

# China's call for more inclusion in the Arctic



Roskilde University

Bachelor project

Justinas Svezda (61206)

Kasper Petersen (60569)

Characters: 143.565

Supervisor: Ahmad Wesal Zaman

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## **Problem area**

In recent years international organizations and non-Arctic states have been showing an increasing interest in the Arctic region (Hong, 2018, p.1) while the Arctic Council, a principal intergovernmental forum that promotes cooperation, coordination and integration between the Arctic States, indigenous communities and other inhabitants of this polar region (Arctic Council, n.d.a), has been experiencing a growing presence of international actors that are geographically distant from the Arctic. By March 2019, 13 non-Arctic states, 13 intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organizations as well as 13 non-governmental organizations have been granted an observer status in the Arctic Council which allows them to participate in the meetings of the Council, propose projects, make and present statements as well as share their opinion on the issues in question (Arctic Council, n.d.b). Consequently, exclusive rights of Arctic states to govern the Arctic region have been significantly challenged in recent years due to activities of international actors located outside this polar region (Hong, 2018, p.2).

A particularly striking example of increasing involvement of non-Arctic states in the affairs of the Arctic region is China. After China agreed to the Svalbard treaty and recognized Norway's sovereignty over the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard in 1925, there had not been any significant events in the history of China's involvement in the Arctic up until late 1980s, i.e. for around 60 years (European Parliament, 2018, p.2). However, this situation has changed dramatically in the last 25 years. In 1996 China became a member of International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), since 1999 China has been conducting scientific expeditions in the Arctic and in 2017 *Xue Long* (Snow Dragon), icebreaker polar research vessel, crossed the Central Arctic Area for the first time (ibid.), to name only a few of China's Arctic milestones in recent years. Despite China's geographical distance from the Arctic, its relatively short Arctic history and lack of sovereign rights in the region, a significant attention has been attached to it in the foreign policy agenda of China, particularly during the first term of Xi Jinping's presidency between 2013 and 2018 (ibid.).

In the context of its involvement in the Arctic Council, China participated in the meetings of the Arctic Council as an ad hoc observer since 2007 to get a better understanding of how the Council operates, and a year later began to officially express its objective to acquire an observer status in this intergovernmental forum (Hong, 2018, p.3). China, together with Italy, India, South Korea and Singapore eventually obtained observer status in 2013. China's contribution to the Arctic Council as an observer could be seen as an exemplary model for proactive international relations. For example, in 2016 China not only hosted a number of Arctic-related meetings and sessions but also did not miss any of the governmental meetings that the observers were allowed access to (ibid., p.4).

China has also intensified diplomatic relations with the Arctic states and particularly five Northern European states, namely Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. For instance, the new Chinese embassy in the capital city of Iceland, Reykjavik, is the largest embassy in the country. Additionally, in 2012 the then-Prime Minister of China, Wen Jiabao paid a visit to Iceland and Sweden and in the same year Hu Jintao, the then-President of China, became the first Chinese president to visit Denmark since the setting up of diplomatic relations between the two countries sixty two years ago. China has also been holding dialogues regarding Arctic affairs outside the Arctic Council, as Chinese delegations also attended the Assembly of Arctic Circle, the Arctic Frontier, the Arctic Summit Week, the International Arctic Science Committee and the Year of Polar Prediction (ibid., p.5,6)

However, despite a more active participation in the Arctic affairs, China's involvement had still been regarded as low-profile during the first five years of its membership in the Arctic Council and merely included slight improvements in its bilateral relations with the Arctic states and development of regional resources (ibid., p.1). The Arctic states were still sceptical towards China's involvement in the Arctic affairs and little had changed from the time when China was not even a member of the Arctic Council. (ibid., p.17, 21). Additionally, China's position regarding the Arctic affairs was not clear as no document presenting China's Arctic policy or strategy was released during the first five years of its Arctic Council membership

(Jakobson, 2010, p.9). That was until January 26, 2018 when ‘China’s Arctic Policy’ was published.

Publication of ‘China’s Arctic Policy’, a white paper by the State Council Information Office of China, marked an unprecedented occurrence as it was the first time that China’s Arctic policies voiced by Chinese academics and policymakers were drawn together in a structured manner and have, since the day of publication, been freely accessible to the foreign public (European Parliament, 2018, p.2). Main goals of China’s Arctic policy outlined in the document are understanding, protection and development of the Arctic as well as participation in its governance, and the key theme of the paper is cooperation (Hong, 2018, p.1). In its Arctic policy document, China for the first time acknowledged that its motives of involvement in the Arctic are not any more limited to scientific research but now expand to a broad range of activities (European Parliament, 2018, p. 1). The white paper indicates that China has the intention to extend the scope of activities in the Arctic and it also emphasizes that China is a ‘responsible major country’ committed to the ideals of cooperation, international law as well as a necessity to balance between potential economic benefits and protection of the environment (ibid., p.2).

China’s activities in the Arctic region and its relations with the Arctic states had for many years been limited to scientific research and China’s mere observation of the operation of the Arctic Council. However, since 2013 China has been particularly vocal in its support for the objectives of the Arctic Council, respect for the values, culture and traditions of Arctic people and commitment to work together on the problems in this polar region (Arctic Council, n.d.b), which allowed it to gain a status of a permanent observer in this intergovernmental forum. China’s accession to the Arctic Council is regarded as a step forward in ensuring that the former will be involved in the decisions related to the future of the latter (Hong, 2018, p. 3). In addition to that, China released its Arctic policy white paper in 2018 which presents its intentions to intensify China’s presence in this polar region and expand the span of activities. This progression from China’s modest formation of bilateral relations with the Arctic states and focus on scientific research towards an eventual association with the objectives and

values of the Arctic region, and insistence on more inclusion in the Arctic affairs in the future is of key interest for this paper as it aims to analyse, why and how China calls for the establishment of a more inclusive international society in the Arctic.

## **Research question:**

“Why and how does China call for a strengthened international society in the Arctic?”

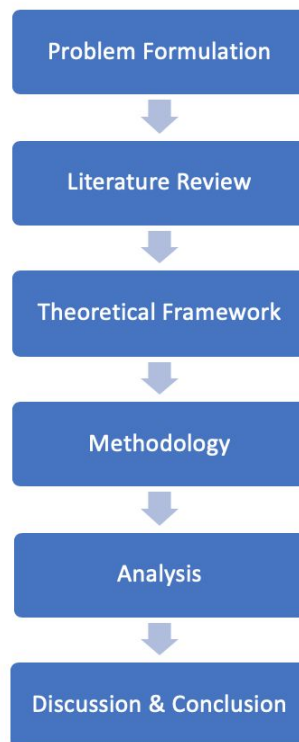
## **Sub-questions**

1. “What are China’s main motives for involvement in Arctic affairs?”
2. “How does China argue that its main interests are shared within the Arctic community and its involvement is based on common values, norms, identities and existing legal framework in the region?”

## Research strategy

The research strategy, or in the words of Jansen and Kvist (2016, p.39) "a masterplan for your research – how you get from research question, choice of theory and empirical material to conclusion" is illustrated in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Structure of the research strategy**



The first task for us was to find a research question worth examining that would lead to a research problem worthy of finding an answer to. Three steps that one should take for this purpose outlined by Booth et al. (in Booth et al., 2016, p. 29) were of great value in the early-stage of the problem formulation. Firstly, we found a topic that is defined clearly enough to let us acquire a substantial knowledge about in a limited time period. Secondly, we

questioned this topic up until we found the themes that interested us. Finally, we determined the sorts of evidence that the readers of the paper will expect us to provide to substantiate our answer.

During the process of formulation of the research question we reviewed the literature on both the topic selected and International Relations (IR) theories that offer different explanations for China's involvement in Arctic affairs. Literature review not only helped us to develop perceptive questions about the topic and obtain knowledge about the existing literature on it, but also assisted us in finding the IR theory that arguably provided the most convincing explanation of the phenomenon studied and was later employed as the theoretical framework of this paper.

The theory chosen for the examination of the topic, namely the English School revolves around the themes of diplomacy, as the interstate dialogue, and a gradual progression from international system to international society that, in the context of our research topic, serve as explanation for China's increasing involvement in the Arctic. While the English School holds that states, which engage in relations with one another, naturally progress to international society, diplomacy serves as the main catalyst and a symbol of this progression.

Formulation of the research problem, execution of the literature review and determination of theoretical framework was followed by methodological selection. We decided to conduct a theory-guided idiographic case study, as a way of doing social science research, which allowed us to investigate the case in-depth in its real-life context. This type of case study is reliant on a strong conceptual framework which allowed us to relate theoretical aspects to a contemporary phenomena studied. Our choice of method is thematic qualitative text analysis which shed a light on the themes that are most frequently occurring in China's statements.

In the analysis, coding of the relevant themes, which this method of study includes, allowed us to find the most frequently recurring themes in the speeches of Chinese representatives and

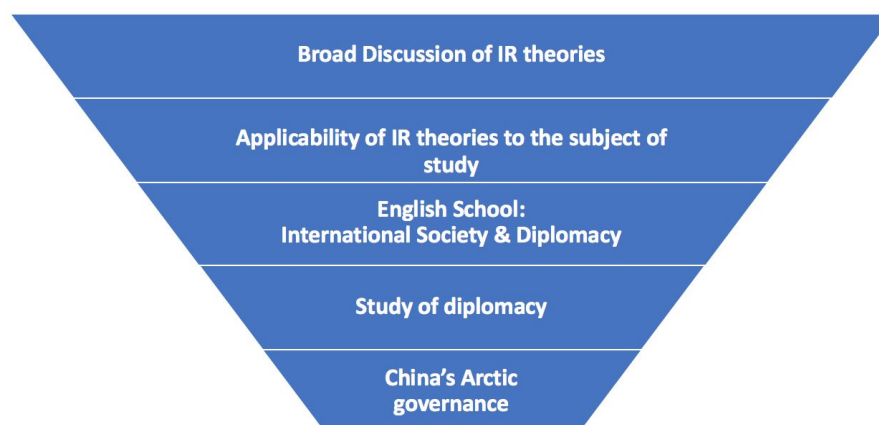


interpret them within the real-life context. After the analysis is carried out the paper ends with a conclusion.

## Literature review

In the most general sense, this paper focuses on relations between China and states of the Arctic region. More specifically, it is a study of how Chinese representatives communicate the ideas of a more inclusive Arctic, where China has a say regarding the governance, development and protection of this polar region. We take an IR approach to study a growing Chinese presence in the Arctic affairs as interactions between state-based actors that transcend borders of the states is the central theme that IR, as a discipline, is concerned with (Lawson, 2017, p.16). Consequently, the literature review presented in this section deals predominantly with the IR and its structure is presented in the figure below (Figure 2). It is important to note that we see the literature review as, in Robert K. Yin's words, "means to an end and not <...> an end in itself" (Yin, 2002, p.9), meaning that we seek not only to determine what has been written about the topic, but also establish questions that would offer perceptive insights about it.

**Figure 2. Structure of the literature review**



This literature review begins with an overview of some of the most influential theories of IR, namely realism, neo-realism, liberalism, neo-liberalism, constructivism and the English School, and examines how, arguably the most authoritative members of different schools of thought, explain the subject of IR. The first part of the literature review is concluded with a discussion of applicability of different theories to the analysis of the subject of this paper and argumentation for choosing the English School as a theoretical scope of this project is presented.

Second part of the literature review includes a closer examination of writings of the members of the English School. As the key theme of this paper is an increasing involvement of China in the affairs of the Arctic states, the emphasis is placed on the progression from international system to international society and institution of diplomacy, which, in the case of China and the Arctic, stimulates and symbolizes this progression.

Third and fourth parts of the literature review are concerned with different methods of studying China's diplomacy as well as the literature that has been written on its involvement in the Arctic and China's role in the governance of the polar region.

Literature review ends with recognition of gaps in the literature on the topic and identification of this project's contribution for the development of the existing knowledge on it.

## **Review of the literature on dominant IR theories**

### **Realism**

Realism is the oldest grand theory of IR and its line of thinking dates back as far as to Ancient Greece (Morgenthau et al., 2006, p.12). The core assumptions of this school of thought are that states are unitary actors that exist in an anarchical system and are driven by rational motives. In this anarchical system war is seen as the norm and peace should be seen as an intermission between periods of conflict (Donnelly in Burchill et al., 2013, p.32-35). A key concept within the scholarship is balance of power, i.e. a state of affairs which ensures

that no one power achieve the status of a global hegemon as other states would 'balance' against the stronger state (Morgenthau et al., 2006, p.196-198).

