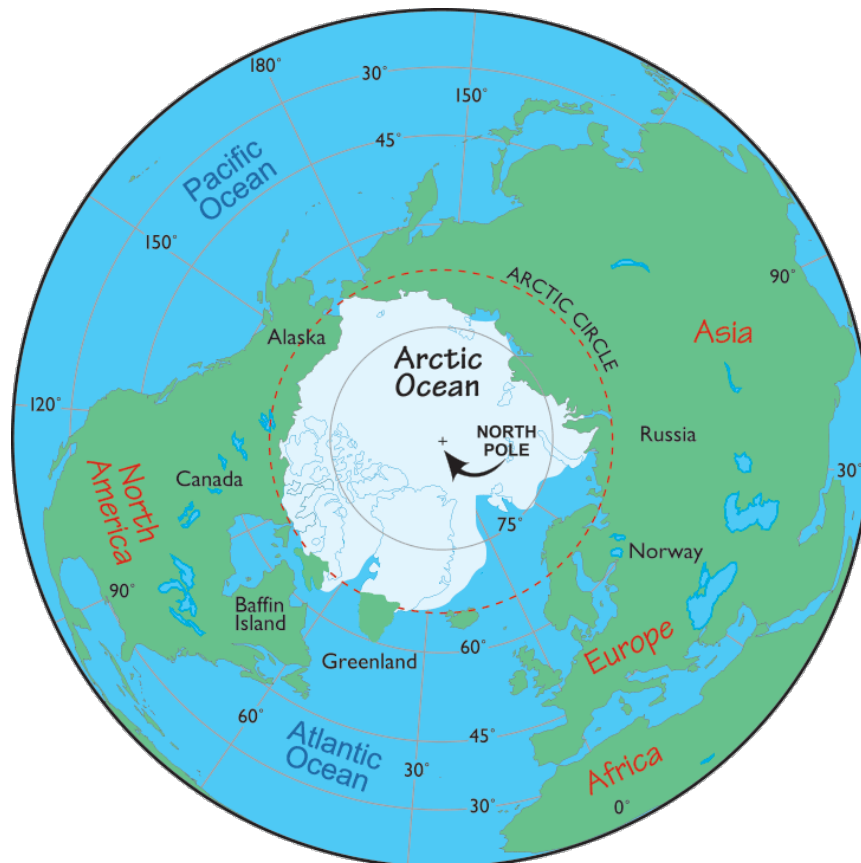


# PARTICIPATION OF NON-ARCTIC STATES IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

*Analysed through neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism*



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## ABSTRACT

This master's thesis tests the explanatory power of two theories of international relations, neoliberal institutionalism and norm entrepreneurship as a part of constructivist theory, for the participation of non-Arctic states in the Arctic Council (AC). The AC is a forum for intergovernmental discussions on arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection. Apart from the eight Arctic member states, there are twelve observer states: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, China, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India. The aim of this research is to theoretically explain the difference in participatory behaviour of observer states and to test the explanatory value of theories that are generally used to analyse cooperation between states. The results of the congruence analysis suggest that the theory on norm entrepreneurship has the most explanatory power for explaining the participation of observer states in the AC. Several states try to promote new norms on: increasing the role of non-Arctic states in the AC; admitting the application of the EU as an observer; and further developing the AC institutionally. On the other hand, none of the theories are able to explain the actual difference in participation. Given that the evidence from various documents and a dataset on participation does not show that countries with higher attendance rates are more or less in accordance with the theory.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Arctic Council
ACAP WG	Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group
AMAP WG	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme Working Group
EPPR WG	Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group
EU	European Union
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
PAME WG	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group
STAPAC	Stakeholder Participation in Arctic Council Meetings Dataset
TFAMC	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation
TFBCM	Task Force on Black Carbon and Methane
TFTIA	Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic
TFOPP	Task Force on Arctic Marine Pollution Prevention
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Arctic region consists of the Arctic Ocean around the North Pole and the northernmost parts of several countries, though precise definitions of the area vary slightly (Tedsen, Valalieri & Kraemer, 2014). Within this area Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Russia, the United States and Iceland all have territories, which makes them part of the Arctic. Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Arctic region has received a lot more attention than it used to, not only from mass media but also from politics and the public. This development is mainly due to growing awareness on climate change, which has severe consequences for the North Pole. Evidence for the particular magnitude of global warming in this region can be found in the Fifth and latest Assessment report by the Intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC), where numbers show that the Arctic region is warming up faster than the rest of the world, which has resulted in a rapid decrease of Arctic sea ice since 1979 (IPCC, 2013). Melting of sea ice is not only problematic because current coastlines in the world may become uninhabitable, but also because melting ice further amplifies the overall warming of the earth, since open water absorbs more heat of the sun.

Due to the serious effects of climate change on the Arctic, interest in the arctic as a scientific research subject started mainly within the natural sciences. However, in the Cold War era the Arctic became the centre of attention as a possible battleground between the two hostile superpowers (Haftendorn, 2011; Solli, Rowen & Lindgren, 2013). This situation created the interest of other fields of research, such as political sciences (Keil, 2014). In addition to the adverse effects associated with melting ice caps, changes in the Arctic landscape also bring several commercial opportunities, such as seabed mining, hydrocarbon extraction, fisheries and alternative shipping routes (Kraska, 2011; Heininen, 2014). The climate crisis and an increase of economic activity both cause erosion of ice, but also decreasing biodiversity and other environmental issues (IPCC, 2013). These issues have led to a growing belief that the protection of the Arctic is an important matter that requires all involved actors to cooperate responsibly. Hence, cooperation on Arctic issues is largely seen as politically stable after the Cold War (Heininen, 2014).

Nonetheless due to the Ukrainian crisis, tensions between Russia, other Arctic states and the EU have risen (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). This has made Arctic intergovernmental cooperation more difficult and has increased security concerns. Worries about political instability in the region are also fuelled by Russia strengthening its military capabilities around the Arctic Ocean (Gramer, 2017; Einhorn, Fairfield & Wallace, 2015). Fears of an arms race are rising as more Arctic states restructure their militaries and develop ships and submarines that can operate in Arctic conditions (Lasserre, Le Roy & Garon, 2012; Klimenko, 2016). This fear over a possible conflict in the Arctic is further amplified by increasing interests of outside actors, namely non-Arctic states that want to have their piece of the Arctic pie. Some scholars call the increasing interests in the Arctic by outside states the new ‘scramble’ for the Arctic, as they predict there will be a race over natural resources (Craciun, 2009; Heininen, 2014).

The idea of an ‘Arctic scramble’ with increased tension due to territorial disputes, can be contradicted by the argument that there is still no emerging military conflict, but highly stable multilateral cooperation (Anderson, 2013). Most of this cooperation is facilitated through the Arctic Council (AC), an intergovernmental forum for interaction and coordination among the Arctic states, Arctic indigenous peoples and non-Arctic actors. They predominantly cooperate on issues regarding sustainable development and environmental protection. The AC was created in 1996 with the intention that all actors, states, and organisations that have some interest in the region should be able to participate (Nord, 2010). The growing significance of the region regarding environmental issues, economic opportunities and geopolitical changes, raises the attention of different non-Arctic actors, who can apply for observer status in the AC (Young, 2016).

This study specifically focuses on the 12 non-Arctic states, called observer states that are part of the AC. These are: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, China, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India (Arctic Council, 2016a). Switzerland was admitted as the 13<sup>th</sup> observer state after the Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2017, but because it has not officially participated in the AC, I will leave it out of this analysis (Arctic Council, 2017a). Even though the observer states have quite a minimal role in the AC, their admissions and participation have still fostered a rigorous debate between key actors in the Arctic. This is primarily because the possible origins of interests in the Arctic by observers are being questioned. (Solli, Rowe & Lindgren, 2013).

Most literature on the observer states therefore focus on the possible interests of non-Arctic states in cooperating through the AC, concluding that it is either commercial interests or environmental protection that drives their involvement. However, most of this research blindly assumes that becoming an observer state would automatically result in attendance and contribution to the AC. This assumption is debunked by Knecht (2016a), who found that there is a high degree of variance in participation of observer states after conducting a stakeholder analysis on the AC. His analysis opens up new questions however, such as how the large variance in observer participation can be explained theoretically.

In this thesis I aim to go beyond the usual assumptions that are made in most literature by looking at the difference between the actual participation of observer states in the AC, using a dataset on participation in Ministerial, Senior Arctic Officials' (SAOs') and subsidiary body meetings between 1998 and 2017. Furthermore I will take a qualitative approach to test the explanatory value of two theories on the participatory behaviour of observer states. These theories, constructivism and neoliberal institutionalism, are mainly used in analyses of cooperation between states in international institutions. By answering my research question I also aim to see if these theories have explanatory power for the participatory behaviour in international institutions, such as the AC. The research question is as follows:

*Does the theory of neoliberal institutionalism or constructivism provide the best explanation for understanding the differences in participation of the observer states in the Arctic Council?*

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.2.1 THE ARCTIC COUNCIL**

In this chapter I will elaborate on the Arctic Council and its observer states quite extensively to create a good basis for the rest of my thesis, as it is a topic that is not known to many. As stated in the introduction, there is a debate if the Arctic will be characterized by a 'scramble' over resources in the future or by multilateral cooperation (Anderson, 2013). Evidence for this possible 'scramble' manifests through incidents such as the planting of a flag by Russia under the North Pole in 2007, as part of their research related to their territorial claims in the Arctic (Economist, 2014). These territorial claims are all made under the United Nations Convention

on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), since unlike Antarctica, the Arctic has no landmass (Byers, 2013). UNCLOS stipulates that a claim can be made if an area of the seabed is an extension of a country's continental shelf (UNCLOS, 1982). If the claim is validated under UNCLOS it gives exclusive rights to all resources on that specific seabed.

