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# The European Polar Identity

A narrative analysis of the EU Arctic Policy of 2008 and 2016

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# Abstract

The way an actor presents itself through a policy document could tell us a lot about – not only how the actor wants to be perceived – but also about what actorness the actor holds. To this foundation, this thesis studies the EU narrative identity presented in the EU Arctic Policy. The Arctic is a region of growing importance, and more eyes have turned to the Polar north over the past decades. The EU considers itself to be, with its three Arctic Member states, “intrinsically linked” to the Arctic Region hence motivating a foreign policy document on the region. Narratives are important for both the understanding and the formulation of policies, and research on policy narratives have increased over the past few decades. This thesis studies how the EU narrative identity has changed between the first EU Arctic Policy from 2008 and the current from 2016. The EU narrative is deciphered from a qualitative analysis of the policy documents, where the Narrative Policy Framework is used as a methodological point of departure. The most prevalent narrative identity in both EU Arctic Policies is that of the EU as a hero in climate change action. The findings suggest that there is no major shift in narrative, but nuances that support the claim that the narrative identity of the EU as a security policy actor is given more space in the 2016 EU Arctic Policy. This in combination with a changing global power dynamic makes it possible that the narrative of the EU as a climate change actor is used to further EU security interests.

*Key words:* EU, Arctic, cooperation, narrative, policy, climate change, environment, security, identity

Words: 19 749

# Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor Ian Manners for his advice and guidance during this thesis writing process. I would also like to extend a big thanks to my family and friends for all unwavering support and many discussions on the EU and the Arctic, but also for offering me an occasional well-needed break from writing.

# List of Abbreviations

BEAC = Barents Euro-Arctic Council

CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP = Common Security and Defence Policy

EEAS = European External Action Service

EU = European Union

EUAP = European Union Arctic Policy

FAC = Foreign Affairs Council

HR/VP = High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

IMO = International Maritime Organization

IPCC = Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

NEAFC = North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

NPF = Narrative Policy Framework

TEU = Treaty on the European Union

ToL = Treaty of Lisbon

UNCLOS = United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC = United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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# 1 Introduction

Unlike its recurrent portrayal in popular media as a cold, distant and remote region (Herrmann 2015, p. 290), the Arctic has gained a rapid increase in attention in power politics over the past decade. Several big and influential Arctic states – the US, Canada and Russia – have all shown a rise in interest for the region (Méndez-Penido & Fralova 2019, p. 344), something that can also be detected in the smaller Arctic states in the Nordic (Nordregio 1). The strategic interest in the Arctic is spreading fast beyond the region, and several other countries have already written, or are in the works of writing, their own Arctic strategies (EUAP 2016, p. 4).

The interest in the Arctic region is largely motivated by the possible geopolitical advantages that a control of the region could entail. First of all, the Arctic is rich in valuable natural resources and the region is believed to hold 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of the world's undiscovered gas (Riddervold & Davis Cross 2019, p. 46). In addition to oil and gas, there are many other natural resources that increasingly become more available as the ices melt (*ibid.*). The changing climate leads to major consequences in the Arctic environment that also serves as an important control mechanism for the global climate. A rapid global warming in the Arctic risks thus harming not only the region itself, but the entire globe. The global warming brings however also strategic opportunities, and many countries are not late in expressing their ambition to get a share of the cake. As the ice melts the Arctic is becoming significantly more accessible by opening up new possible transport- and trade routes (Gricius 2021).

The EU presented its first European Union Arctic Policy in 2008 (EUAP 2008) which was later updated in 2012 (EUAP 2012) and in 2016 (EUAP 2016). Currently it is in the works of being updated by late 2021 again (European Commission 1). Over a mere eight-year timeframe the EU wrote three Arctic policies, suggesting that the Arctic is a region of change as well as an area of increasing importance. We can therefore assume that internal or external developments has occurred over the studied years – hence instigating the need to update the policy. Following these developments, it is possible that the storytelling conveyed through the EUAP may also be different. This so-called policy-narrative is a type of storytelling that has grown in popularity among narrative scholars over the past decades. Narrative analysts argue that narratives are the foundation for how we understand our society and the world (Robertson 2012, p. 225), and in order to fully understand the intent of a policy, a narrative analyst would consequently state that narratives are central to uncover (Shanahan et al. 2017, p. 173). Using the same motivation, this thesis considers it fundamental to study how the EU portrays itself in storytelling – what this thesis considers to be the narrative identity of the EU – in order to fully understand the EU as an actor in the Arctic.

This thesis is set out to study the change – or lack thereof – of the European narrative identity in the EU Arctic Policy (hereafter EUAP) over the time period between its inception in 2008 and the current version from 2016. Due to the limited scope of this thesis the focus is the differences that appear when comparing the first policy with the current one, instead of examining the gradual change over time. The primary study material in this study is the 2008 EUAP and the 2016 EUAP. The EUAP from 2012 is therefore not primarily studied in this thesis, but it serves as an important part of the researcher’s foundation and background to understanding the EU narratives about the Arctic. The idea is not to study how the EU has an impact in the Arctic, nor the power balance between the Arctic actors. The actions taken by other Arctic actors both in the Arctic and elsewhere will however inform and affect the European standpoint, and by doing so also have an impact on the EU narrative in the EUAP.

## 1.1 Research Question

The research topic and the specific objectives this thesis seeks to explain has been identified. Since there are two primary documents studied, this thesis chooses to utilise a qualitative approach to reach further understanding. A qualitative approach is often focused on the objective of exploring, understanding and describing various issues within the field of interest (p. 51), and a research question based on a “how”-formulation is appropriate for this type of research.

The research question for this thesis will hence stand as follow:

**How has the European Union narrative identity in the Arctic changed between the first EU Arctic Policy in 2008 and its revision in 2016?**

**And what does it say about the EU as a foreign actor?**

Before answering the question, this thesis will begin by situating the research topic in the current academic discussion on EU Foreign Policy, as well as explaining the global interest in the Arctic. In order to be able to answer the question the overview of the research field will be followed by reviewing the term narrative, what the use is of a narrative study and what method is suitable to employ when studying the development. The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is introduced, and its elements operationalised to make the method compatible for a qualitative textual analysis exploring how – if at all – the EU have shifted its narrative. The NPF is clearly separated into four core elements – setting, characters, plot and moral of the story – that all together facilitates a comparison between the two primary policy documents studied.

The operationalisation of the NPF has its strength in helping us understand the changes in the policy narrative by looking at the different elements but leaves it up to the researcher to find traces and identifiable signs for the main narratives present in



the policies. The main narratives that are in focus in this study is that of the EU as a climate change advocate and that of the EU as an actor in security policy. The reason why these two narratives are chosen to be in focus is that climate policy and security policy are the two most central policy areas in Arctic diplomacy according to several researchers. These narratives are presented and outlined further before commencing the analysis.

## 2 Historic Outlook and State of the Art

*What Europe you see depends on where you live. 'Europe' is a moveable set of myths and images, both positive and negative, embedded in national histories and vernacular literatures. There is no idea of Europe common to all European states, and therefore also no agreement on where Europe ends. West and East Europeans, Northern and Southern Europeans all have their own definition of what Europe means and where it ends – and all are equally convinced that they are offering a generally valid definition.*

(Wallace 2003, p. 79)

How far European borders go, and more importantly where they end, was a topic of debate throughout the entirety of the 20th century. When the European Coal and Steel Community was founded as the predecessor to the EU of today in the early 1950s, the community encompassed six Western European countries (Dehousse – Magnette 2012, p. 21, 24). Already from the start this community was intended to expand, but how far the European borders should actually stretch was a topic that became increasingly contentious only in the past few decades, especially in connection to the Eastern enlargement in the 21st century (Wiarda 2005, p. 89-90).

The Arctic has not always been a part of, or even close to, the EU. It was first when Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995, where Denmark was already a member, that the European area came to approach the Arctic politically as well as strategically (Arctic Institute 2). This chapter summarizes the historical state of the EU relations to the Arctic, and how the Arctic has evolved over time to become a research topic for political scientists. In order to fully understand the EU interest in the Arctic this thesis considers it important to first shortly outline the interest that the Arctic has faced globally throughout history.

### 2.1 The history of Arctic Global Relevance

The global strategic interest to control the Arctic spans many centuries back. Already in the late 15th century the region began to draw attention for strategic exploration for the first time. The search of a new sea route to Asia had led European explorer Christopher Columbus unintentionally to America, and the search for another passage around the Western continent and through the Arctic Ocean had begun (Arctic Institute 1).

In the mid- and late 19th century along with the rise in nationalism the race to reach the north pole accelerated and several countries launched Polar expeditions with the goal of reaching the northernmost point on earth. In 1878-1880 the Finnish-

Swedish Arctic explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld led the expedition on board Vega through the Northeast passage of the Arctic Sea as the first expedition to successfully reach East Asia on the other side (Mead 1972, p. 4-5). Between 1903-1906 Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and his crew on board the ship Gjøa became the first to cross the North-west passage in its entirety, after several previous expeditions attempts to do so (Amundsen 1907, p. 485). In the mid-1920s, Roald Amundsen was also on board the airship *Norge*, which is the first expedition to have made confirmed sightings of the North Pole (Engelhard 2021, p. 63-64).

During the second world war the Arctic served a strategic role in security politics for the first time, as the Axis and the Allied powers both wanted critical information from weather stations in Greenland (Gjerstad & Rogers 2021). Greenland can often be seen as the origin of European weather and relying on weather reports is especially vital in times of war (ibid.), as receiving this information can give you the advantage of situational awareness needed in battle.

The decades following the second world war – marked by the Cold war-rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union – saw a continuous interest in monitoring the Arctic weather (Devyatkin 2021). The direct conflict and rivalry in the area was not heightened, and rather on the opposite the western NATO allies were able to cooperate with the USSR even at times when the Cold war put a strain on their relationship in other regions of the world (ibid.). After the Cold war the Arctic remained evidently and area bordering both the US and Russia, but as the power struggle decelerated for a few years the Arctic was again shaped by a narrative of being a distant and isolated region (Herrmann 2015, p. 290).

## 2.2 The EU and the Arctic

Denmark was the first Arctic state to join the EU in 1973 (Tallberg 2013, p. 24). When Sweden and Finland joined the European Union in 1995 the union went from one Arctic member state to three overnight in a 200% increase (Arctic Institute 2). Denmark had at the time been a member for more than twenty years, but as a relatively small member state, alliances and shared interests are central to have an influence in the union's decision-making. In 1999, four years after Sweden and Finland joined the EU, the Northern Dimension policy was introduced as a foreign policy initiative during the first Finnish presidency (Northern Dimension 1). The goal was to further enhance cooperation on environment, energy and health in the Northern European regions of the Arctic, the Barents Sea and the Baltic Sea region (ibid.). When the policy was renewed in 2006 the EU had gained new member states in the focus region of the Northern Dimension as the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – all ascended to the union in 2004 (Tallberg 2013, p. 28).

At the time of the 2004 enlargement ambitions to deepen the EU cooperation in various sectors and policy areas were at rise, so also in the area of the common foreign and Security policy. During the renewal in 2006 the Northern Dimension became as a result a joint policy cooperation between the EU, Norway, Iceland and

Russia (Northern Dimension 1). Only two years later, in 2008, the EU launched its first EUAP and the European engagement in the region has grown since.