Hans Morgenthau in his work *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*, which is regarded as one of the foundational texts in the field of IR, (Burchill et al., 2013, p.1), presented the ideas that are associated with classical realism. According to Morgenthau, power and the ability to wield it are key elements in ensuring survival of the states. The ability to wield power is determined by population size, geography, industrial capabilities etc. (Morgenthau et al., 2016, p.13). Morgenthau further stressed that state action is geared towards three power goals: power maintenance, i.e. states' pursuit of status quo in their relations with one another; power acquisition, which refers to restructuring of status quo; and power demonstration - showcasing of one's ability to wield power (ibid., p.183-185).

More recently, neo-realist scholarship has turned its focus to the structures that compel states to act in a given way in the international system. John Mearsheimer shares several classical realist beliefs, for instance, the primary goal for states is survival, states are rational, and the international system is anarchical (Mearsheimer, 2014, p.30). However, Mearsheimer argues in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* that only great powers matter and introduces the concept of off-shore balancing, which stands for the notion that great powers exert their influence globally through alliances with opposing powers in different geographical regions. It is through these alliances that great powers are able to control and contain rising regional powers as a means of ensuring security and survival (ibid., p.257-261).

Kenneth Waltz argues in his work *The Emerging Structure of International Politics* that the balance of power is essential and that a bipolar system, as the world experienced during the Cold War, is the most stable (Waltz, 1993, p.44). Waltz further argues that the emergence of nuclear weapons has brought a state of peace to the international system as states now face a threat of a mutually assured destruction (M.A.D.) - the prospect of two adversaries to annihilate each other in the case of a nuclear combat. M.A.D., according to Waltz, should be seen as a key characteristic of the international system (ibid., p.51).

Additionally, neo-realist scholars such as Thomas Schelling and Stephen Walt have more recently turned their focus to the bargaining processes. Schelling points “for each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do” (Schelling, 1980, p.57) together with the balance of threat theory, according to which, states balance against perceived threats (Walt, 1985, p.5-7), now enjoy a prominent position in the neo-realist scholarship.

However, the realist school of thought has also been heavily criticized, primarily because its supporters tend to exaggerate the ‘capabilities’ of this theory, by claiming that they have an explanation for ‘the most important things’ and clearly understating the pluralistic nature of IR discipline (Donnelly in Burchill et al., 2013, p.55). Proponents of other IR theories have also challenged the basic assumptions of realism. Social constructivists, for instance, oppose the realist scepticism towards norms and institutions and sole emphasis on material interests (elaboration on social constructivism, as IR theory, is provided in the following pages). Liberals, on a similar note, principally disagree with the realist belief that conflict between the states is a natural state of international relations, dealings with other countries are a zero-sum game and strategic power and security are of the utmost importance. The following section presents the literature on liberalism, as an IR theory, its core ideas and writings of arguably some of the most influential thinkers of this school of thought.

## **Liberalism**

In contrast to realism, liberalism is more optimistic and believes that the normal state of affairs is peace. Moreover, liberals do not believe that everything is about power but also see economic factors such as trade relationships as important. In short, liberals believe that the world is progressively becoming less conflictual due to an increased interconnectedness in the form of trade-agreements and establishment of both international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and regional institutions like the European Union (EU) (Burchill in Burchill et al., 2013, p.57,66-69).

Within the liberal school of thought there are several distinct strands that are based on the ideas of Kant's work of 1795 *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. Kant points to three important factors that would lead to peace: an emergence of a federation of free states (Kant's version of an international institution); universal hospitality (economic interdependence); and republican constitution (democratic peace theory) (Kant & Smith, 1795, p.128,137-138,153).

Keohane and Nye in their neo-liberal work *Power and Interdependence* from 2001 examine the power relations that exist when two states are interdependent, e.g. in trade relations. The power relationship between the states is distinguished by two dimensions, namely sensibility and vulnerability (Keohane & Nye, 2001, p.13-15). The authors argue that the dimension of interdependence is a key determinant for how a state acts in the international system (ibid., p.5).

More recently, Keohane retrospectively examined liberal institutionalism in his essay *Twenty Years of Liberal Institutionalism*. Keohane illustrates that liberal institutionalism has been progressively integrated in global affairs since the end of WW2 and its emphasis on moralism and legalism contributes in facilitating better lives for humans (Keohane, 2012, p.127-129).

From this brief presentation the literature of both the realist and liberal schools of thought, it becomes evident that the two have principal disagreements regarding the nature of IR. However, they do share three assumptions. Firstly, political actors for realists as well as liberals are seen as rational, utility maximizing and atomistic. Secondly, interests of the political actors are formed before they enter social relations with one another. Finally, they are not essentially social and enter social relations to maximize their interests. The three assumptions that are shared between liberals and realists are, however, challenged by proponents of another dominant IR theory, namely social constructivism, who believe that political actors are inherently social and their interests as well as identities are social constructs (Reus-Smit in Burchill et al., 2013, p.220-221). The following pages present the literature on this school of thought and shed the light on the way that social constructivists see international relations.

## **Constructivism**

Constructivism emerged as one of the dominant schools of thought of IR in the end of the Cold War. As both neo-realists and neo-liberals failed to predict and understand transformations of the systems that reshaped the global order after the Cold War, the dominant position of the debate between the two schools of thought in the IR was challenged and a space for other ways of understanding international relations was opened (Reus-Smit in Burchill et al., 2013, p.222-223). Consequently, in the beginning of 1990s, it was partly filled by constructivism, an IR theory that emphasises identity as one of the elements that shape political action, significance of both material and normative structures and relationship between agents and structures (ibid., p.217).

Ontologically constructivists share three key premises about social life that explain world politics. Firstly, constructivists believe that normative or ideational structures are of the same level of importance as the material ones (ibid., p.224). Indeed, Wendt in his article *Constructing International Politics* states that material capabilities are only relevant for the activities of the states because of the social structures in which those states are embedded. Wendt gives an example of British and North Korean nuclear weaponry, by arguing that 500 nuclear weapons that British possess are less threatening for the US than 5 nuclear weapons that belong to North Korea due to friendly relationship between the US and UK and a conflictual one between the US and North Korea (Wendt, 1995, p.73).

Secondly, identities are influenced by non-material structures. According to constructivists, identities lay the foundation for the interests of the actors and, in succession, for their actions. Consequently, understanding of those non-material structures is essential. Wendt in his seminal essay *Anarchy is what states make of it* argues that states do not have a 'portfolio' of interests that they carry irrespectively of social context. On the contrary, they establish their interests in relation to the social processes they find themselves in (Wendt, 1992, p.398). Wendt goes so far as to argue that the US and former Soviet Union even lost their identities

in the first years after the Cold War, when mutual threat and hostility to one another, that had for years defined their identities, lost their relevance (ibid., p.399).

Finally, constructivists hold that relationship between agents and structures is mutually constitutive. Even though, as mentioned earlier, non-material structures have a significant influence on actors', be they states or individuals, identities that, in turn, condition interests and actions, those structures only exist because of well informed practices of those actors. According to Meyer et al., institutionalized rules give the meaning and identity to the individual actors and define a system of proper economic, political and cultural activities. However, those rules and norms only become institutionalized as they are incorporated in the social activities of the individual actors (Meyer et al., 1987, p.67,86). Returning to Wendt's example of the end of the Cold War, he argues that social structures are found only in process and practices. When actions of great powers in the early 1990s were no longer following the structure of shared knowledge that had governed their relations during the years of the Cold War, that structure ceased to exist (Wendt, 1995, p.74).

The sections above have presented three dominant theories of IR and discussed their points of critique of one another. The final section of the literature review on dominant IR theories in this paper deals with a school of thought that is seen as a middle ground or *via media* between the three schools of thought, namely the English School.

## **English School**

In 1970s a middle ground theory between realism, liberalism and constructivism emerged with the writings of mainly British or British-inspired scholars such as Hedley Bull, Martin Wight and Adam Watson. For the English School the principal object of examination is 'international society' (Linklater in Burchill et al., 2013, p.88). According to the English School, international relations are more in order and civil than realists and neo-realists argue. However, the English School is also critical of the ideas of constant peace and accomplishment of level of international cooperation that is similar to the one that exists in

stable national societies and is suggested by ‘utopian’ liberals and neo-liberals (ibid., p.89-90).

Position of the English School as the *via media* between the three IR theories can cause some confusion as few of its members sometimes appear to favour assumptions of one theory at the expense of the other two. For instance, Wight in his work *Why is there no International Theory?* makes a clear distinction between domestic politics (‘political theory’) and relations between states (‘international theory’) commonly attributed to the realist school of thought. He agrees with realist standpoint and argues that “what for political theory is the extreme case (as revolution or civil war) is for international theory a regular case” (Wight, 1960, p.48), meaning that international relations are a sphere of survival, while domestic politics is the domain of the good life.

Position in the middle of the three IR theories has also been a point of critique on the part of the English School. For instance, Dave Copeland in his work *A Realist Critique of the English School* argues that the theory lacks deductive logic and empirical support and he stresses that the English School is far behind realism, liberalism and constructivism on this matter (Copeland, 2003, p.441).

However, despite the confusion caused by the way members of the English School position themselves, the fundamental idea of this school of thought is that sovereign states, regardless of the anarchical nature of international relations (absence of a higher authority), form a society with a considerable level of order and minimal level of violence between the states (Linklater in Burchill et al., 2013, p.88).

Bull in his book *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* holds that international order exists because all societies, both domestic and international, accept three primary goals of social life - they place restraints on violence; uphold property rights; and ensure that agreements are kept (Bull, 2012, p.4).



Sovereign states are at the centre of international relations for the English School. According to the English School, sovereign states form systems of states or societies of states. While, according to Bull's definition, system of states is shaped when "two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave – at least in some measure – as whole", the society of states is formed when "a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" (ibid., p.9,13). However, Dale Copeland, in his critique towards the English School, argues that the concept of an international society does not act as a well-specified variable but more of a description of historical tendencies and that the English School as a theory is undeveloped (Copeland, 2003, p.439-440). Additionally, Alex J, Bellamy also points to the fact that the concept of international society has not been substantially evolved and argues that there is a need for a multilayered account of international society if it is to make sense in contemporary international politics (Bellamy in Bellamy, 2004, p.286).

Members of the English School hold that institutions – a set of practices, rather than administrative organizations – support the collaboration between the states and give significance and stability to the international society, once a group of states formed it (Bull, 2012, p.71). However, relevance of different institutions is a domain of strong disagreements between members of the English School.

Barry Buzan (Buzan, 2004), a more recent member of the English school, illustrated which institutions different scholars (Bull, Wight, Mayall, Holsti, James and Jackson) of this school of thought saw as most important. For instance, Wight holds that religious sites and festivals, dynastic principles, alliances, guarantees, neutrality and arbitration are all primary institutions, while none of the other four scholars attribute significant importance to them. While the position of the scholars towards the institutions such as trade, alliances and even sovereignty also differed greatly, the only two institutions that the five scholars all regarded as primary were diplomacy and international law (Buzan, 2004, p.174).

## **Applicability of the theories to the subject of study**

IR theories examined in this literature review provide valuable insights for the study of China's involvement in the Arctic affairs. For instance, realism and neo-realism could be of great use when examining the balance of power in the Arctic and changes of its dynamics with an increased presence of China. One could also analyze strategic interests of China and focus on potential relative gains from its inclusion in the Arctic region. However, both realism and neo-realism are of little use when one focuses on the diplomatic interstate relations between China and the Arctic states, cooperation and potential to form a group of states that would share common values, norms and would be bound by same rules in their relations with one another.

Liberalism and neo-liberalism, on the other hand, places emphasis on potential for cooperation and international institutions. Therefore, one could examine institutional setting of the Arctic Council and its role in international arena, or argue that China-Arctic relations are, as opposed to realists and neo-realists, a positive-sum game. Applicability of this theory to our project, nevertheless, is also strictly limited. Liberalism and neo-liberalism together with realism and neo-realism are all *pre-social* theories, meaning that interests of states derive from within the states themselves and are therefore autogenous. According to these theories, states enter relations with their interests already formed and social interaction is of minor importance in determining the interests (Reus-Smit in Burchill et al., 2013, p.220). Therefore, it renders analysis of possible progression of interstate relations and effects of diplomacy to it hardly possible, as development of interstate relations only occurs if it is an original intention of the states, and diplomacy in a form of social interaction is regarded as unimportant.

Constructivism undoubtedly solves the problem of *pre-socialness* as this theory is based on the importance of non-material structures that are formed in relation to the social processes that states find themselves in. Consequently, proponents of constructivism could study the

subject of China-Arctic relations by looking at, for instance, China's 'Arctic identity'. This type of examination would allow to understand China's interests and actions in this polar region as, according to constructivists, rationale behind the interests and actions of a state is based on its identity. However, even though a significant number of observers and China's Arctic policy suggest that material gains such as resource exploitation and development of strategic infrastructure are one of the main reasons, why China entered diplomatic relations with the Arctic region in the first place, constructivism would be barely useful if one wanted to analyse material aspects that are in place. Constructivists neglect material structures and, as a consequence, theoretical scope of constructivism fails to encompass elements that are undoubtedly of great importance and arguably even constitutive of the emergence of growing China's involvement in the Arctic affairs itself.

