

The power politics of representation

Saami poet Nils-Aslak Valkeapää called for a vision of the Arctic as a horizontal highway of movement and conversation, with its treeless expanses providing opportunity to roam and the long polar nights providing opportunity to talk and listen (1998). This evocative image of a highway of interconnection is a counterpoint to the typical ways in which the Arctic is divided by standard maps and globes, with North–South political lines transecting the Saami homeland in the European North. Maps, films, poetry and policy documents can all tell a story about the region. This chapter seeks to highlight how these representations of the region – or the way in which circumpolar policy issues are framed by narrative and images – are a manifestation of and serve to shape power relations in the region. Consider the selection of the three maps in Figures 4–6 as an illustration of the various ways of representing the region.

Figure 4 illustrates the bird migration routes connecting one nesting ground in Arctic Alaska with populations around the world. Like the ice-locked whales discussed in Chapter 1, these kinds of ecosystemic connections serve to unsettle political boundaries and tie into the logic presented by several of the non-Arctic states in their applications for observer status at the Arctic Council, as we will see below. In this illustrative map, political boundaries are completely absent. Figure 5, by contrast, with its satellite view centred on the Arctic, highlights political boundaries and presents a view that brings to the forefront Arctic states (see Steinberg *et al.*, 2015: 29 for a close analysis of a previous version of this map). Figure 6 shows a view of the Arctic where the relevant lines are neither political borders nor bird migration routes, but a comparatively local view of usage pathways of Inuit hunters moving on the land. The lines were created through GPS mapping software that Inuit hunters attached to their snowmobiles. A fourth map, not reproduced here but available in Jakobsen (2010: 4), was made by Hao Xiaoguang and was utilised by the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration from the



Figure 4 Map of global migration routes of birds with nesting grounds in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.



Figure 5 Map of North Circumpolar Region (polar projection).



Figure 6 Map of a use-based demarcation of the Arctic from the Pan Inuit Trails project.

early 2000s, but fell into disuse as China escalated its efforts to secure Arctic Council permanent observer status (see discussion below). The map has a flattened perspective allowing for a viewing of both poles at once. The boldest lines are not political boundaries, but rather potential transpolar shipping routes in bright red and blue that could bring Chinese goods to European and North American markets in the rapidly warming Arctic.

These broader representations of the Arctic are well analysed in the literature, with key sources of empirics coming from photography, film, mapping, and broad policy narratives and media representations (Powell and Dodds, 2014; Steinberg *et al*, 2015). While the broad strokes of how the region can be framed and is represented have been well examined, we still need to know more about how these frames are brought to bear on the political practice of engaging across borders in the Arctic – and how they tie in with (or undermine) existing relations of power. Whether the Arctic is framed as a resource frontier or an indigenous homeland has consequences for the kinds of politics that can be pursued (and who can pursue them and to whose benefit).

So, how do actors go about deploying regional frames in practice? The chapter illustrates how ‘framing’ is about laying the ground for policy actions. In other words, a robust policy frame will address what the problem is and its causes, who can do something and who should do something. The first case examines how key political actors worked to sustain a representation of the region as cooperative in a time of geo-political crisis outside the Arctic itself, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. From there, we move on to a more granular policy scale seeking to see how particular types of representations of the Arctic matter for specific political outcomes. The two remaining examples look at framings relevant for clarifying policy debates around what kind of actors belong in Arctic politics, namely the participation of non-Arctic states and business representatives in Arctic governance.

Framing for policy action: more than just pretty pictures

How something – a place, a policy problem, an historic event – is ‘framed’ says much about what kind of political action is deemed possible and justified. As Jasanoff and Wynne (1998) put it in their discussion of the framing of environmental problems, a frame is a robust interpretation that gives the policy public a sense of what the problem is, what the cause of the problem is and, most importantly, what can and should be done to address it. In this way, ‘framings’ or representations of the Arctic as a political space set the parameters for possible political action. A robust representation of any policy object most often delimits the kinds of

actors, rhetoric and practices that are recognised as ‘relevant,’ ‘practical’ and ‘useful.’

Analytical attention to framing is a feature of the broader literature on the social construction of space. This literature resulted from a sense for the shortcomings of purely temporal explanations in accounting for how the fabric of everyday life gets made – including local, national and international politics (Foucault, 1980; LeFebvre, 1991; Soja, 2003; Unwin, 2000). For example, work in the vein of critical geopolitics illustrates how particular outcomes in inter-state relations stem from constructed (not given) spatialisations of world politics (O’Tuathail and Dalby, 1998). These may be broad categories, such as developing vs developed world or the ‘first’ (western capitalist, developed), ‘second’ (socialist) and third (poor, developing) from the Cold War.

Acknowledging that our ideas of space are socially constructed is not the same thing as asserting that space is socially constructed (Unwin, 2000: 26). The Arctic environment is not just a blank slate upon which the powerful get to write their discourses, as we will discuss further in the conclusion of this volume. Physical realities, like changes in Arctic sea ice due to climate change, matter. Rather, underlining the social construction of our ideas around space serves to highlight that how places and attending policy problems are packaged for political action is just one representation out of many theoretically possible representations. This line of thinking brings us to relations of power: What does the resulting idea of space do and whose interests does it serve? One way of identifying empirically how frames undergird relations of power and promote interests is to zoom in on what political actors actually do with particular framings in their meetings with other political actors. My emphasis here on how regional or policy frames get deployed is part of a growing literature from geographers focusing on the concrete practices of those who personify and enact geopolitics in global governance settings (Jones and Clark, 2015; McConnell *et al.*, 2012; Hakli and Kallio, 2014).