The possibility of resource extraction, such as oil drilling, motivates countries to make these sometimes conflicting claims. It is however unclear, whether natural resource extraction and commercial shipping will be feasible in the foreseeable future (Young, 2016). This is mainly due to high initial costs, which currently makes investments in the region quite risky. Although it is not probable that this won't change, especially if one looks at first forecasts of what benefits this future might bring. An example of this is when in summer 2013, a Chinese test vessel travelled from China to the Netherlands using the Northern Sea Route, which took about two weeks less than using the usual shipping route through the Suez Canal (Lanteigne, 2017). This northern route will also provide a safer alternative, as piracy is still a common threat to commercial shipping off the Somali coast (Aljazeera, 2017). Furthermore, while the IPCC states it is too early to establish when Arctic sea ice will completely vanish, there are scientists who predict that before 2050 the Arctic will be ice-free during summer (National Climate Assessment, 2014). Some, such as scientist Peter Wadhams in his book 'A farewell to ice', are more sceptical and believe the Arctic will be ice-free in summer 2017 or 2018 (McKie, 2016). Having an ice-free Arctic would be detrimental for the world's environment, but would also lead to more opportunities for shipping and resource extraction.

Most of the cooperation on Arctic issues is done through the Arctic Council (AC), which was established in 1996 and based on the former Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (Arctic Council, 2016b; Young, 2016). The AC calls itself "*the only circumpolar forum for political discussion on Arctic issues [...] in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic*" (Arctic Council, 2017c). Each of the Arctic states are Members of the Council and in addition there are six organizations of indigenous communities that are called Permanent Participants. Apart from the Arctic Members there are currently also 12 observer states: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, China, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India (Arctic Council, 2016a). In addition there are 9 intergovernmental organizations and 11 non-governmental organizations that hold observer status in the AC.



Every two years one of the Arctic States becomes chair. Every six months the chairing country holds a Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) meeting of high-level representatives (Arctic Council, 2017). Next to this every two years a meeting is held on Ministerial-level, with ministers of Foreign Affairs, Environmental Affairs or Northern Affairs from each member country. During these meetings formal non-binding declarations are agreed upon, which sum up the activities in previous periods and give provisions for the future. The AC also provided the forum for the negotiation of three legally binding agreements: the ‘Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic’, the ‘Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic’ and most recently in May 2017 the ‘Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation’ (Arctic Council, 2017a; 2017c). Apart from this, the AC strictly provides a framework for intergovernmental cooperation. It does not implement or enforce its guidelines, assessments or recommendations (Arctic Council, 2017). Its decisions and declarations are furthermore non-binding and it does not have formal authority to adopt a budget that members are expected to fund (Young, 2016). The AC is thus dependent on voluntary contributions from its members. The role of the AC lies mainly in identifying emerging issues and framing them for policymaking processes. In this sense, it is not a “*normal*” intergovernmental organization, but the informal basis of the AC makes it very capable of adjusting to changing circumstances and being open to contributions from all its members (Young, 2016, p.101),.

Most of the work of the AC is done through several working groups, which I will elaborate on in Chapter 5 (Arctic Council, 2015). Apart from the working groups there are several task forces that are appointed at the Ministerial Meetings to work on a specific issue until they have attained their goal, after which they become inactive (Arctic Council, 2017b). Through the specific structure of the AC it is especially successful in terms of norm making, which resulted in becoming the major norm-setting instrument in the Arctic region (Escudé, 2013). Since the AC holds no hard power to force states to alter their behaviour, it is a powerful instrument to obligate states by setting more soft-law norms.

### ***1.2.2 OBSERVER STATES***

Non-Arctic countries can become observers under certain admission criteria, such as that they must recognize UNCLOS and the sovereignty of the Arctic States. In addition they must be able and willing to contribute in the AC, for instance by participating in working groups or providing experts and reports. When the Observer states participate in AC meetings they have no voting rights, but they may participate in the working groups (Arctic Council, 2016a). They can also propose future projects through an Arctic Member or a Permanent Participant and contribute in financing these projects. In meetings, the Observers can make statements and submit documents on certain issues, but only if the Chair of the specific meeting allows them to.

In 2010 Oran Young, a prominent scholar of governance in the Arctic, gave a speech during a discussion on the ‘State of the Arctic’ for the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States, where he said: *“Being a permanent observer in the Arctic Council doesn’t buy you very much, but nonetheless it’s a very significant indication of globalization, of the shifting political currents with respect to the Arctic, that these kind of outside players are now knocking on the door and demanding an opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes regarding Arctic issues”* (Arctic Research Consortium of the United States, 2014).

Despite these limitations, having observer status is the only formal way to get involved in the Arctic and get access to AC proceedings. Moreover, the AC member states are keeping the group of observers more exclusive rather than inclusive (Graczyk, 2011). At this moment for instance, the European Union still has a pending request to become an Observer, mainly because Canada is blocking its participation due to a dispute over the EU import ban on seal products (Hossain, 2015). This shows that the decision to be approved as an observer state lies with the Arctic member states. Graczyk and Koivurova (2014) analysed how the Nuuk observer rules, established in 2011, have impacted the role of non-Arctic states in the AC. They concluded that it is clear that the application to become an observer is assessed on the basis of the interests that the non-Arctic states have in the Northern region. Furthermore, their participation is also evaluated regularly, making it possible for the members of the AC to dismiss observers. According to the writers, the emphasis of studying observers should be on the way they contribute at the working level of the AC, which would reveal their interests in

acquiring the observer status (Graczyk & Koivurova, 2014). Therefore, studies should look at the participation of observer states in the different subsidiary bodies and meetings of the AC.

The United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland and Germany were already present during the negotiations on the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991, which was the predecessor of the AC (Graczyk, 2011). Their interests at this early stage were mainly rooted in their role in scientific research in the region. Another factor that can not be neglected are historical interests, with the Netherlands and Great Britain having long economic traditions in the Northern regions. Not surprisingly however, most contemporary research on the interests of observer states focus on the Asian observers, as they were most recently admitted to the AC in 2013 (Steinberg & Dodds, 2013). Studies on these Asian interests have an excess of emphasis on Chinese involvement in the Arctic relative to other Asian countries (Chen, 2012; Jakobson & Lee, 2013; Kopra, 2013; Xing & Gjedssø, 2013; Lanteigne, 2017). The attraction of China as a case of analysis can probably be explained through general interest in China as one of the great global powers in the world.

An interesting example of one of these studies is an article on China as a norm entrepreneur in the Arctic (Lanteigne, 2017). The argument that is made in this article is that Beijing wants to avoid being seen as too assertive in the region, which would possibly provoke Arctic states too much. Instead China chose to develop its Arctic policies along lines consistent with the theory of 'norm entrepreneurship'. Initially Russia and Canada assumed that China's application to the AC was only based on economic grounds and security. On the contrary China is continuing to avoid competition and is mainly participating in multilateral talks on scientific cooperation. The norm China is trying to develop is about seeing the Arctic as an international space of policy, economic development and environmental knowledge. However, other scholars take a much more economic approach. They argue that China's interest in the Arctic is primarily driven by their external energy dependency and export-oriented economy (Xing & Gjedssø, 2013; Chen, 2012). Apart from the debate on the underlying reasons for Chinese involvement in the Arctic, Lanteigne (2016) states that the specific case of China's Arctic policy can provide an example of how outside actors engage and participate in Arctic governance.

In a stakeholder analysis of the AC, Sebastian Knecht (2016a) raises questions about the actual participation of observer states in meetings. Knecht created his own dataset, called the

Stakeholder Participation in Arctic Council Meetings (STAPAC) dataset. He used this data to quantitatively analyse participation of member states, permanent participants, observer states and organisations, in meetings between 1998 and 2015. From this analysis he concluded that observers do not always use the opportunity to participate, because their attendance rates are relatively low to that of member states and permanent participants.

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As stated earlier, Graczyk and Koivurova (2014) argued that the interests of the observers can be revealed by their actual contributions on the working level of the AC. But apart from the quantitative study by Knecht (2016a), there has not been enough research on participatory behaviour of observer states. Past research has only focused on potential roles the observers might play and their interests, thereby falling short on analysing the actual participation in the AC. Most of this research blindly assumes that becoming an observer state would automatically result in attendance and contribution. According to Knecht (2016a) there is a general ignorance on the participation of all actors in the AC, including observer states. As a reaction to this observation, he has since created a solid basis for analysing the participation of observers in the different meetings and working groups of the AC. The author also acknowledges that the STAPAC dataset does not provide any real information on how or why the observers participated, and focuses instead on whether they were physically present during a meeting or not. Furthermore he states that the results of the STAPAC dataset open up new questions, such as how the large variance in observer participation can be explained theoretically.