As shown above, the theories discussed, though provide valuable insights, they do not cover the entirety of the subject we attempt to examine in this paper. Therefore, English School theory which stands as a middle ground theory and draws on elements from liberalism, realism and constructivism was chosen as a theoretical framework of the project. Firstly, the English School holds that states, in their relations with one another, gradually evolve from international system to international society. This idea helps us to understand the development of interstate relations between China and the Arctic states and increasing interaction between the two. Additionally, it explains, how China seemingly came to subscribe to common values, norms and rules with the Arctic region. Secondly, the English School has a specific focus on diplomacy, which allows to examine the interstate communication in the context of China-Arctic relations. Consequently, the English School covers the two central themes of the subject of the study, namely progression towards a more inclusive international society and role of diplomatic communication in this process.

As the concept of international society was briefly presented in the previous sections, the following page of this literature review will briefly present the institution of diplomacy in the English School. As a decision was made to use the English School as a theoretical framework for the project, a rigorous elaboration on both progression from international system to

international society and the institution of diplomacy is provided in the chapter *Theoretical Framework*. The following pages will therefore instead put an emphasis on study of China's diplomacy and existing literature on its Arctic governance - this section is of particular practical significance for this project as it sheds a light on the ways to operationalize the concept of diplomacy, and presents the literary work on the role of China in the Arctic affairs.

### **Diplomacy in the English School, study of China's diplomacy and its Arctic governance**

The institution of diplomacy was presented by Bull, which he describes as the conduct of international politics by official state agents that work towards peaceful means (Bull, 2012, p.157). Bull argues that key roles of diplomats include negotiation and the minimization of friction between states (ibid., p.174-175). Although Bull acknowledges the importance of diplomacy, he also stresses that the role of diplomacy has decreased due to the fact that diplomats more often get bypassed by heads of the states, who meet face-to-face more frequently than previously (ibid., p.166).

Watson on the other hand, does not see the practice of diplomacy to be in decline and in his work *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* he examines the institutions and practices that shape modern-day diplomacy (Watson, 2005, p.7). Watson argues that both the inclusion of diplomatically inexperienced states and stronger economic interdependence across new regions has increased the scope of diplomacy in the international system (ibid., p.213-215). Moreover, he points to the fact that the terror of nuclear weapons has made the role of diplomacy a key tool in avoiding a nuclear holocaust (ibid., p.213).

Wheeler agrees with Watson's argument that diplomacy is key in de-escalating potentially catastrophic situations, like great power wars. However, Wheeler further turns his focus to trust and interpersonal relationships between state leaders which, he argues, are key elements of diplomacy (Wheeler, 2013, p.479). Throughout the article, Wheeler's focus is on this interpersonal relationship that heads of state build when conducting face-to-face diplomacy.

Although Bull saw this as a sign of a decline in the importance of diplomacy, Wheeler argues that with the increased role of global threats the role of diplomacy is as important as ever (ibid., p.480). He exemplifies this by examining the interpersonal relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev, which, he argues, reached a level of trust that made de-escalating the Cold War in the latter part of 1980s possible (ibid., p.491-493).

The study of diplomacy has been of a great interest for the scholars of IR. Therefore, it is also unsurprising that a significant amount of literary work on the topic of the great concern for our group, namely China's diplomatic relations, is present.

For instance, Zhao Kejin examines diplomacy by studying Chinese public diplomacy campaigns that have been launched since 2003. The author finds that Chinese officials have used public diplomacy as a means to gain public support and strengthen the political legitimacy of the government (Zhao, 2015, p.19). Throughout the article Zhao employs methods such as document reviews and interviews with scholars, government officials and think tanks, and uses sources such as transcripts of formal speeches and material from the interviews with Professor Zhou Qipeng from China Foreign Affairs University and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Zhao argues that these methods are especially useful when examining the strategic motivation of the Chinese government (ibid., p.10,14-15,19).

In relation to China's Arctic diplomacy, a great deal of literature revolves around China's scientific diplomacy and its bilateral diplomacy. However, this tendency is hardly surprising, bearing in mind the fact that for many years China's Arctic interests had been limited to scientific research (European Parliament, 2018, p.1) and bilateral diplomacy in the Arctic is in China's interests since each state has different interests and individual negotiations with the Arctic states allow to avoid one-to-many type of negotiations (Hong, 2018, p.5).

For instance, Jinghao Peng and Njord Wegge in their article *China's bilateral diplomacy in the Arctic* seek to identify bilateral issues of utmost importance, investigate, whether China, in its diplomatic relations with some of the Arctic states, achieve greater success than with

others, and to determine the long-term objectives of China's Arctic diplomacy. Authors argue that it is not in Chinese diplomatic interests to provide leadership, introduce new ideas or initiatives or connect different states together. Instead, China's Arctic diplomacy is primarily directed towards the goals of economic growth, development and, more recently, environmental issues. It is argued that China engages in bilateral, rather than multilateral diplomatic relations because of its historical distrust of international diplomacy and lacking tradition of political leadership in the international arena (Peng & Wegge, 2015, p.244). Peng and Wegge also point to the problems that emerge when one wants to study Chinese diplomacy, not the least because even Chinese scholars can face criminal charges if they reveal motives of Chinese leaders for making major foreign policy decisions, and mode of expression of Beijing is in itself very careful (ibid., p.236, 245).

On the other hand, the writings on China's diplomacy that revolve around science oftentimes deal with a concept of 'Science Diplomacy'. Ping Su in his article *Science Diplomacy and Trust Building: 'Science China' in the Arctic* defines 'Science Diplomacy' as collaboration of scientists from different countries that strengthens two types of trust which are pertinent to international relations. The first type is called 'procedural trust', which derives from collaboration of scientists and is based on their collective confidence in the process of knowledge creation that is objective and is not susceptible to corruption. The second type is 'general trust', which refers to a type of trust that transcends the scientific community. The idea of general trust is based on the belief that politicians, businesses, the public and other relevant actors from different countries believe in the objectivity of science as well as common rules dictated by it, and therefore they will eventually build trust between one another based on objective knowledge, despite belonging to different states and highly unpredictable international setting (Su & Mayer, 2018, p.24). As scientific knowledge is based on objectivity and the Arctic region suffers from increasing uncertainty due to environmental changes, resource extraction etc., China's scientific involvement is seen as a positive development in its international relations with the Arctic and a possible stabilizing factor. Consequently, China has already established long-term interactions with scientists from the Arctic countries ('procedural trust') that have gradually spilled over into other

domains of international relations ('general trust'), as, for instance, it is argued that science diplomacy stabilized China's relations with Norway after 2010 when relations between the two were 'frozen' and the environment was greatly politicized (ibid., p.26).

As in more recent years and particularly with the publication of its Arctic policy white paper, China has begun to push for internationalization of the governance system of the Arctic region, the topic of China's Arctic governance has also acquired a significant attention.

For instance, Peng and Wegge in their article *China and the law of the sea: implications for Arctic governance* investigates how China's commitment to the United Nations Convention of the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) affects its role in the Arctic governance (Peng & Wegge 2014, p.287). The authors examine China's attitude towards UNCLOS from a realist position as it is argued that in the study of any rising power, in this case China, attitude towards international regimes depends on the relative degree that the state in question is set to benefit from these regimes (ibid., p.301). The article points to several aspects that suggest China's dissatisfaction with UNCLOS, among which are China's geographical position that gives it a disadvantage when claiming continental shelves and China's uneasiness about external recognition as a great power (ibid., p.302). In terms of Arctic governance, the authors argue that at the time of writing (2017) it can be difficult to clarify China's official Arctic policy but, if their actions in the Southeast Asian region are an indication of how China will act in the Arctic, then China does not seem to adhere to the UNCLOS, principles of multilateralism or the rule of law, all of which constitute good Arctic governance (ibid., p.303-304).

In his paper, *China's emerging Arctic policy: What are the implications for Arctic governance*, Nengye Liu examines why China is in need for an Arctic policy, how it came into reality, and the content of it (Liu, 2017, p.55-57). Throughout the article, the author argues that Western media overemphasises security aspects of China's actions in the Arctic as it oftentimes compare the situation in the South China Sea with the Arctic. Liu argues that the two cases are not comparable as China has stated publicly that it will respect the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the Arctic countries (ibid., p.63,66). Lastly, the author

argues that China's Arctic policy should not be seen as different from that of other Arctic states as in its essence it is driven towards shaping the Arctic as a region in China's interest (ibid., p.66).

Finally, Andrea Beck in her paper *China's strategy in the Arctic: A case of lawfare?* turns her focus to claims that China uses lawfare, i.e. the misuse of the law to achieve military objectives and to undermine the legal framework in order to realize its Arctic ambitions (Beck, 2014, p.306). The article finds that China has not been using lawfare in the Arctic regions as there is no evidence that supports this claim. On the contrary, China's actions have been in compliance with UNCLOS and the main objectives of China seem to be economic and commercial rather than military. Additionally, China's support for the reform of Arctic's existing legal and governance systems is widely shared by the Arctic states (ibid., p.314-316). In short, the article argues that position towards China should not be as negative and security/military-focused as it is but should be used with caution and careful reflection so as to not incite perception of an illegitimate China threat in the Arctic region (ibid., p.316).

Four findings from the review of the existing literature on China's Arctic diplomacy and its governance are of central importance for the further study of the chosen topic. Firstly, the vast majority of the texts regarding China's Arctic diplomacy deal with bilateral diplomacy, i.e. diplomacy between China and the Arctic states on an individual basis. Secondly, a significant part of literary work focuses on China's scientific diplomacy in the Arctic. As mentioned before, such tendencies exist because, until recently, China's Arctic interests were limited to scientific research (which is no longer the case) and bilateral diplomacy is used for strategic purposes. As a consequence, there is a gap in the literature as literary work that deals with China's multilateral diplomacy in the Arctic and transcends merely scientific interests is lacking. This project focuses on China's diplomacy in relation to the Arctic Council and Arctic Circle, where all countries within this polar region are represented, and places emphasis on how diplomatic communication reflects shared values, norms and rules, rather than only scientific interests with the Arctic. Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap and contribute to a scarcely studied topic. Thirdly, of an increasing interest for the English School



is the role that emerging new powers such as China, India and Brazil play in an international society where monopoly of power no longer exclusively belongs to the West (Linklater in Burchill et al., 2013, p.107). With the focus on China's relations with the Arctic, this paper also aims to play a part in the study of this matter. Finally, the findings of the literature review suggest, that in more recent years China has by many scholars been seen as a state that respects international law in its relations with the Arctic, supports the same reforms as the Arctic states and is sometimes overly criticized by the media. The latter finding serves as a support for the selection of theoretical framework of this paper as it preliminary indicates that China, in its recent dealings with the Arctic region, represents the characteristics of an international society.

## Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we will present our choice of theory. Firstly, we will expound on the English School's core assumptions presented by Hedley Bull before funnelling down our scope to one of its five institutions, namely diplomacy. We will be employing Adam Watson's work *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States* as the underlying basis for the study of Chinese diplomacy in the Arctic. In order to supplement the book by Watson, we will be using a chapter *Diplomacy Today* written by Michael Palliser in Bull and Watson's work *The Expansion of International Society*.

The English School has as its main focus what scholars have termed an international society (Burchill et al., 2013, p.88). The English School theory argues that states exist in a society where there is no central authority that governs and enforces a common set of laws, i.e. an anarchical society. Absence of a central authority is what incentivizes states to form this international society where they can cooperate and limit existential threats (ibid., p.95).

International society is formed when multiple states that are connected by shared interests and a common set of values conceive themselves to be connected by a common set of rules and create a society that consists of like-minded states. In this international society every state is expected to respect each other's sovereignty, honour agreements, cooperate and comply with the rules of the society (Bull, 2012, p.10-13; Burchill et al., 2013, p.93-95). International system that does not constitute international society can exist, however vice versa is not possible as two or more states have to have a certain degree of interaction before they form common values and interests. Therefore, international society requires international system as its precondition (Bull, 2012, p.13).

Scholars of the English School believe that eventual progression from international system to international society typically occurs wherever independent political communities coexist. They argue that rules and institutions which regulate interaction between the states in the

international system normally develop to the point where those states become aware of common values and therefore the system evolves into the society (Watson, 1987, p.151).