Frame 1: a cooperative Arctic in rough winds

The Arctic as a zone of peace

At the 2013 Kiruna ministerial session, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recalled a special ‘symbolic trip’ of the senior officials of the Arctic Council to the North Pole in April of that year. The trip was organised by the Russian Security Council and accompanied by a well-known polar explorer and Russian Arctic policy actor, Artur Chilingarov. Chilingarov had been part of the Swedish–Russian expedition that had planted a Russian flag on

the Arctic seabed in 2008, causing much consternation. Minister Lavrov noted: 'It is hard to overestimate the value for history of the photos [of the SAOs from all eight Arctic countries] against the background of the flags of our eight countries and the flag of the Arctic Council made by them.' He also commented on the signing of the second legally binding circumpolar agreement – on marine oil pollution preparedness and response, underlining how this was 'another evidence of high responsibility of Arctic countries for the state of affairs in the region' (MFA, Russia, 2013).

This statement was not just pretty, diplomatic words – it also tallied well with how the Arctic was discussed at the time by Russian civil servants working on Arctic issues more broadly. As a Russian high-ranking civil servant had also noted in a 2011 interview, image was important for Russia and for the Arctic space more generally, as it was seen as essential to work against Cold War narratives: 'We have to be proactive in telling others about Russia and what we do. We leave it too much to others, and this does not always work out. We are a normal people in a normal country with strengths and weaknesses.' Another Russian interviewee put it this way in 2011: 'Russia plays by the rules. The process of carving up the Arctic does not pull Arctic states apart, in fact it brings us closer.'

Statements like these from the Arctic states have been regularly forwarded to counteract another framing of the region – the Arctic as on the edge of geopolitical chaos. In attempting neatly to package an Arctic that is undergoing complex and unpredictable ecological 'state change' (Young, 2009), the familiar narrative of competitive geopolitics lent itself well to popular imagination. 'Race for the Arctic,' 'Arctic scramble' and the 'new Cold War' have been common newspaper headlines when it comes to the coverage of Arctic affairs (Wilson Rowe, 2013a; Powell and Dodds, 2014 and Steinberg *et al.*, 2015). By contrast, the Arctic states have, in recent years, become a coordinated chorus extolling the peacefulness of the region and the sufficiency of existing international law for dealing with eventual issues (Bailes and Heininen, 2012; Wilson Rowe, 2013a). The 2008 Ilulissat Declaration issued by the 'Arctic 5' coastal states was an important milestone in calming, if not eliminating, concerns about potential Arctic conflict (see Steinberg, *et al.*, 2015, for an extended discussion of this political moment). One study found a remarkable drop in coverage of or reference to the possibility of conflict in the Arctic in Russian State-owned media following the Ilulissat Declaration (Wilson Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014).

However, a mere two years after referencing the symbolically significant and hopeful snapshot taken at the North Pole, Lavrov did not even attend the ministerial session held in Iqaluit during the Canadian chairmanship. Russia was instead represented by its Minister of Environment. Russia's annexation of Crimea and continued interventions in eastern Ukraine in spring 2014 had triggered a sanctions regime by European and North American countries, and a war of words and non-military

reactions in many bilateral and multilateral settings (Legvold, 2016). Arctic military cooperation, for example the Chief Heads of Defence cooperation, had been immediately suspended (Østhagen, 2016). Indeed, the region had been buffered from external disagreements in the past – for example, after Russia’s armed conflict with Georgia in 2009 (Wilson Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014) – but the broader impact of these earlier conflicts paled in comparison to 2014.

Buffering a peaceful frame in cold geopolitical winds

So, how did high-level diplomats shore up and utilise their longstanding framing of the Arctic as a zone of cooperation and peace at a historic low in East–West relations? To get at this question, we are going to take a small trip in time and space to the 2015 Arctic Council ministerial meeting held in Iqaluit, Canada.

Although little diplomatic work on specific decisions takes place at the ministerial meetings (see Introduction for a discussion), they are an excellent place to observe the symbolic work of framing the Arctic for political purposes in a broad way. Relieved of debating policy minutiae, Arctic Council ministers often use their time at the meeting to present once again their general understanding of the purpose of the Arctic region and recommit their countries to work towards that vision.

Consequently, the archival documents from the meeting give us some interesting insights. At the ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, the ministers of foreign affairs actually read their prepared remarks in full. This ‘sticking to the text’ is a sign of a more uncertain and restricted atmosphere (as a high-level Arctic official commented to me off the record in June 2014), rather than the sometimes free-flowing discussions that had characterised previous ministerial meetings.

From Table 2, we can see only six participants addressed the problem of international conflict directly, beyond general statements about regional peace and cooperation. For example, Finland’s foreign minister addressed the geopolitical environment this way:

the question whether and to what extent the strained international situation will affect Arctic cooperation can be answered in a positive tone and quoting our declaration saying that we are committed to maintaining peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic. It is in no-one’s interest to let problems elsewhere to impact [*sic*] negative on Arctic cooperation and the Arctic Environment.

