests of the Chinese state and Chinese investors to target local policymakers for their investment projects. Here, more research is needed to understand how local policymakers perceive Chinese investors. Furthermore, more research is needed on other Arctic states and how they have perceived China's Arctic policy.

5. Conclusion

This thesis sought to find out how China's Arctic policy has been reported on in Icelandic news media during two different periods, with the former period dating from the 15th of May in 2012 until the 15th of May in 2013, and the latter dating from the 26th of January 2018 until the 26th of January 2019. These specific periods in turn coincided with the year leading up to China's successful bid to become an observer state in the Arctic Council, and the publishing of the official white paper on China's Arctic policy. As such, they were chosen in order to detect any changes in the newspaper coverage after the publication of the white paper.

Two newspapers were chosen for the analysis, the more conservative *Morgunblaðið*, and the more liberal *Fréttablaðið*. After having collected the news articles and editorials which covered China's Arctic policy from both papers, they were subsequently inputted into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The editorials were analysed by using the chosen methodology of qualitative content analysis. Quantitative elements were also utilised in the analysis in order to document whether the tone in coverage had changed between the two periods.

The results from the quantitative analysis, which analysed all the articles together, show that the newspapers did not differ drastically from one another when it came to the tone of the coverage. Furthermore, both articles from *Morgunblaðið* and *Fréttablaðið* were more positive towards China's Arctic policy than negative during the two periods, although the difference between the positive and negative coverage was by no means substantial. The positive coverage can be explained by the high frequency of news articles that positively reported on Chinese research in the Arctic, institutional co-operation, and economic co-operation. However, most of the articles that produced negative coverage on China's Arctic policy reported on the possible ties between the Chinese investor Huang Nubo and the CCP, and concerns about China's future ambitions and resource extraction in the region.

The results of the qualitative content analysis show that the editorials from *Morgunblaðið* were more biased towards a realist argument, while the editorials from *Fréttablaðið* were more biased towards a liberal argument. The editorials in *Morgunblaðið* were overtly critical of China's Arctic policy, especially of Huang Nubo's investment efforts in Iceland and his alleged ties to the CCP, while the editorials from *Fréttablaðið* were more positive towards the investment plan while paying less attention to his alleged connection to the CCP. Moreover, the editorials in *Morgunblaðið* were noticeably wary of China's future goals in the region. Lastly, the analysis of the news articles revealed two main themes that

emerged from data. First, editorials of both papers harshly criticised China for its alleged human rights abuses which was seen as a hindrance for China's further co-operation with Western nations, and second, local policymakers were criticised openly by certain members of the government in a few articles for having welcomed the Chinese investor Huang Nubo without paying attention to the potential security concerns that his investment might entail.

The results of this study show that the coverage of China's Arctic policy amongst the two Icelandic papers has on the whole been slightly more positive than negative, while the editorials from *Morgunblaðið* showcase bias towards the realist argument and the editorials from *Fréttablaðið* showcase bias towards liberal argument. However, this study did face limitations as the news articles collected from the latter period were significantly fewer compared to the articles from period no. 1. As a result, and due to only one article from *Fréttablaðið* being found during period no. 2, the quantitative results from that time must be deemed inconclusive. As a result, it is hard to say with certainty whether the media discourse towards China's Arctic policy has changed after the introduction of China's white paper. However, the qualitative content analysis did reveal a small increase in one of *Morgunblaðið*'s editorials towards economic co-operation with China after the publication of the paper, although it still remained wary of China's intentions in the region. Here, the author calls for more research on the topic of how Arctic actors have perceived China's Arctic policy and whether China's information management has been more, or less successful elsewhere.

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Appendix

Nodes