In a chapter of a recently published book called '*Governing Arctic Change: Global Perspectives*', Knecht makes a first effort toward explaining the variance in participation by observer states that he found in his data (Keil & Knecht, 2017). In this chapter he compares Germany, the Netherlands and South Korea and why they participate in working groups at different rates. He first acknowledges that financial and organisational resources also matter when it comes to representation in the AC. However looking at the actual participation contradicts this idea, since some observers with high capabilities such as Germany and the UK, significantly participate less than countries or observer organisations that have more limited resources. He concludes that resources only play a minor role in explaining the

variation in attendance of observer states. The states with defined Arctic policies that align with the AC's agenda and states that consider the AC suitable for advancing their own interests, participate the most. (Knecht, 2017). However Knecht still does not try to explain the large variance in overall observer state participation through a theoretical framework, which is a question he raised in his earlier work (Knecht, 2016a).

The literature review in Chapter 1.2 shows that most research on observer states is concerned with analysing the interests they have in the Arctic region. In doing so, these scholars disregard the fact that being admitted to the AC as an observer, does not necessitate increased participation (Knecht, 2016a). Knecht (2016a) has tried to fill this gap by making a dataset that shows the concrete participation of all stakeholders, including observer states. His research has opened up a new gap in the literature in comparing participation through international relations theory. As stated earlier, media, scholars and Arctic states harbour growing concerns over the expansion of the AC and the interests of observer states, as more commercial opportunities arise in the region (Solli, Rowe & Lindgren, 2013; Stokke, 2014; Milne, 2014). Conversely, there are also scholars, who suggest that the observer states do have a genuine interest in environmental norm making in the AC. An example of this is the study by Lanteigne (2017) on China, whose approach to the Arctic goes beyond concerns about relative power regarding resource extraction and security. According to the author China's behaviour arises from its aspiration to be a norm entrepreneur. This theory can be placed within the larger theoretical framework of constructivism (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

The constructivist theory can be contrasted by another theory that is used to explain state cooperation through international institutions, such as neoliberal institutionalism (Nagtzaam, 2009; Ikenberry, 2000; Sitaraman, 2016). The commercial interests of (non-)Arctic states namely give some the impression that an 'Arctic scramble' lies ahead of us. According to others, this rivalry between states in an 'anarchic' Arctic region is clearly demonstrated by Russia planting a flag on the seabed of the North Pole (Wegge, 2012). The fact that the Arctic has high economic stakes makes interference in Arctic governance by outside actors a sensitive topic for the member states (Pelaudeix, 2015). According to Solli, Rowe and Lindgren this even resulted in that: "*the observer applications were seen as dramatic or problematic by some key actors*" (2013, p. 256).

This theoretical dichotomy of understanding non-Arctic interests in the AC, can constitute a basis for the theoretical explanation of the actual participation of these states in the AC. However, the two IR theories of constructivism and neoliberal institutionalism are usually only used to analyse the emergence of cooperation between states, through international institutions, and asks questions such as: ‘why do states cooperate?’ (Nagtzaam, 2009). The AC is albeit somewhat special in this account, because emergence of cooperation, where non-Arctic states can apply for observer status and are accepted, does not mean that they will actually cooperate during the activities of the AC. Thus observer status does not automatically result in participation in working groups or other AC meetings (Knecht, 2016a).

#### 1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of this research is twofold. First, I aim to fill the gap of explaining the participatory behaviour of observer states with IR theory by going beyond the usual assumptions on participation that are made in existing literature (Knecht, 2016a). Next to this it will also test the explanatory value of IR theory, because I aim to see if the theories, generally used to explain cooperation between states in international institutions, might also have explanatory power in analysing the actual participation in institutions. The explanatory power of the two theoretical frameworks of constructivism and neoliberal institutionalism on the participation of observer states in the AC can be tested through a congruence analysis. Where the conclusion will tell us which theory possesses the most explanatory value for this case. The following research question will be used during the analysis:

*Does the theory of neoliberal institutionalism or constructivism provide the best explanation for understanding the differences in participation of the observer states in the Arctic Council?*

The participation of observers in the Arctic Council will be defined initially as attendance and non-attendance within meetings and bodies of the Arctic Council, as described in the STAPAC dataset (Knecht, 2016b). The differences in (non-)attendance of the observers will be further elaborated on by analysing their actual contributions while participating and their policy directives in the Arctic. These observations will be explained by the theoretical frameworks of constructivism or neoliberal institutionalism.

## 1.5 SOCIETAL AND THEORETICAL RELEVANCE

The topic of my thesis ties in with existing debates on observer states in the Arctic Council, as concerns over their admissions are increasing due to possible commercial interests. Looking at the actual participatory behaviour of observers might show us how much their admittance to the AC, truly means for contributions to cooperation on Arctic issues. This thesis aims to provide clarity about the cooperation of observer states in the AC and if these are mainly based on economic self-interest or on creating norms of environmental protection and sustainability. This clarification might be useful to actors involved in the AC, in order to go beyond usual assumptions and add more nuances to the debate on the admission of observer states. Especially since more and more states are lining up to apply for observer status, such as Greece, Mongolia and Turkey (Rosen, 2016). My thesis will contribute to a more profound understanding of what it is that observer states actually do in the AC.

The theoretical relevance of this analysis comes from the fact that so far an important topic has been largely overlooked in the literature. The unquestioned assumptions about the participation of observer states in available literature will be evaluated in my thesis. Furthermore I will proceed to test the explanatory value of two common IR theories on cooperation between states. These theories will however not be tested on the emergence of cooperation or the making of treaties, regimes or institutions, but on the participatory behaviour of actors after these institutions have already emerged. The observers are namely already admitted to the AC, but apparently this has not led to their actual participation in this institution. The results of this thesis might also have implications for the objectives of the AC and the way it manages the role of observer states in its subsidiary bodies.

## 1.6 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

In Chapter 1 I have introduced the topic of my thesis, given the literature review of the AC in general and more specifically the observer states, stated the problem and presented the research question followed by the relevance of my thesis. In the second chapter, on the theoretical framework, I will specify why I have chosen the two theories in my research question. Afterwards in Chapter 2.2 I will introduce the theory of neoliberal institutionalism, provide the concepts and derive the propositions from these concepts. In Chapter 2.3 I will do

the same for the theory of constructivism. These propositions will form the abstract theoretical basis for the rest of the analysis. In Chapter 3 I elaborate on the qualitative research design of my thesis, namely a congruence analysis. In Chapter 3.4 the collection of data is specified, since I will use a mix of qualitative data such as policy documents, but also numerical data on attendance rates from the STAPAC dataset by Knecht (2015). Before starting the actual analysis in Chapter 4, I will first operationalize the propositions that were presented in Chapter 2.2.3 and 2.3.3. The operationalization is necessary in order to develop falsifiable expectations that can be observed directly in the data. The information from the operationalization is further summarized in Appendix I, a table of the expectations, specific indicators and required data. Chapter 5 on the observations and analysis starts of with an introduction to the results of the STAPAC dataset, where I also elaborate on the updates that were made to the data. The rest of the chapter is subdivided in the different propositions and the observations that were made for this specific proposition. The next chapter discussed the findings of the analyses that were made in Chapter 5, by using two tables that show if the data that was found per indicator was strong or weak. In the final chapter I answer the research question and give the final conclusions of my thesis. Furthermore I state the limitations of my research and provide recommendations on further research.



## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 SELECTION AND SPECIFICATION OF THEORIES

In this chapter I will first elaborate on why I selected the two theories of the research question. After which I will introduce the theory of neoliberal institutionalism in Chapter 2.2, and provide the concepts and the propositions. The same will be done for the theory of constructivism in Chapter 2.3. The propositions will help me in developing the falsifiable expectations found in Chapter 4.

Classical approaches of international relations are mainly concerned with material power and capabilities of states (Wight, 2013). These approaches are also evident in the current discourse on international politics in the Arctic, where there is talk of a struggle of power over potential natural resource extraction (Heininen, 2014). Neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist theories currently dominate the Arctic debate in international relations, as they share the assumption of increasing stakes in Arctic commodities (Keil, 2014). The theory of neoliberal institutionalism is a common way of theoretically analysing environmental treaties, or regimes in general (Nagtzaam, 2009; Keil, 2014). This theory focuses on cooperation and collective action that benefit economic growth, market economies and a liberal international system. However, the dominance of the classical rational theories of IR, has been challenged by other approaches that view the world differently, such as constructivism. This theory namely examines how states become socialized into the international system, where certain standards of acceptable behaviour, or norms, form a state's interest and identity (Ingebritsen, 2002).

There are thus conflicting approaches within international relations theory, one side focuses on states pursuing territorial expansion, material wealth and power. Whereas the other side focuses more on the international community where states are concerned about their reputation and social interactions (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This theoretical dichotomy is also apparent in the discourse on Arctic governance, where the interest-driven explanations emphasize on an Arctic 'scramble' over natural resources, and the norm-driven explanations focus on international cooperation in the region regarding environmental protection (Heininen, 2014). Nagtzaam (2009) uses the theories of constructivism and neoliberal institutionalism to analyse the making of environmental treaty regimes. Even though the AC

does not have a treaty and is generally not considered a regime, this organisation does focus on creating certain environmental and sustainable development standards and norms. A similar theoretical framework as used by Nagtzaam (2009) will form the basis for my analysis. Accordingly the theory of constructivism will be tested using the theoretical model of 'norm entrepreneurship', and the more rationalist view focussing on commercial interests by neoliberal institutionalist theory (Wendt, 1992; Nagtzaam, 2009).