(MFA, Finland, 2015: 3)

Sweden’s statement highlights the more oblique way that most of the other Nordic countries addressed the question of broader issues in international relations between the countries gathered in Iqaluit: ‘there is no

Table 2 High-level statements at the Iqaluit ministerial meeting

Polity	Addressed conflict?	If yes, how?
Finland	Yes	Noted strained international relations, and underlined importance of peace and cooperation in the Arctic.
Denmark/Greenland/ Faroe Islands	No	
Norway	No	
Iceland	No	
Sweden	Yes	Noted the peacefulness of the region and the increased importance of the forum during times of tension.
Russia	Yes	Acknowledged strained relations as 'external circumstances', emphasised peacefulness of the region and applauded progress in Arctic (despite external challenges).
Canada	No	
USA	No	
Saami Council	Yes	Emphasised interconnected nature of region, and the importance of securing and stabilising the region in times of geopolitical instability.
Arctic Athabaskan Council	Yes	Concerned about Lavrov's absence, concerned about unacknowledged tension in the region.
Aleut International Association	Yes	Concerned about geopolitical issues affecting the Council's work.
ICC	No	

Sources: MFA, Finland, 2015; Arctic Council, 2015b; Saami Council, 2015; MFA, Norway, 2015; US Department of State, 2015; Persson, 2015; ICC, 2015b; Arctic Council, 2015c; Arctic Council, 2015a; MFA, Denmark, 2015; Aleut International Association, 2015; Arctic Athabaskan Council, 2015; MFA, Canada, 2015; Ministry of Environment, Russian Federation, 2015.

problem that cannot be solved through cooperative relations. The Arctic Council's role as a forum for political dialogue is especially important in times of conflict and tension' (Persson, 2015: 3).

Interestingly, nearly all the Permanent Participant representatives expressed concern over the possibility of global problems becoming circumpolar regional ones. Reflective of most statements made by the Permanent Participants, the President of the Saami Council addressed geopolitical tension head-on:

The representatives around this table represent the generation that has seen the Cold War come to an end. The Saami Council has seen the relationship with our brothers and sisters in all countries flourish again after decades of separation. Since 1992, the Saami Council has worked in all four countries the Sami people reside in ... Most of the Permanent Participant organisations represent an indigenous people that reside in more than one country. In times of geopolitical instability and changing economies, the indigenous peoples' communities will be the first to be negatively affected. Our pledge to you all is that we need to safeguard the unique work of the Arctic Council. We need to continue to cooperate as one Arctic family learning from each other and respecting each other. That is our responsibility and is important for sustainable development and well-being of all.

(Saami Council, 2015: 1)

The Aleut International Association likewise expressed concern that 'geopolitical issues not related to the Arctic might threaten the discourse on Arctic issues and consensus based approach to decision making that is such a strength of the Council' (Aleut International Association, 2015: 1). On a similar note, Michael Stickman from the Arctic Athabaskan Council noted that they had to speak openly about the tensions between Russia and the West and about the absence of Lavrov: 'We are not naïve, but this Council and its individual members should shield our co-operation from broader political and geopolitical rivalries' (Arctic Athabaskan Council, 2015: 3).

Minister of Environment Sergey Donskoy represented Russia at the ministerial meeting, and also addressed the difficult political atmosphere between Russia and Europe/North America, expressing:

appreciation of the fact that Arctic cooperation has been steadily developing despite the external circumstances ... Russia sees the Arctic as a territory of dialogue and cooperation and is interested in strengthening international cooperation in this region, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis ... Russia sees huge potential in the Arctic to promote and expand a constructive agenda for our common region, built on the basis of national interests of all the Arctic states ... There is no room for confrontation or aggravation of tension in the Arctic region – especially from outside sources – and there is strong public

demand for joint responses to common challenges and for joint use of shared opportunities in the Arctic. Russia opposes any attempt to politicize the development of Arctic cooperation.

(Ministry of Environment, Russian Federation, 2015: 1)

The USA, by contrast, focused exclusively on its aims for the upcoming chairmanship. This may suggest that the USA sought to naturalise the framing of the Arctic as cooperative by mentioning neither cooperation nor conflict (US Department of State, 2015). The absence of attention devoted to broader geopolitical tension also matches the United States' official reports and strategies relating to the Arctic. Though the USA ranked sovereignty and security as its top priority in its 2013 strategy, it characterised the Arctic region as 'free of conflict' and elaborated on the need 'to seek to work with other states and Arctic entities to advance common objectives in the Arctic region in a manner that protects Arctic states' (Obama, 2013: 6, 10).

Here, we see various kinds of diplomatic work in framing the region as cooperative, from oblique reference to the cooperative nature of Arctic politics, to direct calls for states to work to protect regional politics from outside conflict. This is not, however, the same as suggesting that the Arctic Council was unaffected by worsened East–West relations post-2014. In fact, the meetings leading to the ministerial session seem to have been more challenging than at other periods, if we judge by output alone. This renders the symbolic shoring up of the cooperative frame at the ministerial meeting in Iqaluit even more significant.

First, the minutes of the final SAO meeting held before the Iqaluit ministerial held some unusual appeals and exhortations from the Canadian chair. The chair made a general statement about the purpose and function of the Arctic Council to those assembled. He stated 'the Arctic Council is perceived as the preeminent intergovernmental forum in the Arctic, a model for international governance and a body that is moving towards policymaking and implementation.' He also noted that there was 'an increased interest in the Arctic Council', and 'urged delegates to rely on their spirit of cooperation and collegiality during the weeks leading up to the Iqaluit Ministerial' (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2015a: 4). Likewise, at a meeting six months earlier, an output on Arctic marine oil pollution prevention was touted as being of key importance for 'public diplomacy' (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2014: 8). These stated emphases on the diplomatic and symbolic traditions of the Arctic Council suggest that delegates were aware there was an audience watching to see how Arctic Council work proceeded in a new atmosphere of inter-state strife.

