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**University of Amsterdam**

**The relation between the  
Netherlands and the Arctic:  
long distance but strong**

Name: Iris Betten, 13291696  
Supervisor: Jeroen Merk  
2nd reader: Virginie Mamadouh  
Degree: Human Geography (Political track)  
Department: Graduate School of Social Sciences  
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Author: Iris Betten  
Supervisor: Jeroen Merk  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reader: Virginie Mamadouh  
Course: Master Thesis Project  
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Department: Graduate School of Social Sciences  
Institution: University of Amsterdam



## Preface

The Arctic is a complex region. There is a lot of cooperation among states and other actors, both Arctic and non-Arctic. During the Cold War it was a tense place, which has shifted to a place of cooperation and stability. With the changing climate new opportunities arise and the question is whether these opportunities will lead to more cooperation or to more competition.

I have always been interested in how states interact, and power dynamics. This and my interest in the Arctic region were the reason I wanted to write about the interaction among states in the Arctic. Unfortunately, it was not possible to visit one of the Arctic states due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, I decided to look into how the Netherlands interacts with this region and look at the Arctic at the global scale instead of focussing on one specific part.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me during the process of this research. First, I would like to thank Jeroen Merk and Virginie Mamadouh for their feedback. I am very grateful for everyone who was willing to take the time to do an interview and have told and taught me a lot about what is going on in the Arctic. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me during the process.

During the research I have learned a lot about how the Arctic is organized. I hope that this thesis will give you a better understanding of the Arctic. Because understanding the politics in the Arctic helps to understand the importance of climate change in international politics.

Iris Betten

11-08-2021

## Abstract

The Arctic is a great example of how climate shapes geopolitics. Countries involved in the Arctic are engaged in combatting climate change, and in making sustainable use of the economic opportunities that arise. The economic competition among states emerging from these changes the geopolitical field. The Arctic is governed through networks with the Arctic Council being the primary forum for discussing Arctic matters, except for security. State-actors and non-state actors both are involved in protecting the Arctic climate and in using the opportunities for human activity. How the Arctic is governed is complex. Many actors at different scales are involved. This research provides insights for a better understanding of the complexity of Arctic geopolitics by looking at the involvement of the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a maritime nation with historical ties to the Arctic. Since the sixteenth century the Dutch have been active in economic activities such as whaling and fishing, mining, oil- and gas exploitations, and shipping. Besides, the Netherlands is involved in Arctic governance by being active in organizations such as the Arctic Council. The main reasons to be involved are protecting itself against the rising sea-level, protecting the biodiversity and ecosystems the Netherlands shares with the Arctic, and making sure the Arctic remains a stable, peaceful place.

This research scrutinizes Dutch involvement in the Arctic by answering the research question: *How does the Netherlands represent its environmental and economic interests in the Arctic region?* This question is answered by doing a critical geopolitical analysis of this topic. Interviews have been conducted with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch private actors, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Also, documents from the Dutch government, Dutch private stakeholders, and the WWF and Greenpeace have been analysed. The aim is to discover what the motivations of a non-Arctic state are for being involved in the Arctic.



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# 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the Arctic has warmed with 4°C; the amount of snow has decreased by ten percent since the 1980s; and the amount of sea-ice is rapidly decreasing in all seasons, especially in summer (Laruelle, 2015, p.73). The melting ice caps are an environmental risk, but also bring economic and geopolitical opportunities. The opening up of the Arctic Ocean gives access to non-renewable resources, fishing grounds and shipping routes that have not been fully accessible before. Having access to resources means having access to power, because resources are intertwined with power (Furlong & Norman, 2015, p.432). This is not only interesting for the Arctic states, but for non-Arctic actors and organizations as well.

In the Arctic there is a lot of cooperation among actors. This is necessary, because most of the Arctic territory falls under the sovereignty of the eight Arctic states, these are: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Everything beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Arctic states is part of the international waters. Since the Arctic is partly international property, non-Arctic actors are involved in managing the territory as well. This territorial organization makes it a unique place. Agreements, treaties and institutions have been made to make sure the Arctic does not become a place of dispute.

The Arctic is a place of governance and has a history in global convergence and economic integration (Dodds & Nutall, 2016, p.38). The Arctic, like the rest of the world, is still evolving and its governance system too. It is hard to say whether it will remain a place of peace and cooperation or if it will become a place of dispute. To make sure it does not become a place of dispute, countries come together in the Arctic Council (AC). The AC is a consultative body but does not have the power to implement legislation or take military action. The eight Arctic states are permanent members together with six indigenous groups. Furthermore, the AC has 38 observatory members. These observers are both state and non-state actors and are involved in meetings and working groups.

To get more insights into cooperation in the Arctic, this thesis scrutinizes the role of the Netherlands as a non-Arctic actor in Arctic governance. The Netherlands has been active in the region since the sixteenth century; it is an observatory member of the Arctic Council and Barents Euro-Arctic Council; it has its own Arctic strategy, with the new strategy being implemented in 2021; and there is a Dutch Arctic ambassador. Not only the Dutch government has ties to the region. The increasing accessibility of the Arctic creates new economic opportunities for Dutch companies. An example of Dutch economic involvement in the Arctic are activities conducted by companies such as Dutch Royal Shell (Arctic Institute, n.d.). Other maritime companies like dredging companies have been involved in the Arctic as well. It can also be an opportunity for the port of Rotterdam, because of the opening of the Northeast passage and offering a shorter route from Asia to Europe. However, the rising sea level, the threatened ecosystems and other consequences of climate change affect the Netherlands too.

The aim of this research is to understand the Dutch motivations to be involved, and whether those are more economically or environmentally driven. However, security cannot be entirely left out when scrutinizing the geopolitics of the Arctic. The connection between this concept and the Arctic will be further explained in chapter 2. The angle of this thesis will be from a geopolitical point of view. Meaning that it will pay attention to how the Arctic is governed and more specifically what the role of the Netherlands in Arctic governance is.

When researching the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic it is important to look at the consequences of climate change for the Netherlands in relation to the Arctic. These consequences can be both risks and opportunities. The opportunities that arise have mainly to do with the Arctic becoming more accessible. It is important to understand how Dutch stakeholders want to make use of a more accessible Arctic and, with that, has established a position to do so.

To gain insights into the relationship between the Netherlands and the Arctic, this research will be based on four themes. These are: (Arctic) governance, climate change, economy, and security. To scrutinize this, this thesis uses the following research question:

*How does the Netherlands represent its environmental and economic interests in the Arctic?*

To gain insights from the political, economic, and environmental point of view, three actors have been included. These are: the Dutch government, Dutch (maritime) companies, and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To analyse the objectives of these three different actors the following sub-questions will be used:

- *How is the Dutch government involved in Arctic governance?*
- *What are the economic and environmental interests of Dutch private stakeholders?*
- *How do environmental NGOs impact Dutch involvement in the governance of the Arctic?*

### ***Scientific and societal relevance***

The Arctic is an interconnected region with an interplay of territories and networks (Väättänen & Zimmerbauer, 2020). In their research Väättänen and Zimmerbauer (2020, p.358) state that the relation between non-Arctic states and the AC is paradoxical. Non-Arctic states comply with the rules made by the AC, but also try to change or undermine them. Investigating the role of the Netherlands in the Arctic provides more information on this paradoxical attitude of observatory members. Therefore, it is a scientifically relevant topic.

The societal relevance relates to climate change. Climate change is a phenomenon that affects everyone. In the case of the Arctic, the major effect of climate change is the melting ice. The risks caused by this include sea-level rising, and ecosystems being threatened. On the other hand, it creates access to parts of the Arctic Ocean that have never been accessible before. This creates economic opportunities, which is mainly beneficial and relevant for coastal societies. However, access to these waters and its resources can also lead to a changing geopolitical order, because it raises interests from both Arctic and non-Arctic actors.

### ***Thesis outline***

The aim of this research is to provide insights into the role of the Netherlands in Arctic governance. This contributes to a better understanding of the involvement of non-Arctic states in the Arctic region. To answer the research question, a critical approach is used. The theoretical framework will discuss both the neoclassical and critical approach to give an idea of how the Arctic can be analysed. It also gives clarity on why a critical geopolitical analysis is more suitable. To answer the research question, semi-structured interviews were held and relevant documents by Dutch stakeholders were retrieved. How this and the analysis has been conducted is explained in chapter 3. After the methods chapter, the analysis and results will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 includes the answers to the sub-questions, chapter 6 will go more in depth on the four themes. Both chapters contribute to answering the research question in the concluding chapter. The latter also includes a discussion and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The Arctic has become a place for and of geopolitics (Väättänen, 2021, p.616). It is a region of international cooperation among state and non-state actors and is largely impacted by climate change. The impacts of climate change are noticeable at the global scale and it is a consequence of human activity, which makes it a matter of contemporary geopolitics (Dalby, 2015, p.459). Although climate change has a negative impact on the Arctic, it is also an opportunity for resource extraction and commercial activity. The relatively new economic opportunities make it interesting for various stakeholders to get involved in the region. This shows that climate change does not only affect the environment. It affects the social and economic systems as well (Aspinall, 2011, p.3). The contrast between protecting the environment and taking advantage of the economic opportunities that arise due to climate change is reflected in the Arctic.

The Arctic can be looked at from different political geographical approaches. This thesis will use the critical approach to analyse the role of the Netherlands in the geopolitics of the Arctic. When analysing the Arctic region, a neoclassical approach can be useful as well. The first part of this chapter explains why these two approaches are relevant and why in this thesis the critical approach will be used. The second part focuses on the relevant concepts for this research and why they are relevant.

### 2.1 Geopolitical approaches

Geopolitics is both a scholarly and political practice. In academics it often is a subfield of political geography, international relations, and political science. It is continually remade through developments and ideas of key scholars (Moisio, 2015, p.220). In political geography some notable scholars are Anssi Paasi (Paasi, 1996), and Simon Dalby (Dalby, 2015; Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998). Klaus Dodds (Dodds, 2010; Dodds & Nutall, 2016) and Jason Dittmer (Dittmer et al., 2011) are scholars who have written a lot about Arctic geopolitics.

Geopolitics as a subfield of political geography should be understood as a combination of material and representational practices of statecraft itself (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.12). Based on a historical perspective, it should be understood as a combination of academic theorizing and political practices (Moisio, 2015, p.220). In all forms of studying geopolitics, it is about power and space, whether it is between state and territory or power relations among states (Mamadouh, 1998, p.246).

#### 2.1.1 The neoclassical approach

The neoclassical approach is a direct descendant of the classical approach. It can be used to analyse contemporary international relations in the tradition of classical geopolitics (Megoran, 2010, p.187). The two most important characteristics of politics according to the classical geopolitical tradition are: command of territory, and resources as pivotal dimension for state status (Moisio, 2015, pp.221-222). The neoclassical approach is not entirely the same as its ascendent. The basic idea of the classical approach is the state being a living organism and the borders being flexible as a result of this (Mamadouh, 1998, p.238). However, the neoclassical approach states that borders are a given and it does not follow the idea of states being a living organism (Mamadouh, 1998, p.238).

The neoclassical approach is mostly based on Mackinder's heartland theory (Megoran, 2010, p.188). Mackinder believed that politics occurs in a closed system, thus actions of countries are interconnected. Mackinder came up with the heartland theory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He argued that sea powers had the advantage over land powers. With the development of railways, the advantages shifted to land power (Flint, 2017, p.8). In 1904 he defined the centre of Eurasia as the 'pivot area' of the world (Mackinder, 2004, p.312). Later he referred to this area as the 'Heartland'. Eurasia, namely, holds a strategic position, because it is inaccessible to ships and as a result is hard to conquer for sea powers. Outside the pivot area is the inner crescent or marginal crescent, which is partly continental, partly oceanic, and the rest of the world is the outer crescent which is wholly oceanic and peripheral in this theory (Mackinder, 2004, p.312). Based on this idea Mackinder has stated: "*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island. Who rules the World-Island, commands the world.*" (Flint, 2017, p.8).