## 2.3 EU Actorness in International Relations

The European external presence is a growing area of study that has expanded to great lengths during the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hadfield et al. 2017, p. 4). In a world that is becoming increasingly stained by power politics (Gamble 2013, p. 23) the interest for how a multilateral organisation like the EU deals with the new world order, and what place it finds itself to have in the new structure, is on the rise. When studying the narrative identity of the EU, the focus is to find out how the EU wishes to present itself, but also how it would like to be understood by other actors. In regards to this, it is relevant to turn to literature on how the EU interacts with external actors, through one of the strands of literature that has developed as part of research on the EU foreign relations (Hadfield et al. 2017, p. 4)

European actorness in international relations through bilateral and multilateral agreements and organisations is a thorough and comprehensive research topic (ibid.). Much emphasis is put on how the multilevel structure and administration of the EU makes the organisation different from state-actors but also other international organisations. One commonly used theory on global actorness is a theory constructed by Bretherton and Vogler that encompasses Presence, Opportunity and Capability (2013). Presence represents the ability of an actor to exert influence beyond the actor's own border (2013, p. 376), Opportunity is the external context that can either facilitate or restrict action (2013, p. 378) and Capability refers to the ability to formulate and implement policies (2013, p. 381). All these elements are relevant to bring into the study of the EU narrative identity. Niemann and Bretherton claim that despite the common view of the EU as one-of-a-kind in international politics it brings value to compare the actorness and effectiveness of the EU compared to other global actors (2013, p. 262). By identifying what we can learn about the EU foreign policy from the EU narrative identities, this framework is also central to have in mind.

Studying narrative identities could be seen as the crossroads where research on EU actorness and EU narratives meet. The study of EU narratives is another vast research area that is continuously expanding. Many narrative studies focus on how other state or non-state actors perceive EU narratives, how the EU views other actors, or how policy making within the union can be justified by narratives appealing to European citizens. This narrative analysis aims at being a complement to this research by analysing the change in how the EU presents itself in the EUAP through what this thesis labels as narrative identity.

## 3 Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design that is utilised in this thesis and explains the theoretical point of departure and methodology that has been selected to help answer the question. First, the strengths of a qualitative research design – and the reason behind why such design is chosen for this study – will be elaborated upon. Thereafter the basic traits of a narrative analysis, including the chosen framework for this narrative study, is introduced. Lastly, a discussion on the potential challenges of the chosen research design is carried out.

### 3.1 Qualitative Research

The method of analysis for this paper will be based on the ideas of qualitative research, where the data that is analysed and collected is mainly used to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Ormston et al. 2014, p. 4). It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research using a variety of different interpretations and techniques when being carried out (ibid.). Over the past decades, qualitative research has developed and become an increasingly popular approach in social sciences as human beings and their interaction in a society cannot always be understood by mathematical formulas and other forms of quantitative data. The fundamental idea of qualitative research is based on the argument presented by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 11). In this work he argues that our knowledge of the world is only based on our understanding and interpretation of events and surroundings rather than an objective truth that can be unveiled (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 11).

This ontological position is not central – or even shared – by all qualitative researchers today, but seeing this as the foundation for interpretivist thinking, these thoughts and ideas are still important for qualitative research in present times. The main characteristic that different types of qualitative research share is instead the intention to find and portray an in-depth understanding of the social world (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 4). An openness to complex and detailed data along with the reflexive acknowledgements of the researcher's role are other features that characterise and distinguish qualitative research from other approaches (ibid.).

This thesis will take the form of a qualitative narrative analysis where the aim is to determine the change in a European Union narrative in Arctic politics over an eight-year timeframe by looking at the EUAP from 2008 and the EUAP from 2016. As such we could say that there is only one case being studied, the case of the European Union narrative identity in the EUAP, and the independent variable is

instead time as it is the factor that is being changed between the two policies. The assumption of having time as the independent variable – and the change over time as the focus of this study – is that the difference in time will either cause or explain the variation in narrative (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 52). To conduct a qualitative textual analysis is a good fit for this research topic since it will allow us to go more into depth in the actual policies, as well as having a wider understanding of the contextual circumstances under which the policies were written. A qualitative research method can be used to understand the significance, implications and processes that make up international politics (Lamont 2015, p.78), and this understanding can be a solid base for a narrative analysis.

Qualitative research can use different types of data in their analysis such as qualitative observations, interviews or written documents (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 186-187). The data selected for this thesis are the first and the current EUAP (EUAP 2008, EUAP 2016), and the main sources to be analysed qualitatively in the analysis are thus written documents. This qualitative text analysis will focus on the narrative change. A qualitative textual analysis can be further divided into systematic and critical analyses (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 213). A systematic analysis aims to discover the meaning behind a text by methodically clarifying the narrative elements that can be found in the text. A critical analysis focuses more on reviewing the arguments and ideas behind the narrative elements that can be found in the text (ibid.), and as such one could see it as an extension of the systematic analysis. This thesis takes the form of a systematic analysis by going over the policies in-depth and bringing out the narrative elements that can be found in each policy.

One characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher themselves is the key instrument used to conduct the study (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 181). As such, qualitative methods give space for direct input of the researcher throughout the study. The interpretation of the data is impacted by the context in which it is studied, and the researcher has space to both influence, and be influenced by, the data and the contexts. The Narrative Policy Framework used in this thesis is a methodological means to find narrative elements, but the interpretations are based on first-hand observations of the policy documents rather than numerical relationships calculated by statistical programmes. This is however still an attempt to use a somewhat standardised method in a qualitative text analysis, something which is not habitually practiced in the research field (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 4)

### 3.1.1 Researcher Reflexivity

When conducting qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to constantly be aware of their own perspectives and biases about the topic that is being studied (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 4). The researchers' interpretations and understandings of the data is what will guide the analysis and eventually the conclusion that can be reached from the findings. My pre-conceived notions and understandings of the Arctic and the EU that lay at ground in this thesis are based on an upbringing in Sweden and Västerbotten county in Northern Sweden. Västerbotten county is one of the two regions in Sweden considered to be part of the Swedish Arctic territory

(Arctic Council 1). Since Sweden is one of the Arctic countries, the Arctic is hence closer than in most parts of the world. Being one of the Arctic states, as well as one of three Arctic states that is also a member of the EU, Sweden is keen on being involved and have an impact on the EU Arctic Policy. The three Arctic EU Member states have – relative to their size – a significant impact on the EU Arctic Policy (Dolata 2020, p. 42). Based on this background and my relationship to the region, my understanding of the Arctic has long been that of a region of major political interest.

In research overall, but especially in qualitative research, it is central to also consider the potential implications of data collection (Webster et al. 2014, p. 78). The risk of ethical dilemmas in how the data is being collected is however not applicable since the data is public and open for anyone to find on the European Union website. The use and interpretation of the data are built from understandings taught in a Swedish academic context, and these understandings are articulated throughout the study in order to maintain the clarity and focus of this thesis.

## 3.2 The study of Narratives

In qualitative research there are various methods, theories and approaches in order to find deeper understanding of the research subject. One of the most common strands in qualitative research is the study of narratives or the performance of a so-called narrative analysis. The study of narratives and what is meant by them is often described in words such as history-telling or storytelling (Robertson 2012, p. 220), but the existence and use of narratives is prevalent in almost all types of documents, speeches, novels and news articles.

The history of narrative research goes almost a century back. In 1928 Soviet literary scholar Vladimir Propp published what would become an early classic in narrative analysis: *Morphology of the folktale*, but it wasn't until forty years later that the narrative analysis and Propp's ideas would have a wide breakthrough in social sciences. In 1967 American linguists William Labov and Joshua Waletzky further developed the narrative approach to research in their book *Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience*, and by the early 1980s the central role of narratives had been set out for research in political science, psychology, sociology and economics (Czarniawska 2004, p. 2). Ever since these developments in the 1980s researchers that are inspired by what is now labelled as the “narrative turn” claim that narratives are what constitutes our whole identities and that narratives are at the basis for how we understand our society and the world (Robertson 2012, p. 221).

Even so, a clear and concise definition of a narrative is still lacking, but several scholars have tried to pinpoint its meaning for future research and clarifications (Robertson 2012, p. 221). According to Robertson, the narrative perspectives can differ in at least three aspects: their points of departure, their definition of a narrative and the use that the narrative analysis is attributed (2012, p. 221). The presumptions that are made by the researcher before the study is conducted, as well as how the term “narrative” is defined can vary to a great extent and will have different outcomes in what is meant by a narrative analysis. The way the narrative is used by

different narrative researchers can also cause big discrepancies and even contradictions. Some scholars utilise the narrative as the object to be analysed, whereas others consider it to be the method of analysis. Hence, it is difficult to make a firm judgement of how a narrative best be defined, but what is certain is that some type of explanation of this thesis's perspective and definition is needed.

This thesis looks at narrative as a form of storytelling that is not only limited to individual people or smaller groups of policy-makers, but is also expressed by large institutions such as the EU. The way the EU chooses to portray itself through policy storytelling is what this thesis considers to be its narrative identity – it may not be aligned with how its citizens or other actors perceive the EU – but understanding how the EU wishes to be recognized brings value on its own. The concept of a narrative's "sender" – the one offering the storytelling – is important in narrative analysis, not the least when trying to understand how a narrative identity is built. This thesis believes that the sender of a narrative can be found anywhere on a scale from the individual to a larger institution. The narratives are the different stories that are conveyed in the policy documents and the Narrative Policy Framework (to be introduced in part 3.2.2) is used as the method to discover how these have developed over the chosen timeframe. The narratives that are presented in the policies are introduced and how much scope they are given in the text is discussed in order to determine the narrative development, but it has not been a supplementary goal to analyse the underlying ideas in a more critical form, but rather leaves this up to future potential research.

### 3.2.1 An EU Narrative

One of the underlying assumptions made in this thesis is that the EU narrative identity in Arctic politics can be detectable through close reading of the EUAP. This is a probable inference, but since the EU is built up by a multilevel polity (Pollack 2010, p. 34-36) where different levels and institutions interact it is fair to assume that different narratives regarding a certain issue can exist simultaneously within various parts of the union. As a result, one can additionally assume that it would be possible for the different EU institutions and levels to signal and indicate different narratives outwards as well. This difficulty of coherence is not least present within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) since this is an area where the EU lacks legislative competence (TEU Article 24). Foreign policy is historically one of the policy areas most closely-knit to the idea of the nation state, as one of the core ideas and conceptualisations of a state long has been as a territorially delimited area with a monopoly on violence and the ability to protect the borders from outside threats (Badersten & Gustavsson 2010, p. 73-75). In present days this has led to how foreign policy is one of the policy areas where consensus and decisions are the most difficult to reach, or at least uphold since they are not legally binding (Giegerich & Wallace 2010, p. 451). All EU countries have their own foreign policy and their own agenda in addition to the European foreign and security policy, and these national agendas are often granted priority.