According to the English School, international societies have made arrangements that ensure the protection of what is termed the 'three primary goals'. Firstly, societies pursue minimization of violence. Secondly, all societies have as an objective keeping the promises and carrying out the agreements. Finally, societies seek to uphold property rights, meaning that possession of things remains stable (Bull, 2012, p.4). Human activities that support the primary goals of social life among the humankind as a whole constitute the world order (ibid., p.19). In order to ensure that these primary goals are kept, the role of great powers is emphasised as they are also 'great responsables' and a set of institutions is presented by the English School, some of which are great powers, war, balance of power, international law and diplomacy. Institutions should not be thought of in the traditional sense as organizations or supranational institutions like the UN or EU, but as habits and practices that are shaped towards achieving common goals (Bull, 2012, p.70-72; Linklater in Burchill et al., 2013, p.92). Therefore, institutions do not have the capacity to serve an authoritative role in regards to political functions or act as an intergovernmental institution. Consequently, institutions are a means for states to work together and to ensure that states can coexist in the international system (Buzan, 2004, p.169).

### **Diplomacy in English School theory**

As mentioned, diplomacy constitutes one of the institutions in the English School theory. According to the theory, each state in international society is obliged to take control of its own destiny and manage its interaction with other independent states. In order to peacefully coexist in an international society, diplomacy is necessary as it allows states to continuously be aware of each other's wishes and assists in the negotiation of agreements. It is this interaction with one another, the mechanisms that governments use as well as networks, promises, contracts and institutions that constitute the substance of diplomacy. At its core,

diplomacy is an organized pattern of communication and negotiation that enables states to acquire knowledge about other states' objectives. Consequently, plurality is a key dimension of diplomacy which arises when multiple states coexist and engage in international relations (Watson, 2005, p.1,7; Palliser in Bull & Watson, 1984, p.379).

Today diplomacy is mainly conducted by government representatives, and, when negotiations are finalizing, heads of states engage. Heads of the states delegate the task of representing the states, typically to the minister of foreign affairs. Skills and experience of the diplomat are vital as diplomacy will never be more constructive, innovative or capable of rising to great challenges than the diplomat himself/herself. A tendency in contemporary diplomatic relations is the diminishing role of foreign ministers, as heads of the states tend to meet face-to-face more often than in the past in bilateral meetings or multilateral summits. Moreover, new technology has improved the security and speed that communication now travels with (Watson, 2005, p.111-112, 208; Palliser in Bull & Watson, 1984, p.371-372).

The English School holds that diplomacy in its essence is multilateral, which influences how states shape their policies towards other members of the international society and this multilateralism is only further developed as more states enter the society. This is evident in international institutions such as the UN, or in smaller intergovernmental forums such as the Arctic Council (Watson, 2005, p.7).

States that are part of an international society should be aware of both the intentions and capabilities of other states to potentially cause harm. Moreover, it is also important for the states to know what is possible and what is probable and to incentivize other political actors to make choices that are favourable to their policies. All this can be shaped by good diplomatic relations (ibid., p.114). In an international society conflict of interest is expected to arise from time to time and in such occurrence diplomatic relations between states are of utmost importance in limiting the consequences of disagreements. Diplomatic dialogue serves as a tool that enables states to mediate conflict through a civilized process of awareness, respect for each other's points of view and an exchange of ideas that ideally lead

to a mutually acceptable solution for the parties involved (*ibid.*, p.7-8; Palliser in Bull & Watson 1984 p.373). English School theory stresses that if more than one great power exists in the international society, they must be able to have a constructive dialogue and this is possible even if their interests do not align, as long as their main objective is to make the system work (Watson, 2005, p.211).

English School scholars argue that the expansion of international society will increase the range of domains that diplomats work in, e.g. struggle for raw materials, energy, security etc. (Palliser in Bull & Watson, 1984, p.384-385). Arguably, the expansion of the international society is evident in organisations such as the UN or regional institutions like the EU, ASEAN or the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). All these institutions have experienced a growth in their functionality as more states with different objectives have gained membership. Consequently, states have had to adapt to the plurality in the society, an aspect that diplomats increasingly will have to take into account when conducting relations with other states (*ibid.*, p.375). It is believed that states within the international society will group together based on geographical proximity, shared values or common interests (*ibid.*, p.375-376). An example of this is the Arctic Council which originally consisted of 8 states that are bound together by geographical proximity to the Arctic but, in more recent years, accepted the participation of geographically distant states such as China, on the basis of seemingly collective interests and common values.

## **Methodology**

In the following section we will elucidate our methodological considerations, starting with why we have chosen to employ a case study as our research design. Thereafter, our method of choice will be presented before outlining the main categories of analysis. This will be followed by examination of the concepts we have chosen to employ throughout the project. Lastly, we will expound on our data selection and delimitations of this project.

## **Research design**

Firstly, research design should be thought of as a reference to the type of research one chooses to conduct (Byrne, 2017), and in this project it is a case study. We have chosen to conduct a case study as it is favorable when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are included in the research question, due to the explanatory dimension that these questions present. Moreover, this strategy allows the researchers to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Yin, 2002, p.1,6; Levy, 2008, p.2). Yin points to the fact that case studies are advantageous when the study is about a contemporary phenomenon over which the researchers have little or no control (Yin, 2002, p.9). In this case, the latter argument is particularly relevant as the researchers of this project have no control over China’s actions in either the Arctic Circle, the Arctic Council or the Arctic region more generally, and aim to study a recent phenomenon that is still ongoing.

Generally, case studies can be about either a population or a phenomenon. The former deals with a set of units which delimits population (normally people, objects or events) that a researcher wants to study, whereas the latter refers to an observable event, which the researchers seek to analyze and characterize (McClave et al., 2014, p.5). This project is a case study of a phenomenon. The type of case study that we have chosen to conduct is a theory-guided idiographic case study which aims to examine a single case in its historical context. The key characteristic is that this type of case study is explicitly guided by a well-developed conceptual framework that focuses on theoretical aspects of real-life events

(ibid., p. 4). The spatial dimension of this project is within units, i.e. we are studying China's involvement in the Arctic region (case) within the broader population which is all non-Arctic states that are involved in international relations with the Arctic region. The temporal variation is diachronic, meaning that this project examines variation within a single case over time, in this case from 2014 to 2018.

However, there are numerous misunderstandings of case study as a research design. According to the conventional view of the critics, a case study in itself cannot add any value as it needs to be linked to a hypothesis (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.220). In his text, Flyvbjerg points to five conventional misunderstandings of case studies, namely that general, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical knowledge; one cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case, rendering it unable to add to scientific development; the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, i.e. it is most useful in the initial phases of the research process; and case studies contain bias toward verification and it is difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on individual case studies (ibid., p.221). Flyvbjerg goes on to debunk all these misunderstandings and argues that case studies are capable of producing context-dependent knowledge that can be used to gain a higher level of understanding of a phenomenon (ibid., p.222-224). In addition to that, Flyvbjerg argues that "a discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and that a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one" (ibid., p.242). He goes on to say that an increase in the number of case study could help improve this situation. Finally, he even points to the scholars that originally were sceptical towards case studies, but in time have shifted their opinion, an example is Campbell, who first argued that case studies did not add any scientific knowledge, but has later on become a strong advocate for case studies (ibid., p.220-221).

The reason we have chosen China-Arctic relations as our case is due to the fact that the former has in recent years become much more involved in the affairs of the latter. Prior to gaining observer status at the Arctic Council in 2013 and publishing its Arctic policy in 2018, China's activities in the Arctic had primarily been scientific. However, in recent years China has firmly established its presence in the region and has been vocal with its expectation for

more inclusion in the future, moving from passive diplomatic relations with the Arctic states to a more proactive approach. Intensified relations between China and the Arctic challenged the idea that the governance of this polar region exclusively belongs to the Arctic states and significantly disturbed the power balances that had existed there for years. Additionally, climate change has opened up hitherto unseen economic opportunities in the region, a development that is likely to further increase China's Arctic interests in the future.

### **Method: Thematic qualitative text analysis**

In this project, we have chosen to employ a thematic qualitative text analysis as described by Udo Kuckartz in his work *Qualitative text analysis: A guide to methods, practice and using software*. The main feature of this method is that it seeks to uncover themes within a set of data and it is interested in the text in its entirety, i.e. the wording of statements and setting are both relevant and should be taken into consideration after the themes have been uncovered (Kuckartz, 2014, p.65-66).

The method is a multistep process in which the researcher's points of departure is the initial work with the data. The first step includes reading through the data that has been gathered or generated and selecting the important sections of the text for further analysis. In the second step of the analysis, broader main categories are created either deductively (*More Inclusive International Society*), i.e. deriving from the theory or the research question or inductively, based on emerging themes within the data (*China's Interests in the Arctic*) (ibid., p.71). It is important to note that the construction of the main categories most often consists of a combination of an inductive and deductive approach - this process is multi-staged where the main categories are usually initially created deductively and then further developed inductively (ibid.). The third step is where the data is coded using the main categories that are connected to the research question and appear regularly throughout the data. This is done by a systematic review of the data section-by-section and allocation of relevant parts to the main categories (ibid., p.72). In this project, the coding was carried out by using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software. In the fourth step, sub-categories are created to



compliment relatively broad main categories and the data is coded once again ('China's scientific interests', 'multilateral cooperation' etc.). In the second coding the researcher goes through the data again and assigns text passages that are relevant to the newly created sub-categories (ibid., p.75). In the last step, the measurements are presented.

In order to strengthen the quality of the coding, it is important to address the intercoder agreement, intercoder reliability and the problem of unitization. This is done by avoiding that one researcher is responsible for coding of the data and that two or more researchers are participating in the coding (ibid., p.75). Before initiating the coding process, the unitization problem, i.e. identification of satisfactory sections of text for codes, is to be agreed upon (Campbell et al., 2013, p.302). These units can vary from a sentence, a paragraph to an entire page or subjectively defined units of analysis also known as 'units of meaning'. In this project two researchers have taken part in the coding and sentences have been chosen as units of analysis.

In the following step, after the units have been decided upon, the researchers carried out coding independently before comparing their measurements with one another. The extent to which the coding is identical indicates the intercoder reliability which was assessed on a sample of the data (16%) (ibid., p.295). Should this sample not be adequate, the codes are to be adjusted, clarified, merged or reduced, and another test of intercoder reliability should be conducted until a satisfying level is reached (ibid., p.300). In the case of disagreements during the coding process, they should be discussed by coders whose job it is to sort out any inconsistencies of the measurements and agree upon a final version of the main and sub-categories coded. This process is also known as intercoder agreement (ibid., p.297,305). In this project, principal disagreements did not arise and the researchers were able to agree on a final version of the main and sub-categories. The two researchers reached an intercoder reliability of 83% and intercoder agreement of 96% was reached on a sample of 16% of the data.

## **Main categories for the analysis**

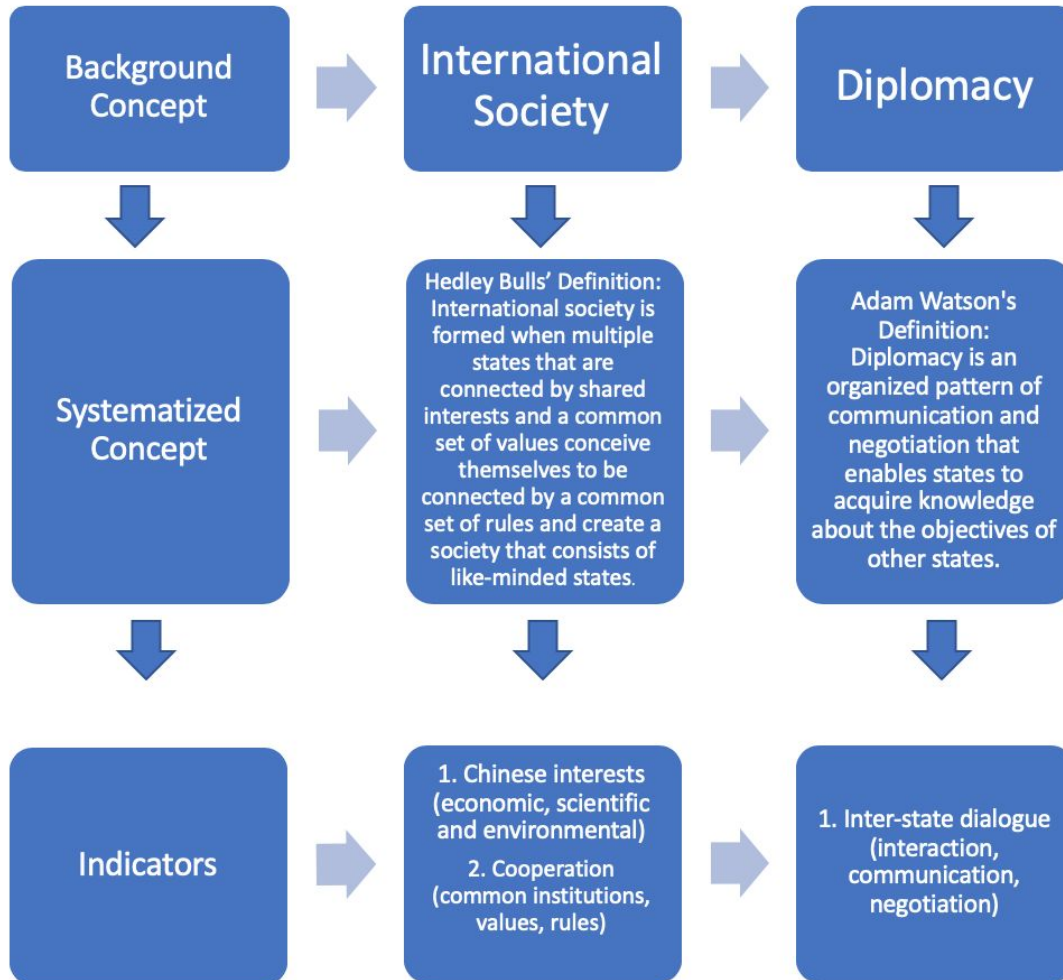
Analysis of the data includes two main categories - *China's interests in the Arctic* and *More Inclusive International Society*. The former main category was created inductively - it derived from the selected data through the coding process and the latter main category is predominantly deductive - based on the English School definition of international society but also supplemented with the sub-categories obtained from the data. Both of the categories have 5 and 8 sub-categories respectively that add more detail to the main categories and include a sub-category 'other' which ensures that the main categories contain all suitable parts of data.