## 2.2 NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM

### 2.2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THEORY

The theory of neoliberal institutionalism is largely based on another important theory in international relations, namely neorealism. Both these theories start with the assumption that the absence of a sovereign authority that can enforce binding international agreements, incentivises states to pursue their own interests (Jervis, 1999). Consequently they agree that we live in an international system where states worry about other states taking advantage of them in a state of anarchy. Neoliberal institutionalism thus accepts the central notions of realism that states are rational actors and that the international system is anarchic (Sitaraman, 2016). Realism furthermore emphasizes the difficulty of cooperation among rational actors who are concerned with relative gains (Mearsheimer, 1994). Neoliberal institutionalism does not agree with realism in this respect, because it states that cooperation in the anarchic system is nonetheless possible.

Robert Keohane, one of the leading scholars of neoliberal institutionalism, developed a rationalist argument to explain the existence of cooperation through international institutions (Keohane, 1982). He argued that high transaction costs and uncertainty could lead to suboptimal outcomes in conditions where states are concerned their peers will default on agreements, like in the Prisoners' Dilemma game. These game theories are presented by realists to explain why there is lack of cooperation among states (Stein, 2008). They show that autonomy and self-interested behaviour can result in suboptimal outcomes for all of the involved parties. However, neoliberal institutionalism demonstrates that institutions can actually help in resolving collective action problems and come to mutually beneficial outcomes. Situations such as trade problems and arms races are typically explained using game theory, but on the other hand these are also situations where states have actually created

institutions to facilitate cooperation. This contrasts the realist argument that states are the only actors that count in global politics (Nagtzaam, 2009).

Neoliberal institutionalists argue that the world is made up of rational states that are focussed on maximizing their self-interest, by making cost-benefit analyses. This autonomous self-interested behaviour within an anarchic system can be problematic, because states can take advantage of absolute profits at the expense of other states. Despite of the self-interest behaviour of actors, cooperation is possible. Cooperation can namely be mutually rewarding, especially since conflict has a detrimental effect on countries' economic interests (Keil, 2014). The concern states have of other states cheating on agreements, can be counterbalanced by creating interdependence between states and setting up institutional arrangements to facilitate cooperation and find mutually preferred outcomes (Stein, 2008). Especially since increased globalization has led to more and more interdependence between states' economies, resulting in extensive networks of interdependence between all parts of the world (Keohane & Nye, 2000).

In contrast to realists that focus more on international security and conflict, neoliberal institutionalists are more inclined to study issues of international political economy and the environment. The theory presumes that states necessarily gain material benefit from cooperation with other states (Nagtzaam, 2009). Because even though international institutions are cooperative, they are still based on the power and interests of states (Stein, 2008). Neoliberal institutionalists thus build on the elements of neorealism, that states are 'rational egoists' who aim to maximize their gains and minimize their costs. Simultaneously they challenge the neorealist scepticism on international institutions and regimes (Nagtzaam, 2009).

Russett and Oneal (2001) presented an example of cooperation that led to mutually beneficial outcomes and which broke a vicious circle of hostility and war in an anarchic system, namely the creation of an intricate system of political, economic and social institutions in Western Europe after World War II. These institutions, which ultimately led to the modern day European Union, came from a deliberate policy to promote cooperation and peaceful relations. According Russett & Oneal (2001) this depends on three elements. First of all there must be promotion of democracy through the establishment of stable democratic institutions. The second element is bolstering of national economies, where the economic well-being of a

country can be increased through stable, cooperative economic relations, which would create economic interdependence. The final element of breaking the vicious circle of conflict in Europe was by “*construction of a thick web of international institutions*” (Russett & Oneal, 2001, p. 26). This thick web would provide rules that encouraged and protected cooperation.

According to Keohane institutions matter because they provide information, monitor compliance, increase iterations, facilitate issue linkages, define cheating, and offer solutions (Katzenstein, Keohane & Krasner, 1998). Trust between states is possible and is enforced through the phenomenon of the ‘shadow of the future’, where cooperation becomes possible due to repeated interaction and reciprocity (Oye, 1985). Meanwhile institutions and rules allow for cooperation by lowering transaction costs and increasing the credibility of state arrangements (Keohane 2011). Through the formal or informal rules of institutions, states are safeguarded against cheating as they can assume that unwanted state behaviour will be punished. Keohane defines institutions as: “*persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations. We can think of international institutions, thus defined, as assuming one of three forms:*

1. *formal intergovernmental or cross-national nongovernmental organizations*
2. *international regimes*
3. *conventions.*” (Keohane, 2011, p. 158)

The theory of neoliberal institutionalism is also often used to analyse international environmental agreements, or regimes. Central to this analysis is the idea that certain principles and norms within these environmental agreements proscribe the behaviour of actors and facilitate cooperation (Nagtzaam, 2009). However, usually norms do not play a large role within neoliberal institutional perspective, since the material interests of actors shape these norms as an outcome of rationalizations of self-interest.

### ***2.2.2. CONCEPTS OF NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM***

John Ikenberry (2000) gives a good summary of institutions according to neoliberal institutionalist theory, they are “*agreements or contracts between actors that function to reduce uncertainty, lower transaction costs, and solve collective action problems*” (p. 15). The transaction costs are lowered because constantly making ad-hoc coalitions when a certain problem arises is more costly than having a more permanent institution in place (Keohane, 2011). Furthermore, “*Institutions are employed as strategies to mitigate a range of opportunistic incentives that states will otherwise respond to under conditions of anarchy*” (Ikenberry, 2000, p. 15). Neoliberal institutionalists are concerned with the concepts of power and self-interest in the international system, they therefore expect states to establish institutions if they benefit from cooperation (Keohane, 1984). Keohane defines cooperation as a process where states ‘*adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination*’ (1984, p.51). The behaviour of states is therefore not just directed at attaining relative gains, such as in realist theory, but on absolute gains.

The basis of behaviour of states is that they focus on their own-self interest in maximizing their material benefits by conducting a cost/benefit analysis. This central notion of neoliberal institutionalism becomes apparent in a study by Wagner (2013), on attendance patterns in the NATO and WEU (Western European Union) parliamentary assemblies. He also assumed, that from a rational institutionalist perspective, members of parliament attend parliamentary assemblies if the benefits exceed the costs. Where the costs would be expressed in expenses for travel and accommodation and time spent on assemblies, and the benefits in valuable first-hand information. A similar argument could be made for states as well, as they too would probably only participate in institutions if the benefits will outweigh the costs.

Next to this, according to Keohane, the international system can be explained by game theory. Where cooperation between states can be facilitated through repeated Prisoner’s Dilemma games, through which they have reciprocal contact (Keohane, 1984). For neoliberal institutionalists abstaining from mutually beneficial arrangements comes from the fear that others will cheat or take advantage of them (Jervis, 1999). At the same time non-cooperation can be prevented if actors are aware that mutual defection produces the worst outcome for both. Frequent interactions between states, teaches them that not cooperating means reduced

benefits for both. International institutions are there to provide these repeated iterations. One of the reasons that international institutions facilitate cooperation is through their ability to provide information to states. Information namely removes the problem of uncertainty that states have about others and prevents states from cheating, because one can better predict future behaviour. Overall the argument is that it is better for actors to cooperate if the players expect to meet again in the future. Keohane (1984) argues that the social world is best captured by a repeated Prisoner's Dilemma game, because over a longer period of time states will learn to cooperate for mutual benefit due to the reciprocal contact they have. Neoliberal institutionalists share the general idea with realists that cooperation will not occur if states do not have a common interest. However only having a common interest is not enough to form establish cooperation, institutions that reduce uncertainty and decrease asymmetries in information are also necessary.

### *2.2.3 PROPOSITIONS*

From the theoretical section on neoliberal institutionalism it is possible to compose the following propositions that will test the explanatory value of this theory in the case of observer participation in the Arctic Council. These propositions will be made into more concrete, falsifiable expectations in Chapter 4.

- 1.1 Observer states participate in the Arctic Council because they are concerned with absolute economic gains, based on rational self-interested behaviour.
- 1.2 Observer states participate in the Arctic Council because cooperation through the AC reduces transaction costs for a state.
- 1.3 Observer states participate in the Arctic Council because cooperation through the AC as reciprocal contact, will learn states to cooperate for mutual benefit over time.
- 1.4 Observer states participate in the Arctic Council because states behave on the basis of maximizing their gains and define their attendance through a material cost/benefit analysis.

## 2.3 CONSTRUCTIVISM

### 2.3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THEORY

Neoliberal institutionalism has long dominated the analysis of international environmental agreements, but this dominance is now challenged by other theories, in particular by constructivism (Nagtzaam, 2009). Constructivism is a norm-based approach and differs from realist or liberal theories, because it emphasizes social norms, moral values and knowledge in order to explain intergovernmental cooperation (Sitaraman, 2016). Constructivists see *“institutions as diffuse and socially constructed worldviews that bound and shape the strategic behaviour of individuals and states. They provide normative and cognitive maps for interpretation and action, and they ultimately affect the identities and social purposes of the actors”* (Ikenberry, 2000, p. 15). Constructivist theory ultimately seeks to explain identities and interests (Wendt, 1992). This theory is a response to the liberal and realist perspectives that focus on material self-interest of states and absolute or relative gains in an anarchic global system. One of the reasons for the rise of constructivism was that the end of the Cold War undermined the explanatory power of neorealism and neoliberalism, as they were both unable to predict or comprehend the changes the global order underwent (Reus-Smit, 2013).

