The Arctic has progressively entered the world of international relations since the first creation of the Russian American Company and the Hudson Bay Company up to the opening of the Northern Sea Route and increasing access to untapped resources. The individual in the Arctic could see, from the early stages of colonialism[1] up to nowadays' industrialization, a shift in international relations: from a realist war for resources to a war for geopolitical security, and now for securing and exploiting resources. This last step is due to the current world economic trend (led by a capitalistic approach of an ever-growing economy) based on an exponential increase of technologies and population[2]. However, the individual has followed States' philosophies and diplomatic approaches as the key word was security, sovereignty-related based on the Westphalian conception of States. Therefore, in order to understand the evolution and structure of the Arctic, a first analysis of the region may start with the application of International Relations' Theories in order to understand the political shift and the consequences on all stakeholders.

The Arctic

In order to understand how international relations work in the Arctic, and hence security, a short analysis of the Arctic is required, applying the method of the 5Ws + 1H (What, Where, When, Who, Why and How), giving the following definition from the National Geographic Society:

"The Arctic is the Northernmost region of the Globe. […] the area within the Arctic Circle, a line of latitude about 66.5° North of the Equator. Within this circle are the Arctic ocean basin and the northern parts of Scandinavia, Russia, Canada, Greenland, and the U.S. state of Alaska. […] The Arctic is almost entirely covered by water, much of it frozen. […] River mouths, calving glaciers, and constantly moving ocean currents contribute to a vibrant marine ecosystem in the Arctic. […] Indigenous […] People established communities and cultures in the Arctic thousands of years ago. […] Rights to land and natural resources are an important part of contemporary culture and survival of indigenous peoples in the Arctic, […] tremendous challenges, often the result of colonization and exploitation of land and energy resources. […] Engineers and geographers estimate that oil and gas deposits in the Arctic make up 13% of the world's undiscovered petroleum resources, and 30% of undiscovered natural gas resources. The Arctic is also rich in minerals." [3]

This definition answers partly to the following questions: “What is the Arctic?”; “Where is the Arctic?”; “What is the History of the Arctic? (When); “What is the structure of the Arctic? (How)”; “Why is the Arctic so important?”; and most importantly “Who is living in the Arctic?”. Regarding the questions “What is the History of the Arctic? (When)” and “What is the structure of the Arctic? (How)”, an example of past race for the control over Arctic resources and land may be highlighted by the Russian – American Company and the Hudson Bay Company, helping in shaping future state borders. In addition, the Cold War era with the military control of the Arctic is another answer to the “When” question. Regarding the “How” question, since Gorbatchev’s speech in 1987[4] and the following creation of the Arctic Council in 1996, the Arctic has gained a regional political structure, an international forum where the Arctic States and the Permanent Participants may discuss Arctic Affairs and eventually issue non-legally and legally binding regulations (e.g., the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan and the MOSPA Agreement[5]).

The Approach

The Arctic is often referred to as a multifaceted region (i.e., No single definition of the Arctic)[6], therefore broadening the approach to the analysis of International Relations Theories applied to the Arctic may result in a more concrete study of the parameters that conform and shape the Arctic relations. As there is no single Arctic, going deeper in a single International Relations Theory would mean to leave aside many crucial parameters that characterize the Arctic. In this sense, through the application of International Relations Theories, a map of the organization of the Arctic might be drawn. The theories considered will be: Realism, Liberalism and English School. The Indigenous Level of Analysis[7] will be considered as cross-cutting due to the transboundary nature of the Indigenous Peoples’ organizations.

Realism

In this section, the realist approach will be applied to understand the relations between Arctic and non-arctic States and to obtain a hard security overview, in which the Westphalian concept of State, sovereignty and Indigenous Peoples’ claims will be considered. Only the differences between Russia and the United States (as the two opposed States during the Cold War), the state of China in the Arctic, and the Indigenous Peoples

will be studied.