Coherence issues are important to have in mind when discussing the policy output – including the policy narrative – of such a big multilateral organisation like the EU, but it is not the prime focus of this thesis. In order to have a reasonable amount of data to be able to conduct an in-depth study certain limitations are needed, and in this thesis all possible EU narratives can therefore not be given the same space for elaboration. This thesis argues that the Arctic policy would be the most representative document to analyse when searching for the EU narrative, albeit a somewhat institutional rather than an individual focus. This is because the three main European institutions: the European Parliament, the Commission and the EU Council are all subject to the policy either as the recipient or as the sender and as such both the Member State's governments are represented (through the Council) and the EU citizens (through the Parliament).

This thesis is hence looking exclusively at the narrative the EU tries to portray of itself to citizens and other international actors through the EU Arctic Policy. This will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of narrative changes since the number of main documents is limited and the primary data can hence be studied in detail.

In short, there may be other – possibly even contrasting – narratives that also are a part of the EU narrative identity in Arctic politics. Just as the narrative analysis needs to take into account when and how different stories are communicated in a text, this thesis chooses to delimit the EU narrative to be the narrative conveyed through the EUAPs, simply because these policies are considered to form the most important EU narrative identity in Arctic politics.

### 3.2.2 The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)

The research question of this thesis will be answered by conducting a qualitative textual analysis with the focus on narratives in the EU Arctic Policy. The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is a framework that can be used in narrative analysis, and one that would be fruitful to apply on the chosen policy texts for this thesis due to its clear formation in identifying different narrative elements in policies. There are various ways to approach narrative analysis but policy texts may not always follow the same storyline-structure that can be found in other narrative accounts, which could make the application of these alternative narrative frameworks or perspectives less fitting. The NPF was specifically developed to study narratives in policies which makes all the elements detectable, and the framework can as such be used to its full strength without compromising certain components.

The EU Arctic policy is communicated via Joint Communication documents to the European Parliament and the Council. The Policy document from 2008 has the European Commission as its sender whereas the document from 2016 has both the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) – representing the European External Action Service – as its sender.

The NPF is a comparatively novel approach to narrative studies (Weible and Schlager 2014, p. 235) developed only in the early 2010s (Shanahan et al. 2017, p.

174). Since the NPF is a new contribution to qualitative and narrative research major strands and new directions within the framework are still under formation (Shanahan et al. 2017, p. 198). One of the new directions that has gained substantive support in recent times is the comparative analysis that utilises the NPF (ibid.). Since this study is comparing the narrative in two EUAPs this study is also relevant in the current developing stage of the NPF.

When utilising the NPF four core elements are identified to be part of a policy narrative (Shanahan et al. 2017, p.176): setting, characters, plot and moral of the story. These four elements are compared separately between the two chosen policies and discussed in connection to the EU narrative identities in the Arctic presented in part 3.2.4. Several of the aspects may be overlapping but will be kept separate in an attempt to remain clear.

When analysing a text, in this case two policy documents, the research can be conducted either qualitatively or quantitatively. This thesis has already argued why it deems a qualitative approach helpful to answer the research question, but what is important to note is that the NPF is usually reliant on statistical methods to test formulated hypotheses (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 341). Due to its structure in outlining different elements, the framework works well for coding to be used in quantitative studies, but the framework should not be overseen for its potential use and value in a qualitative study.

The framework is still in the early stages of its formation and its potential to be used more broadly in political science is described as “ripe” by Shanahan et al. (2017, p. 202), and this thesis considers a qualitative point of departure to be motivated. Although not the most common way of using the Narrative Policy Framework, a qualitative approach has proven fruitful in previous NPF-studies, for example in 2014 when O’Byrne, Dunlope and Radaelli utilised a qualitative methodology to conduct a comparative NPF-study on the narratives about the Arab spring (Shanahan et al. 2018, p. 335).

The well-delimited narrative elements and the overall composition of the framework is not only a strength in quantitative but also qualitative studies, and if operationalised in a well-defined manner, the NPF can become a structured way to analyse change in a smaller sample and through a qualitative research design. This thesis will hence use the Narrative Policy Framework as the methodological foundation in a qualitative research design.

One of the main strengths of conducting a qualitative textual analysis instead of a quantitative one is that the integrality of the text is often hard to decipher when drawing extracts for quantitative comparisons (e.g. word counts) (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 211). The central themes and narratives of a text may not be visible if the entirety is not considered simultaneously, and many qualitative textual analysts appear to hypothesise that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (ibid.).

### **Level of analysis**

The NPF often starts off by identifying and describing the level of analysis (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 334). Typically, an analysis using the NPF is split into three different levels: the micro-, meso- and macro level. This delimitation of the level of

analysis helps the researcher as well as the reader to further identify a focus group of the study by narrowing down the studied population. (Shanahan et al., 2018, p.334)

The micro level emphasises the way individuals influence certain narratives, and how individuals are influenced by narratives themselves (Shanahan et al, 2018, p.334). This level of analysis falls outside the scope of this study due to one main reason, namely that it would be very challenging to study how individual citizens in the EU interpret, understand and value the EU Arctic Policy without further narrowing down the population to for example an indigenous group in Northern Europe or a region in an EU Member state. Even when narrowed down, finding a representative sample when collecting data would require difficult choices and meticulous consideration of possible sampling errors. Although being outside the scope of this thesis, a narrative analysis of the Arctic Policy at individual level would be an interesting possibility for future complementary discussions and research.

The meso level is focused on policy actors in groups or entities (Shanahan et al., 2018, p.334). An NPF study carried through on a macro level concentrates more widely on narratives in the society by analysing the way institutions or societies as a whole are formed by narrative stories and also how they in turn form and reproduce policy narratives (Shanahan et al., 2018, p.334). Since the aim of this thesis is to examine how the EU narrative has changed during the chosen years, the meso level of analysis is the most applicable in this case. The meso level of analysis “begins from the premise that the objective of stakeholders in a policy system is to achieve a policy goal” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 15). The idea is to find the way the EU presents its narrative identity through the problem formulations and solutions presented in the EUAP which goes in line with the description of the meso level of analysis.

A pure macro level of analysis of the narrative surrounding the Arctic would have to focus wider by collecting further data to be able to say something more generalisable about the large-scale EU narrative (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 341), which would lead away from the goal of finding the way the EU presents itself in the EUAP.

## **The core elements**

### Setting

The setting is the specific policy context in which the studied policy is formed (Shanahan et al., 2017, p. 176). The setting is reflected in the policy but can in most cases not be detected solely by drawing quotes from the text. The geographical area both in terms of nature and environment but also the legal framework of the area where the policy is formed are central parts of the setting. Time is another vital component of the setting, and this thesis uses time as the independent variable. Recent events and developments influence the way we act in certain situations and hence also the way policymakers deal with various circumstances. Changes in time may not only cause a change in external factors but also the internal legal framework and environmental setting of a certain policy, and as such this thesis considers time to be the most important factor of the setting.

The setting is in other words the specific context in which the problem the policy is dealing with occurs (Jones et al. 2014, p. 6). The first stage of policy formation is

the agenda-setting – when the need of one is discovered, or the need of one has already been evident for quite some time. (Coen et al. 2021, p. 111), and in order to fully understand a policy narrative it is also imperative to study the setting under which it was formed.

### Characters

The characters are the different parties that are part of, or relevant to, the story that is being told (Shanahan et al., 2017, p. 176). With a broad interpretation a character can thus be both the initiator or author of the policy document, the intended policy audience and the different actors mentioned in the policy. The focus of this thesis is the narrative conveyed in the text and therefore the characters introduced directly in the policies will be the primary focus for comparison.

Just as in fiction novels, characters can have different types of roles depending on their impact on the plot (Jones et al., 2014, p.6). In works of fiction there is often at least one protagonist and one antagonist, and according to the NPF the same types of variation in characters can be detected in policy narratives, where they are instead often characterised into groups of heroes, villains and victims (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 335). Russian literary scholar Vladimir Propp was already in 1928 studying the and breaking apart the structural elements of Russian folktales in his renown work *Morphology of the Folktale* (1958 [1927]). In this book Propp identifies seven different types of characters that have different functions in the storytelling (Propp 1958 [1927], p. 72-73) and his ideas are still today guiding principles for narrative analysts attempting to draw any conclusions about characters. What is important to bring from Propp's characters into this study is his description of how characters can experience a character development in a way that they take on a role that wasn't originally theirs to play.

Since this thesis is interested in understanding how the perceives and presents itself in the EUAP it is reasonable to turn to the idea of actors in international relations. Since the EUAP is a part of the CFSP the policy's description of characters can give us significant insight into either how the EU views itself or how it wants to be perceived in terms of global actorness. An actor in international politics – a global actor – can be defined as “those groups, institutions, or both exercising public authority beyond the state and that with the aim of influencing broader socio-political transnational spaces” (Madsen & Christensen 2016). The research on actors in international relations is vast and depending on the researcher's point of departure many different subcategories to actors exist. Actors in international relations are as a starting point often distinguished as state actors or non-state actors (Lake 2008, p. 1-2). There are various different theories about what constitutes an actor's actorness (e.g. Niemann & Bretherton 2013; Bretherton & Vogler 2013), but the baseline of these theories are that various actors can exercise different strengths based on separate internal and external contexts. We can subsequently assume that characters can be depicted as more or less distinct versions of the same role or put into other words – there can be different types of heroes, villains and victims in one single policy.

One could argue that character has a broader significance than actor based on this background, but for the scope of this thesis the actors present in the policies –

whether directly addressed or not – are the key characters. Additional characters in the policies can be smaller groups or communities that in some way influence the actions taken by the EU and other international actors without the requirement of having an explicit aim to do so.

### Plot

The plot is described in various NPF-studies as when the characters meet the setting (Shanahan et al. 2017, p.176). In other words, we could state that the plot is the different descriptions made in the policy document to narrate what is essentially happening. When the state actors and the non-state actors interact at moments that can be different in both time and space the outcome can be presumed to vary accordingly, and the narrative may shift as a result. In a lot of narrative analysis the plot is usually an element expected to have a beginning and an end (Jones et al. 2014, p. 6), but this is not always the case, and can be especially difficult to detect in policies.

Even though it would be possible to imagine a plot with a storyline in the EUAP, it would not be particularly easy to determine which formulations that suggest A leading to B and B leading to C, since they may not be presented in chronological order. Since this is often the case in policies, NPF studies usually rely on the narrative plot lines presented by Deborah Stone (Shanahan et al. 2017, p. 176). Stone identifies two main plot lines that are particularly prevalent in policies, namely the *story of decline* (Stone 2002, p. 138) and the *story of helplessness and control* (Stone 2002, p. 142). The *story of decline* goes like this: “In the beginning, things were pretty good. But they got worse. In fact, right now, they are nearly intolerable. Something must be done.” (Stone 2002, p. 138) and the *story of helplessness and control* like this: “The situation is bad. We have always believed that the situation was out of our control, something we had to accept but could not influence. Now, however, let me show you that in fact we can control things” (Stone 2002, p. 142). This plotline is in other words the way the policy authors view the problem, and the problem is hence also something that can be found within the policy instead of being an external element actively affecting but remaining outside of the policy process. Shanahan et al. consider narratives to not only reflect who the sender is, but also influence the future actions by the sender (Shanahan et al., 2014, p. 69). In other words, the NPF considers policies to represent the way a certain problem is understood by the sender, and as such they also give shape to, and form, the actual problem.