Secondly, the Canadian ministerial meeting did not produce a binding agreement as the previous two ministerial meetings had done (2011, Search and Rescue Agreement; 2013, Oil Spill Pollution and Response). Several initiatives under the 2013–2015 chairmanship seemed to be

aiming for high-level agreement in various task forces, but failed to reach it within a two-year chairmanship. Task forces are often established on areas of high political priority and have previously enjoyed rather quick progress to completed goals under each chairmanship. This probably relates to the fact that task forces are ad hoc and established at the political level (by the SAOs), probably in issue areas where there is already agreement about the potential scope of outcomes and political goodwill. This contrasts with the rather more 'bottom-up' approach that generates a lot of the other Arctic Council outputs, which frequently come from the WGs.

For example, as late as 2015 at the final pre-ministerial SAO meeting in Whitehorse, the hope remained that the Task Force for Action on Black Carbon and Methane would invite observers to join and work towards a politically binding agreement that could reduce the presence of so-called short-lived climate forces in the Arctic. However, during the discussions, it became clear that this policy area did not yet have the needed support for a legally binding agreement by the Iqaluit ministerial meeting, and that the group needed to work further in incorporating various 'national priorities' into their work (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2015a: 10–11). The same seems the case for the Arctic Council Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention, which had been working in earnest with one meeting in Nuuk in September 2014 and another in Ottawa in June 2014 (Arctic Council Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention, 2014b, c). This task force, however, also decided that working towards a non-binding document was preferable, but with a binding agreement coming later.

The seemingly slower progress within these task forces could be explained in part by the generally more challenging atmosphere between Russia and the other Arctic states outside the Arctic. Even if all the states were committed to keeping conflict out of the Arctic Council, as the review of ministerial statements above would support, Arctic Council representatives still needed to navigate their home environments to gain backing and clearance for their activities, particularly ones that might be novel or at the edge of existing mandates. An alternative or perhaps supplementary explanation is that the Arctic Council may be maturing and tackling an increasing number of questions that do not have clear policy solutions, and thus require more extensive handling and increased opportunity for discussion.

Nonetheless, as we have seen above, the conflict of Russia with European and North American states in the aftermath of Russia's military interference in Ukraine in 2014 resulted in a moment when all the Arctic states reiterated and underlined their commitment to representing and enacting the Arctic as a zone of cooperation and peaceful coordination. This was a coordinated display of diplomatic work from Arctic states and the Permanent Participants around the longstanding,

state-supported framing of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation. These displays were necessary because of the broader conflict lines between East and West and because this conflict had probably affected the Arctic Council's work in subtle ways, as suggested above in the work, slower across the board than usual, amongst the Arctic Council's task forces. Counteracting policy discourses around the Arctic as ungoverned or on the verge of conflict shores up a relationship that we examine in detail in the next chapter – a hierarchy of power established between Arctic and non-Arctic states. We also see traces of this Arctic/non-Arctic hierarchy in the more granular policy framings to which we turn now.

Frame 2: navigating global and regional framings of the Arctic

In their Arctic strategy documents, the five Arctic coastal states (Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States) all point to increased traffic and regional activity as a promising economic possibility and a security and governance challenge (Wilson Rowe, 2013a). These developments have not gone unnoticed by non-Arctic states, which have demonstrated an increasing interest in the region (Blunden, 2012; Manicom and Lackenbauer, 2013; Jakobsen and Lee, 2013; Wegge, 2012; Willis and Depledge, 2015). A key moment in which Asian states' interest was debated intensively was in connection to these countries' ultimately successful applications to gain permanent observer status on the Arctic Council.

As discussed in the methods section of the introductory chapter, the aim of the ministerial meetings is to have all the issues basically ironed out beforehand by high-level civil servants and their teams, and to work in home capitals and multilateral settings. It is, therefore, interesting that consideration of a new batch of observer applications, including China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and the European Union, became a late-night, high-political affair prior to the end of the Swedish chairmanship ministerial meeting in Kiruna (2013). Some states, namely Norway and Denmark, publicly went out with their support for the impending applications early on, even flagging their support for some of their Arctic strategies (e.g. MFA, Norway, 2011: 78). Others, such as the USA, Canada and Russia were taciturn. Interviews conducted with decision-makers in 2013 indicated that the USA, Canada and Russia had not yet made their decisions plain – even at the behest of the Swedish SAO to put all cards on the table in advance of the ministerial session (Solli *et al.*, 2013).

The late-night, ministerial discussions around the topic were not because the question of observers was novel or had suddenly come on to the agenda. These observer applications had been delayed from the

2011 Nuuk ministerial meeting, where a decision had been made instead to revise application procedures for aspiring Arctic Council observers. The amendment (the ‘Nuuk criteria’) required aspiring observers to submit comprehensive applications detailing how they fulfilled the seven observer criteria, including demonstration of Arctic interests; financial and material contributions to the work of the Council; recognition of the Arctic states’ sovereignty and jurisdiction over the region; and support for the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the prevailing legal framework for the Arctic. Furthermore, the Task Force on Institutional Cooperation had produced, during the Swedish chairmanship, an ‘Observer Manual’, which had been pushed for especially strongly by Russia and Canada (Solli *et al.*, 2013). The manual sets specific criteria across the board for both previous and incoming permanent observers with a focus on form and procedure within the Arctic Council – who sits where and who is allowed to speak in what order – as well as making specifications about expectations of and limits to the financial contributions of observers to Arctic Council work (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2013).