Russia vs. United States: In this clash of visions and regimes, the US and Russia oppose their claims over the Arctic, laying down their political approach to Realism. As stated before, the Arctic contains a large amount of offshore oil and gas. After the Cold War and the militarization of the Arctic, the post-Cold War era is characterized by the adoption of international legally binding conventions and agreements. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of them, being used by Arctic States in order to assert claims over continental shelves and extensions, as highlighted by Russia[8]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and hence the end of the Cold War, there has been an exacerbation of the Westphalian concept of State from the economic perspective with the assertion of sovereign rights to advocate for resources in the Arctic [9]. In the case of Russia, there has been a military de-escalation after 1991 due to the economic chaos, therefore a lack of income, of the recently created Russian Federation[10]. But after its recovery, Russia shifted towards a scientific development to assert claims according the UNCLOS via the CLCS[11]. Moreover, the progressive melt down of the Arctic and a greater policy of sovereignty assertion, highlighted by the above-mentioned CLCS submission and because of its shrinking economy, are giving place to a military build-up[12]. In this sense, Russia develops and secures its own supply lines, trade routes, industrial and natural resources assets in the Arctic. In the case of the United States, the approach has been keeping an eye over the Arctic but not engaging in further expenses on militarization[13], resulting in a loss of military presence in the Arctic due to the end of the nuclear threat during the Cold War. In this sense, the US has followed the scientific movement to assert claims in the Arctic (despite not being part of UNCLOS, the US still gathers information that might be useful to formulate future claims in the Arctic Ocean[14], lowering its realist approach to transform it into a more liberal focused system with the extraction of oil and gas in Alaska[15]. However, according to the recent events, such as the announcement of the intentions to buy Greenland or the creation of the Polar Security Cutter program[16], the US has shown a shift towards a harder realist approach in dealing with Arctic affairs as Russia, allied with China, seems to represent a direct threat to its territorial sovereignty and sphere of geopolitical influence through Russia's intentions of militarization[17] and the passive-aggressive behavior from China that considers itself as a near-Arctic State.

China and the Arctic: In its Arctic Policy, China declares itself as a near Arctic State,

asserting through the wording its claims over the Arctic. According to the Policy and its international acts (e.g., participating in Arctic mining projects such as Arctic LNG 2 and Yamal LNG), China shows a clear realist approach in which it intends to gain political control, alongside Russia which has over 40% of the Arctic coast, over the Arctic and thus expanding a direct threat to the US in response to the American First and Second Island Chains in the Pacific[18]. Furthermore, China tried to increase Chinese-built infrastructures in Greenland, but the intervention of NATO blocked that investment at the last minute, showing the tensions between the NATO bloc and China for a strategic control of the Arctic[19]. As China launched the Polar Silk Road[20], theoretically, every logistical infrastructure would have the capacity to be used militarily due to the the involvement by the Chinese government as most of the Chinese companies participating in these projects are state controlled (e.g., Shandong Gold Mining Co. Ltd. and the bid to purchase the gold mine of Hope Bay, Canada[21]). These facts are confirmed by the increase in Chinese military assets and the already military use made by China of its Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure (e.g., the use of the Djibouti Port facilities as a naval base[22]).

Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Being the first peoples present in the Arctic, they fight against past colonialism, State bureaucracy, structuralism and the Westphalian concept of State applied in the Region. In this sense, Indigenous Peoples have gained in recognition of their rights through diverse mechanisms such as the land claims acts (e.g., Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act and Indigenous land claims in Canada) or the progressive approval and implementation of UN Conventions (e.g., UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). From the recognition of their lands and cultures, Indigenous Peoples have adapted to the Westphalian concept of State through diverse political forms: one would be the creation of a borough like the North Slope Borough, another would be Greenland through the adoption of Home Rule Act and subsequent Self-Government Act that ensure the progressive gain in autonomy of the lands concerned, and a last example would be the reunification of tribes and peoples under International bodies in order to produce an international and tangible voice against States' interests in international fora[23], some of them going further and building an alliance with States to secure their position (e.g. Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russian and the Saami Council[24]). These political adaptations are meant to build resilience against the Westphalian concept of State (Hard borders, centralized State with a full sovereignty over the territory within these borders). In this sense, these political and organizational

structures allow the Indigenous Peoples to adapt themselves to both National and International structures and preserve then their rights while enhancing their recognition on both levels. It is a realist approach in the sense Indigenous Peoples fight to survive in a hostile environment where their interests are often a threat for sovereign States and private companies' interests. It is not hard security such as military, but a security where the use of a constructive and peaceful dialogue is promoted, using international fora and diplomacy as a way to gain influence and public recognition. A clear example is the Permanent Participant status of Indigenous Peoples within the Arctic Council.