### Moral of the Story

The moral of the story is what is presented as the solution in the policy (Shanahan et al., 2017, p. 176). When the problem formulation has been conveyed as the plot, the character that has been introduced as the hero of the story needs to initiate an action that can solve the problem.

As the policy often is written with a certain problem in mind (Coen et al. 2021, p. 111), the last element of the NPF is the hypothetical idea of how the problem presented in the plot will eventually be solved. The ideas and ambitions presented as the moral of the story can often be read as the actual intention behind why a certain policy was written, but as already introduced in the description of a plot this does not

necessarily have to be the case. Sometimes it can be more valuable for an institution to present itself and the will to introduce a certain solution to a problem, for example a legislation proposal, rather than the actual introduction of the mentioned solution. This is because the way different actors perceive each other may be heavily based on the policy output, rather than an immediate result of the named policy.

### 3.2.3 Operationalisation and Application of the NPF

This study will look for formulations in the policies that are consistent with the four elements of the Narrative Policy Framework that was introduced in part 3.2.2.

The setting under which the policy was formed is the one element where it is not possible to solely turn to the EUAPs for traces of the context, and data material will therefore primarily be looked after in news articles and official reports from the years preceding the EUAPs. The setting will be compared by looking at the internal legal setting and the two most relevant external settings, climate and security, in 2008 and 2016 respectively in order to form an understanding of the settings the two policies were formed under. Time will as such be a central aspect of the different settings that are studied. For each of these identified settings the goal will be to find information in order to build an understanding of the context surrounding the 2008 and the 2016 EUAP. In order to find this information searches will be carried out in Google by delimiting the results to be from three years preceding the policies (2005 – 2008 and 2013 – 2016), and by using different combinations of keywords such as “EU”, “Arctic”, “Climate”, “Environment” and “Security”.

The aim is to compare the internal setting within the EU – being for example its member states, the legal framework and the organisational structure – as well as the external setting that is global interest from other actors in the Arctic, climate change and shifting power relations. Mentions of the setting in the actual policies will also be considered in the case they appear, but since the setting is the context under which the policy was written it is not certain that it will be introduced in the policy on its own. If the setting is introduced in relation to the characters in the policy it will thus constitute the plot instead.

The characters will be analysed by examining the different actors that are introduced in the policies. Some actors may have disappeared or been given greater attention in the 2016 EUAP compared to the 2008 EUAP, which is important to note in order to analyse change over time. The presentation of these characters in terms of heroes, villains or victims will be determined by looking for formulations suggesting that the characters are working in favour of, or against, the policy solution (Moral of the Story) or whether the actor is causing a desired, or an undesired, change to the plot. These presentations are what constitutes a vital part of the narrative and any noticeable changes in these presentations are reviewed in the analysis.

The plots of the separate policies are contrasted by close-reading and by identifying the main problem formulations in form of plot lines presented in their introductions. Stone’s two main plot lines – the *story of decline* and the *story of helplessness and control* – will be used to identify how the narrative about the problems presented

in the EUAP unfold. The introduction as well as the conclusion will be weighted heavier than the parts in between since the opening and the ending of the most textual documents is what binds the text together as well as summarizes what the author considers to be the most important components of the text (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 211).

The moral of the story will just as the plot be retrieved by thoroughly going through the documents looking for all solutions that are presented to the problems introduced by the plot. If there are any solutions presented in the introduction they will be considered as something the EU argues to be the most important solution and therefore the introduction of the policy – and by extension – the introduction of its chapters will carry more weight than the following parts.

### 3.2.4 The EU Narrative identities in the EU Arctic Policy

When researching how the narrative has changed over time, it is helpful to first establish and identify the main narratives of interest that this thesis will consider in the analysis. The two narratives that are the most central are that of the EU as a climate change actor and that of the EU as a security policy actor. Potentially there could be a variety of other narratives present in the policies such as the narrative of the EU as a Human Rights-promoter or the EU as a global trade giant, but by using the most central claim for why Arctic cooperation is needed (climate change) and the most contested (military security), two EU narratives can be identified.

These two claims of why Arctic cooperation is needed were also central in the discussions that were at ground in the establishment of the Arctic council. In 1996 the Arctic council was established when the Ottawa Declaration was signed by the eight Arctic states (thereafter the members of the Arctic Council) (Ottawa Declaration).

The first goal of the Arctic council read :

*“The Arctic Council is established as a high level forum to:*

*(a) provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.”*

(Ottawa Declaration, p. 2)

In total the Ottawa Declaration states four motives for establishing a high level forum on Arctic issues, out of which all are closely related to the environmental challenges the region faces (ibid.). In an inauspicious footnote the Ottawa Declaration further explains what the signing countries mean by “common Arctic issues” by stating that “The Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security” (ibid.).

Dams and van Schaik claim in their 2019 policy brief that the threat of climate change to the Arctic and the geopolitical setting in the region are “two taboos upon which Arctic diplomacy is founded” (Ties & van Schaik 2019, p. 3). There appears to be several factors pointing at climate and security as the two most important areas of concern in Arctic politics, and it is therefore of interest to examine whether the EU portrays a narrative identity as an advocate for climate change action or a security actor.

### **The EU as an Advocate for Climate Change Action**

The narrative identity of the EU as an environmental actor spans many years back (Delbeke & Vis 2015, p. 11-12), and the EU policy making on the area is continuously increasing. During the 1990s and the early 2000s the development of new environmental policies and climate regulators was especially steep (Selin & VanDeever 2015, p. 29), and it is also possible to claim that it was during these years, and especially during the negotiations that would result in the Kyoto Protocol, that the EU for the first time would emerge as a leader in global environmental policy (Lenschow 2010, p. 327).

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a few years after the Kyoto Protocol, the narrative identity as an advocate for climate change began to crystallise, and would soon become a central EU narrative (Werksman et al. 2015, p. 109-111). The narrative identity of the EU as an environmental actor grew in importance especially as a reaction to Bush’s US presidency 2000-2008 (Manners & Murray 2016, p. 195). Some scholars would argue that the mid-2000s was the “heyday” of European leadership in climate policy (Tobin & Schmidt 2020, p. 143) since this was a time when the EU showed more constructive tendencies, meaning that they took on the leading role regardless of other actors actions (ibid.). This can be shown by for example the *independent* commitment the European Council made in 2007 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to the 1990-levels (Delbeke & Vis 2015, p. 18), where the word *independent* signifies that the ambition would stand regardless of actions taken by other actors to reduce greenhouse gases. Tobin and Schmidt argue that the EU leadership in climate policy has shown to possess more conditional tendencies during the Paris conference in 2015, meaning the EU is willing to take on climate goals on the condition that they are met by matching ambition from other actors (2020, p. 143)

Environmental policy is nonetheless still one of the areas where the EU is the most homogenous and coherent in relation to others, and as such it is also one of the policy areas where the EU has the best abilities to exert influence and gain power in international politics (Selin & VanDeever 2015, p. 152). The EU actorness in environmental and climate policy can thus be considered stronger than in other policy areas where the Member states’ opinions are less coherent, since the capability of reaching and implementing decisions is higher. When it is easier to reach decisions and pass policy documents on a certain topic, it is assumed to also be easier to come across as a legitimate actor and produce a narrative that is convincing to the audience.



## The EU as a Cooperative Security Actor

The EU as a security policy actor is the second narrative identity worthy to bring into the analysis. The EU has no army of its own (Biscop 2019, p. 81-85) but has participated in several missions under EU flag abroad, however never in the Arctic (EEAS 2). Since there is no EU military mission in the Arctic as of now, the emphasis of this study lay instead at the escalation of rearmament and language about the security concern of the Arctic states. Therefore, the narrative identity this thesis will look at will be of the EU as a security actor more generally and not only a military actor. An actor in security policy is prone to strategic considerations in order to affirm one's security or sense thereof. Communication outwards is one important component and this thesis argues that the narrative identity presented in a foreign policy document is as such inherently motivated to study.

Although the historical roots of the EU foreign and security policy are possible to trace decades back as a part of a long European integration process (Giegerich & Wallace 2010, p. 433-434), the modern-day foreign policy has gone through many changes in the past 15 years including the time between the policy from 2008 and the policy from 2016. In the early 1990s Germany and France made a joint policy proposal when they were suggesting a Common Foreign and Security Policy for the EU (Giegerich & Wallace 2010, p. 434). Already in this foundational state of the CFSP it would become apparent that foreign policy wasn't the easiest policy area to reach conclusive agreements since the two EU Member states suggesting to introduce a security policy had two very different concepts of how they envisioned the document (ibid.)

As previously elaborated upon in part 2.3, the research on the EU as an actor in international affairs is growing in academia. The EU actorness in security policy is not as strong as it is in climate policy, both due to the restraint of not being able to adopt legally binding documents and due to the coherence issues deriving from how every EU Member state have their own foreign and security policy in addition to the European one.

The common notion of the EU as a *sui generis* in international politics (Niemann & Bretherton 2013, p. 262) appears to – although still acknowledged – no longer be a hindrance or an excuse to avoid comparisons with other security actors. The study of international relations has for a long time been very state-centric (Lake 2008, p. 1-2), but as there have been a slight shift in emphasis and interest in favour of non-state actors over the past years (ibid.), the foreign and security policy of the EU has also gained momentum over time, prompting more research on the topic.

### 3.3 Challenges

Despite the attempts made to show the strengths and fit of the chosen research design, and argument behind its applicability in the studied case, it remains important to be aware of the weaknesses and possible challenges the choices could pose to this study.

One commonly claimed weakness of qualitative research is its insufficiency in being able to draw generalisable results. Due to the lack of quantitative data, it is often not possible to point at a substantive trend in the results and the conclusion is hence based solely on the researcher's interpretation of the detected narratives in the policies (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 181). Qualitative studies are however not as focused as quantitative studies on the external validity – the ability to generalise beyond the specific research context (Bryman 2012, p. 47) – and puts instead a substantial effort at discussing the internal validity. The internal validity concerns the causal relationship between the variables studied (Bryman 2012, p. 47), and to what extent it is possible to draw the conclusion that one has caused a change in the other. As the development and change (or lack thereof) over time is the research focus of this thesis there is a potential risk that other causes of change could be overlooked. In order to prevent this from happening, the NPF will be used as a systematic method where potential changes in any element will be discussed as other likely causes of a shift in narrative.

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to always keep track of the researcher's role in the process (Creswell & Creswell 2014, p. 183). In qualitative research the researcher themselves is one of the necessary tools in order to group and interpret different uses of narratives (Creswell & Creswell 2014, p. 181), and a common critique is that qualitative research therefore have a tendency to be too subjective (Bryman 2012, p.405). A quantitative research design is likely to employ an instrument that can be used to demonstrate or display data which allows for the researcher to remain a more neutral observer when explaining the results. The researcher's bias and prejudice are thus central to always have in mind.

Likewise, many quantitative researchers would argue that the qualitative approach to research risks having problematic lack of transparency (Bryman 2012, p. 406) as it can be difficult for the reader to understand all the steps the qualitative researcher took to reach their conclusion.