Social constructivism challenged the notion that international relations were only influenced by power, because social interaction, identities, ideas and norms also shaped the international sphere. The theory of social constructivism, initially developed by Wendt (1992), states that the structure of the international system is not given, but that it is determined by social practice. Ideational and normative shifts are the main means for system transformation, like changes in the balance of power for realists (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Reus-Smit, 2013). Even though constructivists also recognize the importance of power, they focus more on ideational and non-material power, for instance through influence, persuasion and legitimacy. It is important to understand the norms in international society, because they legitimize goals and define actors' identity and interests. The general definition of a norm is: *“a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a give identity”* (Finnemore & Sicking, 1998, p.891). Norms can be set apart from other kinds of rules by their prescriptive nature, they focus on “oughtness” and shared moral assessment. Therefore they incite justifications for certain actions and communication between actors, which can be studied.

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) constructed a framework for empirical research of social construction processes and norm influences in international politics, by specifying three stages in the so called 'norm life-cycle'. The first phase is called 'norm emergence', where agents, such as states, act as norm entrepreneurs that mobilize support for certain standards of appropriateness and persuade other agents to adopt these norms. In the next two phases, norm acceptance and internalization, there is a socialization effect where states conform to the norm, after which the norm becomes internalized and unquestioned.

The agents and states that promote certain norms are called 'norm entrepreneurs'. They do not necessarily have to be the hegemons in global politics, which are the focus of more classical IR theories, but precisely smaller states try to exercise 'soft power' to develop certain standards of behaviour. An example of the application of this theory to a case, comes from research by Christine Ingebritsen (2002), who identifies Scandinavian countries as norm entrepreneurs in global environmental politics, conflict resolution and the provision of aid. According to her "*Scandinavia has consistently and actively sought to influence more powerful states in establishing and strengthening global norms of cooperation*" (Ingebritsen, 2002, p. 11). This is a similar argument Lanteigne (2017) makes, about how China is trying to influence global politics in the Arctic as a norm entrepreneur through the Arctic Council.

For the analysis of the differences in participation by the observer states in the AC, I will focus on the first stage of the norm life-cycle, 'norm emergence'. In this stage the norm entrepreneur tries to persuade a critical mass of states to embrace new norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). I am namely not analysing the actual completion of the norm life-cycle, where internalization of the norm by a critical mass is reached, in the later stages of the norm life cycle, since this analysis is not on which promoted norms ultimately become central in the AC.



### 3.3.2 CONCEPTS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM AND NORM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), the characteristic mechanism of the stage of 'norm emergence', is that there is persuasion by norm entrepreneurs. They define norm entrepreneurship as "*the purposive efforts of individuals and groups to change social understandings*" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001, p.400). The two elements present in the first stage are the norm entrepreneurs and the organizational platforms from which they act, in this case the AC. The first essential component of a norm entrepreneur's strategy is the construction of frames. During this process of framing, the norm entrepreneur calls attention to certain issues, or creates issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing them. After these frames are constructed, they might form a new way for understanding a certain issue by a broader group of actors. During this process there is a case of 'normative contestation', where different norms must compete with each other. In order to promote a new norm, sometimes the existing appropriate behaviour has to be challenged and contested.

Young (1991) describes a similar concept in his article on entrepreneurial leadership by political actors, he states that the entrepreneur uses his negotiating skills to frame certain issues and finds mutually acceptable solutions for key players involved. Although Young focuses more on individuals as leaders in international affairs, his narrative is still useful for analysing leadership among states, as it are also individuals who act as agents of states and represent their interests. He identifies four functions of entrepreneurial leaders: they are agenda setters that shape certain issues; they draw attention to the importance of the issues; they are 'inventors' who construct innovative policies to overcome barriers to compromising and cooperation; and they make deals while finding support for the policy options (Young, 1991).

Based on Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) definition of a norm entrepreneur, Carr and Baldino (2015) have constructed a framework of norm entrepreneurship with four characteristics that allows them to assess how actors communicate, negotiate and advocate transnational norms. They specifically use this framework to analyse Australia as a norm entrepreneur in conflict prevention and crisis management in the Indo-Pacific region. Since Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) themselves do not explicitly formulate a model for analysing norm entrepreneurship alone, the model by Carr and Baldino (2015) will form the basis for establishing the concepts underlying the propositions of norm entrepreneurship. Carr &

Baldino's (2015, p. 31) model consists of: "*framing, institutionalism, socialisation and resilience*", which are all apparent in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) description of norm entrepreneurs and also somewhat resemble Young's (1991) functions of entrepreneurial leaders.

First off, as described above, framing is an important trade of norm entrepreneurship, where persuasion is the first step in creating certain desired state behaviour (Nagtzaam, 2009). Aside from framing, an important characteristic of norm entrepreneurship lies in the ability to build institutions for developing certain norms (Carr & Baldino, 2015). In the case of the Arctic Council, there is already a certain organizational platform through which actors can promote their norms. The norm entrepreneurs would thus work from the already existing institutional framework in promoting and shaping issues and ideas (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). However, even within an already existing framework, it is of course possible to promote new forms of institutionalisation that might help to attain one's objectives. An example linked to this analysis' specific case, could be to develop a national Arctic office within their foreign affairs department, which would help in promoting the specific norm the entrepreneur wants to advance.

The third characteristic consists of coupling the frame and the institutional regime together through a socialisation strategy (Carr & Baldino, 2015). These strategies are needed in order to make sure other actors accept the norm, because they connect the proposed frames with resources. The costs might be expressed in material value, but also through a factor such as legitimacy, given that states increasingly acknowledge the importance of their reputation and credibility. The final characteristic of norm entrepreneurship is called 'resilience' by Carr and Baldino (2015), which is based on the idea by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) that norms do not emerge in a vacuum, but in a highly contested normative space. Since new proposed norms might be in conflict with already established standards of appropriate behaviour, as a result this can bring about criticism. This last factor might just cause the norm to not reach its 'norm cascade' if too many actors negatively react to the efforts of one or more states to change social understandings.

### *2.3.3 PROPOSITIONS*

The four characteristics that are described by Carr and Baldino (2015), which are based on Finnemore and Sikkinks definition of norm entrepreneurship, form the propositions that will test the explanatory value of this theory in the case of observer participation in the Arctic Council. These propositions will be made into more concrete, falsifiable expectations in Chapter 4.

- 2.1 Framing: Observer states participate in the Arctic Council to promote norms by constructing frames, by calling attention to certain issues, or create issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing them.
- 2.2 Building organisational platforms: Observer states participate in the Arctic Council to promote norms by forming or suggesting an organisational platform for promoting a certain norm.
- 2.3 socialisation: Observer states participate in the Arctic Council to promote norms by developing a socialisation strategy to promote a certain norm and persuade other states.
- 2.4 resilience: Observer states participate in the Arctic Council to promote norms by showing willingness to sustain criticism on a proposed norm.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of research is to produce valid inferences on the basis of empirical information regarding a certain topic (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). The empirical information constitutes of facts that can be quantitatively or qualitatively assessed. The aim of this research is to test the explanatory power of two theories, constructivism and neoliberal institutionalism, in the case of observer state participation in the Arctic Council. It is valuable to study cases through theories, because these can shape our knowledge about the social and political reality through focussing and framing of certain aspects (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). My analysis will start off with a numerical measurement of the participation of observer states in the AC, which is defined with either attendance or non-attendance at meetings. The degree of participation can be found in the STAPAC dataset, made by Knecht (2016c). The results of this analysis will provide me with information on the actual participation rates of observer states, which will make it possible to accurately compare them. This comparison will then form the basis of testing the two theoretical approaches in different qualitative data. The adaptations made to the existing STAPAC dataset will be clarified in paragraph 3.3 on the data collection and in Chapter 5.1.

My research question will ultimately be answered using a qualitative research design, largely based on observations that are not numerical. Since I am not looking at different variables in a large-n population, a quantitative analysis is not appropriate for answering my research question (Van Evera, 1997). Therefore I will conduct a case-study analysis, focussing on all twelve observer states of the Arctic Council. According to Blatter and Haverland (2012) a case study research is non-experimental, which focuses on a small amount of cases, with a large and diverse number of observations per case, and reflects intensively on the relationship between concrete empirical observations and abstract theoretical concepts.

I will look at all observer states and not take a sample of the total population, as I want to avoid a selection bias. Furthermore if I would only take a small sample of cases, it would be hard to generalize the chosen cases to the rest of the population that were not a part of the study. The only observer state I will leave out of my analysis is Switzerland. As stated in the introduction, Switzerland was admitted as the 13<sup>th</sup> observer state after the Ministerial Meeting

in Fairbanks, Alaska on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2017, but because it has not officially participated in the AC, I will leave it out of this analysis (Arctic Council, 2017a). Since the goal of this analysis is to test the explanatory power of the two theories with the cases, a congruence analysis will provide the best method.