Table 3 Stated key interests of Asian states

Country	Stated key interests
China	Arctic’s global environmental significance; climate change impacts (on food and agricultural productivity in China); new Arctic shipping routes and long-term economic picture; expansion of Arctic Council mandate from science/research to sustainable development work. (Bennett, 2015; Lanteigne, 2014; MFA, China, 2010; Jakobsen and Lee, 2013; Zhao, 2013; Zhang and Yang, 2016)
Japan	Maritime state with extended polar traditions; scientific presence on Svalbard; concern about global climate change. (Tonami and Watters, 2012; MFA, Japan, 2012; Ohnishi, 2016)
Korea	Environmental aspects and global impacts of climate change; polar research strengths/traditions; demonstrated ability to play role in global governance; long-term economic interests such as shipbuilding, shipping and energy. (Dongmin <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Solli <i>et al.</i> , 2013)
Singapore	Interests stemming from status as global maritime hub, including specific economic interests (expertise and experience in maritime traffic management, shipbuilding); concerns about climate change impacts as an island state. (Tonami and Watters, 2013; MFA, Singapore, 2012; Chen, 2016)

Asian countries' interests and global framing

So, why was the decision left until the ministerial meeting itself? Turning first to the East Asian countries that sought observer status, we see that the interests stated in their efforts to secure formal observer status were quite similar (see Table 3). All of the states demonstrated a concern for climate change (of which the rapidly warming Arctic is a key barometer) and most mentioned maritime traditions and economic interests. By the time of the Kiruna ministerial session, all of the East Asian observer applicants had underlined their respect for the pre-eminent position of Arctic states and accepted the premises of international law in governing the region, in particular UNCLOS (Solli *et al.*, 2013).

At the same time, these countries had, at times, engaged in some creative work in 'framing' the Arctic in a way that lent logic to their desire to secure their position within the Arctic Council. China; South Korea; Singapore; and, to a noticeably lesser extent, Japan underlined the global nature and significance of the Arctic region. As one interviewee from Singapore put it in 2013: 'It is our opinion that Arctic states should bear in mind that action in the region can affect the whole world and should include other states in polar matters' (in Solli *et al.*, 2013: 260). China had gone further than the other East Asian states in its framing of the Arctic as a 'common heritage of mankind', although this particular representation of the Arctic was noticeably dampened following the issuance of the Nuuk criteria, including suspension of the flattened polar map view discussed at the start of this chapter (Jakobsen and Lee, 2013). However, the emphasis on the global nature of the Arctic still remained, as demonstrated by the Chinese Ambassador to Norway's speech in 2013: 'In spite of their regional nature, the Arctic issues also include trans-regional ones, such as climate change, maritime shipping and so on, which need to be addressed with joint efforts of the international community' (Zhao, 2013).

Receiving a global framing: Arctic states' reactions

The Nordic countries were generally supportive of EU and East Asian states' observer applications. Norway has been forthcoming and welcoming of Asian states' Arctic interests. Norway proclaimed its support of the Asian states' inclusion on the Arctic Council early and continued to play a role in the states' ultimate acceptance and inclusion in Kiruna (MFA, Norway, 2011: 78; Bekkevold and Offerdal, 2014; Lunde, 2016). Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden were also openly welcoming of non-Arctic states' applications to the Arctic Council after the Nuuk ministerial meeting in 2011. Denmark reiterated its support for observers in 2013 and noted that it looked forward to welcoming the EU (whose

application was once again delayed in 2013). The Danes' argument was that observers can 'give valuable contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. By this decision, we show to the outside world that ensuring a sustainable future to the benefit of people living in the Arctic is a regional and a global responsibility' (MFA, Denmark, 2013). Iceland also expressed its support for meeting the interest of 'relevant stakeholders to contribute to the work of the Council [as it] will strengthen our ability to ensure the sustainable development of the North' (MFA, Iceland, 2013).

A largely positive stance from the USA with regard to an inclusive Arctic Council was also generally known, although not yet spelled out in any submissions or documents before Kiruna. A US interviewee in 2011 pointed to the question of expanding the number of observers as one of the biggest challenges for the Arctic Council, and outlined clearly the US position before Kiruna: 'For the US as a matter of principle it should be open and transparent. Some non-Arctic states and NGOs are upset that the process is taking so long.' It was also reported that the USA, represented by Secretary John Kerry, was catalytic in bringing about a united approval of the permanent observer applications (Solli *et al.*, 2013). In line with other Arctic states, the US reception of the Asian states came hand in hand with reminders of responsibilities. Tapping into the Asian states' own discourse about their Arctic interests being strongly linked to climate change, Secretary Kerry warned that proactive measures and efforts taken by the USA and other nations to combat climate change would be wiped out by 'China or another nation' using coal firepower, and he underlined the importance of countries, such as China and the United States, pursuing responsible growth (US Department of State 2013).

Both Canada and Russia had been more reserved, as had some of the Permanent Participants. Canada's concerns about the 2013 group of observer applications were primarily directed towards the EU's application for observer status, particularly considering the EU's ban on the import of seal products, despite an exception made for seal skin sold by indigenous hunters (see Introduction). There was also a concern cited, primarily by Canada and the ICC, about a possible reduction in permanent participants' ability to maintain a strong position in a broadened Arctic Council with a new batch of populous, wealthy observer states. At the Kiruna ministerial meeting, the ICC underlined that the 160,000 Inuit are vastly outweighed by the new sum of the Arctic 8 plus the observer states (3.5 billion people) and urged the US chairmanship to pay greater attention to 'specifically northern' – rather than global – concerns, such as food insecurity and inadequate housing (ICC, 2013).

A contrasting Permanent Participant position was forwarded by Chief Michael Stickman on behalf of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, who noted that most sources of pollution that affect the Arctic originate from outside the region, necessitating engagement of non-Arctic states

(Arctic Athabaskan Council, 2013). Likewise, the Aleut International Association's statement emphasised that they were not afraid of change or new voices and opinions in Arctic affairs, but also that the organisation wanted to preserve the pre-eminent positioning of Permanent Participants and Arctic states within the Arctic Council (Aleut International Association, 2013).