The first main category, *China's Interests in the Arctic*, is made up of four sub-categories and focuses on the statements made by the Chinese representatives and their argumentation regarding the reasons for China's involvement in the Arctic. Consequently, the sub-categories are concerned with China's scientific, economic and environment-related interests in the Arctic. The sub-category 'other' has been coded when statements reflect interests more generally and do not specify any of the aforementioned interests of China. This is exemplified in 2016 in Gao Feng's statement when he said that one of the six Chinese Arctic policy guidelines is to "protect and rationally use the Arctic" (Feng, 2016).

As mentioned previously, the second main category, *More Inclusive International Society*, is founded on the English School definition of international society. Therefore, category deals with the main aspects of the concept of the international society that are present in the data selected. For this reason the sub-categories cover the elements of 'China's Arctic identity', 'multilateral cooperation in the Arctic region', 'commitment to international law', 'China's respect for the Arctic culture', 'common interests of the international community', 'development of the international community', 'China's Arctic history' and 'respect for sovereignty'. An example of the sub-category 'other' is when Chinese statements concern bilateral dialogue etc.

## Concepts

**Figure 3 Operationalization of concepts**



In this project, we have chosen to focus on two concepts that derive from the English School theory, namely international society and diplomacy. In order to ensure the measurement validity of these concepts, we have utilized the four levels of conceptualization that Adcock and Collier (2001) outlines. The authors argue, that the researcher has several tasks in order to get from the broad concept to a concept that can be operationalized (Adcock & Collier, 2001, p.530). The first level is the background concept which refers to the broad understandings associated with the concept, and in this project the backgrounds concepts are

international society and diplomacy. The next level is the systematized concept which entails a specific definition or formulation of a concept used by a given scholar (ibid., p.532-533). We have used the definition of international society presented by Hedley Bull which is outlined in Figure 3. For the concept of diplomacy, we have employed the definition outlined by Adam Watson, also presented above. The third level concerns the indicators which are the measures that were classified in the coding process. As can be seen in Figure 3, we have two indicators relating to the concept of international society which are ‘Chinese interests (economic, scientific and environmental)’ and ‘Cooperation (common institutions, values and rules)’ and for the concept of diplomacy we have a single indicator ‘inter-state dialogue’ (interaction, communication and negotiation). It is important to note that a specific main category relating to diplomacy was not created, instead everytime the indicator appeared in the data it was coded under individual sub-categories within the main category *More Inclusive International Society*. These indicators have been used so as to every time statements relating to either indicator have occurred they have been systematically coded. There is also a fourth level which relates to the scores for cases, i.e. scores that are generated by a particular indicator both numerical and qualitative classification (ibid., p.530-531). In this project, only the first three levels are illustrated in Figure 3 while the fourth level is presented in the analysis of main categories - *China’s Interests in the Arctic* and *More Inclusive International Society*. The coding frame illustrates the scores for each indicator and this will be further expounded below in the section presenting the categories of the analysis. After the researcher has gone through the four steps, he or she will move upwards taking the steps 4-3-2-1 going through and readjusting the indicators, fine-tuning the systematized concept and revisiting the background concept (ibid., p.530).

Further, valuation of the operationalization of the concepts includes examination of several parameters of the concepts, namely resonance, coherence and field utility. The resonance refers to the degree to which the concept is intuitively clear. In terms of both international society and diplomacy the resonance is very clear - there is a common understanding of the concepts and their use within English School scholarship (Gerring, 2012, p.52-53). Following is the point of coherence which checks how clearly defined the concept is both internally, that

is to say within the project, and externally, i.e. in relation to other concepts. In this project, the researchers have ensured the external coherence by making sure to utilize explicit definitions of the concepts which in turn has made it possible to distinguish both concepts from neighboring ones. The internal validity is likewise ensured by elucidating the concepts, which allows for the project to stand as an independent piece of work (ibid., p.41-43). The last point is the field utility which concerns how useful the term is to describing a real-life phenomenon and how well a concept respects the coherence and resonance of neighboring concepts, i.e. how clearly does the concept encapsulate phenomena that can be observed in real life (ibid., p.51).

## **Data selection**

In this project we have chosen to employ the data from the Arctic Circle which is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization where states can express their opinion, concerns and develop ties for cooperation in the future of the Arctic. The organization brands itself as a democratic platform with participation of governments and many civil society organizations that are concerned with the future of the globe (Arctic Circle, n.d.a). The Arctic Circle holds forums in which participants can discuss a specific topic, and in the past there have been forums with a focus on economic development of the region, Asian involvement in the Arctic and ways of constructing sustainable communities in the North (ibid.). We searched for the speeches given by Chinese officials in the time period 2014-2018. In 2014, Jia Guide, the deputy director general of the Department of Treaty and Law, a division within the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave a speech at the forum held in Reykjavik, Iceland (Guide, 2014). The following year, two Chinese officials gave speeches at the Arctic Circle forum held in Alaska and Singapore. The Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi opened the forum with a speech and the vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming gave a keynote speech concerning China's Arctic-related practices and policies (Yi, 2015; Ming, 2015). In 2016, Gao Feng, the Special Representative for climate change negotiations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, spoke about the environmental challenges of the Arctic region and China's role in the global climate system (Feng, 2016). In the subsequent year, no Chinese officials gave any speeches at the Arctic Circle forum. In 2018, Gao Feng, the Special Representative for Arctic

affairs from China, gave two speeches concerning China's increased role in the Arctic region (Feng, 2018a; Feng, 2018b).

We have also used data from the Arctic Council which is a leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states and Arctic indigenous communities on common Arctic issues (Arctic Council, n.d.c). The forum is particularly concerned with promoting sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic region. The Arctic Council consists of eight members that have geographical proximity to the Arctic region, namely Denmark, Canada, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain or access data from the years 2014-2016, therefore we employed the data from 2017 and 2018 from the Arctic Council. In the year 2017, during the Oulu Observer Special Session, Chinese officials gave a speech relating to environmental challenges in the Arctic region (Arctic Council, 2017). In the following year, Gao Feng from the Chinese government gave a speech at the Arctic Council concerning China's intentions to preserve the biodiversity in the Arctic (Feng, 2018c).

The process of selecting relevant data was carried out by going through all speeches published by the Arctic Circle and Arctic Council within the time period 2014-2018 and speeches given by Chinese officials were gathered for further analysis. As a result, in total six speeches were gathered from the Arctic Circle and two speeches from the Arctic Council. In order to supplement the selected speeches, we used China's Arctic policy of 2018, which is a white paper published by the Chinese government on its official Arctic policy (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018).

In order to triangulate the above mentioned data sources, we have chosen six texts written by experts within the field. The criteria we have set up for the scholars are that they have published several peer-reviewed articles within the last 12 years on China-Arctic affairs - this particular period was selected because 2007 marked the beginning of China's participation in the Arctic Council as an ad hoc observer. All chosen experts also have professional

experience working at universities and think tanks on the China-Arctic affairs and/or commenting on this subject matter in relevant scientific journals. The scholars we have selected include Sun Yun, co-director of the East Asian program and director of the China program at the Stimson Center, which is a non-partisan policy research center based in Washington D.C (Sun, 2018 p.15); Njord Wegge who is a senior research fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and his areas of expertise include the Arctic and IR (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, n.d.). We have also selected Nengye Liu as he is an expert on Polar and Chinese law and works for the University of Adelaide (University of Adelaide, n.d.). Furthermore, we have employed the scholarly work by Nong Hong who is employed at the Institute for China-America studies, has published several articles on Arctic affairs and holds a PhD in interdisciplinary study of IR and international law (ICAS, n.d.). Additionally, we have used the work of David Curtis Wright who is working at the University of Calgary and holds a PhD in East Asia Studies. Wright has published several articles on China, including China-Arctic relations (University of Calgary, n.d.). Lastly, we have used a text by Linda Jakobson who is an expert in Chinese politics and Chinese foreign affairs. She works as an independent researcher at the University of Sydney, at the United States Studies Centre (Jakobson, n.d.). We are aware that multiple scholars could have been chosen, however, we have chosen scholars who have explicitly written on China's role in Arctic affairs in recent years. Due to time constraints we have not been able to read articles from all scholars who fit this criteria.

The original aim of this project was to conduct the analysis by using primary documents from Chinese officials in both an international and domestic settings. However, it has not been possible to gather any speeches or statements from Chinese officials given in a domestic setting. Therefore, the data consists of speeches given at the Arctic Circle and the Arctic Council. Moreover, we sought to conduct interviews with experts within the field but unfortunately these efforts were fruitless. The scholars contacted were from University of Copenhagen, the Royal Danish Defense College and the Danish Institute for International Studies. We have also applied for the funding to go to the Arctic Circle Forum held in Shanghai in May 2019, however we have not been able to secure funding for the field trip.

This opportunity would have allowed us to gather the most contemporary data and added significant value to the project.

## **Delimitations**

Throughout the process of writing this project, several decisions have been made that have limited the scope of the research. The first one being the selection of data that has been limited to the time period 2014-2018. Evidently, China's engagement in the Arctic dates back prior to this date and, had we chosen to examine a wider timespan, the results of the analysis would arguably have allowed us to widen our knowledge about China-Arctic relations. However, since China gained observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013 and published its Arctic policy in 2018, the period selected is arguably the most relevant in order to investigate China's increased involvement in the Arctic affairs.

Another delimitation is the language barrier, since neither researcher is capable of writing or speaking Chinese, this has limited our search for data. Had we been able to, we could have employed Chinese statements given in a domestic setting in order to juxtapose them with the statements from the international setting, arguably this would have added another level to the analysis.

Lastly, the scope of our theoretical framework has imposed delimitations to the project. As mentioned, we have chosen to employ English School theory, however, we are aware that several other theories of international relations, e.g. (neo-)realism or (neo-)liberalism would have yielded different results and allowed us to investigate this case from a different perspective. Nevertheless, since the aim of this project is to illuminate how and why China argues for a more inclusive international society in the Arctic region, and how it employs diplomatic measures in doing so, English School theory appears to be the most pertinent to utilize.



## **China's Arctic history and change in foreign policy**

As noted above, research design of this project, namely a case study is concerned with describing, understanding or explaining a contemporary phenomena in its real-life context. In addition to that, writers of the English School theory of IR generally agree that knowledge of the historical context of the international relations case studied is of great relevance (Linklater in Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p.6). As a consequence, the following pages briefly present China's Arctic history and changes that China's foreign policy experienced in the post-1989 period.

In 1925, China acceded to 1920 Svalbard or Spitzbergen Treaty, acknowledging the sovereign rights of Norway over the Svalbard (at that time Spitzbergen) archipelago (European Parliament, 2018, p.2) and marking the beginning of China-Arctic relations. For the next 55 years China's involvement in the Arctic activities was virtually non-existent until the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration (CAA) was founded in 1981 (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2012, p.82). The first Chinese research program began 8 years later, in 1989, and since then the amount of scholarly output has been growing exponentially. It is important to note, however, that mass media tends to picture China's involvement in the Arctic as a relatively recent phenomenon, even though China began its research in the Arctic more than 30 years ago. This tendency is a reflection of lack of noticeability of China's activities and interests in the Arctic as they were not regarded as 'strategic' until 2010 (ibid.).