The Narrative Policy Framework has been chosen due to its relevance and applicability when studying narratives in policies, but the framework is often utilising a statistical scheme to analyse the findings (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 341). After justifying the choice of the approach and setting up an operationalisation of how the different elements of the NPF will be applied in the analysis, one goal is that this thesis to a certain extent will contribute to the development of the framework to be used in qualitative studies. The apparent risk with this approach is however the alternative outcome: that the framework doesn't work well or is able to employ its full strength in qualitative studies.

The operationalisations are therefore key to this research, but if not backed up by clear explanations it risks making the researcher even more susceptible to subjective interpretation than they already are in qualitative studies. One of the main challenges this thesis identifies regarding the application and use of the NPF is the difficulty of knowing whether the data found to build an image of the setting offers a comprehensive view of the context. The risk is that important data of contextual developments is missing, which could lead to conclusions that are not in line with the actual setting. By reading a number of academic books and articles on the development of the EU in a global setting during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this risk will

hopefully be minimised, although it cannot be completely excluded. It is therefore natural that the setting only acts as a background for the study but cannot tell us much about how the actual narrative identity has changed.

## 4 Findings and Analysis

This chapter will outline the major differences between the two policies that were found during the analysis of the data. The elements of the Narrative Policy Framework are used as a methodological structure in the comparison that is made in order to determine how the narrative in the European Arctic Policy has changed.

### 4.1 Setting

Since the main EU narratives this thesis is looking to compare in the EUAP are that of the EU as a global actor in climate policy and that of the EU as a security policy actor, there are clear motivations to look at how the environmental setting and the global power dynamics changed between 2008 and 2016. These are the external factors that could lead to a change in policy narrative. There could also be internal factors responsible for changes in the policy-making procedure that could potentially cause a change in narrative. Therefore, we must also consider the internal setting.

#### 4.1.1 Environment

The environment and a rapid climate change in the Arctic are presented as the main area of concern in 2008 EUAP as well as in the 2016 EUAP. The first problem introduced in both policies, established in their respective introductions, are the fact that the Arctic is warming at a pace almost twice the global average rate (EUAP 2008, p.2, EUAP 2016, p. 2). The significance of this problem formulation for the storytelling in the policy is discussed further in part 4.3 and 4.5, but what is important is that this central problem formulation situates the policy in a time of rapid climate change in the Arctic.

The climate change in the Arctic was at the time of the release of the 2008 EUAP recently confirmed to occur at a pace double that of the global average (EUAP 2008, p. 2). The environmental strain on the Arctic had been high for a long time when the 2008 EUAP was released, but with the confirmation of the high rate of global warming in the Arctic, the drastic changes and fast melting of the polar ices it is likely that this environmental setting was a triggering cause for formulating an EUAP. Following the drastic effects of global warming, “climate change” became a buzzword in Europe and among European policymakers in the early 2000s, and when the sixth Environmental Action Programme entered into force in 2002 “climate change” was for the first time one of the priority areas (European Commission 2). The issue of climate change had risen to the European

environmental agenda in the years preceding the 2002-update of the Environment Action Programme. In 2000, the EU released the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) (European Commission 3). The programme was initiated as a direct result to meet the need of how to implement the Kyoto Protocol on a European level (*ibid.*), and with an Arctic warming up at double speed it became ever more relevant in the years leading up to the first EU Arctic Policy to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The environmental setting in 2008 can hence justify the timing of the first EU Arctic Policy, but what is more important in order to understand the narrative change is to note what changed in the environmental setting between the policies. The difference in the environmental setting between the two policies lie primarily in the escalation of global warming beyond what had previously been predicted, as well as a more defined positioning of the EU as an advocate for climate change action.

In the fourth IPCC Assessment Report from 2007 it was clear that the climate change in the Arctic was accelerating and that the ices were melting at high speed and the report states that “Satellite data since 1978 show that annual average Arctic sea ice extent has shrunk by 2.7 [2.1 to 3.3]% per decade” (IPCC 2007, p. 2). The fifth IPCC Assessment Report released in 2014 adjusted the number upwards stating that “the annual mean Arctic sea-ice extent decreased over the period 1979 to 2012, with a rate that was very likely in the range 3.5 to 4.1% per decade” (IPCC 2014, p. 4). The decrease in ice reported in 2014 appears thus to be above the higher limit of standard deviation calculated in the 2007 Assessment Report. In line with these estimates of an increasing global warming another alarming observation was made in 2012 when the daily ice cover on the Arctic reached a record low (Parmentier et al. 2013, p. 195). Never before had the Arctic Sea ice levels been so low, and the reported measurements were two times lower than the 1979-2000 average (*ibid.*).

At the time of the release of the 2016 EUAP the EU had further cemented the presentation of itself as a global climate change actor and an environmental superpower, compared to the years just after the Kyoto Protocol when the EU first shouldered a leading role in environmental policy (Lenschow 2010, p. 327). The Paris Agreement that had been approved in the preceding year, with the goal of keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, was ratified by the EU in early October 2016 (European Commission 5). The European approach to and perception of the Paris Agreement was to a large extent that of a consensus (BBC 2). After all, the EU Council had already in 1996 – twenty years prior – expressed the ambition to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels (European Commission 4). The at-the-time Republican nominee to the US presidential election Donald Trump expressed in early 2016 a willingness to leave the Paris Agreement would he be elected the next president (BBC 1). Since the Paris Agreement would enter into force with the EU ratification, this also served as one of the main reasons why the EU rushed to ratify the Paris Agreement before the American election (*ibid.*). When Trump, as elected president, repeated his standpoints regarding the Paris agreement, several European leaders denounced the remarks by the American president (Boffey & Nelsen 2017) further fuelling, not only the sentiment that what the US inclined to do was wrong, but also the sentiment and narrative that what the EU did was right.

In the years leading up to the 2016 EU Arctic Policy the EU also took steps towards redirecting the economic system. In 2015 the EU adopted its first Circular economy action plan (European Commission 6), and the plan became one of the first proposals globally for a policy on how to work towards a circular economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2020, p. 2). Finland became the following year the first country in the world to adopt a roadmap for a circular economy (Järvinen & Sinervo 2021), soon followed by other EU Member States (*ibid.*). For a union that has been built on trade as a central part since its foundation, the circular economy action plan is not insignificant as the plan indicates that the union wants to profile itself strongly as an environmental actor. The 2016 EUAP mentions the Circular economy commitment when stating that the EU should share “experience and best practices” (EUAP 2016, p. 8) with the Arctic states.

To sum up the observations we can state that the environmental challenges had, if nothing else, become even more apparent during the first half of the 2010s compared to the 2000s, but apart from the intensification of global warming there are no major developments in environmental settings that cause significant differences between the two. The mere fact of using the same main problem formulation in both policies implies that the environmental setting is not a factor that has gone through changes that would motivate a revision of the EUAP.

#### 4.1.2 Global power dynamic

The power ambitions and power dynamic on the international arena is an area where it is possible to claim that the setting changed – or at least escalated – between 2008 and 2016. The power dynamics in the Arctic have a direct effect on the security situation in the region and theoretically also the way the EU would want to portray the narrative of themselves as an actor in security policy. This thesis considers Russia to be the most important actor for the European security concerns in the Arctic which is why it is given a proportionally larger amount of space.

During much of the 20th century the international arena and global politics was influenced by a bilateral power struggle between the US and Russia (Gamble 2013, p. 16). When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and several new countries proclaimed their independence and ambition to ensure a path to democracy, it appeared for a short while as if the future would be that of liberal democracies (*ibid.*). This perception would not last very long. Already in the 1990s some scholars would start arguing that the new political situation that arose after the Cold war could cause instability and significant complexity in the global world order (Sahle 2010, p. 97). In the early 2000s both Russia and the rising giant China shifted towards a more authoritarian rule, and with the unprecedented rise of China in the 21st century (Gamble 2013, p. 18) the bipolar power relations were exchanged for a multipolar global dynamic. When the 2008 EUAP was released, there was no longer an apparent bipolar dynamic with two main parties competing for world influence, but rather several global powers interacting and trying to find a new equilibrium (Gamble 2013, p. 18-20). Eight years later, when the 2016 EUAP was released, the establishment of a multipolar world order had only further intensified. This shift in global dynamic has

an effect on all global actors, since the system of international cooperation is built on the way actors interact on the international arena.

Russia is arguably the most important actor in the Arctic, but also one that changed in the way it signals its power ambitions between 2008 and 2016. Russian president Vladimir Putin had just left his position as president in May 2008 after serving two consecutive terms (Harding 2008). Although Putin did in no way leave the top layer of Russian politics as he was immediately appointed the Russian prime minister when leaving the presidential office (*ibid.*), this action indicates nonetheless that there was still some willingness to portray Russia as an actor following legal internal procedures. The Russian foreign relations and power ambitions outside its national borders were nonetheless accelerating. The relations between Russia and Georgia had been deteriorating for some time and the conflict reached its climax in August 2008 when Russian troops entered Georgia resulting in the Russo-Georgian war (Dickinson 2021). The EU opposed the war and called for a ceasefire, but the ceasefire appeared to mostly favor Russian interests (*ibid.*). The EU further blamed both sides for breaking international laws (Heritage 2009).

With Russia appearing to increasingly strive to be perceived as powerful, their territorial claims started to spread further outside their borders, and also into the Arctic (Kramer 2016). The US identified this threat in a report from the US Department of Defence in 2013: “There is some risk that the perception that the Arctic is being militarized may lead to an arms race mentality.” (US Department of Defence 2013, p. 13). When the 2016 EUAP was released tensions were high between the EU and Russia, primarily due to the Russian annexation of Crimea two years prior (EEAS 1). The EU answered by imposing various types of sanctions against Russia to protest the illegal annexation (European Council 1). Compared to the Russian war with Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea clearly showed Russian aggression since there were no first moves initiated by the Ukrainians that would give Russia an excuse to open fire (Englund 2014).

Political scientists Marianne Riddervold and Mai’A K. Davies Cross even believe that the Russian aggressions are the main reason behind the development of the EUAP (2019). They argue that the EU development of an Arctic Policy follows the patterns of Russian foreign aggressions. International attention to the Arctic region grew rapidly after the 2007 incident when a Russian submarine planted the Russian flag in the Arctic seabed just under the North Pole (Faulconbridge 2007). The fact that the EU member states only a few years prior to the development of the first EUAP had opposed the very creation of such a policy is used as further evidence to back up their claim (2019, p. 44).

Apart from the steady rise in Russian territorial claims over the past years the second most important difference between the two policies concerning the global power dynamic is the rise of China. China became an observer member of the Arctic council in May 2013 (Arctic Council 2). Thereby China also surpassed the EU whose observer status in the Arctic Council had been blocked by Canada due to a disagreement over fisheries (Østhagen 2013). In the following year Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist party General Secretary, proclaimed that China would become a powerful great power (Grammaticas 2013). Reinhard Biedermann argues that the EU perceives China as a threat in the Arctic, especially following the Chinese ramping up

of Polar engagements in the 2010s (2021, p. 12). This also supports the claim that there have been significant changes in the global dynamic between 2008 and 2016.

All in all, the major change in global power and security dynamic between the two policies is the way Russia significantly increased their foreign power ambitions. Although most visibly seen through the Russo-Georgian war and the annexation of Crimea, the Russian power ambitions also included heightened aspirations to control parts of the Arctic. The global dynamics can therefore be said to move into a more hostile period in Arctic diplomacy.