Liberalism

In this section, the liberal approach will be applied in order to understand the shift from hard security during the Cold War to the development of economic interests in the Arctic.

Russia and the Northern Sea Route (NSR): After the sanctions issued by the European Union in 2014[25], the Russian economy has been shrinking[26]. In this sense, and for almost a century, Russia has been trying to develop the Northern Sea Route in order to exploit its Arctic natural resources that are locked by the lack of infrastructure to export them outside the Arctic[27]. Furthermore, Russia has to exploit these resources in order to satisfy its industrial needs and continue developing its economy and assert its claims over the Arctic, operating a shift from realism to liberalism. This change is certainly the fruit of adaptation to world economics, but as well it has been induced by international sanctions from the US and Europe[28] that have precipitated the entry of Asian countries in the Arctic through mining projects in Russia such as Arctic LNG 2[29]. So, in a way, it is more about adaptation rather than State Philosophy.

***Asian States (China, Japan, South Korea)*:** Being part of the development of the NSR, the new Arctic marine technology and mining resources projects is the opportunity to integrate the development process of new trade routes [30], new resources and forecast the progressive shift from the traditional maritime routes to the Arctic. As the Asian countries above-mentioned are highly influential States linked to maritime industries, the control over new opportunities is clearly a liberal approach in order to keep their seat at the table in international fora as well as asserting their position in emerging Arctic markets. China, as mentioned in the realist approach, might be considered in a different way due to its

economic position and military nature. However, the other Asian States are involved in a pure liberal approach, promoting economic interests with the help of the State that issues regulations and frameworks for its national private and public companies to take advantage over foreign companies through a fiscal, social and economic adaptability[31].

US, Canada, Norway, Greenland (Kingdom of Denmark) and Iceland*:* All these States have interests in the NSR and/or the Northwest Passage (NWP), as well as in developing their Arctic resources. In this sense, the approach differs from Russia where the NSR is controlled by the government and is only crossing one country: Russia. In the case of the Northwest Passage, Canada is involved for the archipelagic part but still have to go through the Bering Strait (Half controlled by Russia and half by the United States), where both Coast Guards may enforce controls as the strait is within territorial waters and located in the Polar Code area, meaning the Article 234 from UNCLOS[32] might be applied. Furthermore, Canada is fighting internationally to protect the Northwest Passage and consider it as internal waters in order to seek environmental preservation and pretend to the right of charging passage fees. In this sense, Canada and the United States are developing their resources and shifted, at the end of the Cold War, from a realist approach to Arctic affairs to a liberal approach with major developments in extraction of mining resources[33]. Iceland and Greenland may face their strategic location to both the North Atlantic entrance to the Arctic and the central Arctic with a more realist approach. In this sense, Iceland relies on NATO's forces for a hard security apparatus while Greenland has a mix between Denmark and NATO's security forces. Nonetheless, both countries are oriented towards a liberal philosophy as Iceland is willing to continue developing fisheries and maritime traffic, and Greenland is willing to develop sustainable industrial activities and infrastructures for a better communication with global trade routes. However, Iceland is progressively back as a key player in NATO's strategy[34] and Greenland is increasingly developing a major role in securing the United States and NATO allies' influence and control over the Arctic, being still under influence of the approach to build commercial infrastructure which would be used as military (e.g., like China and the Belt and Road Initiative[35]).