From 1980s up until mid-2000s, China's involvement in the Arctic had primarily revolved around scientific research. In this period China, a country that previously had no Arctic research at all, turned into a country that set up its own research station, *Beiji Huanghe Zhan* (*Yellow River*), on the island of Spitsbergen in Norway, successfully carried out four independent Arctic missions, and was using its own icebreaker, the *Quelong* (*Snow Dragon*), bought from Ukraine. *Quelong*, is the largest and one of the most advanced non-nuclear icebreakers in the world (Jakobson, 2010, p. 3; Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2012, p. 82). In terms

of polar scientific research, China's current capacity and potential is in effect unmatched by any other country in the world (Jakobson, 2010, p. 3).

The Chinese focus on scientific research is also reflected in the typology of the scientific articles written in that period. Alexeeva and Lasserre examined a total of 680 articles that were published between 1988 and 2008 on the largest database in China, Wanfang Data, and contained the word 'Arctic' in their titles. They found that nearly a half of them (49%) dealt with climatologic issues, almost one fourth of the articles were concerned with biodiversity (23%) while environment (10%) and technology (10%) were also among the themes of the greatest interest for the Chinese scholars. It is important to note, however, that not a single scientific article looked at issues of politics in the Arctic until 2007 (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2012, p.81,82). Importance of scientific research is unlikely to lose its influence in China-Arctic relations in the future as, for example, in 2011 the Chinese government invested \$300 million in the construction of a new research icebreaker to increase the quality of future projects in the polar region (ibid.).

However, in more recent years, together with the growth of wide-reaching research programs in the Arctic, China has also expanded its range of activities in this polar region that now include commerce, economic activities and internationalization of the Arctic governance system (European Parliament, 2018, p.1; Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2012, p.84-85; Wegge & Peng, 2015, p.234). In the words of Brady (2010, p.777), China's activities in the Arctic are "on the rise". This rise is associated with a broader change of China's foreign policy, namely China's transformation from being a passive international actor in the post-1989 period to an active one in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This shift means that China is now proactive in both politics and economy-related issues, and is ready to confront the West within the two spheres. The main reasons for this change in China's foreign policy are its arguably unparalleled economic growth that has been going for decades; emerging Chinese middle class that changed the self-image of Chinese nationals and contributed to their increasing sense of pride; insecurity of political leaders regarding the future of the regime in the country; and a shift of political rhetoric on the conduct of foreign policy from Deng Xiaoping's 1989

statement that China "should hide its strengths" to a more proactive motto of 2008 "do what we can" (Wegge & Peng, 2015, p.236; Brady, 2010, p.777). China's rise, its emergence as a major global power and changes in the Chinese foreign policy are expected to translate into its increased leadership in the Arctic (ibid., p.777,785).

In the context of China-Arctic relations, a more proactive foreign policy employed by the Chinese officials is evident when recent developments in the dealings between the two are considered. In 2007, China took part in the Arctic Council meetings as an ad hoc observer and a year later expressed its intention to become an official observer state in this intergovernmental forum. By successfully conducting bilateral relations with the Arctic countries, China gradually obtained their approval and votes in favor for its membership in the Arctic Council. Particularly illustrative in this context were the trips of China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in 2012 to Sweden, Iceland and Denmark to secure their support for China's application for the Arctic Council. Eventually, in May 2013 China, along with South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Italy became permanent observers of the Arctic Council (Leng, 2018, p.147). Asian states consider accession to the Arctic Council as an important step towards acquisition of a guaranteed role in determining the future of the Arctic (Hong, 2018, p. 3).

However, China's increased involvement in the Arctic has caused suspicion from the international community and particularly, the Arctic states. Indeed, China's application for a permanent observer status was rejected three times before eventual approval. In addition to that, in 2013, the same year that China was granted observer status in the Arctic Council, Russia decided to open its military base in the Arctic region again and put in place permanent military in New Siberian Islands. In a similar manner, Canada expressed its concerns about China's unwillingness to accept Canada's sovereign rights over northwestern sea lanes, while Iceland turned down offers made by the Chinese businessmen to buy its land, worrying that they would build a harbor there, despite the agreement that the land would be used for a construction of a golf course (ibid., p. 17, 18).

China addressed the problem of vigilance among the Arctic states through diplomatic measures and most importantly through the publication of its Arctic Policy white paper in 2018. It is argued that international community appreciates the transparency that the white paper brought about and strategic guidelines of China's involvement in the Arctic that it provides. The white paper reduced the uneasiness from the Arctic states and marks a pivotal point in China-Arctic relations emphasizing the key theme of it - cooperation (ibid., 18, 1).

## **Analysis**

### **Category 1: China's Interests in the Arctic**

The first main category is called *China's Interests in the Arctic* and it consists of four sub-categories, namely 'China's scientific interests', 'China's economic interests', 'China's environmental interests' and 'other'. The four sub-categories all have a relatively great variation over time. Table 1 illustrates that this main category was most frequently referred to in 2014, when all sub-categories were mentioned to a relatively high extent. In both 2015 and 2018 all sub-categories are mentioned, although to a lesser extent than in 2014. Moreover, it becomes evident that overall China mentioned the sub-categories the least in 2016, where the sub-categories – 'China's economic interest' was not referred to at all.

The year 2017 was a year with a rather large spread, as the sub-category 'China's environmental interests' was mentioned in 42,86% of the data, the highest of any sub-category in any year of analysis. On the other side, the sub-category 'China's economic interests' was not referred to once in that year. Arguably, this is due to the data, which in 2017 consists of a speech "China's Recent Practice on Preventing Marine Pollution in the Arctic" and, as the title of it suggests, the content is specifically about environmental interests. Moreover, it becomes evident that a sub-category 'China's scientific interests' has experienced a decline between the years of 2014-2016 when mentions of it decreased from 20,63% to 4,88%. In 2017 the percentage of mentions spiked to 14,29% but declined to 1,19% in 2018.

The next sub-category ‘China’s economic interests’ is mentioned relatively often in the years 2014-2015 with 14,29% and 8,75% respectively, however, it is not mentioned at all in the years 2016-2017. In 2018 it peaks at 16,67%, and this trend is possibly also due to the data available. In both 2016 and 2017, the focus from China in its statements has been placed on environmental interests and not the economic ones, which are illustrated in the Table 1.

The following sub-category ‘China’s environmental interests’ is the most referred to sub-category. There is an upwards trend in mentions from year 2014 to 2017 where it peaks at 42,86%, the highest in the entire data set. Thereafter, it declines dramatically to 3,57% in 2018. Further examination and exemplifications will be presented in the following pages.

**Table 1: China’s Interests in the Arctic**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	%	%	%	%	%
Total					
China's scientific interests	20,63	12,5	4,88	14,29	1,19
China's economic interests	14,29	8,75	0,00	0,00	16,67
China's environmental interests	11,11	15	19,51	42,86	3,57
Other	4,76	1,25	2,44	0,00	1,19

The numbers do not tally due to overlapping coding of the sub-categories.

As mentioned, the most referred to sub-category of 2014 is ‘China’s scientific interests’ which constitutes 20,63%. An example of this is the speech given by Jia Guide, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, at the Arctic Circle, in which he stresses China’s close scientific relationship with the Arctic countries: “In terms of scientific cooperation, China has close communication and coordination with all Nordic countries in the Arctic Council”. Guide continues his speech with a concrete example of

Chinese-Icelandic scientific cooperation by saying that: “In 2012, China and Iceland reached the Free Work Agreement between the two governments, Arctic cooperation and memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the fields of marine and polar science technology” (Guide, 2014). Arguably, these two quotes illustrate how China is working towards establishing its presence as a state that is heavily invested in scientific research in the Arctic area and is already in close cooperation with the Arctic states. From English School’s perspective, the first quote indicates China’s efforts to establish an international society in the Arctic which is build on states that share common interests (e.g. scientific). However, placed in the historical context of China’s involvement in the Arctic affairs, the second quote also reflects bilateral nature of China-Arctic relations as, even though the speech given by Jia Guide was on China-Nordic Arctic cooperation in general, importance was also attached to China’s dealings with Iceland in particular. Such careful appeal to the cooperation that would encompass all Arctic states and remaining emphasis that is put on bilateral relations and primarily scientific interests in the speech by a Chinese representative could also be seen as a response to the suspicion by the Arctic States towards China in the early stages of its Arctic Council membership and prior to the publication of China’s Arctic policy. The latter point is also evident in the scholarly work on China-Arctic relations. For instance, Yun Sun argues that China is using scientific diplomacy in order to legitimize its Arctic presence and to build stronger cooperation with individual Arctic states (Sun, 2018, p.1,3). Wegge further argues that China is using softer means such as science to improve its image in the face of some of the Arctic states that have been skeptical towards China’s increasing presence in the region, as China, in their view, has several issues relating to the shared liberal values of the Arctic region (Wegge, 2014, p.92). This point is also stressed by Liu who argues that China is facing questions from Arctic coastal states as to what their aspirations in the region are. Therefore, it is important for China to formally stress that they are there to cooperate and should not be seen as a threat (Liu, 2017, p.58).

In terms of the sub-category ‘China’s economic interests’, it is evident that it also constituted a relatively large proportion of the Chinese discourse in 2014. Data from 2014 reflects a close connection between the scientific and economic interests, where the success in China’s

scientific research opened opportunities for economic cooperation with the Arctic states. Guide argues in his speech that close scientific cooperation has expanded into economic cooperation, as he states: “Recently, China-Nordic Arctic cooperation is increasingly expanding from research area to economic area, like ship building, shipping and resource development” (ibid.). This quote is followed by two specific examples. Firstly, in 2012, a Finnish based company won the bid for the design of a new Chinese icebreaker and in 2014, a Chinese company (COSCO) signed a cooperation agreement with an Icelandic container company. It becomes clear that Guide is interested in depicting China’s scientific and economic interests as merged with each other and with the Arctic community. Economic interest is also paid much attention in the scholarly work on China-Arctic affairs. Sun, argues that the increased presence of Chinese companies in the Arctic will allow China’s expanding economic presence to translate into indirect and soft influence on local affairs. This will lead to China’s acquisition of more influence at the national level which will be strengthening China’s political legitimacy in the region (Sun, 2018, p.4). Wegge adds that China’s economic interests are closely linked together with the fact that in the future China is likely to become the greatest consumer or exporter of goods shipped through the Arctic sea routes (Wegge, 2014, p.86).

In 2015, the Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi, in his opening speech at the Arctic Circle, encompassed close to all of China’s interests in the Arctic and presented how they are prepared to work together with the Arctic community to ensure closer cooperation in the future: “China is ready to step up exchanges and cooperation with Arctic countries, non-Arctic countries and other stakeholders and, work for concrete outcomes in a wide range of areas including climate change, scientific research, environmental protection, shipping, sustainable development and people-to-people exchanges” (Yi, 2015). In this quote, the Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi, stresses that China’s intentions in the Arctic are far from unidimensional and that they are ready to engage in exchanges with Arctic states on a number of areas, which is a continuation of the discourse Guide had begun a year earlier. For the Chinese, this is a natural development, as the Vice Foreign Minister Ming argued in his speech at the Arctic Circle in 2015: “Since the 1990s, China's involvement in Arctic activities

has been expanding both in depth and breadth” (Ming, 2015). This argumentation also appears in the third section of the Chinese Arctic policy in which China expounds its policy goals on topics such as environmental protection and scientific research (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018). From the historical context, China’s period of scientific success that has begun in 1990s now serves as an argumentation for increased interconnectedness and therefore China sees its establishment as an integral part of the Arctic international society as a natural development. From a theoretical point of view, expansion of China’s involvement in the Arctic affairs in both depth and breadth, represents the argument of the English School that progression from international system to international society normally occurs wherever independent communities coexist and interact with one another. This expansion of international society, in turn, also affects the range of areas that diplomatic relations cover by expanding them, which, in the case of China and the Arctic, now encompass environment, science and economy-related fields.

In 2016, Chinese representatives did not focus on scientific and economic interests nearly as much as they did in the other years of analysis, however, emphasis was still placed on environmental interests. Geo Feng from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed in his 2016 remarks that climate change is a challenge that requires close cooperation and states with ties to the Arctic should be “shouldering their responsibilities” in order to maintain the ecological environment in the region (Feng, 2016). Arguably, China is calling for a deeper and broader cooperation with the Arctic states as they are facing a common threat - climate change which, Feng argues, is best dealt with by inter-state cooperation. Additionally, it illustrates how China argues that its interests in the Arctic are shared and its involvement should be based on combating a common threat together with the Arctic community.