Important to note here as well is that Mackinder viewed the world from a Eurocentric perspective. In neoclassical reasoning the heartland theory is adapted to social and technological changes in explaining why a region is a 'pivot area' (Megoran, 2010, p.188). Another trait of the neoclassical approach is that geography does not determine international politics but offers a framework in which it occurs (Megoran, 2010, p.188). In neoclassical reasoning the focus lies on national interests and national security in which the state is seen and referred to as one entity (Mamadouh, 1998, p.238).

When applying this to the Arctic, it would mean that it is about states wanting to have control over the Arctic territory with its unrenowable resources being the pivotal dimension of the stakeholder's interests. It is true that different stakeholders show interest in what the Arctic has to offer with its resources, shipping routes and fishing grounds. Having access to those can enhance a state's position in the geopolitical field. "Those who hold resources hold power; and those that hold power, hold resources" (Furlong & Norman, 2015, p.432). In this sense one might say that the Arctic is a 'pivot area' as in the Heartland theory by Mackinder, only not Eurasia being the heartland, but the Arctic (Bennett, 2014, p.75).

Though the Arctic offers a lot of economic opportunities, several stakeholders are concerned about the impacts of climate change. They are more interested in protecting the area rather than in its economic values. This research focuses on the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic, which can be either economically based, environmentally based or a combination of those two. Of course, other arguments on, for example, security can be an important reason for Dutch involvement in the Arctic as well. So, viewing the Arctic as a pivotal place with the resources as its main benefit would not cover the relationship with the Netherlands completely.

As explained earlier in this chapter, in the neoclassical approach, borders are a given. The Arctic region is not a state and does not have a clearly defined southern border. In fact, the Arctic region is hard to define. The whole region consists of five coastal states: Russia, United States, Canada, Norway and Greenland (Denmark); and three states above the Arctic circle: Sweden, Finland and Iceland. The last three do not have a direct coastline with the Arctic Ocean. There are several ways to define the southern boundary. This can be done by saying that in the Arctic the temperature is below 10°C for the whole year; the treeline; the Arctic circle being 66° 33 '3N; the cultural boundaries of where the indigenous people live; or the political boundaries of states (Arctic Centre, n.d.; Dodds & Nutall, 2016, p.18). Although these are different definitions, the eight Arctic states and the Arctic Ocean are always part of the Arctic territory. Only the extent differs. Figure 2.1 shows the definition by the Arctic Human Development report. It gives an idea of what the Arctic territory looks like.

***Figure 2.1: Arctic region defined by the Arctic Human Development Report***



Source: Arctic Centre, n.d.

The final traits of the neoclassical approach discussed in this paragraph are: geography offers a framework in which international geopolitics occurs, and the focus lies on national security and national interests. These two might be suitable for analysing the Arctic. Yet, the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic is international in itself. Besides, Dutch national security and interests are important, but international security and international interests play a part as well. Therefore, this thesis will use a critical approach.

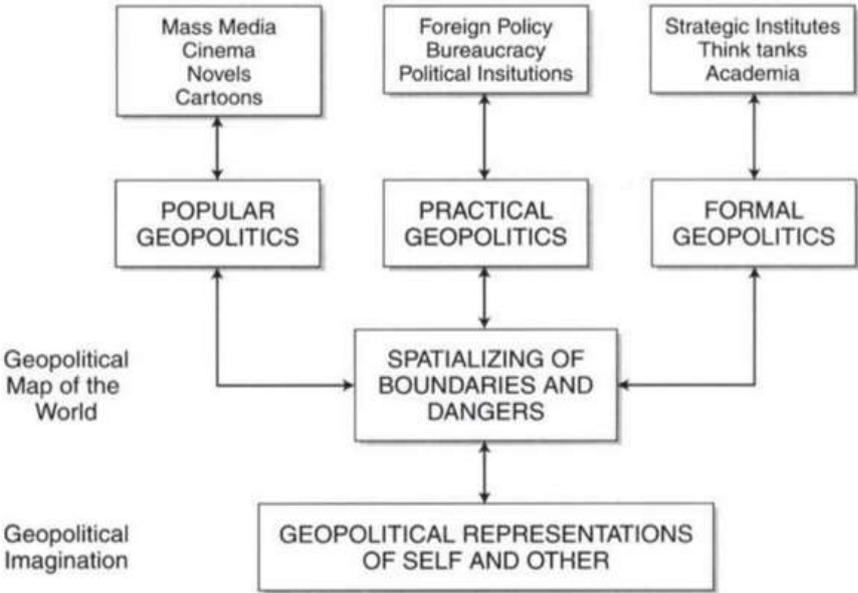
### **2.1.2 Critical geopolitics**

Critical geopolitics emerged in the late 1980s and contributed to understanding the discursive construction and knowledge generation of geopolitics (Bachmann & Mo시오, 2020, p.252). Whereas theories of classical geographers as Mackinder and Ratzel were part of their political philosophies and ambitions (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p.192), critical geopolitics rejects the idea of geography as an aid for statecraft (Bachmann & Mo시오, 2020, p.252). There are tensions within critical geopolitics among scholars on how the geopolitical discourse and agency should be textualized and materialized (Mo시오, 2015, p.223). It is not an intellectual and political given how someone analyses, engages and critiques certain geopolitical practices (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.15). There are similarities in how practitioners of critical geopolitics approach those geopolitical practices.

Critical geopolitics looks at “performances that characterize the everyday life of states” (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.12). It focusses on agency and conceptualizes geopolitics as culturally embedded in spatial practices of statecraft (Mo시오, 2015, p.223). To gain insights in these practices, practitioners of geopolitics deconstruct geopolitical processes and look at discourses (Bachmann & Mo시오, 2020, p.254). Discourses are conditions for what may be said, done and thought (Medby, 2018, p.120). They enable actors to write, speak, listen and act meaningfully (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p.193). This fits within the critical geopolitical idea that practices are socially constructed rather than a natural given. It is not only about the state within, but the state in relation to others. Mo시오 (2015, p.224) states that critical geopolitics emphasizes on international affairs.

There are three distinctions in critical geopolitics: popular geopolitics, practical geopolitics, and formal geopolitics (see figure 2.2). Popular geopolitics is about culture. It is used to scrutinize how geopolitics is reflected in media, stories, artefacts and all other kinds of cultural outings (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.13; Mamadouh & Dijkink, 2006, p.355). Practical geopolitics focusses on statements by state leaders and how they justify their foreign policy (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.13; Mamadouh & Dijkink 2006, p.355); Ide, 2016, p.6). Formal geopolitics is more about the scholarly and theoretical reasoning of geopolitics, the academics and advisors (Ide, 2016, p.6; Mamadouh & Dijkink, 2006, p.355). These three different domains overlap and shape each other (Ide, 2016, p.6).

**Figure 2.2: A critical theory of geopolitics as a set of representational practices**



Source: Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.14

This research focuses on the international relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic at the global scale. The aim is to scrutinize how the Netherlands to be involved in the Arctic region from an economic and environmental point of view. As explained in the beginning of this chapter the impact of climate change offers economic opportunities and creates environmental risks. These topics are relevant for the Dutch foreign policy, Dutch companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Therefore, practical geopolitics is the most suitable for scrutinizing this. Looking at the foreign policy of the ministry of foreign affairs and strategies used by Dutch companies and environmental NGOs contributes to a better understanding of the role of economy and the environment in Dutch involvement. How this research is conducted will be explained in chapter 3. The next paragraphs of this chapter will go further into Arctic related concepts.

**2.2 Security**

This thesis follows the idea by Vääänen (2021, p.618) of the geopolitical dimension of the Arctic being an attempt to secure competitive advantages in a time of globalization. Globalization in this thesis refers to a geography of networks. The flows of goods, money and people across boundaries within those networks make non-state actors as private businesses, banks and NGOs geopolitical actors (Flint, 2017). It is less about states being entities within their own territory. In this view political power is not only about controlling territory, but also about being able to construct networks to one’s own advantage (Flint, 2017, p.179).

We are living in a time of globalization where borders become more flexible. Territory and network are in many discourses seen as incomparable and competing forms of spatial organizations (Painter, 2010, p.1093). Painter (2010, p.1093) notes that network and territory are not rival concepts. Territory and network are connected to each other. It can be a network of different territories in a more conventional definition of territory, or networks where the borders of territories are not fixed. Actors want to frame these spaces of action. In that sense, network activities are not outside boundaries, because the actors operate within a framed, configured and crystallized space (Del Biaggio, 2015, p.37). Based on this, it can be concluded that the Arctic territory is governed by networks among state and non-state actors.

Globalization in combination with climate change will have security implications for the Arctic region (Berkman & Vylegzhanin, 2013, p.68). Berkman & Vylegzhanin (2013, pp.68-69) made a list of seven points where governance issues with security implications are most likely to appear. These seven points are:

- Accessibility to the passages and the rights to use them
- Maritime claims and boundary issues
- Commercial shipping and offshore oil- and gas exploitation
- Arctic fisheries
- Land claims
- Conservation of Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity
- Multi-level governance

Land claims and multi-level governance will not be discussed in this research. The land claims mainly apply to the unresolved claims of a number of indigenous people. Regional governance is about the interaction among different governance institutes at different scales. Both issues are not relevant in scrutinizing Dutch involvement. The other five issues that arise are relevant, since those address issues concerning economy, climate and the geopolitics at the international scale. Before diving into these specific security issues, it is useful to understand what security is.

Security can refer to several things. It can be about a certain feeling, an ontological state of being, a field of policymaking, a technical project or a source of political legitimacy, which one it refers to depends on the context (Martin, 2015, p.100). Security issues are a social construct of threats (Paglia, 2017, p.98). It implies “stability, predictability, physical safety, and collective cohesion” (Martin, 2015, p.100). In understanding security as a ‘mode of governing’ it is useful to approach it as a form of assemblage. An assemblage is an order of how different actors work together during a certain time (Müller, 2015, p.28). Müller (2015, pp.28-29) mentions that assemblages are: relational, productive, heterogeneous, caught up in the dynamic of territorialization and reterritorialization, and desired.

Assemblages help to understand why orders emerge as they do, how they are maintained and how they fall apart (Müller, 2015, p.27). Thinking in terms of assemblages makes it possible to acknowledge non-state actors as key players in politics (Martin, 2015, p.103). In assemblage topological distance is not important, it is more about how close actors are in the network (Müller, 2015, p.35). In political geographical research the aim is to understand how power results from assemblages and actor-networks (Müller, 2015, p.36). Territorialization and deterritorialization can be aspects of power by shutting out one particular assemblage as opposed to another or the suppleness and flexibility of perpetually moving barriers. For assemblages “examining the production of difference is key” (Müller, 2015, p.37). Assemblages are important in understanding the Arctic, because the melting ice in the region facilitates the emergence of different kinds of assemblages (Depledge, 2015, p.92). The Arctic can be a discourse of a “resource frontier, military theatre, environmental sanctuary or indigenous homeland” (Depledge, 2015, p.92). How these discourses play out depends on what kinds of human activities are performed and the non-human developments like the melting of the ice due to climate change. This all affects how the assemblage is shaped. If one of these elements are taken away, the assemblage changes.