It is also important to keep in mind that China, as a major economic power, probably created some concern, even if its Arctic interests were clearly specified and in accordance with the dictates of the Observer Manual (Willis and Depledge, 2015). Russia was primarily opposed to China's application, as they felt it was purely 'economic reasoning' about China's size that spoke in favour of its application (Chernenko, 2013). Nonetheless, Russia did accede to the observer applications (MFA, Russia, 2013), although perhaps more to avoid 'breaking the consensus' (Kommersant, 2013) than from real enthusiasm or sense of possibility from an expanded contact network within the Arctic Council.

Russia's concerns also seemed to be anchored in broader debates about how Arctic cooperation can best serve Russia's long-term priorities. Rather than conflict or cooperation as the main Arctic dichotomy, studies of Russian media coverage have found that the primary tension is between the national and the international scales. In this discourse, 'internationalising' Arctic challenges is seen as a worst-case outcome, with national or regional circumpolar solutions being the preferred one (Wilson Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014). As one Russian journalist from the State-owned *Rossiskaya gazeta* reported from Kiruna: 'Members of the council do not hide, that it is with difficulty that they find a balance between protection of the regional identity of the Council and development of mutually beneficial cooperation with non-Arctic states' (Vorob' ev, 2013).

At the 2015 ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, however, the Minister of Environment, Donskoy, took a departure from the previously cautious approach towards observers. He actively welcomed observers in the implementation of projects and underlined and argued that 'cooperation should not develop according to the "insider principle"' (Ministry of Environment, Russian Federation, 2015). This may be an interesting indication of both an acceptance of the status quo (the observers are there already, in the limited roles assigned to them by the Observer Manual) and of Russia's growing orientation towards China and the East as its transatlantic and European relations were challenged following the country's interference in Ukraine in 2014 (Blakkisrud and Wilson Rowe, 2017).

Balancing global and regional framings

Many of the reactions outlined above seem to have been more about how the different Arctic states envision the Arctic's place in the world than

specific disadvantages or advantages tied to more observers or these particular potential observers. How tied into global process and politics do the key Arctic states like to envision the region? To what extent does a more 'global' vision of the Arctic serve to weaken or strengthen the positions of the Arctic states themselves?

The delimitation of global/regional issues in Arctic cooperation comes up repeatedly in a number of guises at the Arctic Council. For example, in a 2009 SAO meeting in Copenhagen, the question of whether observers should be included in the Search and Rescue Task Force was raised. A key element of search and rescue in the high seas is that it also relies on the input and participation of any vessel in the region – commercial, scientific and so on, and sailing under any flag. The minutes reflect disagreement, with some SAOs arguing the point that many countries in Europe and other continents have an Arctic presence and that 'perhaps [the Arctic Council] should not exclude parties that have legitimate interests from observing the Task Force.' Other SAOs are recorded as expressing doubts about observers at intergovernmental negotiations between member states (Arctic Council, 2009b: 6).

The same question arises on issues of a rather everyday nature as well. For example, in a discussion of how the Arctic Council should be communicating its outputs and decisions, the debate about target audience came up. The choices lay between primarily northern and Arctic audiences and/or non-Arctic states as well, and this question remained unresolved (Arctic Council, 2010a). In another discussion at the 2015 SAO meeting in Anchorage, we see that Permanent Participants and, to some extent, some of the SAOs found themselves surprised – or 'unaware of the extent and nature of these formal and informal relations' of Arctic Council WGs in global settings (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2016c). That WGs had independent, extra-regional diplomatic ties was seen as a problem. Concern was especially directed towards WGs with wide networks, such as AMAP (with its connections to UN bodies such as the UN Environment Programme and UNFCCC) and CAFF (which had a wide range of agreements with actors, organisations, research centres and NGOs) (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2015b). The conclusion was that WG secretariats were to report in these relationships too and also consult more with the SAOs on establishing new extra-regional ties.

The reactions of Norway, Russia and the United States to Asian states' Arctic interests have been marked by a number of specificities that could be contributed to national interests or foreign policy traditions. Such concerns could include, for example, that Russia overall prefers smaller multilateral clubs as opposed to broad tents in international relations, and fears China's rise, the strong outrage in Canada's domestic North over the EU's ban on seal products, Norway's interest in joining regional bodies in the Pacific as an observer and the USA's 'pivot to Asia'.

However, this varied reception of Asian states' applications also speaks to some divergences and questions about how the Arctic region should be understood – as global or regional or a mixture of both. In terms of the observer debate, we see how these competing broader framings of the region mattered for shaping the concrete policy debate on what kind of actors belong in Arctic governance – and how they should participate.

Frame 3: business in Arctic governance

Policy 'storms in teacups' may be a relevant cue for the analyst in identifying when broader issues or spatial frames – and the power relationships undergirding them – are at stake. The debate over the new batch of observers' applications seems to have been one such moment. Even with key interests at stake, it was surprising that the decision went to the ministerial level. Similarly, the formal considerations of economic development and business issues by the Arctic Council might seem another such surprisingly tempestuous issue. The Arctic has long been a place of regionally and sometimes nationally important industries (mostly extractive) and other forms of economic development (Huskey, Mäenpää and Pelyasov, 2014). However, as Kristoffersen and Langhelle (2017) note, the representation of the region as a frozen nature preserve or a booming resource extraction zone of opportunity (and a range of representations in between these visions of the Arctic) has long been contested. This provides a hint as to one reason why a focus on bringing business actors into circumpolar cooperation would be debated. If and how does such an effort unsettle broader regional framings?