### 4.1.3 Internal legal context

The institutional setting of the 2016 policy was also different to that of the 2008 EUAP, primarily because of the Lisbon Treaty (ToL) that entered into force in December 2009. The ToL caused, at least in theory, significant changes for the European Union's ability to act in foreign relations, as the EU acquired both a legal personality and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was formalised (Troszczynska-van Genderen 2015, p. 5). The role of the double-hatted High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) was also formed with the ToL which helped contribute to a higher degree of continuity to the external relations (Telò 2013, p. 30). The EEAS was intended to serve as the European Union diplomatic service and with its creation the previous Commission delegations were transformed into EU Delegations reporting to the EEAS (Troszczynska-van Genderen 2015, p. 7). The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) got with the introduction of the HR/VP a permanent president and abandoned as such the shifting presidency the council is otherwise known for (Troszczynska-van Genderen 2015, p. 5). The hope of introducing the HR/VP was that this would lead to more consistency in the Foreign Affairs Council (Telò 2013, p. 30). The internal legal structure was thus considerably different between the 2008 and the 2016 policy.

Another reason to update the treaty could be to strengthen the EU coherency in Arctic politics. As Foreign and Security policy often are considered a core competence of a national state, the competence to make decisions and pass legislation in the policy area is a right that many EU Member states continuously defend (Alecú de Flers et al. 2011, 162). Due to this, the policy area is still one that requires unanimous decision-making in most cases, a fact that wasn't drastically changed by the ToL. In most cases the EU foreign policy should therefore be seen as an addition to national foreign policy (Alecú de Flers 2011, 163), and not something that is given priority over national legislation, as is the case in some other policy areas. The coherence issues that may arise from a wider European interest in the Arctic is therefore mostly important to deal with from a perspective of EU legitimacy, and not from the perspective that it may cause any actual legislative clashes between the EU and the Member States' policies. The EU must try to maintain its legitimacy both internally towards the Member states and externally towards other actors, and coherence between the EU institutions is a vital aspect in



order to appear legitimate. Not all EU Member states feel a close connection to the Arctic as a region, but among those that don't, they may have an important relation to Russia to consider, a deep concern and worry about climate change or possible major economic advantages they could gain from new transport routes following the melting ices, all different causes leading to further engagements in Arctic discussions.

Even though potential coherence issues between different EU institutions or different EU Member states is not a central focus of this study, they can still be relevant to the internal context. In the years following the first EU Arctic Policy several EU Member states started to develop their own strategic documents for the Arctic region. Finland was the first EU Member state to publish its own Arctic strategy in 2010 (Arctic Institute 3), followed the year later by both Denmark and Sweden (Arctic Institute 4; Arctic Institute 5). In September 2013 Germany published a smaller document called "Germany's Arctic Policy Guidelines" (Arctic Institute 6) and France was in the works of publishing its "National Roadmap for the Arctic" (Arctic Institute 7) after having appointed an Ambassador for international negotiations on the polar regions already in 2009 (*ibid.*). With a growing number of EU member states developing their own strategic documents the need for the EU to update theirs became more apparent. It became evident that the strategic interest and involvement in Arctic matters was increasing all over the union and without an update there was a risk that the EU coherency could be threatened.

When considering coherence issues the sheer number of EU member states are intrinsic to discuss. One year before the 2008 policy was released the EU gained two new member states in Bulgaria and Romania, making the total number of EU member states 27 (Tallberg 2013, p. 30). In 2013 Croatia joined the union as the only country to do so between the publication of the two Arctic policies (*ibid.*), making the total number of member states 28. There is consequently no major difference in the number of Member states between the two policies but the contextual change of any new Member state could still mean a big difference in the policy-making process. Croatia is situated on the Balkan peninsula in between central and southeast Europe (UI 1) and has as such no direct connection or strategic interest in the Arctic. There are however other factors that could lead to varying degrees of interest in Arctic matters, primarily the relationship with Russia which can sometimes cause a division among EU Member states, both regarding their perception of threat and regarding their perception of strategy (Dempsey 2015). Croatia has historically had strong ties to Russia, but with their accession to the EU the relations worsened (Skrpec 2017). It is therefore unlikely that the accession of one new EU Member state resulted in a different internal setting when the 2016 policy was written.

By the time the 2016 EU Arctic policy was published the EU had undergone two major challenges since the publication of the 2008 policy. In 2009 the European debt crisis, or the eurozone crisis, hit hard on the EU economy when several eurozone countries were unable to pay back the government debt (Gamble 2013, p. 20). In 2015 the EU experienced a major surge in migrants entering the union to seek asylum, leading to what is often referred to as the refugee crisis (Emmott 2015). The crisis posed a challenge to European unity and anti-EU sentiments spread. In the UK the effects of the migrant crisis caused a division in society leading up to the June

2016 referendum about the future of their EU membership, ending up with a narrow win in favour of Brexit (BBC 3).

The internal setting that the policy was created under, went through significant changes between 2008 and 2016. This thesis argues that the main change in the internal setting between the two policies are the entering into force of the ToL which made the EU Foreign Affairs more instrumental than it had been before. This helped increase the European actorness in foreign and security policy by granting a greater capability. Since the EU Arctic Policy was updated in 2012 as well, the effects of the Lisbon treaty entering into force is not a likely a key cause behind the 2016 update, but it does nonetheless signify a major difference in setting between 2008 and 2016.

#### 4.1.4 Summary

Finally, this thesis argues that the major differences in terms of setting between the two policies were due to the institutional changes and the external power dynamics. The critical threat of climate change had undoubtedly become even more apparent, but as there is no new previously unknown consequence of climate change, the changes are not significant to the extent that it would cause any remarkable shift in narrative between the two policies.

## 4.2 Characters

When analysing the narrative change of characters in the EUAP, this thesis seeks to point out if there are any differences between whom (or what) is presented as the hero, villain and the victim. First, all the characters need to be identified, and thereafter the most important portrayals for the different roles accounted for. Finally, a discussion about the change in characters as a narrative element will conclude this subchapter.

Commencing this section by making a distinction between state-actors and non-state actors, will allow us to discover if there are any differences between the actors that occur. The state actors mentioned in the 2008 EUAP are Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, the US, Canada and Russia (p. 2). Greenland is mentioned on several occasions in the 2008 EUAP, but it is emphasised that this is due to Greenland being a part of Denmark throughout, for example when described as “Being part of Denmark, Greenland is one of the Overseas Countries Territories (OCTs) associated to the Community” (EU 2008, p. 8). All state actors that are mentioned in the 2008 policy are also mentioned in the 2016 EUAP, which comes as no big surprise since all the eight mentioned states in the 2008 EUAP are Arctic states. Even though no state-character hence appears to have fallen out of importance between 2008 and 2016, the 2016 EUAP includes more state-actors than the 2008 EUAP does.

One noteworthy difference between the policies character-wise is the fact that China is not mentioned in the 2008 policy, nor in the 2012 policy (EUAP 2008, EU

2012). The first time China is mentioned in the EUAP is in 2016 (EUAP 2016, p. 3), when grouped together with India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. The 2016 EUAP underlines the importance of cooperating with the South- and East Asian states that have an interest in engaging in the Arctic (EUAP 2016, p. 15), but the policy affirm that the EU consider these countries to be situated “beyond the Arctic” (EUAP 2016, p. 3). The 2016 EUAP also mentions more actors within the EU that have shown a growing interest for the Arctic region: Germany, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, France and Spain (EUAP 2016, p. 4). In the 2016 Policy Greenland is portrayed as a more independent actor through phrasings like “Greenland has a close relationship with the EU based on its status as one of the Overseas Countries and Territories associated with the EU.” (EUAP 2016, p. 2) and “The EU cooperates with Greenland under the EU-Greenland Partnership” (EUAP 2016, p. 15).

The non-state actors that are present in the 2008 Arctic Policy are the EU (through various institutions and agencies), the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the North East Atlantic Fishing Commission (NEAFC), the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Nordic Council of Ministers, the International Maritime Organisation, the Saami, the Inuit and the Arctic population. The main difference in non-state actors between the two policies are that the NEAFC and the IWC are not mentioned in the 2016 Arctic Policy, whereas the United Nations (UN) and its specialised agencies and subsidiary bodies (e.g. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the International Maritime Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme) appear. The IMO, which is the only UN agency mentioned in both EUAPs, also appears to be the most important one. The IMO has the mandate to regulate maritime issues under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS is a legal framework used to settle marine disputes, and as the Arctic largely consists of the Arctic Ocean where more and more actors increasingly show an interest it is central to the regional diplomacy.

#### 4.2.1 Hero

The EU is the actor that in both EU Arctic Policies presents and initiates the solution and to a large extent also the actor that carries through these proposals in order to fix the problem. The EU is therefore portrayed as the main hero of the story.

Already in the introduction of the 2008 EUAP we note the first formulation suggesting that the EU will be the hero as EU policies on climate change, research and transport are described to have “a direct bearing on the Arctic” (EUAP 2008, p. 2). Although this is not an explicit presentation of itself as the hero, it is made clear that European action is not just valuable but a necessity. The EU continues to describe itself as a “leader in fighting climate change and in promoting sustainable development” (EUAP 2008, p. 3), and although admitting that long-term coordination and data collection for Arctic research is insufficient, the EU phrase themselves to be “major contributors” (EUAP 2008, p. 5) along with the EU

Member states. The EUAP, as well as other cross-border programmes in the Arctic, are described to “benefit” indigenous peoples (EUAP 2008, p. 4), which clearly adds to the portrayal of the EU as a hero.

The 2016 EUAP is not much different. The introduction establishes that “given the important role of the Arctic as a regulator for the climate of the planet [...] the EU has a duty to protect the Arctic environment and strengthen ecosystem resilience.” (EUAP 2016, p. 3). The policy goes on by explaining that “The EU’s Arctic policy will be an important element in implementing the global agreement reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015” (EUAP 2016, p. 3). The Arctic Policy will hence not only serve the target region – the Arctic – but also global goals on limiting climate change. Solving the rapid climate change through international cooperation, not the least through research and science, is one main area where the EU is building the narrative of itself as a hero. Under the headline about international cooperation in the Arctic, the EU depicts itself as “a global leader in science” (2016, p. 13), and as a result the policy states that the European Union should be prepared to take further responsibility and space in large scale global scientific collaboration.

There are no other characters that come close to the EU depiction as a hero in neither of the EUAPs. No other characters are portrayed as presenting solutions to the problem-formulations in the policy, but by classifying the output (regardless of the intent), the Arctic Council is a character described with heroic tendencies in Arctic multilateral governance. The Arctic Council is portrayed as “successful” in “developing a regional identity and setting the Arctic agenda” (2008, p. 10), and is also considered “the most important” (EUAP 2016, p. 13) forum for international cooperation on Arctic matters. This presentation of the Arctic Council is noteworthy, since the EU has still not been recognised as an observer. A possible reason for this may be that the EU considers the Arctic Council to be the closest actor in reality to what the EU would see as the ideal-type arena for settling disputes in the Arctic, namely through multilateralism and international cooperation.