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples may find in the technological build-up of the Arctic and the invasion of infrastructures and industries both a threat and possibility. This development may suppose a direct threat to their traditional culture and way of living,

possibly destroying their ancestral lands and natural resources. However, they have to embrace economic progress to ensure food and health security, social and professional security through the creation of income from their resources to generate a stable political structure to be autonomous (e.g., Greenland and its first Home Rule Act of 1979 replaced by the Act on Self-Government of 2009). In this sense, Indigenous Peoples have to apply (Some already do, like the North Slope Borough with their political and regulatory framework) the liberal approach in order to continue achieving sustainability, build resilience and continue their march towards autonomy. As long as achieving a full-scale political, military and economic structure for a whole State might be not viable yet (e.g., Greenland and the fact Denmark controls foreign policy, currency and security), the best option to create security and face a State with equal arms would be the application of the liberal approach to generate income and thus protecting their way of living. Despite their ancestral culture and traditional way of living, Indigenous Peoples may have to adapt to, at least a national framework to ensure a required political security to protect their rights against both national and international interests. In this way, Indigenous Peoples may want to use liberalism as a primary mean to achieve security and thus achieving a soft form of realism.

As a cross cutting approach, the English School plays the role of reminder of the past. The Cold War being quite recent, all Arctic States, particularly Russia and the United States, may not want to come back to a state of constant military security threat that would impede the development of Arctic economies. In this sense, the Arctic Council is the best example in terms of English School application, being built on a solid and common interest to all Arctic States: environmental protection[36]. Therefore, it provided a common ground to overcome the differences generated during the Cold War (Realism) to achieve cooperation in order to control the future of the region (Realism) and to lead the Arctic development and economic efforts (Liberalism), all based on the analysis of the past, of cultures and societies, of the differences and resemblance[37].

Conclusion

The individual in the Arctic has been observing and experiencing a shift in international relations, from experiencing hard security threats (e.g., the Cold War) to a liberal approach that has driven the rapid build-up of mining and transportation facilities in the Arctic (e.g., Greenland and the construction of three new airports[38]). Therefore, there is an economic

development underway, bringing social and economic security, which might be still missing in strength in most of the remote communities[39]. However, despite the recent military escalation between the US and Russia in the Arctic, Liberalism is definitely on the rise and supported by all States as economic ventures are increasing in number and strength across the region, with examples such as the Royal Arctic Line – Eimskip cooperation agreement, the multistakeholder LNG projects in Russia, to name but a few. This shift has been driven by the implementation of the English School that exposed the economic losses and the waste of capacities from both blocs (Eastern and Western), being translated into a state of permanent threat that channeled efforts and finances towards hard military security. In this sense, Indigenous Peoples across the Arctic experienced different political approaches that led to different security issues. In some parts of the Arctic, specific legal mechanisms have been signed, promoting the recognition of Indigenous rights and creating a certain autonomy (e.g., Greenland and its first Home Rule Act in 1979, or Alaska and the ANCSA in 1971). In other parts, Indigenous communities were sacrificed for the sake of the Nation (e.g., Russia and the construction of infrastructures on Indigenous lands[40]). However, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the decrease in military expenses from both sides (One driven by a collapsed economy like Russia and another by the military financial release) and therefore decreasing the militarization of the Arctic created a void that was filled up by both public and private companies that were looking for new opportunities. Suddenly, Arctic communities would see the opportunity of an opening to the World as the geopolitical tensions would decline. Indigenous Peoples then could enjoy an economic breath and an international recognition as the land they occupy would not be longer subject to tensions, bringing the space and opportunity to start building an international voice that would be recognized by the UN (e.g., the ILO Convention 169 in 1989 and the UNDRIP in 2007 and then by several States in both the Arctic and the World). Nonetheless, in order to secure this voice and claims, the Indigenous Peoples made the opposite shift, using Liberalism and English School as two powerful tools to achieve Realism and thus create security for their rights, culture and lands. In this sense, Indigenous Peoples understood the current and increasing shift from state to intergovernmental organization-driven interests, in which states slowly gather in groups from the same geographical region and/or sphere of influence to pursue common international economic, political, security and/or military goals (e.g., NATO, the EU and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization). After all, unity makes strength, and Indigenous Peoples have a great track record of applying such philosophy to survive in the Arctic.

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