The following year continued with an increased focus on the environmental interests with 42,86% references in the data set. As mentioned earlier, this is arguably due to the fact that the data from 2017 consists of a speech given at the Arctic Council Observer Special Session which was titled “China’s Recent Practice on Preventing Marine Pollution in the Arctic” (Arctic Council, 2017). In this speech, Chinese representatives argue that in recent years



China has been working to combat climate change and prevent pollution in contributing efforts to the Arctic (ibid.). Evidently, China is trying to show that its actions are in favor of the Arctic community and suggest that they are willing to work towards solutions for issues that are highly relevant for the Arctic region. This is also illustrated in the following quote: “China attaches great importance to climate change, and makes significant contributions to the multilateral process on climate change, advocating global green development, and safeguarding global ecological security”. The speech continues with Chinese representatives stressing their intentions for closer cooperation on environmental issues and committed to contribution to the work of the Arctic Council (ibid.). As Table 1 shows, environmental interests were of great concern for China in 2017 and the speech illustrates how China, first of all, makes it clear that it is already a part of the Arctic efforts to combat climate change and is working extensively for better environmental conditions in the region. From the theoretical perspective of the English School, China pushes for a more inclusive international society because it identifies a common threat that both China and the Arctic are facing. This illustrates the English School’s point that there is no central authority that governs international community and therefore, states are incentivized to cooperate on areas in which they share common interests or existential threats. This is also a point that is made clear in the Chinese Arctic policy section two which states that China, as a near-Arctic state, has a great interest in the natural conditions of the Arctic as changes therein would have an impact on Chinese climate system and ecological environment (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018).

For the year of 2018, it is evident that the focus was on China’s economic interests in the Arctic and this could be because in 2018 China published its official white paper on Arctic policy, which is to an extent centered around the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). The BRI is an attempt from China to make the world more interconnected by investing in global infrastructure projects and basically recreating the ancient Silk Roads (ibid., section 2). In the white paper, China is outlining a “Polar Silk Road” which is the Arctic extension of the BRI that is meant to facilitate a sustainable economic development in the Arctic (ibid.). This is a clear indicator that one of China’s motives for calling for a more inclusive international

society in the Arctic region is economic. Moreover, it is a way for China to argue that its main interests are shared and not only meant to benefit China. This is also evident in the speech given by Special Representative for Arctic affairs Gao Feng at the 2018 Arctic Circle forum, in which he states that: “In June last year, China released the document vision for maritime cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative which emphasizes that China will make an effort to promote a blue economy passage leading up to unify the Arctic ocean, participate in Arctic affairs, support efforts by countries bordering the Arctic, improving maritime transportation condition and encouraging China’s enterprises to take part in the commercial use of the Arctic route”. Feng argues that China in the future will work towards making the Arctic more economically interdependent by incorporating Arctic states as well as states that are bordering the Arctic in the maritime economy (Feng, 2018b). Feng continues by saying that China is: “<...>willing to strengthen cooperation with Arctic countries and to actively participate in events organized by the Arctic related international organization” (ibid.). The last quote again illustrates China’s desire to work closely together with the Arctic states, and they are doing so by offering an economic incentive for states that are willing to cooperate with China. Interpretively, this is a clear attempt from China to articulate its motives for involvement in the Arctic by convincing Arctic states that its interests are shared and that it is working towards unifying, rather than dividing the Arctic. From a historical context of the speech given, the quotes above illustrate the so-called ‘Rise of China’ where it takes up a role of a proactive leader in the Arctic region. China now argues that it will strive for unification of the Arctic ocean and strengthening of cooperation with Arctic countries.

The analysis of the first main category sheds a light on China’s interests in the Arctic. The main category illustrates how China is calling for a strengthened international society in which environmental, scientific and economic motives are central. It also becomes evident that one of the reasons that China calls for a more inclusive international society in the Arctic region is that both China and the Arctic states are facing the same threat - climate change, which, China stresses, should only be dealt with in a close cooperation. Moreover, China is making it clear that its Polar Silk Road initiative will benefit not only China but also the Arctic states ensuring their sustainable economic development, and therefore China’s

investment in the region is a collective interest of the two. China even stresses that is ready to engage in the work of Arctic-related international organizations which arguably shows China's willingness to engage in efforts that will strengthen the international society in the Arctic and indicates its increasing leadership in this polar region. It is also evident that China, in its diplomatic communication with the Arctic states, is pushing for a more extensive cooperation and has high hopes for the future cooperation.

As the main motives for China's involvement in the Arctic are identified in the first part of the analysis, we now proceed to the second main category, namely *More Inclusive International Society* in order to investigate whether China's interests in the Arctic and its push for more cooperation is based on its shared values, rules, norms and identities with the Arctic region.

## **Category 2: More Inclusive International Society**

The second main category, *More Inclusive International Society*, consists of nine sub-categories, namely 'development of the international community', 'China's Arctic identity', 'multilateral cooperation', 'respect for sovereignty', 'China's Arctic history', 'commitments to international law', 'respect for the Arctic culture', 'common interests' and 'other'. As Table 2 displays, it was the years of 2014-2015 in which Chinese officials referred most to the sub-categories. In 2016, most of the sub-categories were mentioned, however, there was one that China did not focus on, namely 'China's Arctic identity'. In the following year, only three sub-categories were mentioned, although they were referred to relatively frequently. In the final year of analysis, all but two sub-categories were mentioned and both 'development of the international community' and 'multilateral cooperation' were focus points of China in 2018. After examining Table 2 closer, it becomes evident that mentions of the sub-category 'development of the international community' are relatively stable, only ranging from a low 17,46% in 2014 to a high 20,24% in 2018. It appears that this sub-category is particularly important to China, as will be expounded below.

The sub-category 'China's Arctic history' is mentioned rather consistently in 2014-2015 and, as Table 2 illustrates, in the year 2016 it is not mentioned once, but peaks in 2017 with 14,29%, before it declines in 2018 to 3,57%.

The next sub-category 'China's Arctic identity' is overall the least referred to as it is only mentioned in 3,17% in 2014, 3,75% in 2015 and 2,38% in 2018 and not at all in 2016-2017. As mentioned earlier, the topic of the speeches selected has a great influence on this and should therefore be taken into consideration before any conclusions are made. Following is the sub-category 'multilateral cooperation' which is the most frequently mentioned sub-category with a peak in 2014 of 36,51% followed by a decrease to 23,75% in 2015 before it again rose to 29,27% in 2016. Thereafter, it experiences a drop to 16,67% in 2018, although the sub-category has been declining, it is still mentioned in a relatively large part of the data. The sub-category 'respect for sovereignty' is referred to relatively scarcely - it rose from 3,17% in 2014 to 5% in 2015 before it began decreasing to 1,19% in 2018 with no mentions in 2017.

The following sub-category 'commitments to international law' has varied over time relatively much as it rose from 7,94% in 2014 to 15% in 2015 before it dropped to 4,88% in 2016 and rose again to 18,18% in 2017, and finished with no mentions in 2018. 'Respect for Arctic culture' is mentioned in a small percentage of the data in 2014 (1,59%) but in 2015 it rose to 10% before it decreased again to 4,88% in 2016, the following two years there were no mentions of this sub-category. The last sub-category 'common interests' experienced an increase from 7,94% in 2014 to 17,07% in 2016, it did not receive any mentions in 2017 and 5,95% in 2018.

**Table 2: More Inclusive  
International Society**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	%	%	%	%	%
Total					
Development of the international community	17,46	20	19,51	18,18	20,24
China's Arctic identity	3,17	3,75	0,00	0,00	2,38
Multilateral cooperation	36,51	23,75	29,27	27,27	16,67
Respect for sovereignty	3,17	5	4,88	0,00	1,19
Commitments to international law	7,94	15	4,88	18,18	0,00
Respect for Arctic culture	1,59	10	4,88	0,00	0,00
China's Arctic history	9,52	8,75	0,00	14,29	3,57
Common interests	7,94	12,5	17,07	0,00	5,95
Other	6,35	7,5	4,88	9,09	4,76

The numbers do not tally due to overlapping coding of the sub-categories

Examining Table 2 it becomes clear that in 2014 China's focus was to a large extent placed on multilateral cooperation. This is evident when Jia Guide, the Chinese representative to the Arctic Circle, in his speech talked about how China and the Arctic states complement each other in terms of environmental research, in which both parties have great interests.

Moreover, Guide exemplifies the sub-categories of 'multilateral cooperation' and 'common interests' when saying: "The two sides also enjoy complementarity and mutual benefit in economic sectors as trade and shipping. Confidence and interaction are a driving force" (Guide, 2014). Evidently, Guide is showing Chinese-Arctic relations as having a shared objective and that they are working towards a common goal of increased prosperity. This is arguably an example of a key element of the English School theory which emphasises that an

international society is formed when states that share common interests and have trust in one another group together. In this case, China stresses that mutual beneficial relations based on confidence are already present and this is a motive not only for China but also for Arctic states to engage in further cooperation. Liu supports this idea by arguing that in the future China should be seen as a collaborative partner rather than a challenging one due to its efforts to keep open dialogues with the Arctic states and to collaborate on areas such as marine environmental protection and Arctic ocean fisheries (Liu, 2017, p.65-66).

Guide also touches on the sub-category 'commitments to international law', of which he states: "China respects the sovereignty, sovereign rights and the jurisdiction in the Arctic region of the Arctic states, of course including the Nordic countries, and the respect for the current legal framework and governance system in the Arctic" (ibid.). In this quote Guide explicitly states that China will oblige to the legal framework that is guiding Arctic affairs, this is arguably also a way of ensuring the Arctic states that China is not interested in violating any property rights in the region. It could also be seen as an attempt for China to make clear that its engagement in the Arctic region is build on the respect for existing values, norms and identities of the region. This is also illustrated in the scholarly work by Sun as she states that China's goal is to keep the region open rather than closed. This is done by pursuing bilateral cooperation with the Arctic states for practical purposes and making clear that China understands the rights and sovereignty of the Arctic states (Sun, 2014, p.3). Statements from 2014 clearly represent the ideas of the English School as they reflect the importance of three primary goals of social life. China focuses on respect for the agreements that it entered in the form of agreed legal framework and emphasises upholding of the property rights as well as commitment to the minimization of violence reflected in its respect for the sovereign rights of the Arctic states and their claims to the natural resources. Additionally, China, in its dealings with the Arctic region, represents one of the central features of the international society, namely compliance with the existing legal framework and norms in this polar region. However, appeals to the respect for international law in the context of the speech given could also be seen merely as a response to the vigilance among the Arctic states as a year before it was given, Russia reopened its military base in the Arctic, Canada insisted that China does

not respect its sovereign rights, and Iceland doubted that Chinese businessmen keep the agreements that they enter.

In the year of 2015, China's discourse continued with approximately the same themes being discussed, however, mentions of 'commitments to international law' and 'respect for Arctic culture' spiked compared to 2014. In his speech the Foreign Minister Wang Yi again stressed that China will respect the Arctic states' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic as well as traditions and culture of Arctic indigenous people. Moreover, Yi stated that: "China also believes that the legitimate concerns of non-Arctic countries and the rights they enjoy under international law in the Arctic and the collective interests of the international community should be respected" (Yi, 2015). In relation to the latter statement, it is evident that Yi is interested in continuing the discourse first outlined by Jia Guide a year before, in which China is reiterating its commitments to international law and respect for the Arctic culture. This is arguably in order to calm the Arctic states that might have a negative view on China's expanding efforts. The latter quote is important since it indicates that China expects its rights and interests to be taken into consideration as it is a part of a group of non-Arctic states that share common interests and is a member of this international society in the Arctic. As mentioned above, the respect for legal framework and common values is at the center of the concept of international society and this is evidently a reoccurring theme that China intends to make sure is acknowledged by the Arctic community. However, a difference from the previous year is that China now emphasises the importance for the respect of legal claims of non-Arctic states. A motive for China's engagement is therefore also to make sure that Chinese rights and concerns are also taken seriously and respected by Arctic states. In terms of international law, Liu argues in his article that in the future China would prefer to be involved in the lawmaking related to Arctic issues. Evidently, this is exemplified by China's insistence to acquire observer status in the Arctic Council. Observer status should therefore be viewed as China's decision to embrace the current Arctic regime rather than challenging it (Liu, 2017, p.63)

In addition to that, in 2015, China in its address at the 2015 Arctic Circle, highlighted its appreciation for the Arctic culture: “With respect to the indigenous community in the Arctic region, China respects their traditions and culture and take seriously their concerns and needs” (Ming, 2015). This is a clear attempt to show respect for the indigenous people with an Arctic identity/culture which is also a key point in the Chinese Arctic policy under section 3.2, in which it states that China respects the sovereign rights of the Arctic states over natural resources in accordance with international law and respects the interests and concerns of residents in the region (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018).