#### 4.2.2 Villain

The villain is the root of the problem presented in the thesis. As already mentioned in part 4.1.1, the main problem appearing in the thesis is that of an accelerating climate change posing a great risk to local populations and ecosystems as well as global warming. As a part of the NPF, the villain does not have to be an actor in the same sense as a person or a country would be, but it can also be a more abstract phenomena such as migration or environment (Jones et al. 2014, p. 6). By using this point of departure, the changing environment is the main antagonist of the story told and as such also the villain of the story.

There are many formulations in the 2008 EUAP as well as the 2016 EUAP supporting the fact that global warming and climate change are presented as the main problems of the thesis, and some of these also support the presentation of the climate as the villain. It is possible to make a distinction between cases when the environment is causing problems in its own capacity and cases when other events

cause a change in the environment (which in turn “villainifies” the environment). The 2008 EUAP tends to more fall under the second classification when the environment in the introduction of the 2008 EUAP describes climate change as a “threats multiplier” (EUAP 2008, p. 2), and later the impacts caused by climate change to represent “a challenge of paramount importance” (EU 2008, p. 3).

The presentation of the environment as the villain is clearer in the 2016 EUAP as climate change in itself – and not just the impacts of it – is described as a “significant risk” (EU 2016, p. 5). The introduction of the 2016 EUAP also introduces climate change as a primary villain when global warming is depicted to turn the Arctic region into an accomplice: “there has been growing awareness that feedback loops are turning the Arctic into a contributor to climate change” (2016, p. 2). This way the environment is not just portrayed as an element affected by other character’s actions, but as a character in its own right causing problems for others to deal with.

Being an official EU document, it could be diplomatically sensitive to point fingers directly at another character in the EU Arctic Policy and claim that the escalating security concerns are due to their actions. This is probably the main reason as to why criticism about Arctic instability is not directed to a single actor.

Again using Riddervold’s and Davis Cross’ theory about how the EU Arctic Policy is driven by Russian aggression, they describe Russia from an EU Arctic perspective to be a “major potential antagonist” (2019, p. 44). Using their theory of EU intervention in the Arctic one can assume that the underlying EU narrative would see Russia as the villain of the story. This is however not explicit in the policy documents, so even though their theory can provide answers to why the EUAP was revised it cannot answer the question how the EU narrative identity has changed.

### 4.2.3 Victim

The character portrayal that changes the most between the two policies are the presentation of the victim. The 2008 EUAP presents the indigenous people living in the Arctic regions as the main victim, whereas the 2016 EUAP makes a broader victim portrayal by considering the entire Arctic population, and even the Arctic region, to be the main victims.

In the 2008 EUAP the clearest victim portrayal is that of indigenous people living in the Arctic. Living close to, and in some cases off what nature offers makes the Arctic indigenous peoples critically susceptible to the negative effects of climate change. In the 2008 EUAP, goal 2.2 is “Support to indigenous peoples and local population” (EUAP 2008, p. 4). The introductory motivation as to why this is needed reads “They [indigenous peoples] are particularly vulnerable to the increasing pressures of climate change and globalisation.” (ibid.).

In the Arctic Policy from 2016 the formulations have changed, and the EU stance does not appear as protective as it had in the earlier policy. The goal related to the challenges facing indigenous people in the Arctic have changed name to “Dialogue with Arctic indigenous peoples” (p. 15), and the description bearing the motivation behind this goal reads: “The EU will continue to engage with Arctic indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure that their views and rights are

respected and promoted in the ongoing development of EU policies affecting the Arctic” (ibid.). The EU seems to be more careful not to present itself as a hero with a solution superior to that of the local population.

The victim portrayal in the 2016 EUAP is instead focused more widely on people living in the Arctic region. Both the climate and the security context make the Arctic population vulnerable, and the 2016 EUAP argues that adaptation strategies are important to support the Arctic inhabitants in dealing with the consequences they face from these challenges (EUAP 2016, p. 3). The EUAP further claims that the Arctic inhabitants suffer due to the “high levels of pollutants and heavy metals” that enter all food chains in the Arctic region. (EUAP 2016, p. 6). In an even broader note, the Arctic region itself is also depicted as a victim to global pollution when described to be “acting as a sink for long-range pollution” (EUAP 2016, p.3). Consultation rounds in the EU have also shown that the “European Arctic is suffering from underinvestment” (EUAP 2016, p. 11), which likewise serves as another victim-portrayal.

#### 4.2.4 Summary

There is no substantial shift in narrative regarding the characters in the Arctic policies. The characters are to a large extent the same and the roles established in the 2008 EUAP have not been exchanged for the most part. Having climate change as the villain, and the EU as the hero of both EUAPs goes much in line with the narrative identity of the EU as an advocate for climate-change action. There are differences in regards to the presentation of the victim, where it is possible to note that the EU is going through a character development in its approach to the local Arctic population.

### 4.3 Plot

Central to the policy narrative is the story that actually unfolds in the policy and the plot is the part that accounts for the storyline. There are two main plotlines identified in the Arctic Policies, one being the escalation of climate change, and the other being increased human activity in the area. It is fair to say that most evidence of increased human activity in the area is dependent on the environmental changes the region is experiencing, but for better overview this chapter will first consider how the plot regarding the climate is presented, and thereafter the plot regarding the increased human activity in the area.

#### 4.3.1 The Environmental plot

The environmental plot is the first storyline that this thesis considers to be central in the EUAPs. The first and most pressing issue that we are introduced to in both the

2008 and the 2016 Arctic policies is the fact that the air temperatures in the Arctic has increased twice as much as the global average, leading to a rapid loss of sea ice, snow cover and permafrost (EUAP 2008, p. 2, EUAP 2016, p.2). These effects all have strong negative feedback mechanisms that trigger global warming to an even more worrisome degree.

The melting ice and snow will cause less sunbeams to be reflected back and the heat will thus remain closer to the earth's surface triggering further melting of snow coverage (Parmentier 2013, p. 195). Darker areas also absorb more light so when the melting ices also cause a rising sea level this effect will be further triggered (Parmentier 2013, p. 196). The melting permafrost releases methane which will further contribute to more global warming, in its turn releasing more methane (ibid.). This primary problem formulation in the area of environment is also the basis for the other environmental changes the Arctic is going through, such as the risk of biodiversity loss that comes as a consequence of the changed climate (EUAP 2008, p. 3; EUAP 2016, p. 5).

There is no detectable difference regarding what happens in the environmental plot of the two EUAPs, but it is possible to determine which of Stone's storylines the EUAP environmental plot follows. Even though there are signs in favour of the *story of decline*, such as when the summer sea ice is described to having decreased by more than 40% in less than four decades (EUAP 2016, p. 5) hence suggesting that things used to be good, this thesis argues that the dominant storyline for the environmental plot – at least in the 2016 EUAP – is that of the *story of helplessness and control*. Both policies are permeated by the idea that international cooperation and agreements are needed to tackle the increasing climate change in the Arctic, but on several occasions formulations are made indicating that the realisation that international cooperation could solve the climate crisis are fairly new. This is the most detectable in the 2016 EUAP when the Paris Agreement is considered a “decisive turning point towards comprehensive and collective global action against climate change” (EUAP 2016, p. 3). This goes in line with the argument made by Tobin and Schmidt that the EU has taken on a more conditional role in its climate leadership in the 2010s, since a conditional leadership would require more international cooperation.

#### 4.3.2 The Human plot

The increased human activity in the Arctic is the second identifiable plot that is playing out in the Arctic according to the EUAPs. This plot is also present in both EUAPs, but as the phrasings differ somewhat between the two, this section will consider the policies one at the time.

In the introduction of the 2008 EUAP it is described that the melting ices and new technologies “will gradually increase access to Arctic living and non-living resources as well as to new navigation routes.” (2008, p. 2) and that the “environmental changes are altering the geo-strategic dynamics of the Arctic with potential consequences for international stability and European security interests” (ibid.). At first glance this may appear to initiate an environmental plot but since it discusses how the environmental changes lead to changes in human activity in the

Arctic this thesis considers it to be part of the human plot. There are various descriptions in the EUAP that imply that the situation was once good but is getting worse in regard to the human plot, such as when marine mammals are labelled to be “in danger” due to “modern human activities” (EUAP 2008, p. 4). Arctic tourism is another area claimed to have developed rapidly but where several recent accidents demonstrate the risks of Arctic travel (EUAP 2008, p. 9). The perhaps clearest example of this type of storyline in the 2008 EUAP are when the five Arctic Ocean coastal states are said to have adopted a Declaration “stating that they remain committed to the legal framework in place and to the orderly settlement of any overlapping claims” (EUAP 2008, p. 10), just to in the next sentence be portrayed as actors seeking to increase their individual power by “extending or affirming their national jurisdiction and strengthening their Arctic presence.” (ibid.).

These portrayals of human activity in the 2008 EUAP goes in line with the *story of decline*.

The 2016 EUAP states in the introduction that the Arctic region has acquired a higher profile in international relations over the past few years “due to its increasing environmental, social, economic and strategic importance” (2016, p. 3). Just as in the 2008 EUAP the environmental changes are described to bring some positive consequences for human activity, in particular the local population (EUAP 2016, p. 4), but they are also described to have the potential to “increase tensions in the region, for example through competition for resources and increasing economic activity” (2016, p. 4).

The language regarding concerns in the Arctic Sea differs between the two policies. Whereas the 2008 EUAP appears to be most concerned with the protection of marine biodiversity, the 2016 EUAP is more focused on potential security threats. The introduction of the 2016 EUAP describes the world’s oceans to be under “increasing pressure” that risk a potential of future harm in the Arctic Ocean if not controlled in an appropriate manner (p. 4). It is clearly spelled out that human activity is one factor that risks the loss in ecosystems since they are “not only affected by climate change, but also by pollution” (EUAP 2016, p. 5). The 2016 EUAP states that the longer opening of the North East passage has potential to lead to maritime security threats (p. 13), and notes that “wider geopolitical dynamics may add further complexity to the changes affecting the region” (ibid.)

Similarly to the 2008 EUAP the human activities in the 2016 EUAP appear to follow the *story of decline*, as the situation is depicted to previously having been good, but now have worsened causing a need for urgent action.

### 4.3.3 Summary

Out of the two separate plot lines identified in the Arctic, the data shows that they follow separate storylines in the way the policy problem is presented. The environmental problem formulation is the same in both policies, but this thesis argues that the environmental storyline in the 2016 EUAP primarily follows the *story of helplessness and control*. The human plotlines appear to instead follow the *story of decline*.



## 4.4 Moral of the Story

In many policies the problem formulation is followed by a suggested solution and the EUAPs are no exceptions. The Moral of the Story is what the EU finds to be the best way of dealing with the development and the effects of global warming in the Arctic, but it is also relevant to consider why the EU – apart from the problem formulations – consider itself to have the moral right to get involved in Arctic diplomacy. This chapter will therefore begin by pointing out these motivations, and thereafter identifying the priority areas for the EUAPs. The subsequent goal will be to uncover the main solutions presented.

### 4.4.1 The Motivation for EU engagement

Apart from the problem formulation that motivates the need for a policy, the EUAPs also motivate why the EU should be involved in the Arctic region to begin with, something this thesis considers to be an important part of the policy moral. The beginning of each EUAP starts off with these motivations.