All sorts of Arctic discourses, as introduced in the previous paragraph, are related to security. The two most relevant for this research are the idea of the Arctic as a ‘resource frontier’, related to economic security, and ‘environmental sanctuary’ related to environmental security. The Arctic currently is not a ‘military theatre’. The dominating discourse is the Arctic being a ‘zone of peace’ (Heininen, 2018, p.172). It is hard to say whether it will remain this way, but that is not a topic that will be discussed in this thesis. Security matters surrounding the ‘indigenous homeland’ is a research in itself, which is why this also will not be discussed in this thesis. How the Netherlands positions itself concerning indigenous people in relation to economic activity and the environment will be discussed in chapter 6.

The Arctic is an example of how the environment reshapes geopolitical codes. A geopolitical code is the manner in which a country orientates itself towards the world (Flint, 2017, p.52). It includes the potential allies and enemies, how allies can be maintained and how potential allies can be nurtured, how to counter enemies and threats, and how to justify all of this to the public and global community. Every country has one. The natural resources of the Arctic made the region more important for countries’ geopolitical codes (Flint, 2017, p. 264). Geopolitical codes are always relational and dynamic. Alliances between countries create security regions, just as networks of trade and diplomatic relations can be used to secure peaceful regions (Flint, 2017, p.70). An example of such an alliance that is relevant for this research is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

***Economic and environmental security***

In critical security studies economic security is about open or closed territorial borders and the development-security nexus (Martin, 2015, p.106). The open or closed territorial borders apply to the Arctic. Accessibility to the Arctic Ocean means new opportunities for shipping, fishing, resource extraction and other offshore practices. It enhances the possibilities of maritime claims as well. It makes the Arctic a place of intensifying geopolitical competition (Dodds, 2010, p.64). In Arctic geopolitics liberal arguments are dominant (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.206). This means that economic values are important in how states approach the region. From a liberal point of view human security discourses are linked to governance practices and economic opportunities (Martin, 2015, p.107). In the Arctic this shows in that the role of international law is emphasized and non-Arctic actors expect Arctic governments to strictly follow these rules (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.206).

As for environmental security, this is linked to climate change and the related risks and developments. The relationship between security and climate change can be powerful. When they become dominant, they can define the terms of debate about particular issues and become incorporated in political institutions (McDonald, 2013, p.44). McDonald (2013, p.44) discusses four discourses concerning climate and security: human security, national security, international security and ecological security. Which discourse prevails depends on whose security is discussed. Ecological security is rarely a topic for key political actors (McDonald, 2013, p.45). However, in the case of the Arctic, the discourse of the environmental sanctuary includes ecological security as a topic for debate.

Whether it is about economic, environmental or any other type of security, it requires identification and calculation of threats, risks and interventions (Martin, 2015, p.108). Table 2.1 shows the different discourses, whose security is at stake, the threat, the actors and how they tend to respond.

***Table 2.1 Discourses of climate security***

<b>Discourse</b>	<b>Referent</b>	<b>Threat</b>	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Response</b>
National security	Nation-state	Conflict, sovereignty, economic interest	State	Adaptation
Human Security	People	Life and livelihood, core values and practices	States, NGOs, international community, communities themselves, international organizations	Mitigation
International security	International society	Conflict, global stability	International organizations	Mitigation and Adaptation
Ecological Security	Biosphere	Challenges to equilibrium associated with contemporary political, social and economic structures	People: changing political consciousness	Fundamental reorientation of societal patterns and behaviour

Source: McDonald, 2013, p.49

In this thesis, ecological and economic security are emphasized. In the case of the Arctic, it is hard to ignore international security. Many international organizations are involved in how the Arctic is governed. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of territory and governance in the Arctic.

There are differences in how countries approach climate-security. For example, the United States uses a conflict-oriented military approach and Germany uses a long-term approach aimed to create a global climate regime (Von Lucke et al., 2014, p.858). ‘Risk’ is a concept applied to environmental and particularly climate issues (Von Lucke et al., 2014, p.860).

Climate change can be constructed as an immediate and existential threat to the survival of an entire island that requires urgent counteraction (“Security”), or it can be constructed as a potential threat that may gradually undermine the way we live today and should lead us to take precautionary measures (“Risk”). (Von Lucke et al., 2014, p.861).

If a state uses a more risk-oriented argumentation the threat is more diffuse, the focus lies on long-term, precautionary measures (Von Lucke et al., 2014, p.873). These measures are useful to target root causes of climate change.

### **2.3 Territory and governance**

Territories are not eternal, but created and transformed by institutional practices (Paasi, 1996, p.3). Landscapes are always social constructs around social institutions (Paasi, 1996, p.28). In the case of the Arctic, these institutions are not established in the form of a central government, but in the form of institutions facilitating international cooperation. It is a spatial platform of international cooperation (Väättänen & Zimmerbauer, 2020, p.376). Steinveg (2021, p.40) describes it as “governance without government”. It is a form of non-hierarchical coordination based on voluntary commitments and conflicts are solved through negotiation. Steinveg (2021, p.40) notes that the involvement of non-state actors is more effective when a strong state ensures their contributions.

“Governance without government” is not the only form of governing. Hysing (2009, p.315) identifies four modes in which governing can occur:

1. Command and control: the government has government instruments based on sovereign authority.
2. Governing through delegation: public functions are delegated to private actors through privatization, outsourcing and contracting out.
3. Enable and influence: enabling and influencing private governing arrangements
4. Governance without government: arrangements do not rely on state authority and do not involve governmental actors.

The third mode, enable and influence, is the most important when looking at networks (Hysing, 2009, p.315). In this case governments are able to shape the institutional context of private governing arrangements, by setting the ground rules. Another way to influence private arrangements is by facilitating and/or sponsoring certain projects (Hysing, 2009, p.316). If a government decides to give up its authoritative position to work with the collectively agreed rules, it is also about government participation. The governance in the Arctic has more similarities with the mode ‘enable and influence’ as a mode of governance rather than ‘governance without government’. Governing the Arctic is about a collaboration among states, NGOs and organizations of indigenous people. Facilitating cooperation among those different stakeholders is important, as climate change is a transboundary issue with long-term consequences (Reed & Bruyneel, 2010, p.649). Besides, the aim is to maintain the Arctic as a region of peace and cooperation (Wilson Rowe & Blakkisrud, 2014, p.82). It is not a given that this will stay this way forever.

How governance appears depends on the different institutional forms in different contexts (Peters & Pierre, 1998, p.228). When looking at how governments articulate and pursue collective interests, Hysing (2009, p.314) identifies two different standpoints. The first is that globalization, privatization and multi-level governance reduced the capacity of states while at the same time the legitimacy and integrity of the state have been questioned. The other point is that there is more of a shift in the role of states rather than a diminished position of states.

Political recognition of territory is one of the most important issues concerning Arctic geopolitics (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.210). The Arctic does not belong to one particular state. Its openness is central to the performance of Arctic geopolitics (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.205). The ownership of the seabed of the Arctic Ocean is not determined yet. Therefore, the discussion of the division of the Arctic territory is still prevalent. The Arctic is mostly oceanic, fluid, frozen and the vast majority is uninhabited (Medby, 2018, p.119). The parts that are land fall within the sovereignty of each of the eight Arctic states. Therefore, there is no doubt about the sovereignty of the parts that are land. The seabed however is a different story. The water within two hundred nautical miles from the shore are part of the Arctic states' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). All the water beyond two hundred nautical miles from the shore is part of the international waters (Baker & Mooney, 2013, p.87). Within its EEZ a coastal state has:

sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds. (United Nations, 1982)

It also entails the right to perform scientific research, establish artificial islands or put effort in protecting and preserving biodiversity. Basically, it means a coastal state can do whatever it wants with the water and its seabed as long as it is conform to international legislation. Officially a state has the sovereign rights over its EEZ as long as it does not overlap claims of neighbouring states (Dodds, 2010, p.68). In the case of the Arctic an exception is made, called the 'Arctic exception' or the 'ice clause'. This clause implies that Arctic coastal states have the right to enact non-discriminatory regulations as prevention, reduction and control of maritime vessels in ice-covered areas within those two hundred nautical miles. Especially in the regions where the ice-covered areas can cause serious obstruction or hazards for navigation (Clarke-Sather et al., 2017, p.351).

The claims made by Arctic states apply to the seabed and not to the water above it. So, if a state's claim of the seabed is authorized by the CLCS, it means that the state has sovereignty over the seabed, but the waters remain international. Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia, submitted claims to the CLCS to extend their limit of the continental shelf of the Arctic Ocean. Russia's claim of the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridge were the largest (Clarke-Sather et al., 2017, p.352). When a country wants to have sovereign rights beyond this limit, it has to provide scientific evidence that it should have the legal say over this part of the sea (Dodds, 2010, p.68; Laruelle, 2015, p.125). The CLCS is the United Nations (UN) body advising on the submission of coastal states that want to extend their territory (Dodds, 2010, p.67). Landlocked countries cannot be a member of this commission. Dodds (2010, p.72) explains that Arctic states make these claims, because they want certainty and recognition. Besides, owning the seabed also means owning its resource potential. As long as the CLCS has not verified or denied those claims, no one is allowed to perform activities in these areas. This is not an issue, because most of these parts of the ocean are currently not accessible at all.

Access to the Arctic Ocean is not about territorial control, but about having competitive advantage and using the geopolitical dimension to consolidate this and by that contributing to the reterritorialization of a state at the supranational scale (Väättänen, 2021, p.622). Reterritorialization means that territorial geopolitical entities other than the nation-state are becoming increasingly important (Flint, 2017, p.147). This reterritorialization is a tool for developing a regulatory regime for promoting nation exports and validating the envisioned competitive advantages (Väättänen, 2021, p.635).

This chapter provided the framework in which this research is conducted. A critical approach will be used to gain a better understanding of the (international) relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic and how the Dutch environmental and economic interests are represented in the Arctic. Looking at the practical geopolitics practiced by the Dutch government, Dutch companies, and environmental NGOs provides the insights needed for answering the research question. The second part of this chapter elaborated on the concepts security, territory and governance. This thesis is mainly about environmental and ecological security. Climate change shapes the conditions in which the events in the Arctic occur. Therefore, assemblages have been explained in this chapter. The theme 'climate change' will be used for the analysis to get a better idea of its role in the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic. The same applies for the theme 'economy'. As for territory and governance, chapter four will give some additional information on how the Arctic territory is organized. Governance is included as one of the four themes for analysing the data. The next chapter will go further into how the concepts are operationalized and how this research is conducted.

### 3. Research outline

This chapter elaborates on the research methods that have been used for this research. The theoretical framework explained the approach and concepts used for this research and the previous chapter gave a description of the Arctic and Dutch involvement to give a better understanding of the subject. The first paragraph of this chapter entails the chosen method. This is followed by the operationalization and data collection. The last paragraph is about the ethical considerations and research limitations.

#### 3.1 Research design

The aim of this research is to gain insights into the benefits of being involved in the Arctic for the Netherlands from a climatological and economical perspective. A qualitative research design is the most suitable for scrutinizing this, because this research is about the objectives of Dutch stakeholders. To answer the research questions nine semi-structured interviews were held and 22 official publications by several stakeholders have been analysed. The selection of potential interviewees and documents is based on the idea of ‘practical geopolitics’ as discussed in paragraph 2.1.2. This means looking at statements by the geopolitical actors in the Arctic. Cooperation of the Arctic is based on networks. In a network private businesses and NGOs are geopolitical actors as well (Flint, 2017). As explained in the theoretical framework assemblages are useful in understanding the Arctic. In assemblage thinking non-state actors are acknowledged as key players in politics (Martin, 2015, p.103). Therefore, in this research, Dutch companies and environmental NGOs are viewed as actors in Arctic geopolitics. On top of that, assemblages help understanding the role of non-material factors on geopolitics as well. In this thesis, this means the impacts of the melting of the ice caps on decision-making by Dutch stakeholders and in the Arctic in general.