### 3.3 CONGRUENCE ANALYSIS

A congruence analysis is a small-N research design that connects abstract concepts, from the theory, with concrete observations from the cases (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). Diverse theories have a different way of looking at reality and help us understand certain observations from a specific perspective. This method allows the observer to look for congruence, or incongruence, between values observed on the independent and dependent variable and values that are predicted by the hypothesis (Van Evera, 1997). Gerry Nagtzaam (2009) applies a similar method in his book on the making of several international environmental treaties, such as mining in Antarctica. As he asks himself the question which theoretical approach has greater explanatory power with regard to environmental regimes.

This method consists of a set of steps that need to be followed in order to produce valid inferences (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The first step is ‘vertical’, where propositions and specific predictions are deduced from both abstract theories. The propositions are already deduced from the theory, and can be found in Chapter 2. The concrete expectations, consisting of certain indicators that refer to the cases can be found in Chapter 4. These expectations will lower the level of abstraction of the theories. In the following second ‘vertical’ step the researcher checks if the collected data is in line with the expectations, this will be done in Chapter 5. The third ‘horizontal’ step consists of concluding which theory in explaining the observations of the different cases, the conclusions of this step can be found in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. If there is a higher degree of congruence between propositions from one theory and the observations from the cases in comparison to the other theory, I can conclude that the first theory has a stronger explanatory power than the latter.

### 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

In order to test the explanatory power of the two theories in the analysis, data needs to be collected. I intend to use different types of sources to develop a more complete image of the participation of observer states in the AC. First of all I will use the STAPAC dataset to establish the difference in participation between the observer states. The current dataset by Knecht (2016c) only has data up to and including 2015 and he has left out a few of the working groups and task forces. In Chapter 5.1 I will discuss in more detail how I updated to dataset, together with some of the results on the attendance rates. The differences in percentages of observer participation that will come out of the initial numerical analysis, will form the basis of the qualitative analysis.

For the qualitative analysis I will examine primary sources that refer to the Arctic region, which are available from the observer states, such as documents on Arctic strategies. The validity of the measurement will be enlarged by using direct citations in the argumentation. I will only use the policy documents of the observer states that are available in English, these are however still abundant. The documents available from the Netherlands are the only documents I analyse that were not available in English, but that I translated from Dutch. Because diversification of data is important in order to analyse the full picture of the case, I will not only look at data from the governments themselves. This one-sided data will give a distorted image, as they might focus more on desirable attributions such as entrepreneurship regarding environmental norms. Therefore I will also analyse primary sources from the AC, which has an exhaustive archive that is available online, where most documents on the participation of the observer states can be found. First off I will use recent the ‘Observer Activities Reports’ or ‘Observer Review Reports’ of the 12 observer states, these summarize the activities and contributions of each respective observer state in the Arctic Council working groups, task forces and expert groups for 2016. This information will be expanded with reports on the meetings and activities of the working groups, ministerial meetings and Senior Arctic Official (SAO) meetings will also be part of the analysed data. Other Arctic Council documents, such as the document titled ‘Opportunities for Observer Engagement in AC Working Group Activities’ (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2016) will also be part of the analysed data. Together these documents will form a comprehensive account of the participation of the observer states in the AC. Due to time constraints I will only analyse a selection of the AC documents, namely from 2013 till now. It is not feasible to look at

documents of all the meetings from 1998 onwards, therefore I chose to take 2013 as a starting point, the year that all 12 observer states from my analysis were admitted. This makes sure that the non-Arctic states that were not yet admitted as observers are not underrepresented in the reports on meetings of the AC.

## **4. OPERATIONALIZATION: DEVELOPING FALSIFIABLE EXPECTATIONS**

In this chapter I will further develop the theoretical propositions stated in Chapter 2, to change them into falsifiable expectations. By decreasing the level of abstraction of the theories, the propositions can be turned into concrete indicators that are observable in the real world (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). If a theory has explanatory power, the propositions of that theory will be confirmed by the data. The different levels of congruence between the expectations and the observations from the data show which theory has the largest explanatory power compared to the other. The concept validity of the research can only be safeguarded if the expectations in this chapter accurately describe the meaning of the theories. In the following two paragraphs I will discuss the theories of neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism and provide falsifiable expectations that are derived from the propositions, which are given in Chapter 2.2.3 and 2.3.3. An overview of the indicators per expectation can be found in Appendix I.

### **4.1 NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

#### **4.1.1 Absolute gains**

According to the theory of neoliberal institutionalism, cooperation between states is based on rational self-interested behaviour, where states are concerned with absolute economic gains. According to neoliberal institutionalism, pursuing relative economic gains, benefiting in comparison to others, is unreasonable, since the distribution of benefits is more beneficial in a world of economic interdependence. States do however act in their own interests, mainly their own economic interests, but they should not be concerned with the relative gains of others. From the theoretical framework of neoliberal institutionalism we can therefore expect that participation of observer states in the Arctic Council will be largely based on the material interests of these states, in this case seabed mining, hydrocarbon extraction, fisheries and shipping. Evidence for this prediction can be found in the different types of meetings the observers attend. Based on their rational self-interested behaviour, they will for instance



be more likely to participate in the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME), which developed and periodically revised the Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines (Keil, 2015). At the same time they would be less likely to participate in meetings such as those of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, which provides scientific advice on contaminants and pollution and will not be as significant for the commercial interests of observer states. Next to the attendance, their actual contributions in the working groups and task forces will also provide information on their interests. Furthermore the policy documents and observer review reports (as discussed on p.27) of the observer states will provide me with information on the underlying reasons for their interests in the Arctic and for participating in the Arctic Council.

*Prediction: the participation of observer states in the AC is based on absolute economic gains, evident in mentioning commercial interests such as shipping or resource extraction in the Arctic.*

#### 4.1.2 Reduction of transaction costs

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by neoliberal institutionalism if cooperation through the AC reduces transaction costs. The reduction of transaction costs is apparent if data gives proof that it is cheaper for states to cooperate through the AC than to form ad hoc coalitions per Arctic issue, where cooperation is needed. The evidence for reduction of transaction costs by the AC should be given by the observer states themselves. Therefore they will not be achieving their self-interested goals regarding Arctic matters through other ad hoc coalitions or cooperating through other institutions. If there is evidence of observer states trying to attain their goals regarding the Arctic alone, or through other forms of bilateral or multilateral cooperation, this means the AC is not successful in reducing transaction costs for observer states, which would mean they will participate less through the AC. Evidence for the reduction of transaction costs by the AC will be found in the policy documents of each of the observer states themselves. If the observer states participate through the AC, they will name that the AC is the most efficient means to attain their own goals through cooperating with other states and will not mention other means of cooperation that might also be efficient or attaining their goals by themselves.

*Prediction: the observer states themselves will mention that the AC is the most efficient means to attain their own self-interested goals and will not cooperate through other (ad hoc) coalitions regarding Arctic matters that are the topic of discussion in the AC.*

#### 4.1.3 Iterated interactions

Neoliberal institutionalism states cooperation, based on reciprocal contact, will learn states to cooperate for mutual benefit over time. This idea is based on games such as the Prisoners Dilemma. If this game is played once or just a few times, defection is the dominant strategy. However, in cooperation the interactions are repeated many times by the same players, after which it is generally agreed that it is rational behaviour for the players involved to cooperate (Keohane, 1984). This means that if there have been many repeated interactions in the 'iterated game', this will ultimately result in cooperation and not defection. If we translate this to the case of participation by observer states, it is expected that the non-Arctic states that have been admitted as observer states for a longer time, will participate more on average than newly admitted observer states, as it is rational for them to do so in the long run. On account of the fact that participating in meetings is the only formal way for observer states to cooperate on Arctic issues through the AC. Evidence for this expectation can be found in the STAPAC dataset, which will show the (non)attendance of observer states in the different meetings over a certain time period.

*Prediction: the observer states will participate in more meetings over time, because in the long run cooperation will be rational due to repeated interactions.*

#### 4.1.4 Material cost/benefit analysis

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by neoliberal institutionalism if a state behaves on the basis of maximizing its gains and defines its attendance through a material cost/benefit analysis. This means that they are aware of the costs of participating in the meetings of the AC, nevertheless they will still participate if the benefits are higher. On the other hand they will not attend a meeting if the costs of participation will be higher than the potential benefits. An example of this can be found in the study of Wagner (2013), where attendance in meetings was influenced by the costs of participating, such as travel, accommodation and time, and by benefits, such as gaining

valuable first-hand information. The sources of the observer states themselves, such as their policy documents, will show if the participation is indeed defined through material costs and benefits. Documents of the Arctic Council, especially more elaborate ones such as those of the ministerial meetings, might also give reasons for the (non)participation of observer states.

*Prediction: the observer states will define their participation through material costs-benefit analyses, meaning they will mention material costs that refrain them from participating, or benefits that stimulate them to participate.*

## 4.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM

### 4.2.1 Framing

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by norm entrepreneurship if a state has constructed a frame, by calling attention to certain issues, or created issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing them. Framing forms the ‘basic building blocks for the creation of broadly accepted norms’ (Nagtzaam, 2009, p.75). Norm entrepreneurs seek to negatively frame the current situation, by framing the status quo undesirable, they promote their ‘new norm’ as an appealing solution. Evidence for framing of a certain norm can thus be found in discrediting an existing norm and persuading other actors of a different, more suitable norm. Apart from trying to discredit the existing situation, there are several other strategies that may be found as proof that observers will try to convince others of a new norm. Observers may try to link the new norm to universally existing beliefs to increase its legitimacy. Next to this they may also bring new information to light that can reframe an existing norm, for instance in the form of scientific knowledge. Accordingly, the explanatory power of constructivism can be proven if we find evidence of framing a certain issue to promote a norm in the documents of the AC meetings, or in the policy documents and observer review reports of the observer states themselves.