Negotiating the Arctic Economic Council

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Arctic Council has long had scientific cooperation and coordination as its key mandate and has produced important conclusions about and engaged in global diplomacy on issues of climate change, conservation and biodiversity. The Council grew out of an even more specifically science-oriented cooperation, the AEPS. The introduction of 'sustainable' development issues was a key, and contested, expansion of mandate when the Arctic Council replaced the AEPS. The inclusion of sustainable development occurred despite US concern about lack of definition of the concept. The issue was of great importance to the newly minted 'Permanent Participants', who argued for a stronger focus on Arctic populations to weigh up against the heavily natural-science-oriented/conservationist traditions of the AEPS (English, 2013).

As Canada took the helm of the Arctic Council from Sweden in 2013, it was clear that business and economic development were flagship emphases for the chairmanship period. All Arctic Council states and Permanent Participants had stated support for the initiative and welcomed it as part of the Canadian chairmanship (Quinn, 2016). As the idea evolved within the 'Task Force to Facilitate a Circumpolar Business Forum', however, opposition began to crop up. A key element of change in this period is the relationship of the 'business forum' to the Arctic Council. Early documents had envisioned a special place for state representatives in the new forum. However, the end product was an organisation of and for business to be held at an arm's length from the Arctic Council (Loukacheva, 2015). Distance between the work of the Arctic Council and a business forum had been an important requirement forwarded by the ICC (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2014).

Non-governmental organisations involved in Arctic affairs had become concerned when it was clear that the evolving business forum was more about enrolling 'big' nationally significant businesses rather than an effort to support small and medium enterprises (Greenpeace, 2015; WWF, 2014). The WWF had encouraged the 'greater involvement of business in meaningful dialogue about sustainable Arctic development', but was concerned about transparency and accountability of a solely business organisation operating independently from the Arctic Council (WWF, 2014). Some key Canadian voices, such as former Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and former Circumpolar Ambassador Mary Simon, had never supported the initiative. They were concerned about the role given to private actors pursuing private concerns at a potential crossroads with the concerns of and directions given by participants in the Arctic Council (Axworthy and Simon, 2015)

Opposition, however, did not prevail, and the initiative resulted in a new organisation, the AEC, with a secretariat opening in Tromsø, Norway in 2015. The AEC describes itself as an independent organisation, aiming to facilitate Arctic business-to-business relations and positioning itself as the preferred advisor to the Arctic Council on business issues. Membership is open to all businesses active in the Arctic, with special positions reserved for key representative businesses nominated by the 'Arctic 8' states. These 'representative' companies range from the native corporations of Alaska, through shipping and shipowners' associations (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Russia), complex holding companies based in the North, federations of industries and chambers of congress (Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Russia), to Rosneft, which is one of the Russian national oil companies. Three representatives from each of the Arctic Council Permanent Participants' organisations are also present (AEC, 2017). The AEC is further organised into several WGs (e.g. infrastructure, maritime transport, telecommunications, traditional knowledge/stewardship in the years 2016–2017).

Statements by the AEC leadership and WGs emphasise a commitment to stringent regulatory regimes, as long as these regimes are predictable. In a commentary in the *Arctic Yearbook*, Tara Sweeney, then chair of the AEC, and Tero Vauraste, then vice-chair, stated that the AEC aims to make the Arctic a 'favourable place to do business', by working to remove trade barriers, forge circumpolar market connections, and ensure predictable and common-sense regulatory environments (Sweeney and Vauraste, 2016). The support for the regulatory regimes established by the Arctic Council and at the national levels in Arctic states received another vote of confidence from the maritime WG of the AEC: 'today's Arctic business environment is governed by stringent regulatory regimes ... and so it should be – the Arctic is a pristine environment, where people have thrived for generations. The AEC will work to promote best regulatory practices and to the extent possible seek to align rules and regulations to ease the flow of business' (AEC, 2017). The WG on traditional knowledge, stewardship and small/medium business development likewise noted that the Arctic is ground zero for climate change, and emphasised the importance of providing a necessary framework for partnership with Arctic communities (AEC, 2017).

Overall, the goals are unsurprising and very much in keeping with broader Arctic efforts and discourses. However, the voices and an official role for this actor group are novel. On the whole, you do not see many business representatives present at Arctic Council meetings. One does note business actors at the WG or task force level. For example, oil and gas producers' associations have been active in ongoing work on prevention of marine oil pollution (Arctic Council Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention, 2014b, 2014c). This is striking in light of the fact that business is absolutely a target audience of much of the Council's work – most of which is about persuasion and best practices rather than enforceable regulatory initiatives.

A broader debate over framing: conservation versus sustainable development

To understand the degree of uncertainty and debate around the AEC, we also have to turn our attention to framing and representation. I would argue that the debate about business actors is closely tied to a broader uncertainty about how to balance conservation principles and economic development in the North. What is the Arctic for – and who is meant to benefit from it? Is the relatively undeveloped – and increasingly threatened by global warming – Arctic landscape something to be protected for a global audience and experienced through photos and documentaries? Or is the Arctic, like many other parts of the world, the

physical base upon which people living there should attempt to support their communities, accessing and marketing the local resources at hand?

This is an ongoing tension that is evident in how individual states and communities debate their development strategies (Steinberg *et al.*, 2015). At the national/bilateral level, President Barack Obama's agreement with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada to protect the Arctic environment by banning offshore oil and gas development in the Arctic is a useful example (Trudeau, 2016a). This effort in Obama's last days of office was a follow-on from an earlier 2016 bilateral agreement to protect 17 per cent of Arctic land and 10 per cent of Arctic marine areas by 2020 (Trudeau, 2016b). The bilateral agreement was received with jubilation by many national and global audiences, and with consternation and a sense of betrayal by many Arctic communities. The immediate direct economic costs were small, given that Arctic oil and gas production in the North American Arctic is yet to prove itself a feasible avenue for economic development.