#### 3.2 Operationalization

The transcripts and documents have been analysed through coding, meaning that the data are treated as potential indicators of concepts (Bryman, 2016, p.573). The used codes were made based on the concepts of the theoretical framework. A trial has been done to make sure all relevant codes were included for the analysis. Afterwards the codes have been divided in groups to get a grip on the four overarching themes. The themes and sub-themes were:

- Climate Change: codes are based on the discourse of the Arctic being an ‘environmental sanctuary’ (Depledge, 2015, p.92)
  - ‘Biodiversity and ecosystems’
  - ‘Nature protection’ and ‘protected areas’
  - ‘vulnerable’ and ‘valuable’
- Economy: codes are based on possible economic opportunities and risks as described in chapter 2 and during the trial.
  - ‘Accessibility’: access to the Arctic Ocean is not about territorial control, but about having competitive advantage (Väätänen, 2021, p. 622).
  - ‘Shipping’
  - ‘Fishing’
  - ‘Oil and gas’ and ‘mining’ of mineral resources
  - ‘Tourism’
  - ‘Harbour of Rotterdam’
  - ‘Harbours’ in general
  - Other ‘maritime companies’ refers to all other maritime activities in the Arctic

- Governance: everything related to governing the Arctic
  - ‘Arctic Council’: for all AC related statements
  - ‘International cooperation’: The Arctic is a spatial platform of international cooperation (Väätänen & Zimmerbauer, 2020, p.376)
  - ‘Jurisdiction’: acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Arctic states, and references to international jurisdiction, because an emphasis on international law are related to liberal arguments (Dittmer et al., 2011, p. 206).
  - ‘Treaties and conventions’: this code is related to the code ‘jurisdiction’, this code refers to specific treaties and conventions such as the Paris agreement or the possibility of an Arctic treaty
- Security
  - ‘Military’: the potential of the Arctic becoming a ‘military theatre’ as described by Depledge (2015, p.92)
  - ‘Peace’ and ‘stability’: the dominating discourse is the Arctic as a ‘zone of peace’ (Heininen, 2018, p.172)
  - ‘Risks’: potential threat to how we live and something to take precautionary measures on (Von Lucke et al., 2014, p.861)
  - ‘NATO’: the international platform of security matters, because the AC does not discuss those.

The data derived from the interviews are the foundation of this research. Interviews give deeper insights and explanations of the stakeholders’ views. The document analysis provides a contextual background and gives insights into official statements to the audience. The interviews have been recorded with permission of the interviewees and have been transcribed accordingly. The data has been coded in English and quotes are translated for the results chapter. The codes have been determined through the sub-questions of this research and the operationalization of the concepts. The interviews helped in reconsidering the focus of this research and whether and how the research question should be reshaped. The collected data has been derived from stakeholders with direct ties and knowledge of the Arctic region. The collected data is based on their own experiences and perspectives on the North pole.

When all the data was retrieved and transcribed, it has been coded in the program Atlas.ti. Based on the output of this coding, the data has been analysed. The results of this are discussed in the chapters 5 and 6.

### **3.3 Collecting data**

As explained in the theoretical framework, this research focuses on practical geopolitics. So, the analysis will be based on data retrieved from the Dutch government, and on data from Dutch companies and environmental NGOs that are involved in the Arctic. The latter are both included, because they are involved in the Arctic network and relate to Dutch economic and environmental activity in the Arctic. First, the data collection of the interviews will be discussed. This is followed by a paragraph on the way in which the documents were retrieved.

#### ***Interviews***

Interviews can provide more insights in the position and interests of the Netherlands. Besides, interviewees can give information that is not available in publications. The interviews were semi-structured to make sure all topics are covered. The interviews were flexible, with an emphasis on what the interviewee considered important in explaining the topics (Bryman, 2016, p.468). A topic list was used as a guide to make sure all concepts were covered during the conversations (see appendix 1). The interviews took around 30/45 minutes and were conducted in Dutch.

The background research on Dutch involvement in the Arctic provided information on which organizations were relevant to contact for an interview. Snowball sampling was used to find more people involved in the Arctic. People who are relevant to this research were contacted and used to establish contact with others (Bryman, 2016, p.188). At the end of each interview, the interviewees were asked whether they knew other people who would be relevant for this research and willing to cooperate as well or if they knew of any relevant documents.

The respondents were selected based on their involvement in the Arctic region. The focus of this research lies on the combination of climate, economy and politics. From these three perspectives stakeholders were identified. I contacted companies who are a member of the Dutch Arctic Circle Network and asked them if they knew other companies. Furthermore, I contacted several NGOs who have or have had campaigns concerning the Arctic. Also, I contacted the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through them I came into contact with people who are involved in the Arctic region both from private businesses and the government. There were also companies who did not want to cooperate or did not respond at all. For example, I had the opportunity to talk to someone from the World Wide Fund for Nature, but not someone from Greenpeace. Companies as Shell, Van Oord and Boskalis did not want to cooperate, because they are currently not active in the region. Out of the 24 people I contacted, nine were willing to do an interview. A Shell employee was willing to answer some questions via email. The full list of respondents is in appendix 2.

### ***Documents***

Analysing documents is interesting, because they are authentic and have meaning (Bryman, 2016, pp.560-561). People or institutions writing documents have a certain message or view they want to present. So, when looking at the credibility of documents, it is probable that the source is biased (Bryman, 2016, p.560). Documents by the Dutch government and other Dutch stakeholders can thus provide insights into how they frame the Arctic and how they explain their presence there.

The criteria used for finding documents were:

- The documents have to be available in Dutch or English
- Preferably the documents are published in the period 2016-2021, because this covers the time period of the previous Dutch polar strategy and the newest Dutch polar strategy
- The word 'Arctic' or 'Noordpool' has to be mentioned in the document
- The Arctic has to be a subject that is extensively discussed in the document.
- The documents are published by a Dutch stakeholder or must have ties to a Dutch stakeholder

A few exceptions were made concerning the timeframe. For the Dutch government the policy framework 2011-2015 is included, because it is the first policy framework concerning the Arctic that addresses political and economic challenges, the policy framework gives more context and is more extensive than the strategies that followed. The information given in this document is still relevant. Another exception is a document from Shell. Shell does not have many documents that specifically address the Arctic since 2016, because they do not perform offshore oil exploitations anymore. Therefore, one more article is included from 2014. This is the year before Shell retreated from the area, so the research now has a statement from Shell from before and after it decided to leave the Arctic. The last exception is a report from the WWF. This is a document sent by the interviewee from the WWF. He mentioned that this document is still relevant for the WWF's standpoints.

This search resulted in 22 documents: twelve from the Dutch government, six from environmental NGOs and four by private companies. The documents published by the Dutch government include: one policy framework, two polar strategies and three publications by the parliament and three observer reports from the AC. The documents by the Dutch parliament include parliamentary questions. From these documents only the answers have been analysed. The documents from environmental NGOs are retrieved from the websites of the WWF and Greenpeace, one was sent by Gert Polet from the WWF. The WWF and Greenpeace are the only environmental NGOs in the Netherlands that directly address the Arctic. On top of that, the WWF is the only NGO represented in the Arctic Council. For Dutch businesses it was hard to find documents on their websites.

Therefore, only documents from Shell and one publication from the DAC have been analysed. Luckily the views of the private sector are represented in the data retrieved from the interviews. The full list of analysed documents is included in appendix 3.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations and Research limitations**

The respondents were informed about the content of this research by email when asking them if they were willing to cooperate as well as at the beginning of the interview. Before starting the interview, the participants gave verbal consent to participate. To respect their privacy, I have asked the participants if I was allowed to mention their name. The participants who did not agree, are included anonymously. All respondents have been asked for permission to record the interview for the transcripts. The steps taken to make sure the interviews were conducted in accordance with the research ethics as described by Bryman (2016, pp.125-134).

This research has been conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. When contacting the envisaged participants, I gave the option to meet in person or conduct the interview online. All interviews have been conducted online via Teams or Zoom. This was not a limitation, because we were able to see and speak to each other. Participants spoke freely about their perspectives. The Covid-19 measures have been going on for a year now. Because of the measures, the rest of this research was mainly desk research. When writing the research proposal these limitations were already taken into consideration to make sure the measurements would not be a limitation. This worked. Another limitation, that might be due to the pandemic, but can also be personal considerations, is that not everyone I have contacted wanted to cooperate. Everyone who did cooperate shared their knowledge and perspectives extensively.

A qualitative research design is hard to replicate, because its research design is often unique (Bryman, 2016, p.398). Although it is hard to replicate, because the approach depends on the researcher, I intend to be as transparent as possible in how data has been retrieved and analysed. Also, the goal of this research is not to generalize all stakeholders involved in the Arctic region. Its main focus lies on Dutch stakeholders or Dutch based stakeholders and thus provides meaningful insights into the Dutch objectives and perspectives concerning the Arctic. This research has derived in-depth and valuable knowledge based on the narratives of Dutch stakeholders who are, or have been, involved in the Arctic region. The aim is not to generalize all non-Arctic involvement in the Arctic, but this research can give insights for similar cases. It also can contribute to a better understanding of Arctic governance.

Another limitation might be my own positionality. Qualitative research is likely to be affected by characteristics of the researcher and interpretation is subjective to the researcher's positionality (Bryman, 2016, p.399). I am Dutch, so it is written from a Dutch perspective. I have a background in political geography with an interest in environmental protection strategies and equality issues. So, this thesis is written from a more geopolitical, environmental perspective instead of a more economic perspective.

## 4. The Arctic

This chapter provides a context of international cooperation in the Arctic and Dutch involvement. The first part will explain cooperation among different actors and the legislator structure of the Arctic. The second part will give more information on Dutch involvement in the Arctic region.

### 4.1 Explaining Arctic cooperation

Both the Arctic and Antarctic have a history of international cooperation and a need for governance (Young, 2016, p.231). The biggest difference in governing these regions is that there is an Antarctic treaty and not an Arctic treaty. The Antarctic treaty was signed in 1961. It entails that Antarctica can only be used for peaceful purposes, international scientific cooperation, and is suspended from territorial claims (Dodds & Nuttall, 2016, p.91). Such a treaty is possible, because the Antarctic is a continent surrounded by an ocean. It has no residents and states and because of the Antarctic treaty it will never have (Arctic Centre, n.d.). It is argued that the Arctic should be governed within a treaty system like the Antarctic (Bruun & Medby, 2014, p.919). An Arctic treaty would be much harder to establish, because it is an ocean surrounded by land, includes several states and is inhabited. Besides, most of the Arctic lies within the jurisdiction of the Arctic states, the region has large-scale industrial activities, the permanent residents are vocal in any institutional arrangements that address Arctic issues, and it is a militarised region. It would be complex to make a comprehensive agreement (Young, 2016, p.236).