In the following year, a speech given by Gao Feng, representative of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Arctic Circle forum revolved around three major themes, namely ‘development of the international community’, ‘multilateral cooperation’ and ‘common interests’. This is illustrated in the following statement: “It is a common expectation of the international community to understand, protect, develop and govern the Arctic as a region for common benefit”. This quotation seemingly reflects the idea of the English School which holds that great powers are ‘great responsables’ and, in the context of a changed China’s foreign policy, it suggests that China is ready to stand for the interests and expectations of an international community as a whole. Feng follows with a presentation of three words that describe Arctic cooperation. First of them is ‘inclusive’, meaning that Arctic issues are not regional but trans-regional or even global and should be dealt with in cooperation with all relevant states/stakeholders. The second word is ‘comprehensive’, meaning that “cooperation acknowledges that all aspects of the Arctic issues are closely interrelated and needs integrated analysis and solution” (Feng, 2016). The third word is ‘diversified’, which refers to “improving Arctic cooperation and the mechanism at different levels including the global, regional and bilateral among different participants, including countries, entities and other stakeholders through different modalities – conventional and unconventional” (ibid.). This speech by Feng clearly illustrates how China is calling for a strengthened international society in the Arctic, by developing the Arctic region in a way that will be beneficial for not only Arctic states but all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, it illustrates how China argues that



its main interests are shared within the community as Arctic issues are transregional, which calls for improvement of Arctic cooperation at several levels if they are to be solved.

According to the English School, one of the central aspects of international society is that states cooperate to find solutions for common challenges and share collective interests. China is arguably attempting to turn the Arctic into a region that no longer exclusively belongs to the Arctic states, but also to the states that engage in the development of the region.

Arguably, this is a means to solidify China as a relevant actor in Arctic affairs and strengthen its ties to the region. This is also evident in China's Arctic policy which reads as follows: "Cooperation is an effective means for China's participation in Arctic affairs. It means establishing a relationship of multi-level, omni-dimensional and wide-ranging cooperation..." (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Speech given by Feng, together with China's Arctic white paper, illustrate how this broad cooperation serves as a means for China to entangle itself deeper into Arctic affairs and continue the work towards a more inclusive international society in the Arctic region, and even internationalize the governance of the Arctic as, according to the Chinese representatives, it would benefit international community in general. The idea that increased cooperation between the Arctic and non-Arctic states is a common interest of the two is reflected in the writings of Nong Hong, who argues that the goals of peace, stability and sustainable development can only be achieved through the partnership of both Arctic and non-Arctic political actors and it is the only "appropriate way forward" bearing in mind that global importance of this polar region is only increasing (Hong, 2018, p.20).

As can be seen from Table 2, the key themes of 2017 were 'commitments to international law', 'multilateral cooperation' and 'development of the international community'.

Interpretively, this could be seen as China's attempt to make clear that its involvement in Arctic affairs is based on respect for the law and that its intentions are not to disrupt the current legal framework that guides the Arctic community. Moreover, the sub-category 'China's Arctic history' experienced an increase in mentions that year. As the Vice Foreign Minister Ming stated in his address to the Arctic Council in 2015, Chinese Arctic history began with the accession to the Svalbard Treaty of 1925. The Arctic history was further

pointed out by China in their address at the 2017 Arctic Council Special Observer Session in which they stated that China's Arctic history further progressed in the 1990s with the first Chinese scientific exploration in the Arctic in 1999 (Ming, 2015). From the perspective of the historical context, Svalbard Treaty seems to enjoy an important role in the communication of Chinese representatives as it not only marks the beginning of China-Arctic relations but also indicates a fact that interactions between the two started almost a hundred years ago, and Chinese representatives tend to remind it in their speeches. Early scientific interactions between Arctic and China are also of great importance in the diplomatic communication of the latter due to its significant scientific output and the fact that research capabilities which China possesses are virtually unparalleled, and therefore serve as a means for trust-building.

In 2018, Gao Feng, the Special Representative for Arctic Affairs of China, in his address to the Arctic Circle focused heavily on the development of the international community in the Arctic region and China's role herein. He explicitly states that "China is a stakeholder in Arctic affairs as a geographical near-Arctic state <...> and the development of the Arctic is closely linked with China" (Feng, 2018b). Feng continues this discourse when outlining the basic principles that guide China's Arctic relations by saying that: "China and the Arctic are to understand, to protect, to develop and to participate in the governance of the Arctic. China will participate in Arctic affairs in accordance with basic principles of respect, cooperation, win-win result and sustainability, the four principles to guide us" (ibid.). In these two quotes it is evident that China no longer perceives itself to be a state that is trying to become part of the international community in the Arctic region, rather its discourse suggests that it expects to be treated as a major stakeholder in the region on which the progress of the Arctic is dependent. Additionally, China seemingly even constructs its own Arctic identity by calling itself a 'near-Arctic state'. Arguably, this is an indicator of China's call for a strengthened role in an international society in the Arctic by changing how it sees itself and by influencing how other states perceive its status in relations with the Arctic states. Interpretively, this is done so China can gain greater influence over Arctic affairs as it differentiates itself from other non-Arctic states. According to the English School, every state is obliged to take control of its own destiny within international society and evidently, China is using its

diplomatic relations to change the way they are viewed by other states and in turn increase its sphere of influence in the Arctic region. The scholar Yun Sun argues, that the term “near-Arctic state” is purposely used by China to differentiate itself from other non-Arctic states that are positioned farther away from the Arctic region, implying certain privileges to China’s geographical location (Sun, 2014, p.2)

Another theme that is recurring throughout the entire data set is the Chinese argument of win-win results, i.e. that Chinese involvement in Arctic affairs is inevitably going to yield positive results for all states involved. This is also clearly illustrated in China’s Arctic policy in which it is stated that: “Win-win result is the value pursuit of China’s participation in Arctic affairs. It means all stakeholders in this area should pursue mutual benefit and common progress in all fields of activities” (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018). Arguably, this argumentation is used by China to validate its involvement in the region and could also be seen as a motive for China and the Arctic states to benefit from this relationship. From an English School perspective, position of China in 2018 undoubtedly indicates existence, of what the school of thought calls, international society. China sees itself as a stakeholder in the Arctic affairs and appeal to the geographical proximity between two regions. China also constructs its Arctic identity and aim for win-win results in the Arctic region.

Analysis of the second main category indicates that China’s motives for further engagement in the Arctic affairs are to a great extent connected with the ideas of multilateral cooperation and development of the international community. China believes that cooperation with the Arctic benefits both sides as it yields, what China calls, “win-win results”. China also argues that its main interests are shared within the Arctic community as the challenges the Arctic faces are not only regional but should be viewed and dealt with in transregional or even global levels. For this reason, China believes that not only all Arctic states but also non-Arctic stakeholders have to unite in order to develop the region and respond to transregional concerns. Additionally, China stresses that, in its dealings with the Arctic, it is willing to conform to the existing legal framework that guides the Arctic community. China

is also trying to shape its identity by labeling itself as a near-Arctic state. This is arguably a way for China to differentiate itself from other non-Arctic states, however this could also be seen in a negative light as China hereby also acknowledges that it is not an Arctic states itself. Throughout the years of analysis, Chinese representatives emphasise the responsibility to respect both the Arctic culture and international law that governs the relations between China and the Arctic; cooperate on the win-win basis as well as set mutual benefits as an objective; and internationalize governance and development of the Arctic even further as it would serve the interests of international community as a whole. From an English School perspective, China's actions illustrate its attempt to construct a more inclusive international society in the Arctic and it also becomes evident that diplomatic relations are the key tools that can help China's attempt to become fruitful.

However, the positions of experts on Chinese-Arctic relations regarding China's call for a more inclusive international society are far from being homogenous and they do differ greatly. While Hong is more positive regarding this subject matter and argues that "China's language is consistent with its position" (Hong, 2018, p.17) and the member-states of the Arctic Council have recognised China's narrative on the Arctic issues and its push for more inclusion, scholars like Linda Jakobson and David C. Wright are far more critical. They hold that China uses periphrastic language and initiates cautious policies in order to avoid countermeasures that Arctic states could introduce if China appeared as a threat to them (Wright, 2011, p.2; Jakobson, 2010, p.12). This diplomatic strategy allows China to become "a player in the Arctic game" (Wright, 2011, p.32) and expect to eventually be awarded a role, where it would be able to determine political structure as well as legal framework for the Arctic in the future (Jakobson, 2010, p.1). Such an increased role of China in the future would also be a subject of security concern as one day China could argue that certain developments in the Arctic region are a threat to its economic well-being, and therefore its social stability, and thus the political influence of the Communist Party of China regime. Consequently, it is necessary for the Arctic states to ensure that their defensive capabilities in the Arctic are sufficient (Wright, 2011, p.38).

## **Conclusion**

This paper indicates the main motives of China's involvement in the Arctic and presents how representatives of China have been calling for a more inclusive international society in their diplomatic communication with the Arctic states.

The first part of the project sheds a light on China's interests in the Arctic. Through the analysis of the speeches given by the Chinese representatives, the Arctic white paper and the scholarly work on the subject, three main motives, namely scientific, environmental and economic were identified. The findings show that China's range of interests has widened in the recent years as it had traditionally been linked exclusively with scientific research. The expansion of China's interests is associated with the global climate change and its effects on the Arctic, which are expected to have significant consequences for the world as a whole, and the opportunities that environmental changes open for the execution of economic activities that have not been available before, e.g. creation of the Polar Silk road. In addition to that, in its historical context, China's increased range of interests in the Arctic could also be seen as a reflection of its growing role in the international arena.

The second part of this paper examines how China argues that its interests in the Arctic region are shared with the Arctic states and calls for more inclusion on the basis of respect for shared values, norms, identities and existing legal framework. Thematic qualitative text analysis of the statements given by Chinese representatives supplemented by the material from China's Arctic white paper and scholarly work on China's role in the Arctic suggest that China expects its role in the Arctic to be growing and its claims in the region to be respected. China argues that the Arctic affairs are of global rather than of regional concern and should be dealt with collectively by both Arctic and non-Arctic states. This is evident in the findings of the analysis which show that the most frequently recurring themes in China's diplomatic communication with the Arctic states are development of international community and multilateral cooperation. Additionally, China holds that involvement of non-Arctic states in the Arctic affairs is based on mutual benefits as they oftentimes refer to the win-win principle

and fulfilment of global objectives, e.g. combating the global climate change. China also argues that its relations with Arctic states are guided by the respect for the sovereign rights of the Arctic countries and the existing legal framework in this polar region by making references to the norms of international law. Finally, Chinese officials appeal to its involvement in the Arctic affairs since 1990s, respect for the Arctic culture and its indigenous communities, and even aim to construct its Arctic identity as a 'near-Arctic state' based on its geographical proximity with the Arctic. In the future China expects to consolidate its status as a 'major stakeholder' in the Arctic as it believes that Arctic development is closely connected to China.

The results of the analysis were supplemented by the writings of the experts on the subject matter and provided this paper with a more critical reflection of its findings. Several scholars of China-Arctic relations argue that diplomatic measures that China employs are not solely related to the common principles that it shares with the Arctic and ideals of win-win cooperation, but rather serve as a public facade that masks its future strategic interests such as exploitation of natural resources, establishment of the Polar Silk Road, opening of new shipping routes etc. Some scholars even go as far as to argue that China's increased involvement in the Arctic should be seen as a security threat to the region.

From the theoretical standpoint of the English School this paper illustrates how a group of states progresses from an international system to an international society. Firstly, the findings support the English School proposition that such progression typically occurs whenever states interact with one another for a lengthy period of time. Secondly, once the states have formed international society they come to subscribe to common norms, values identities and legal framework guiding their relations. In the process of this progression diplomacy plays a central role as it allows states to articulate these collective principles and strengthen international society as a whole as well as symbolize its existence. Moreover, diplomacy contributes to a further expansion of the areas of cooperation within the group of states. The paper exemplifies this progression by presenting how from 1990s to mid 2000s China's involvement had predominantly revolved around scientific research, but has since then

developed to an extent where it also covers economic, environmental and even Arctic-governance-related issues. As noted above, this progression also lead to China's subscription to the collective norms, values, identities and legal framework with the Arctic states. Accession of China to the Arctic Council has provided it with the access to the intergovernmental forum, where, through diplomatic measures, China is now able to articulate its position regarding the relations with the Arctic, strengthen its ties with the region and expand its influence in this polar region.

Finally, the project contributes to the scarce literature that examines China's diplomacy in the Arctic outside scientific and bilateral realms and focuses instead on multilateral diplomacy of China in this polar region. Additionally, this paper also addresses the growing importance that the English School attaches to the question of how newly emerging centers of power, such as China, will affect the so-called 'post-Western' international society and what role in it will these power centers attempt to claim through interstate diplomatic dialogues.

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