However, Arctic communities reacted strongly, and these reactions are summarised thoroughly by Chater (2017). The Governor of Alaska, Bill Walker, stated that the agreement prioritised 'outside voices' above the 'voices, lives and livelihoods of Arctic residents'. Alaska's senators and congressional representatives put it even more pointedly: 'The only thing more shocking than this reckless, short-sighted, last-minute gift to the extreme environmental agenda is that President Obama had the nerve to claim he is doing Alaska a favor.' Canadian leaders objected to Ottawa acting on behalf of Canada's Arctic territories, pointing out that it went against the spirit of devolution. Peter Taptuna, premier of Nunavut, put it this way:

We do want to be getting to a state where we can make our own determination of our priorities, and the way to do that is gain meaningful revenue from resource development. And at the same time, when one potential source of revenue is taken off the table, it puts us back at practically Square 1 where Ottawa will make the decisions for us.

The ongoing balancing act between the sustainable development and conservation 'pillars' of the Arctic Council is also evident in SAO and Permanent Participant commentary on WG activity. At the conclusion of Denmark's chairmanship in 2011, the Greenlandic representative made a statement that exemplifies some of these tensions: 'The Arctic is not just about polar bears and ice. What is most often missing from the discussion is the human aspect of the Arctic and the conditions in which we live' (my translation from Danish, Kleist, 2011: 3). In discussing CAFF's work, which is now focused on biodiversity challenges, several delegations at the first Anchorage SAO meeting pointed to the need for CAFF to use both conservation and sustainable use as guideline principles. The CAFF

chair pushed back that they do indeed look at sustainable use. The chair then diplomatically intervened, stating that use and conservation are not inconsistent, and suggested that the conversation that had ensued around the Council's work on biodiversity 'may indicate a need to consider shifting emphasis and thus the Council's focus a little bit' (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2015c: 15).

Likewise, in discussing the oil and gas work of the Council at the same opening meeting of the American chairmanship, Norway pointed out that petroleum was a mature industry in Norway and an important 'driver of regional development in northern Norway'. The country asked whether the Arctic Council focuses enough attention on the economic development value of oil and gas, as opposed to merely 'source of environmental risk'. Russia supported the remarks by Norway, as did Denmark and Canada. Other states, which were not listed specifically, retorted that 'the substantial environmental consequences of oil and gas activity must be addressed' (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2016c: 21–22; see also US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, 2016b).

Here, we can see how the framing of the Arctic as a space for economic development or a space for conservation is not a one-off effort supported by a one-time marshalling of resources and articulation of preferences. Rather, the preferred framing is constantly shored up and debated by actors seeking to present a picture of the region that makes their interventions and preferred outcomes sensible.

Representations and the 'constant work' of maintaining power

As Edward Soja puts it: 'it may be space rather than time that hides consequences from us, the "making of geography" more than the "making of history" that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world' (2003: 1). In this chapter, we have shown how broader framings of Arctic space do indeed matter in 'day-to-day' circumpolar diplomacy and are actively contested and enthusiastically marshalled by actors seeking to promote particular perspectives on the region. The active support given by most Arctic Council high-level representatives to buffering the region from external political strife was an important reflection of their foreign policy aspirations and interests in the Arctic. It also served as a display for non-Arctic actors who have frequently expressed concern about the potential for conflict over resources and boundaries and wondered if the Arctic environment should somehow be protected with a regime or a special set of globally endorsed rules. Reasserting the peaceful Arctic frame in Iqaluit in 2015 was an important message to others about the commitment of the Arctic states to governing the region peacefully – and primarily amongst themselves (an important hierarchy of players, which the next chapter addresses).

We may identify that frames – and the power relations implicated in these framings – are at stake when we witness policy ‘storms in teacups.’ The drawn-out consideration of a new batch of observer applications over two chairmanship periods, and the late-night, last minute discussions of those applications on the eve of the 2013 ministerial meeting in northern Sweden, may be one such policy storm that is difficult to understand without taking frames into account. The East Asian states that presented their applications did so in conjunction with the rules and preferences that had been articulated by the Arctic states and Permanent Participants formally and informally. Observers, permanent or not, have a limited role to play in the Arctic Council overall. What was also at stake, however, was a framing of the Arctic as regional or global. For some key participants, such as the ICC and Russia, the regional framing was the preferred one, as it ensures a smaller ‘club’ format where more purely ‘Arctic voices’ can be heard.

The contention around the development of the AEC can be seen in this light too. Commercial actors are one of the target audiences of many of the Arctic Council’s policy efforts from conservation to economic development, and not newcomers to Arctic affairs, as discussed in Chapter 1. Yet the development of the AEC in its various early iterations attracted high-level debate from a number of key Arctic actors. This is probably in part because the enhanced presence of business actors ties into a longstanding tug-of-war or balancing act between policy frames of the Arctic that speak to conservation/environmental concerns and sustainable development. While we often see framing as an academic analytic, used to help us understand in a more abstract sense how representation, power relations and policy outcomes tie together, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider how framings, like rhetoric, are actively deployed and debated by policy field participants. This chapter took a cue from critical geopolitics and its growing emphasis on tracing what actors do with particular geopolitical framings. From the cases selected and empirical insights generated, we can see that experienced players in Arctic governance seem to be highly aware of the importance of ‘geopower’ (Thrift, 2000) – anchoring their preferences in richly weighted narratives about space – to realise preferred power relations and political outcomes.