In contrast to the Antarctic, the Arctic is governed through a complex patchwork of institutions, which makes it a distinct political region (Bruun & Medby, 2014, p.917). Formal Arctic cooperation started with the Polar Bear Agreement in 1973, when the individual Arctic countries started to develop their policies and respective Arctic regions (Koivurova, 2010, p.147). The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) of 1991 resulted in the establishment of the Arctic-eight as an institution, consisting of the USA, Russia, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland. The critique was that it could not elaborate on its environmental focus sufficiently. Transboundary pollution was emphasized but has not been included as an independent set (Keskitalo, 2007, p.197). Closely after the establishment of the AEPS, the Arctic Council (AC) was established in 1996. This regionalized the Arctic by creating a regional framework for cooperation (Väättänen, 2021, p.623). It is remarkable that the AC does not use a specific definition of where the southern border of the Arctic is.

Up to the present day, the AC is the primary forum for discussing Arctic matters (Bruun & Medby, 2014, p.918). Nowadays it consists of the eight Arctic states, six indigenous people organizations, and thirteen non-Arctic states and 25 organizations have observer status (see table 4.1). The Arctic council can only advise countries and does not address military issues (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.208). The institution cannot act without government approval and all decisions are taken by participants' consensus (Steinveg, 2021, p.40). The main issues they address concern the climate and sustainable development. One of the Arctic states is the chair, this position rotates every two years. From 2019 to 2021 Iceland was chair, the Russian federation chairs the AC from 2021 to 2023 (Arctic Council, n.d.). The AC does not have a programming budget and does not address military security. Arctic states and international bodies have their own responsibility in which projects they decide to sponsor and the legislation of the region (Arctic Council, n.d.). The fact the AC has members that are not located closely to the Arctic shows that it is hard to say whether it will remain a criterion of geographical location as determinative for permanent membership in the future (Young, 2016, p.233). It is a forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, indigenous people and other inhabitants to work on solving Arctic issues (Arctic Council, n.d.).

Non-Arctic states express interests in the economic potential and governance of the Arctic region (Dodds & Nuttall, 2016, p.24). Non-Arctic states position themselves in relation to the region to gain economic and political leverage (Väättänen, 2021, p.616). Other non-Arctic actors such as Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are calling for protecting the Arctic from pollution and other ecological damaging activities (Dodds & Nuttall, 2016, p.24). To involve non-Arctic actors, they were given an observer role in the AC. Although they are accepted as observers, they sometimes speak up about strategies, which is not a part of their role (Steinveg, 2021, p.47).

Non-Arctic states claim they have the right to speak up about Arctic strategies, because the Arctic Ocean is part of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and should be treated as any other maritime area. This relates to the conclusion by Väättä and Zimmerbauer (2020, p.358) that non-Arctic states try to undermine or change rules made by the AC while also following the rules made by the AC.

The Arctic is a place where science and politics are intertwined. There is power connected to possessing the most advanced knowledge of the territory (Bruun & Medby, 2014, p.919). In the Arctic, science contributes to the authoritative guidelines for politics, meaning that scientific knowledge here has not only the role to enhance human knowledge (Dittmer et al., 2011, p.203). This knowledge is provided by both Arctic and non-Arctic states.

**Table 4.1: members of the Arctic Council**

<b>Arctic Council</b>		
<b>Permanent members</b>		
<b>Arctic States:</b>	<b>Indigenous people organizations (permanent members):</b>	
Canada	Aleut International Association	
Denmark	Arctic Athabaskan Council	
Finland	Gwich'in Council	
Iceland	International Inuit Circumpolar Council	
Norway	Russian Association of Indigenous People of the North	
The Russian Federation	Saami Council	
Sweden		
The United States		
<b>Observatory members</b>		
<b>Non-Arctic states:</b>	<b>Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary organizations:</b>	<b>NGO's:</b>
France	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)	Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea (ACOPS)
Germany	International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	Arctic Institute of North America (AINA)
Italy	International Maritime Organization (IMO)	Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH)
Japan	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU)
The Netherlands	Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)	International Arctic Science Committee (IASC)
China	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO)	International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA)
Poland	North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)	International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH)
India	OSPAR Commission	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
Republic of Korea	Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR)	Northern Forum (NF)
Republic of Singapore	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Oceana
Spain	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	University of the Arctic (UArctic)
Switzerland	World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	World Wide Fund for Nature Arctic Programme (WWF)
United Kingdom	West Nordic Council (WNC)	

Source: Arctic Council, n.d.

The AC is not the only organization determining practices in the Arctic. There is a large variety in types of legislation and organizations that determine the political order in the Arctic. These vary from the local scale to the international scale. The international law is not targeted at the Arctic specifically. It does apply to the parts of the Arctic within international jurisdiction. The legislations and organizations vary in age. The Spitsbergen-treaty was established in 1920, while the treaty on marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction is still in development. Both are relevant in how the Arctic is governed nowadays. The following list gives an idea of the legislations and organizations that currently exist in the Arctic besides the AC. The list is in alphabetical order, because it provides an overview of some of the most important legislations and organizations in the Arctic that still apply today. There are more organizations active in the Arctic. Their activities vary from the regional scale to the international scale. This applies to legislation too. The Arctic states all have their own strategies and legislation concerning the whole Arctic region and the parts that are within their own jurisdiction. For this list, mainly international legislations and organizations are included, since those are most relevant for this research. Paragraph 4.2 will explain in which organizations and treaties the Netherlands is involved.

### ***List of organizations and legislations in the Arctic***

- Arctic Circle Assembly: Organizes forums in which different agents can discuss specific areas of Arctic cooperation. It is an annual international gathering (Arctic Circle, n.d.)
- Arctic Economic Council (AEC): established for business-to-business activities and responsible for economic development in the Arctic (Arctic Economic Council, n.d.). The establishment of this was an initiative of the AC.
- Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC): forum specifically about the Barents region. The BEAC is created to maintain political long-term stability and reducing possible tensions within the region (Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation, n.d.).
- BBNJ: Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. This international legally binding instrument by the UN is still in development
- IMO Polar Code: Code for ships operating in Polar waters. It covers everything concerning environmental protection matters and safety matters for ships operating in the inhospitable waters of the two poles (International Maritime Organization, n.d.-b)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO): the specialized organization of the UN for safety and security of shipping, and prevention of pollution by ships (International Maritime Organization, n.d.-a)
- NATO: a political and military alliance to guarantee freedom and security of its members (NATO, n.d.)
- OSPAR Convention: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
- Paris Agreement: international treaty on climate change
- Search and rescue convention (SAR): an international system to cover search and rescue operations at sea. The SAR organization co-ordinates the rescue of persons in distress at sea (International Maritime Organization, n.d.)
- Spitsbergen-treaty: treaty on the sovereignty of Svalbard (further explained in paragraph 4.1)
- UNCLOS: UN Convention of the Law of the sea, the international parts of the Arctic Ocean are part of this law.

### **4.2 The Netherlands and the Arctic**

The Netherlands has been involved in the Arctic region since the 16th century. Back then it was mainly about cod-fishing and whaling (Arctic institute, n.d.). Also, the Dutch explorer Willem Barentsz started to look for the northern passage in 1596 to find a shorter trade route to Asia. Barentsz's expedition to find the passage failed, but he did discover Svalbard. In the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch discovered whales underneath the ice and dominated the whaling-industry in the Arctic until 1678 (Scheepvaartmuseum, 2019).

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Netherlands claimed administrative authority of Svalbard. In 1920 the Dutch company *N.V. Nederlandsche Spitsbergen Compagnie (Nespico)* started exploiting a coalmine on the island (Scheepvaartmuseum, 2019). The Netherlands was not the only country interested in mining on Svalbard. When mining became the dominating economic field on Svalbard at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became important who owned the land (Stange, 2020). Eventually the ‘Spitsbergen’-treaty was signed in 1920 by fourteen countries including the Netherlands. The outcome of the treaty is that Svalbard falls under Norwegian sovereignty, all citizens of signatory countries have free access and the right of economic activities on Svalbard, and the island remains demilitarized (Stange, 2020).

Nowadays, the Netherlands is still involved in the Arctic. It is an observatory member in the AC and the BEAC, is a member of the UN, NATO, and the IMO, meaning that all the conventions mentioned in the previous paragraph apply to the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Netherlands has signed the Spitsbergen-treaty and Paris agreement. Not only the Dutch government is involved. Private companies as Royal Dutch Shell, Royal Haskoning DHV and other maritime related companies have had activities in the Arctic as well. Royal Dutch Shell has performed oil- and gas exploitation in the region and still holds some licenses for exploitation. Royal Haskoning DHV is a consultancy company for international engineering, design and project management, which also entails consulting projects in the Arctic. Other maritime companies are dredging companies, companies specialised in offshore activities, the port of Rotterdam, maritime facilitators and so on. To bring Arctic actors together, the Netherlands has a Dutch Arctic Circle network (DAC), which is a platform where public and private stakeholders can share their knowledge and skills concerning economic activities in the Arctic (Dutch Arctic Circle, n.d.).

As for the NGOs, the WWF and Greenpeace both have an office in the Netherlands and have campaigns concerning the Arctic. They contribute to consultations of, among others, the DAC in how economic activities in the Arctic can be approached. The WWF is also the only nature conservation organization represented in the AC. Table 4.2 shows the AC’s working groups and in which the Netherlands and the WWF are involved. This will give a better idea of the activities of the AC as well.

**Table 4.2: Involvement of the Netherlands and the WWF in working groups of the AC**

<b>Working group</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>WWF</b>
Arctic Contaminants Action Programme (ACAP)		
Arctic Monitoring and Assessment programme (AMAP)	X	
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)	X	X
Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (EPPR)		
Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)	X	X
Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)	X	

Source: Arctic Council, n.d.

## 5. Objectives of Dutch actors

As explained in chapter 2, this research has been conducted through a practical geopolitical approach. Meaning that it focuses on statements by state leaders and how foreign policy is justified (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p.13; Mamadouh & Dijkink 2006, p.355). Chapter 4 explained how non-state actors are involved in Arctic governance. This links to the concept of assemblage. In the theoretical framework of this thesis, it was explained that assemblages make it possible to acknowledge non-state actors as key players in politics (Martin, 2015, p. 103). In the theoretical framework, it was also explained that assemblages are important in understanding the Arctic, because the melting ice in the regions facilitates the emergence of new opportunities and risks (Depledge, 2015, p.92). Therefore, practical geopolitics in this thesis means analysing the statements of companies and NGOs, because they affect Arctic policy, and with that are relevant in scrutinizing the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic (see also chapter 3).

Chapters 5 and 6 will discuss the results of the analysis, which is conducted as described in paragraph 3.2. For the analysis, the documents and transcripts have been coded in the 2019 version of Atlas.ti. The coding has been done according to the codes introduced in chapter 3. The data have been sorted by entity resulting in a document group for the data of the Dutch government, a group for the NGOs, and a group for Dutch businesses. The respondent from the Dutch Arctic centre is included in the governmental documents, because the Arctic centre contributes to research in the working groups of the AC.

This chapter will discuss the answers to the sub-questions, which will give insights into the main objectives of the Dutch government, Dutch businesses and NGOs. The next chapter will go more in depth on the four themes (climate change, governance, economy, security). This provides more insights into the similarities and differences among the different Dutch actors. Both chapters contribute to answering the main question in the concluding chapter.