*Prediction: the observer states participate in the AC to frame their promoted norm by calling attention to it, linking it to universally existing beliefs, provide new information and by discrediting existing norms regarding Arctic issues.*

#### 4.2.2 Building organisational platforms

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by norm entrepreneurship if a state has formed or suggested an organisational platform for promoting a certain norm. The observer states already have access to an organisational platform, the AC, to promote norms as a norm entrepreneur. It can also be however, that a certain organisational platform is built to specifically promote a certain norm. In this case the state has to allocate resources to build an institution that is able to assist in promoting a norm. The dedication of resources, such as time, energy and money, towards a new organisational platform is a good indication of the efforts taken by a state to promote a norm (Carr & Baldino, 2015). In the case of norm entrepreneurship by the observers, building organisational platforms can be understood through the development or suggestion of platforms that will aid in promoting the norm in the AC. For instance by developing a specific foreign policy or research department regarding the Arctic or otherwise investing resources in the organs of the AC, such as financial contributions, that promote a certain norm. Evidence for building of organisational platforms or contributing through resources can be found in the reports of the AC and the policy documents of the observer states themselves.

*Prediction: the observer state will have directed resources towards contributing in the institutions of the AC or they have developed a national organisational platform, that helps to promote a certain norm,*

#### 4.2.3 Socialisation strategy

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by norm entrepreneurship if a state has developed a socialisation strategy to promote a certain norm and persuade other states. As stated in the four-part model by Carr and Baldino (2015), the third role of a norm entrepreneur is to establish an overarching strategy in order to persuade others to support a certain norm. This strategy's function is to identify the nature of the challenges and provide a means to overcome these problems. The observer state may introduce material resources to try to convince others, but without coercing others, since normative changes must be voluntarily accepted because they are seen as legitimate (Florini, 1996). The strategy should encompass which material and ideational resources will be used (Carr & Baldino, 2015). A socialisation strategy is necessary in order to successfully promote

a norm because it matches means with ends. Only calling attention to an issue and framing it will not persuade other actors enough, therefore it is important to have a strategy to show what the intended behaviour is, how to allocate resources and use certain capabilities. Evidence for the socialisation strategy of a promoted norm will be given by the observer states themselves in policy documents on their Arctic strategy and in the observer review reports. Apart from framing a certain issue, they should also mention how certain challenges will be overcome and how resources will be allocated.

*Prediction: the observer states participate in the AC with a deliberate socialisation strategy in order to persuade others by mentioning how material and ideational resources will be allocated and by identifying challenges and solutions.*

#### 4.2.4 Resilience

The participation of an observer state in the Arctic Council can be explained by norm entrepreneurship if a state has shown willingness to sustain criticism on a proposed norm. As stated by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, p. 897) promoting certain norms happens in a ‘highly contested normative space’, where there might be a clash between old and new norms. Because new norms might be contested and old ones defended, negative reactions could be developed towards the norm entrepreneurs. If the norm entrepreneur is not successful in sustaining criticism and mobilising enough support, the proposed norm might never reach the critical point after which it is internalized. However, it can also be that norm entrepreneurship is not controversial if the norms do not cause any concern and are corresponding to the wishes of all those involved (Carr & Baldino, 2015). Evidence for ‘resilience’, as a part of the model for determining norm entrepreneurship, can be found in reactions of other observer states and organisations, member states and permanent participants on the efforts of an observer state to promote a certain norm. These reactions might be found in the meeting reports, where the participation of observer states is discussed.

*Prediction: there will be a willingness to sustain criticism from other actors on the promotion of a certain norm, evident in negative reactions on the particular norm entrepreneur or the new norm and defence of the existing norms, when participating in the AC.*

## 5. OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA ON ATTENDANCE

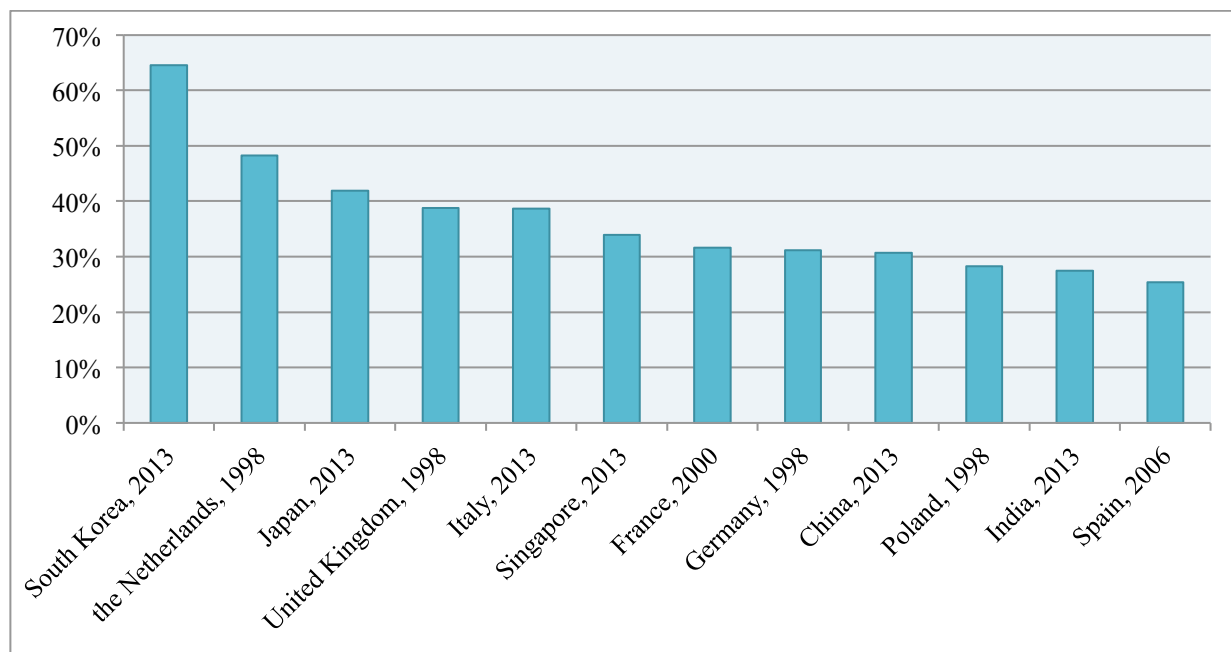
In Chapter 5 I will link the empirical observations from the data to each of the predictions from Chapter 4. The results of the analysis presented in Chapter 5.2 until 5.9 are based on Table 3 in Appendix I, which shows an overview of the expectations, indicators and required data. First off, I will shortly present the changes I made to the Stakeholder participation in Arctic Council Meetings (STAPAC) dataset of Knecht (2015) and the results. The exact numbers on the attendance of observer states will form an important basis for the rest of the empirical analysis, since the policy documents and AC documents do not give enough information on the actual participation. The percentage of attendance of the observer states only includes the meetings since they were admitted as observers. The dataset includes the following meetings, working group meetings and task force meetings:

- Ministerial Meetings
- SAO Meetings
- AMAP WG: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme Working Group
- EPPR WG: Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group
- PAME WG: Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group
- SDWG: Sustainable Development Working Group
- TFOPP: Task Force on Arctic Marine Pollution Prevention
- TFBCM: Task Force on Black Carbon and Methane
- ACAP WG: Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group
- TFAMC: Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation
- TFTA: Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic

Data on the last three meeting types were added by myself, as they were not included in the original dataset by Knecht (2015). In addition to this I added the meetings that were documented for 2016 and 2017, up to and including the Ministerial Meeting in Fairbanks on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2017. The following working group and task force meetings were not included, because there was either no data available, or because there have been no meetings so far:

- SCTF: Scientific Cooperation Task Force
- TFSR: Task Force on Search and Rescue
- SLCF: Task Force on Short-Lived Climate Forces
- CAFF WG: Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group

Furthermore, I have taken out a few meetings where the information was incomplete, to not give an advantage to some states with more available information. Overall the amount of meetings where the dataset measures attendance or non-attendance, range from 170 for the countries that were admitted in 1998 as observer states (Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, the UK) to 155 for France, 118 for Spain and 62 measurements for the countries that were admitted in 2013 (China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore). The following graph shows the percentage of attendance of all the meetings that the observer states attended:



*Figure 1: percentage of attendance in all meetings of the AC between 1998 and 2017, for each observer state, mentioning the dates of accession to the AC. Data from the updated STAPAC dataset (Knecht, 2015) and author's own update.*

From this graph it is clearly visible that there is a difference in attendance between the observer states. South Korea particularly participates more than the other states, with an attendance rate of 65%. The rest of the observer states attend between 25 and 48 percent of all meetings. The percentages in attendance of each different meeting can be found in Appendix II, which I will refer to in further chapters.