In the 2008 EUAP the motivation of EU involvement in the Arctic is based on its geographical proximity and its shared history through the EU Arctic Member States:

*The European Union is inextricably linked to the Arctic region (hereafter referred to as the Arctic) by a unique combination of history, geography, economy and scientific achievements. Three Member States — Denmark (Greenland), Finland and Sweden — have territories in the Arctic. Two other Arctic states — Iceland and Norway — are members of the European Economic Area. Canada, Russia and the United States are strategic partners of the EU.*

(EUAP 2008, p. 2)

The motivation in the 2016 EUAP is different:

*A safe, stable, sustainable and prosperous Arctic is important not just for the region itself, but for the European Union (EU) and for the world. The EU has a strategic interest in playing a key role in the Arctic region.*

(EUAP 2016, p.2)

The motivation for engaging in Arctic matters appears to be more based on developments in the region that may have consequences for the EU. Even though the environment is still discussed as the main concern in the 2016 EUAP, the fact that a “safe” and “stable” Arctic are put ahead of “sustainable” in its opening sentence signifies a shift in tone towards a narrative identity as a security policy actor.

### 4.4.2 The Solutions

The solutions that are suggested are the main parts of the policy documents and many solutions are presented under each priority area. The goal with this section of the analysis will therefore be to identify the main solutions rather than list all possible solutions the EUAPs offer.

There are primarily three priority areas in the 2008 EUAP: protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population, promoting sustainable use of resources and contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance (EUAP 2008, p. 3). The 2016 EUAP also sets up three priority areas: “1. Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment; 2. Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic; 3. International Cooperation on Arctic Issues.” (EUAP 2016, p.4). The three areas appear similar as both deal with environment, sustainability and cooperation, but the noteworthy difference lies in the way they are formulated. In the 2008 EUAP, the three priorities have been encapsulated in three goals whereas the 2016 EUAP considers them to be priority areas. This small change could indicate that the priority areas presented in the 2016 EUAP could not easily be narrowed down to solely three goals, implying that the EU engagement in the Arctic has increased.

In line with liberal international relations-theory (Ericson 2014, p. 73) the primary solution offered throughout the two EUAPs is international cooperation as a positive sum game where all present actors are favoured. All three priority areas focus heavily on the need for international cooperation to solve the issues (EUAP 2008, p. 3; EUAP 2016, p. 5). This has led to some scholars criticising the EU for not admitting the reality of power politics (Biscop 2019, p. 7).

The 2016 EUAP emphasizes further that science and research should be key areas of cooperation where different global actors can find common ground: “Science, in particular, can be used as a catalyst to support a common understanding, enabling jointly agreed solutions to be reached and foster peaceful cooperation” (2016, p. 13). This focus emerged first in the 2016 EUAP, and it is later on also confirmed to be a “further area for cooperation” indicating that it hadn’t been on the agenda before.

#### 4.4.3 Summary

It is easy to assume that the EU would want to present themselves as an actor that can offer a solution since this is usually one of the main ideas behind policy documents. In order to do so the EU is putting emphasis on international cooperation where the multilateral context is favourable for EU actorness. What is additionally important to note is how the motivation behind EU engagement in the Arctic changes its formulation between 2008 and 2016. The emphasis on “safety” and “stability” in the 2016 EUAP motivation appears considerably more in line with the narrative identity of a security policy actor than the 2008 EUAP motivation arguing for geographical proximity.

## 4.5 Discussion

Although limited, and far from sufficient according to some researchers requesting clearer EU language on security issues (e.g. Dams & van Schaik 2019), there has been a slight development in the EU narrative identity between the two EUAPs. The EU narrative identity as an advocate for climate change action is still the most explicit and overarching portrayal of the EU that can be deciphered from the EUAPs, but the small changes in tone can tell us a lot about the EU as a foreign actor.

In order to first confirm that the narrative identity as an advocate for climate change action is the most dominant, we can show at the fact that the EU is presented as the primary hero of both policies, and the environmental changes as the main villain. The major problem formulation – the rapid global warming – doesn't change between the two EUAPs, and most presented solutions are directed towards dealing with the changing climate. These factors also go in line with the assumption that even though the narrative identity as an advocate for climate change is the most prevalent, it is not likely that the rapid climate change is the sole, or even main, reason for updating the EUAP.

Even though the focus of this thesis is not to understand the main reason why the EUAP was updated, it serves as an important background for understanding the differences in nuances. The internal setting had indeed changed between the 2008 and the 2016 EUAP, but most of those changes occurred before the 2012 EUAP revision, suggesting that this could not have been the cause of the 2016 revision. In the 2016 EUAP it was clearly stated that the EU wants to “maintain its current funding levels for Arctic research” (EUAP 2016, p. 6), which suggests that a ramping-up, or other budgetary alteration, of the current EU funding is not either the reason behind the update of the policy.

This leaves one plausible reason for revising the EUAP to be changes in the global power dynamics, which would support the argument made by Riddervold and Davis Cross that Russian aggression is the main factor behind updates of the EUAP (2019). This thesis discovered that there has been minor changes indicating a move towards a growing narrative identity in the EU as a security policy actor. The EU lacks the ability to legislate in security policy (TEU Article 24) at the same time as the environment and climate change for a long time has been one of the policy areas where the EU finds it the easiest to reach consensus (Selin & D.VanDeever 2015, p. 152). This appears to have created a situation in which the EU is trying to assert influence outside its borders through its position as a leader in environmental policy.

The EU is described by Selin and D.VanDeever as a “ubiquitous” global actor with clear ambitions to take on leading roles (2015, p. 151). With the number of international environmental and climate agreements increasing, the growth of the EU environmental policy will be more intertwined with and have spill-over effects on other policy areas (Selin & D.VanDeever 2015, p. 153), including the foreign policy.

The EU's keen insistence on how international cooperation, and cooperation with indigenous and other local communities in the Arctic region, is vital to slow down climate change may therefore be a security tactic. This thesis considers that the changes in narrative identity could be a form of opposite securitisation of the Arctic

environment. Securitisation is a common theory in international relations referring to how various policy areas may be framed within the context of “security” in order to grant bigger resources and more public attention (Buzan 1998, p. 23-25). In this case, the real intent may well be security concerns that are hidden under climate cover. The environment is likely not solely a false cover for a hidden security policy agenda, as it reflects a strong will of preserving the Arctic environment and hindering global climate change. It is however not only the intrinsic value that the environmental policy on the Arctic can bring to the EU.

Before the ratification of the ToL the hopes were high that it would bring significant reform to the CFSP and the EU as a global actor (Howorth 2013, p. 66). This did not happen. The CFSP is still outside the legal competences of the union, and the financial crisis of 2008 proved to have a severe hit on the defence spendings of EU Member states (ibid.). Due to the difficulty in reaching legislation and proving to be an effective actor through its security policy, the EU is using the Arctic Policy as a way to promote cooperation and safeguard stable communities in the Arctic region. Using an environmental policy in this manner is gradually becoming a more and more important way for the EU to exert influence in foreign affairs (Selin & VanDeever 2015, p. 153).

#### 4.5.1 Future Research

Since the 2016 EUAP was released there has been many changes to the setting that would motivate further research on the EU narrative identity in the EUAP, and with an expected update of the policy due in late 2021 this will be even more relevant.

The power dynamics in the region has further intensified as several of the Arctic states appear to have increased their power ambitions in the region. In 2018 China proclaimed itself to be a “near-Arctic state” (Wong 2018), and in the same year also presented their vision of a Polar silk road (Biedermann 2021, p. 2). The Polar silk road was facilitated not the least by the China-Russia strategic relations concerning the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (ibid.). Russia continued its pursuit to Arctic control also on its own when they in April 2021 formally extended their territorial claims in the Arctic Ocean, now reaching all the way to Canada’s and Greenland’s exclusive economic zones (Breum 2021). The US also joined the real fight in the Arctic which became evident not the least in 2019 when US president Trump expressed his wish to buy Greenland from Denmark (Finnegan 2020). Although ridiculed by many, the US continued their Arctic bid for power and granted the island \$12M for economic development in April 2020 (ibid.), and in June 2020 the US reopened its consulate in the Greenlandic capital of Nuuk (Cammarata 2020).

The internal setting within the EU have also changed to some degree. In early 2020 the UK left the EU as a result of the referendum held almost four years prior (BBC 3). This change may have effects on the EU decision-making processes in the Arctic since coherence and decision-making procedures can be altered with only one member state (especially in policy areas where unanimous decisions are required). The UK is not an Arctic state but was one of the closest allies in the EU with the Arctic EU Member states (Taylor 2018). In their own policy towards the Arctic, the

UK portrays themselves as the “Arctic’s nearest neighbour” (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2018), since they are the northernmost region to not cross the Arctic circle, something that would imply a big British interest in the Arctic region.

In May 2021 several news outlets reported that the Arctic appears to have warmed up even faster than the double speed previously reported, as scientists globally now warn that the Arctic average temperatures have risen at three times the speed of the global average (Sankaran 2021). This would potentially give the EU reason to develop new environmental policies for the Arctic which could be further compared to the narrative identities outlined in this thesis.

## 5 Conclusion

The EU narrative identity that is the most prevalent in both the EU Arctic Policies (EUAP) studied in this thesis is that of the EU as a climate change facilitator and advocate for climate change action. The central problem is the devastating effects of climate change in the Arctic, and the EU is the hero that can present a solution. There are no major shifts in what the EUAP is focusing on in 2008 compared to 2016, but the narrative elements of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) compared in this thesis show small – but significant – differences in nuances between the 2008 and the 2016 EUAP. While nuances may appear insignificant when comparing and contrasting one paragraph with another, several remarks about changes in nuances can together add up and form a slight alteration in narrative identity.

This thesis has presented the argument that although the changes are so small that it is insufficient to claim that there has been a *shift* towards a new narrative identity as a security policy actor in the Arctic, the changes in nuances imply that the EU is moving towards this presentation. This is particularly visible in the way the EU motivates its involvement in the Arctic and by how the human plot appears to follow the *story of decline* to a greater extent than the environmental plot.

This presentation of the EU narrative identity revealed that the EU foreign policy is not always as straight forward as one at first may think. The EUAPs show proof of how European security concerns can be addressed without compromising neither EU law nor Member state convergence. By using a policy area with a high degree of European convergence this thesis argues that an opposite securitisation has taken place in order to meet European security concerns in the Arctic.

The European multi-level structure combined with national ambitions of 27/28 (during 2008-2016) EU Member states make the situation both unique and complex. External developments appear to happen faster than the EU have the ability to update its treaties, and the Lisbon treaty appeared to fall short of developing the EU actorness in CFSP just years after it was implemented. With time the internal EU legal integration process may catch up with the external developments, allowing the EU to act as a stronger and more coherent global security actor.

By writing this thesis it has become clear to me that while the EU may not have extensive legal abilities or legal strength in foreign and security policy, they are able to use their capabilities in a policy area where they have a higher degree of actorness and thus still have the possibility to exert influence outside their borders on matters regarding security policy. To what extent the EUAP actually does have an impact in Arctic diplomacy was outside the scope of this study, but what appears certain is that the EUAP was not only written with the intent of halting global warming and climate change.

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