### 5.1 Dutch government

This paragraph discusses the results of three analysed transcripts and twelve Dutch policy documents. Three of these documents represent the Dutch policy concerning the Arctic. The policy framework 2011-2015 is made by the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012). The two polar strategies (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2020) are a collaboration among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment. For the construction of these strategies private stakeholders have been consulted as well. Four of the analysed documents are published on the website of the AC. These are the Dutch observer reports of 2016, 2018 and 2021, and an interview with the Dutch representatives in the Arctic. The last five documents have been retrieved from the website of the Dutch parliament. These include the answers to parliamentary questions on the Dutch polar policy, and a letter from the Dutch minister of foreign affairs in 2019. Furthermore, the analysis included two interviews with officers from the Ministry of Foreign affairs (Interview 4 & 9). The outcomes of the interview with Annette Scheepstra from the Arctic Centre in Groningen are included in this part as well (Interview 7). The Arctic Centre is active in the working groups AMAP, CAFF, PAME and SDWG of the AC. Annette Scheepstra explained that the working groups originally are targeted at doing research, but over the years they have become more political. Chapter 4 discussed that in Arctic governance science and politics are connected, and that science contributes to authoritative guidelines for politics (Dittmer et al., 2011). Therefore, the Arctic Centre is included in this paragraph. The analysis of these documents answers the sub-question: *How is the Dutch government involved in Arctic governance?*

The Netherlands has a 'strong connection' to the Arctic (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2021, p. 1). Historical ties, migratory birds, and the impacts climate change has on weather patterns are (in)direct links between the Netherlands and the Arctic. Climate change and economic activity are direct ties between the Netherlands and the Arctic. Dutch involvement shows in contributing to polar research and international cooperation (Arctic Council, 2020; Ministry of foreign affairs, 2021, p.1). The Netherlands is directly involved in the AC.

Despite its observer status, the Netherlands is an active member of the working groups and eager to share its knowledge on sustainable technology, and biodiversity and ecosystems. International law and discussing matters in international platforms are emphasized many times. This relates to the argument of Dittmer et al. (2011) which is explained in the theoretical framework. In their article Dittmer et al. (2011) explain that liberal arguments are dominant in approaching the Arctic. This is reflected by the emphasis on international law and institutions. This shows in the Dutch approach of the Arctic. International cooperation fits in the discourse of the Arctic being a 'zone of peace'. For maintaining this the Netherlands puts effort in the AC not becoming a platform for discussing military security matters. As for economic activity, the Dutch government supports it, but it has to be performed according to the Dutch and international rules. Protecting the Arctic climate remains an important priority.

Dutch scientists are represented in working groups (see table 4.2) and government officials attend the political meetings. In these meetings "they support Dutch Scientific research in the Arctic." (Arctic Council, 2018, p.2). As explained in the theoretical framework, knowledge is attached to power (Bruun & Medby, 2014, p.919). The Netherlands uses science and knowledge to strengthen its position in the AC by promoting and financing it. Hereby is also mentioned that without international cooperation the Netherlands would not be able to perform Arctic research at all (Rijksoverheid, 2020, p.33).

How is the Dutch government involved in Arctic governance? Dutch involvement shows in contributing to scientific research and maintaining international relations through international cooperation. Their objectives are mainly presented in the AC, which is the primary forum for Arctic matters. How the Netherlands approaches the Arctic within the discourse of the Arctic as a 'zone of peace'. In the theoretical framework it is explained that this is the dominating discourse for the Arctic (Heininen, 2018, p.172). The Dutch government shares this dominating discourse. The main driver for Dutch involvement is climate change. As explained in chapter 2, the melting ice facilitates the emergence of different kinds of assemblages (Depledge, 2015, p.92). In the case of the Netherlands, this means that the melting ice is a threat to the biodiversity and ecosystems, but the Dutch government supports economic activity as long as it does not threaten the environment. Chapter 6 will elaborate more on how Dutch stakeholders deal with the effects of climate change in the Arctic.

## 5.2 Dutch Companies

To gain insights into the standpoints of the Dutch companies, five interviews have been conducted (Interview 1, 2, 3, 6 & 8) and four documents have been analysed (see appendix 3). Companies are not represented in the AC. Royal Dutch Shell has applied for observatory membership of the AC, but its application was denied due to time constraints of the admission board. Although companies are not directly involved in Arctic governance, they are part of the network and thus Dutch geopolitical actors. To research the role of companies in the Arctic and how they contribute to the Dutch positionality, this paragraph will answer the question: *what are the environmental and economic interests of Dutch private stakeholders?*

For cooperation among public and private stakeholders in the Netherlands the Dutch Arctic Circle network (DAC) has been established. In the beginning it was mostly a network of oil, gas, and offshore companies. When they retreated from the Arctic, they did not need this platform anymore. Eventually it was revitalized by the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs to involve other stakeholders within the Arctic region as well (Interview 3). Currently, the companies involved are active in shipping, infrastructure, transport and tourism (Interview 3). Tourism benefits from the melting icecaps, because it is easier to visit some of the islands with tourists (Interview 2).

Companies do cooperate with the Dutch government or are supported by it. Nowadays, there is not much Dutch economic activity in the Arctic. In 2015 most oil companies, among which Royal Dutch Shell, retreated from the region due to low oil prices. The company is currently not active in the region but keeps its licenses where it is possible. They also quit their trial exploitation in Alaska due to disappointing results. Alaska was not the only place in the Arctic where Shell was active.

Royal Dutch Shell (2014; 2016) argues that Arctic oil will be needed in the future to provide enough energy. In 2014 it still was a “good long-term investment opportunity for your company” (Royal Dutch Shell, 2014). In 2016 the statement was that it is very likely that Arctic oil will play a key role in the future (Royal Dutch Shell, 2016). In their report of 2020 Shell announces not to perform any offshore Arctic oil exploration in the future. They will continue onshore activities (Royal Dutch Shell, 2020). The onshore activities they talk about in this report are mainly located in Russia. Although they do not aim to pursue new activities in the future, they do hold on to some licenses. A company applies for these licenses at the International Seabed Authority. It is for the company itself, but there always is a sponsoring state behind it (Interview 9). In the case of Shell this means that the Netherlands is its sponsoring state. It means that the Netherlands is responsible for Shell performing its activities according to the rules and guidelines. It also means that the Netherlands supported the exploitation conducted by Shell at the time they applied for these licenses. Now, the Dutch government does not support oil- and gas explorations anymore.

Another reason there is no Dutch involvement in the Arctic is the competition with Russia and China. “Many activities that still occur in the Arctic are conducted by Russia or China” (Interview 1). In the same interview it is mentioned that Dutch businesses perform less activities than before, which might be less than they want. It is hard to do business with the competition of Russia and China, because they have a cheaper way of conducting activities or are favoured relative to other countries. Many Chinese companies receive government funding, which is prohibited in the EU (Interview 1). Geopolitics also plays a part in whether companies want to invest. “Companies want clarity about what is allowed and what is not. If countries do not agree on this among themselves, companies will not invest a lot of money.” (Interview 1). The risk of performing illegal activities due to an unclear policy is too big. For companies there are no profitable opportunities yet. Dutch companies are willing to invest, but not with this many insecurities and low margins (Interview 1).

Competition with Russia and China, and unclarity about what is allowed and what is not allowed makes it unappealing for a company to invest. Also, high standards for sustainability make investments expensive. The profits do not outweigh the costs. The gain lies more in the future. When the shipping routes open, the port of Rotterdam can be a hub for transporting goods and resources to its hinterland. Maritime companies can provide their knowledge in developing ships suitable for shipping through the ice. As mentioned, this is future potential. It is uncertain if it will actually be economic beneficial to perform activities in the Arctic

Shipping is another branch that can benefit from an accessible Arctic Ocean. “The Netherlands has a quite prominent position where shipping is concerned” (Interview 3). If it is possible to ship through the Arctic, Dutch companies are willing to have a part in this. They do not state they will never use the Northern route, because it is too vulnerable and too risky. Instead, the Dutch are willing to look at the possibilities of shipping over the Northern routes by, for example, developing ships with no emissions (Interview 1). Having no emissions for shipping or at least as little as possible is also a goal of the International Maritime Organization. Even if it is possible to ship through Arctic waters, companies have to be willing to use these routes. A company close to the consumer market can say they do not want their goods to be transported over the northern routes, because they find the region too vulnerable (Interview 1).

What are the environmental and economic interests of Dutch private stakeholders? Dutch companies have the knowledge and skills to perform activities in the Arctic when possible. Performing activities depends on the geopolitical climate and the environment itself. Performing economic activities should be safe and should not threaten the Arctic environment. This is in line with the objectives of the Dutch government. How the Dutch government and companies approach climate change and economic activity will be further elaborated on in chapter 6.

### 5.3 NGOs

For the NGOs one interview has been conducted with Gert Polet from the WWF (Interview 5), and documents have been analysed from the WWF and Greenpeace. Both are international NGOs with an office in the Netherlands. The WWF is the only international environmental organization represented in the AC. This is not specifically the Dutch part, but the Dutch WWF works together on Arctic matters with the offices in Russia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Canada and the United States, because these matters cannot be solved at a national scale (Interview 5). Greenpeace did apply for an observatory role in the AC, but just like Shell, their submission was denied due to time constraints of the admission board. To gain insights into the environmental interests in the Arctic and the role of the Netherlands this paragraph will answer the question: *How do environmental NGOs impact Dutch involvement in the Arctic?*

The WWF is involved in CAFF of the AC, where they contribute to research in underwater noise. The WWF does not only contribute to ecological matters. They have been involved in the EPPR project for guidelines and tools for marine risk assessments in the Arctic region (Arctic Council, 2018, p. 6). This is mainly targeted at preventing risks such as oil-spills and other forms of pollution due to accidents in the Arctic Ocean.

The WWF supports the development and strengthening of the AC. In their view it is a place of collaboration to protect Arctic peoples' wellbeing and the Arctic ecosystem (Arctic Council, 2016, p.1). This is quite in line with the standpoints of the Dutch government. Their goal is to protect the Arctic, because it is a vulnerable region. "A rapidly warming climate and increasing appetite for industrial development continues to threaten the Arctic's vulnerable nature and people" (WWF, 2021, p. 1). In this they want the global community to act. For this they give suggestions on how countries can do this. In their AC statement of 2021, they suggest countries to act on the following points:

reconsidering any new oil developments; phasing out the use of fossil fuels and redirecting fossil fuel subsidies to support clean energy projects; developing a zero-emission strategy for Arctic shipping; utilizing COVID-19 stimulus to incentivize green technologies, support renewable energy projects, sustainable infrastructure and green jobs creation. (WWF, 2021, p.1)

In emphasizing the economic values, they say: "the Arctic is too precious for the people living here, but in fact for the whole of humanity, to be transformed into a playground of economic or military competition and exploitation." (WWF, 2021, p.2). Although, the WWF is an observatory member of the AC, they do criticize its non-political character:

Even if there would be sufficient substantive rules applicable to the marine Arctic, it is clear that rules alone – and in particular non-legally binding rules – cannot manage the sea that will soon emerge from underneath the arctic sea ice. Hence, a new governance arrangement with a new institutional set-up is needed, which will be able to counter the vast challenges now facing the marine Arctic (Molenaar & Koivurova, 2010, p.96)

They suggest a legally binding framework to govern the Arctic in the most sustainable way possible with the AC still being the primary forum. This would apply for the maritime areas of the Arctic. This report was published in 2010. Although this research is conducted eleven years later, the organization of the Arctic is basically as described in this WWF report by Molenaar and Koivurova (2010) are the same and its issues too.

Greenpeace (2016, p.15) refers literally to the Arctic being a 'environmental sanctuary' by saying: "Countries should work towards the creation of a sanctuary in the international waters of the central Arctic Ocean that is closed to all industrial extractive activities." (Greenpeace, 2016, p.15). An issue that Greenpeace addresses concerning economic activities are the investments in oil- and gas companies by banks and insurance companies. Dutch companies do not exploit anymore, but financial institutions support oil- and gas exploitation from other countries. Despite the efforts of the Dutch government to divest from oil- and gas activities in the Arctic (Eerlijke Bankwijzer & Greenpeace, 2020, p. 5). Greenpeace wants the government to prohibit investments by banks and insurance companies in the oil- and gas sector. This is not something the government can do.

How do environmental NGOs impact Dutch involvement in the governance of the Arctic? The WWF and Greenpeace address the environmental issues and suggest tools for the government on how they can do this. This is all done from the perspective of the Arctic being an 'environmental sanctuary'. Their main critique is that there is not one comprehensive agreement on how the Arctic should be governed and with that how to protect it. They call for clarification of what the protected areas are. They prefer it to be everything in international water.

It is not possible to forbid all economic activity in the Arctic. The WWF contributes to developing strategies addressing risks. This to protect nature by preventing oil-spills and other accidents, but it also protects companies from major hazards. The standpoints of NGOs are quite in line with the Dutch government and the companies in making sure the Arctic's nature is protected.

## 6. Dutch involvement in general

This chapter will elaborate more on the four themes introduced in the introduction of this thesis and paragraph 3.1. The previous chapter explained the main objective of each actor. This chapter will go more in depth on the four themes, since there are similarities in how the three different actors approach the Arctic. Apart from the four themes, there is also the reference to historic reasons. Both Dutch businesses and the Dutch government refer to this. Companies often refer to the time of Willem Barentsz, the idea that we were there first, in explaining why they are active in the region (interview 3). Political documents refer to Willem Barentsz in explaining their presence in the Arctic. “Our ties go back to 1594, when Willem Barentsz started an expedition in search of the Northern Passage” (Arctic Council, 2020). The historical ties refer to the time of Willem Barentsz and all developments after that. The policy framework of 2011-2015 (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012, pp.22-23) includes a complete paragraph on the Dutch history in the Arctic.

The Dutch approach has changed over time. Before the policy framework of 2011, the policy frameworks mainly targeted environmental issues and research. The framework of 2011 introduced a broader approach including politics, strategy, economy, security, indigenous people, and the international legal order (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012, p. 3). The Dutch government continued using this broad approach in the strategies for 2016-2020 and 2021-2025. Although these are objectives phrased in publications by the Dutch government, economic and environmental interests from other stakeholders are represented in these documents as well. The DAC contributes to the Dutch polar strategy. Therefore, this chapter combines the objectives of the three actors together to show that in the Dutch approach the stakeholders might have different goals and standpoints, but in the core, there is actually one discourse.

### 6.1 Climate change

As explained in the previous chapters, climate change is one of the main drivers of Dutch involvement. Two distinctions can be made in why this is important for the Netherlands. On the one hand, the Arctic is seen as valuable and vulnerable, a place that needs to be protected. This relates to the discourse of the Arctic being an ‘environmental sanctuary’. On the other hand, they frame climate change as a risk for the Netherlands. The Dutch territory is threatened by the rising sea-level, and the changing weather patterns. On top of that, the country shares its ecosystems with the Arctic.

Migratory birds are especially important for the Netherlands, because those birds hibernate on the Dutch Frisian islands and in Zeeland. If they are threatened in the Arctic, it impacts the Dutch biodiversity and ecosystem as well. “To protect vulnerable ecosystems, the Netherlands commits to protecting and maintaining the Arctic environment” (Rijksoverheid, 2019, p.12). The Netherlands aims for adaptation and mitigation, and long-term support for the ecosystems. So, the Netherlands is in favour of a long-term global climate regime to deal with climate security instead of a more military strategic approach as described in chapter 2. This is also reflected in the many references to the Paris agreement. By making statements as: “fulfilling the agreements made in the Paris Agreement is essential” (Ministerie van Economische Zaken, 2019, p.2) and “climate change can only be stopped by the ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement” (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2021, p.14). This applies to the Netherlands itself, and is something the Netherlands promotes in the AC and in bilateral relations with the Arctic states.

The Dutch government takes its own responsibility and wants the international community to do the same. “We see it as our joint responsibility to make sure the Arctic values will be maintained” (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2021, p.1). This statement addresses the issues in the Arctic itself, and the fact that most climate damaging activities occur somewhere else. The Netherlands and other non-Arctic countries contribute to global warming through emissions and pollution. To protect the Arctic, the Dutch government is committed to sustainable development and developing sustainable guidelines for Arctic operations (Arctic Council, 2016, p. 4; Arctic Council, 2018, p.4). These Arctic operations are mostly economic and scientific in nature.

“The Netherlands does anything to slow climate change down” (Interview 3). The poles are important for the world. This is emphasized by the Dutch government and NGOs. In the data on companies this occurs less, because there the emphasis lies more on sustainable development. Companies do acknowledge that it is a vulnerable region and that there are high standards for performing economic activity (Interview 1). The poles are important, because the differences in temperature differ more than in other regions in the world. So, the climate on the poles is a good indicator for how the climate is doing (Interview 8). “If you understand the climate there, can verify it over there, then you are ahead of the rest of the world” (Interview 8).

In the theoretical framework it was explained that when the climate change becomes dominant in relation to security, it defines the terms of debates and becomes incorporated in political institutions (McDonald, 2013, p.44). In the Arctic, climate change is strongly incorporated. This is also shown in the Dutch approach. Much attention is paid to the protection of migratory birds, the rising sea-level, and performing scientific research to understand the Arctic environment. This confirms that in approaching the Arctic the effects of climate change shape policy, and the potential for economic activities.

## 6.2 Governance

The climatological and economic interests come together in governance. For this “the Arctic Council remains the most important forum for the Netherlands to realize its policy goals” (Arctic Council, 2016, p.4; Arctic Council, 2018, p.4). These policy goals are based on three pillars: international cooperation, research and sustainability (Interview 4). The Dutch interests are promoted by being represented in four AC working groups, by government officials who attend AC meetings, and by being present at the observer meetings. Besides, there is a Dutch Polar Research programme enabling experts to “make a substantive contribution to the work of the AC (Arctic Council, 2018, p. 2).

As for jurisdiction in the Arctic, the Dutch government acknowledges the sovereignty of the Arctic states over the parts that are within the Arctic states’ territory. For the parts that are not within the Arctic states’ jurisdiction, the Netherlands is a big proponent and stimulator of international legislation. In the AC, the Dutch government aims to make sure all activities in international territory comply with international law. “It is our task, in our own membership and via the European Union, to make sure international law is practiced in this area.” (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020, p.6). The Netherlands would not be a proponent of an Arctic treaty similar to the Antarctic treaty.

A treaty as the Antarctic treaty is not obvious, because the Antarctic does not have any adjacent states. The Arctic has been inhabited for a long time. [...] The international law indicates jurisdiction of the Arctic states over their coastal waters, which they will not give up. (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020, p.6)

The Netherlands does aim for the protection of the maritime areas beyond the Arctic states’ jurisdiction.

“The Dutch government does not actively support companies but acknowledges the interests a company has in the Arctic.” (Interview 6). The role of the government depends on the political climate, both in the Netherlands and the Arctic. Besides, the Netherlands has a role in supporting companies to have risk insurance. These risks can be political or something else like accidents. (Interview 6). Of course, the Dutch policy also determines how a company can act. This is not necessarily related to the Arctic, but more to the rules and guidelines in general.

Dutch research has positive impacts on the position of the Netherlands in the Arctic. “If you are perceived as a good partner in understanding the Arctic, it enhances your position. It gives the possibility to cooperate in standards for tourism and shipping even when you do not have any jurisdiction in the region” (Interview 8). Thus, money is not the only form of government support. Promoting Dutch interests within the AC is just as important, maybe even more.

As explained in chapter 2, governance in the Arctic has the most similarities with enabling and influencing as a mode of governance. Governments are able to influence and facilitate private arrangements by sponsoring certain projects and are able to set ground rules for institutional contact of private arrangements (Hysing, 2009, p.316). The Dutch government does this by supporting companies to have risk insurance and acknowledging companies' interests to perform economic activities in the Arctic. Chapter 5 explained that when a company as Dutch Royal Shell needs a license for oil- and gas exploitation it needs the support of a sponsoring state. Since it is a Dutch company, the sponsoring state is the Netherlands. The support and enabling of performing Polar research for Dutch scientists for the working groups in the AC fits within the mode of governance 'enable and influence'.

### **6.3 Economy**

The Dutch government does not perform economic activities itself. The economic activity performed in the Arctic is done by private companies. If companies want to become active in the Arctic, they can count on government support as long as they follow the Dutch and international rules (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 2019, p 7).

Although the Dutch government is open to economic activity in the Arctic, the emphasis lies on doing this sustainable and responsible. Dutch knowledge and expertise in maritime activities are mentioned as tools to be used for developing these sustainable and responsible ways of, for instance, shipping (Arctic Council, 2016, p.4). In their observer report the DAC is mentioned as having a lot of interest in contributing to the sustainable development of the Arctic (Arctic Council, 2018, p.5). As explained in chapter 3, the DAC is a network of Dutch stakeholders with interest in the Arctic. The DAC contributed to the polar strategies (Interview 4). So, the information in the Arctic strategies has been derived from public and private sources. The fact that those interests are represented in the Dutch policy means that the Netherlands is interested in performing economic activities in the Arctic.

“Dutch companies have a lot of knowledge and skills concerning sustainability” (interview 4). The port of Rotterdam is an example of how the Netherlands could benefit from the accessibility of the Arctic Ocean. The harbour would benefit from the new transport routes and could serve as a hub for oil and gas flows. The port of Rotterdam has a convenient location for such use (Rijksoverheid, 2016, p.21). Currently there is not much economic activity conducted by Dutch companies in the Arctic. When it is possible the Dutch government is willing to enable it.

The main way in which the Netherlands performs government support for companies is through sponsoring and lobbying. This fits perfectly within the governance form of enabling and influencing by Hysing (2009, p.315) as explained in the theoretical framework. An example of a project they support is the marine litter project, which is a project to get rid of all the litter that drifts ashore in the Arctic. The Dutch government has supported it by introducing it to the AC and co-financed the project (Interview 3). The Dutch government sponsors other (research) projects as well (interview 8). The Netherlands has its own Polar Program which includes the Dutch incentives for Polar research (Rijksoverheid, 2020, p. 32). Not only scientific organizations can apply for these researches, it is also open for companies and other non-governmental organizations.

As for the natural resources: “the Netherlands is happy with the restraints of Arctic states concerning resource extraction.” (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 2020, p.8). Here it is uncertain whether this restraining attitude will remain. Another uncertainty is the attitude of Arctic and non-Arctic states when the Arctic Ocean becomes accessible for more economic activities. “The Arctic is definitely going to be important for the economy in the future” (interview 9). These economic activities can be in the offshore branch, shipping, tourism, exploitation and other maritime areas.

Indigenous people are important in considering taking part in economic activities in the Arctic. When investing in the Arctic, their interests should be considered as well. When developing techniques or exploring economic possibilities, one should not forget there are people living in the Arctic (Interview 7). These people have the right to go through their own economic development while maintaining their own cultural traditions. The Dutch government works together with indigenous groups in the SDWG working group. The Netherlands is positive about creating possibilities for indigenous people and protecting their livelihoods (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012, p.43).

However, in the same document it is mentioned that indigenous groups are becoming increasingly vocal in Arctic policy. This affects the possibilities for non-Arctic countries in promoting their interests (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012, p. 45). This can either be positive or negative for non-Arctic states.

The increasing accessibility of the Arctic Ocean makes it a place of intensifying competition (Dodds, 2010, p.64). In the theoretical framework it was explained that this means that economic values are important in how states approach the Arctic. Chapter 5 already discussed that the Netherlands follows the dominant approach of using liberal arguments. The attitude of the Netherlands within the AC has to do with shipping, the environment and energy, the Netherlands wants to take a position in these matters (Interview 6). The knowledge for these three aspects often come from Dutch maritime companies. Providing this knowledge and making it possible to share this knowledge with other states relates to ‘enabling and influencing’ as discussed in the previous paragraph.

## **6.4 Security**

The last theme for this thesis is security. The AC is not a place for discussing military security matters. “The Netherlands is a big proponent of keeping this constructive collaboration” (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2021, p. 4). If there are any international security matters that need to be discussed, the Dutch government wants it to be discussed in NATO. The Netherlands uses the AC to plead for good international collaboration for maintaining peace and stability in the region. “Maintaining the non-political character of the Arctic Council is important.” (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019, p. 10). In stating this, again the emphasis lies on discussing security matters in other, international platforms. Science is important in the Dutch position. There is a polar program to perform research in the Arctic and the Dutch government sponsors research initiatives. “We think that by doing good research one has the right to contribute to the discussion about doing good research and what affects the climate (Interview 8).

As explained in paragraph 2.2, globalization combined with climate change has security implications for the Arctic (Berkman & Vylegzhanin, 2013, p.68). In the case of the Netherlands these security issues mostly relate to accessibility, commercial economic activities, and conservation of the Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity. Especially the latter is important for all three actors. The Dutch approach is about maintaining peace in the region. The Arctic is a place of peace and cooperation (Wilson Rowe & Blakkisrud, 2014, p.82). The Netherlands actively contributes to this cooperation and aims to maintain this zone of peace.

## 7. Conclusion and discussion

The main question for this research is: *How does the Netherlands represent its environmental and economic interests in the Arctic?* This question is answered through performing a critical analysis of three different objectives: politics, private businesses and environmental NGOs. The three of them have one thing in common, namely: protecting the ecosystem. All three acknowledge and emphasize the fact that it is a vulnerable region threatened by climate change.

The Netherlands represents its interests in Arctic governance, especially in the Arctic Council (AC). Although, it is an observer state, the Netherlands has a prominent position in the AC. This is mainly achieved through conducting research in the AC's working groups. The fact that the Netherlands has been involved since the establishment of the AC is beneficial for the country as well. Being present in Arctic governance gives the opportunity to influence it. Scientific knowledge on, for example, dealing with litter provides the opportunity to adapt the current policy on this matter. This does also apply to diminishing other forms of pollution and development of sustainable technology.

Being involved in Arctic geopolitics provides a position in environmental, economic, and military security matters. Although the AC is not a platform to discuss security matters, it is a relevant topic for the region itself. Being involved in Arctic governance provides the Netherlands to be in a position to easier maintain bilateral conversations with the Arctic states and to give input in security matters. If the AC or another governance platform will be addressing security issues in the Arctic, the Netherlands has already given itself a position to contribute to these discussions. This is important, because the Netherlands has a relatively close geographical position towards the Arctic. If it will ever become a place of tension or even conflict the Netherlands lies too close to not be involved. At this point there is nothing that indicates the Arctic becoming a place of conflict. The Dutch data fits perfectly within the discourse of the Arctic being a 'zone of peace'. By emphasizing that it is most profitable for the Arctic to stay peaceful, stable and low-tension, the Netherlands implies that it does anything to keep it this way. They do this by emphasizing international cooperation and international law. This emphasis on international law is in line with the liberal arguments as introduced by Dittmer et al. (2011).

Currently, there is not much economic activity performed by Dutch companies. After most oil companies retreated from the region in 2015, no other offshore economic activities actually replaced those. At this point with the Coronavirus there is also not much tourism. It is not that Dutch companies do not want to invest. There is a willingness to develop sustainable technologies for shipping, infrastructure and offshore activities. There is a lot of insecurity concerning the risks in the region. These are political risks, because of unclear regulations and sanctions against Russia, but also environmental risks. Due to the ice, there is a large risk of accidents, pollution or oil spills. Furthermore, investing in the Arctic costs a lot of money and the margins are low. However, when the Arctic Ocean becomes accessible for shipping and other forms of maritime activity the Netherlands wants to be involved.

Dutch companies are not that active in the Arctic at the moment. Yet, there is and will be economic activity in the Arctic region performed by either Arctic or non-Arctic actors. This is something the environmental organizations acknowledge as well. All Dutch actors agree that if economic activity occurs, it should be performed in a sustainable way. From the data it is quite clear that the Netherlands has the knowledge and otherwise wants to gain this knowledge to make sustainable maritime activities possible. This is not only applicable to the Arctic, but to other regions in the world as well. If the Arctic really opens, the Netherlands is ready to invest. A side note here is that the political situation has to be appealing. Economic opportunities create a shift in the geopolitical order, because all countries want to gain benefit from this. Of course, countries who have less interest in maritime industry are more interested in protecting the environment or just not performing any activity at all. This creates economic competition, but also political.

The governance in the Arctic is based on cooperation with the AC being the primary forum. This forum is not able to make any binding arrangements. If there is an opportunity for economic gain it is not certain whether countries will maintain this cooperation as it is now. As discussed in the previous chapters, economic competition and geopolitics in the Arctic are intertwined. Economic competition among states could make the Arctic region politically unstable. Economic activity does not benefit from political instability. Clear concise rules help in making sure economic activity is conducted safely for the people, and the environment. It would be helpful to have a treaty for the complete Arctic region, but this is hard to establish. A treaty similar to the Antarctic treaty would not be possible, because the Antarctic is a continent, and the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by independent states. If there would only be a treaty for the international property, it would apply to a small part of the Arctic. It is the question whether Arctic states would be fond of a treaty that applies to a part that lies within their own sovereign territory. The question of an Arctic treaty has existed for years and it remains a relevant topic. The melting ice caps make it more urgent to look into the possibility of more coherent and concise regulations of the complete Arctic region concerning the protection of the ecosystems and pursuing safe economic activities. Hereby, the rights of the indigenous people should not be forgotten.

### ***Discussion and recommendations***

The initial idea for this research was to focus on the contrast between economic and environmental interests. During the research process it became clear that environmental interests outweigh the economic interests in the Arctic. As a result, there is not a contrast between the interests, because the environment determines the standards for economic activity. In creating the research design, it also became clear that when researching the Arctic, it is impossible to ignore security matters. Ecological, economic, and international security are relevant in scrutinizing any Arctic related topic.

This research discussed the relation between the Netherlands and the Arctic. It did not discuss Arctic interests at different scales. A suggestion for future research is to look into how legislation on the international scale impacts the local scale for different Arctic regions; this can apply to economic activity, politics or the indigenous people.

Another suggestion for future research is to focus more on tourism. This research discussed consultancy and cooperation platforms but not one specific economic niche. Since most oil- and gas companies retreated from the area and tourism became more important, it is interesting to look at how this impacts the Arctic and what this means for ecological tourism.

A third suggestion is to focus on the media and public opinion. These two have an impact on how certain areas, among which the Arctic, are viewed. These opinions affect politics and the attitude of companies. An analysis on how this communication works gives insights into how Arctic geopolitics is framed and formed. It also provides insight into climatological geopolitics in the media. This contributes to the bigger discussion of international involvement in regions as the Arctic, but also the Amazon or Great Barrier Reef.

Researching the Arctic contributes to a better understanding of how climate change shapes politics and how it changes the geopolitical order by causing environmental risks and creating economic opportunities. This thesis aimed to give a better understanding of the involvement of the Netherlands, as a non-Arctic state, in the Arctic region. To fully understand the position of a non-Arctic state in the Arctic, it is important to look at the impacts of climate. Not every non-Arctic state might prioritize protecting the climate. What the non-Arctic states have in common is that the melting ice caps are the reason that the Arctic becomes accessible for non-Arctic states and why it raises their interests. Therefore, the last suggestion for future research would be to scrutinize the different objectives of the different observatory states, or states that want to become an observatory member, to get a better understanding of the geopolitical relations in the Arctic.

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## List of Abbreviations

AC:	Arctic Council
ACAP:	Arctic Contaminants Action Programme
AEC:	Arctic Economic Council
AEPS:	Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy
AMAP:	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment programme
BEAC:	Barents-EURO Arctic Council
CAFF:	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
CLCS:	Commission of the Continental Shelf
DAC:	Dutch Arctic Circle Network
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EPPR:	Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness, and Response
IMO:	International Maritime Organization
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
OSPAR:	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
PAME:	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment
SAR:	Search and Rescue
SDWG:	Sustainable Development Working Group
UN:	United Nations
UNCLOS:	United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea
WWF:	World Wide Fund for Nature

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## **Appendix 1 – Topic list**

All interviews started with an explanation of the research and verbal consent for collaborating and recording. The interviews were semi-structured, which means that the questions were adapted to the interviewee if necessary and were not always asked in this exact order. The structure of the interview also made it possible to ask follow-up questions based on the interviewees' answers. This topic list gives an overview of the general, overarching questions. All topics included in the topic list were covered during all interviews.

### **Background information**

- What organizations do you work for? And what does that organization do?
- Can you tell a bit more about your function?
- How does your work relate to the Arctic region?
- What are motivations to be involved in the Arctic region?
- Is there more an emphasis on the climate or economic activity?

### **Involvement in the Arctic**

- What is the goal of the organization?
- How are these goals achieved?
- Which considerations play a part in formulating those goals and realizing them?
- From what perspective do you approach the Arctic? *E.g., economic, climatological etc.*
- Why do companies decide to withdraw from the Arctic? – Is there a chance that they will come back?

### **Cooperation**

- Do you work together with other organizations? If so, which organizations?
- What is the cooperation based on?
- Are the collaborations mainly Dutch based or international?
- Are there obstacles in collaborations? If so, can you name an example?
- How is the collaboration between climatological Ngo's and private companies or the government? – Can their campaigns be an issue?

### **Dutch government**

- What is the role of the Dutch government in the Arctic?
- What kind of projects does the Dutch government support? – How do they do that?
- How does the Netherlands benefit from climate change in the Arctic and what are the risks?
- Do geopolitical discussions, such as sovereignty claims on the continental shelf or sanctions against Russia, affect your projects in the Arctic?

### **End**

- Do you have any remarks, additions or questions?

## Appendix 2 – List of respondents

Names are hidden for the people who requested to remain anonymous.

A Shell employee was willing to answer some questions via email but did not do a full interview.

<b><u>Interview</u></b>	<b><u>Respondent</u></b>	<b><u>When</u></b>
1.	Arjen Uytendaal Director Stichting Maritiem Land	12 April 2021
2.	Consultant Wing ‘partner in ruimtelijke ontwikkeling’ The Dutch Arctic Circle Network	14 April 2021
3.	Eelco Leemans Coordinator Dutch Arctic Circle Network	19 April 2021
4.	Policy officer ministry of Foreign affairs	22 April 2021
5.	Gert Polet Department head Wildlife - World Wild Fund Netherlands	22 April 2021
6.	Erik Huber Director business development Oil gas and energy - Royal Haskoningdhv	26 April 2021
7.	Annette Scheepstra Researcher at the Arctic Centre in Groningen	28 April 2021
8.	Robert Blaauw Chair of the program committee of the Dutch Polar Program Former employee of Shell	29 April 2021
9.	Legal officer juridical department ministry of Foreign affairs	10 May 2021

## Appendix 3 – List of analysed documents

### Dutch government

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## **Environmental NGOs**

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Koivurova, T. & Molenaar, E. (2009). International governance and regulation of the Arctic. World Wide Fund for Nature.

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