## 5.2 ABSOLUTE GAINS

*Prediction: the participation of observer states in the AC is based on absolute economic gains, evident in mentioning commercial interests such as shipping or resource extraction in the Arctic.*

This prediction is based on the theory of neoliberal institutionalism and assumes that cooperation between states is based on rational self-interested behaviour. In the case of participation in the Arctic Council, this would mean that the observer states will have mentioned a commercial self-interest in the Arctic and that they would participate and contribute in meetings that are concerned with commercial activity. To assess whether this prediction can be confirmed I analysed data from the policy documents of the observer states themselves, the observer reports, the type of meetings that they attended and how they contributed to the different AC subsidiary bodies.

As mentioned in the introduction, due to the melting of ice in the Arctic Ocean, there are increasing opportunities for resource extraction, fisheries, shipping and even tourism. From the different policy documents that the observer states provide, it becomes clear that each state is well aware of these commercial opportunities, given their energy dependency on Arctic states such as Russia and Norway, development of new shipping routes, migrating fish stocks and other commercial interests (UK Polar Regions Department, 2013). Even though the Arctic strategies or policy documents of the observer states differ greatly in how detailed they are, they all devote some words to mentioning the possibilities the Arctic can provide for their economy. The Netherlands for instance has a very elaborate Arctic strategy document, called the *'Dutch Polar Strategy 2016-2020'* (Rijksoverheid, 2016b). In this document the Dutch government mentions that around 10% of the Dutch maritime sector is related to the Arctic, which accounts for a revenue of several billion euros. The government is however also aware that the opportunities for resource extraction are not profitable yet. Which became evident as Shell halted its drilling experiments end of 2015, due to disappointing results. For most observer states, including the Netherlands, developments in shipping routes are seen as one of the main possibilities the Arctic brings for the future, because of shorter travel times. Germany mentions: *"Thanks to the increasing navigability of the Arctic Ocean, there is great potential in the market for innovative ship-building that meets high environmental standards. Germany, especially through its shipyards and maritime contracts, is a global leader in this*



*domain*” (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013, p.9). Later on in the policy document it is mentioned that through the Arctic Council, Germany wants to put this *‘technological know-how’* to use and increase its participation in working groups for this purpose (p. 13). On the other hand Spain mentions that it is also aware of the threat these new Arctic shipping routes might bring to its economy. If the Northern Sea Route, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Arctic Ocean, is going to be opened permanently this would be competition to the current commercial routes through the straight of Gibraltar that benefit Spain (Comité Polar Español, 2016; Evers, 2013). Shipping is given as one of the reasons of Spain’s geopolitical interest in having an Arctic presence and in having observer status in the AC.

Apart from Germany, South Korea is the only country who specifically mentions, as one of three reasons, that it wants to: *“create new business areas by participating in the Arctic Council and its Working Groups”* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p.5). Contrary to South Korea, who is quite clear on its reasoning behind participating in the AC, Poland is contradictory in the message it spreads about its interest in the Arctic. In the first sentence of an article on its website called ‘Poland in Arctic’, it states: *“Poland has neither vital nor direct political and economic interests in the Arctic”* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, 2012a). While in an article called ‘Poland in Arctic Council’, it mentions that Poland is actually interested in increasing a business presence in the Arctic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, 2012b).

Next to this, it is important to note that while all observer countries mention economic opportunities in the Arctic, this narrative is often overruled by an acknowledgement of the potential environmental dangers any future economic activities will have for the Arctic and the rest of the world. While the observer states recognize that the Arctic has great commercial potential, participation in the AC is mostly defined as a framework for cooperation on environmental protection and scientific research. If commercial interests are mentioned by observer states these topics are almost always approached from an angle of sustainable development. France for instance states that it wants to: *“Ensure that France’s industrial projects mainstream environmental protection concerns and local indigenous community participation, in line with corporate social responsibility”*, after it mentioned French companies that are currently present in the Arctic (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, 2016). Most observer countries mention that their interest in the

Arctic is manifold, like a statement on the website of the government of India: “*Today India’s interests in the Arctic region are scientific, environmental, commercial as well as strategic*”. (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2013).

To further establish if the observer states are motivated by absolute gains in participating in the AC, I looked at the type of meetings that were attended in the updated STAPAC dataset and the contributions to these meetings (Knecht, 2015). The results from the percentual participation of the observer states in each of the different meetings can be found in Table 4 to Table 14 displayed in Appendix II. As stated in the Observer Manual, which was adopted at the Eighth Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2013: “*Observers may, at the discretion of the Chair, make statements, present written statements, submit relevant documents and provide views on the issues under discussion. Observers may propose project through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant but the total financial contributions from all Observers to any given project may not exceed the financing from Arctic States, unless otherwise decided by the Senior Arctic Officials.*” (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2013b, p.9)

By looking at the levels of attendance it is possible to find out which of the meetings are of most interest to the observer states. The Ministerial Meetings and Senior Arctic Official (SAO) Meetings are, not surprisingly, attended the most, as these are namely the most important meetings. The Ministerial Meetings are held every two years between foreign ministers, while the SAO meetings are held twice annually. Part of the content and the possible contributions of observers in the working groups and task forces are explained in a document called ‘Opportunities for Observer Engagement in AC Working Group Activities’ (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2016b). This document discloses that the ACAP and AMAP Working Groups are mainly focussed on environmental research, such as the examination of local black carbon emissions. The PAME, EPPR and Sustainable Development Working Groups are much more focussed on commercial activities and would be, according to the prediction on absolute gains of neoliberal institutionalism, be of more interest to the observer states. These working groups namely established expert groups on shipping, traffic data, resource exploration and are working on the management of fossil-fuel resources. Next to these working groups, the TFAMC and TFTIA task forces also have a more economic focal point, working on a regional seas program for increased cooperation in Arctic marine areas and developing a circumpolar infrastructure of telecommunications and cooperation, between

the public and private sectors (Arctic Council, 2017d). Whereas the TFBCM and TFOPP task forces are concerned with environmental issues such as pollution.

From the above-mentioned information on the content of the different meetings and in light of the expectation on absolute gains, it would be assumed that they would attend the PAME WG, EPPR WG, SDWG, TFAMC and TFTIA more than the ACAP WG, AMAP WG and TFBCM and TFOPP. However by looking at the total average attendance of each of the observer states, it is not possible to confirm that the meetings of these more economically oriented working groups and task forces are attended more than others that are more concerned with environmental protection and research. This result is for all of the observer states together, but in order to see if there is explanatory value for the difference in participation between states, it is expected that the observer states that participate the most on average, will also be most driven by their commercial self-interest. If we look at the observer states that participate the most on average, South Korea, the Netherlands, Japan, the UK and Italy (they each participate more than the average overall participation of all meetings at 36%), there is no clear trend of these states attending more of the commercial or environmental oriented meetings. Unfortunately, the information on the discussions in the meetings themselves does not give sufficient information on the actual contributions of observer states to these meetings. Typically these meeting reports state observer contributions like the following: “*Singapore provided a short update on EPPR related activities including SAR and OSR exercises*” (EPPR, 2015). Usually only the attendance of observer states is noted, or a specific observer state and that they contributed to sharing information and best practices, providing experts or through a financial contribution, without going into details.

### 5.3 REDUCTION OF TRANSACTION COSTS

*Prediction: the observer states themselves will mention that the AC is the most efficient means to attain their own self-interested goals and will not cooperate through other (ad hoc) coalitions regarding Arctic matters that are the topic of discussion in the AC.*

According to the theory of neoliberal institutionalism, states cooperate through international institutions because these reduce transaction costs. Having permanent institutions in place to facilitate cooperation on a certain issue is namely less costly than having to make ad-hoc

coalitions each time a problem arises. The two indicators for this prediction are that the observer states should mention the AC as an efficient means to attain their goals and that they will not cooperate through other (ad hoc) coalitions on issues that are discussed in the AC. Evidence for this prediction is found in the observer reports of the AC and the policy documents of the states themselves, given that these documents provide information on the Arctic policies in general and not just the AC.

In the policy documents of the non-Arctic states most of them mention that the AC is an important organisation for Arctic regional cooperation. The Italian policy document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015) called 'Towards an Italian Strategy for the Arctic', they state: *'Italy views the Arctic Council, with its wide range of members ..., as the main debating arena for the region. It is a forum for discussion of the different features and issues of this multifaceted area and for the identification of all viable forms of cooperation.'* (p. 3). This piece of text clearly shows that Italy, among other observer states, finds the AC the international institution for cooperation on the Arctic. Other states mentions the vital role the AC plays as the premier forum on Arctic issues (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016), or state the leading role and legitimacy the AC has in regional cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development France, 2016). South Korea, who participates the most in all AC meetings, seems to focus the most on the AC in its policy document. Its Master Plan for 2013 to 2017 of strengthening international cooperation; building a foundation for scientific research; and creating new business areas, will almost entirely be accomplished through the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2013). South Korea does mention that it took an initiative in convening a trilateral high-level dialogue on the Arctic among South Korea, Japan and China, but this meeting also reaffirmed their commitment to contributing to the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016). South Korea's primary focus on the AC as a means to achieve its goals on Arctic issues, would explain the fact that it participates a lot more in AC meetings than other observer states. The only countries that do not explicitly express their opinions about the AC are India, Singapore and China. This can probably be attributed to the fact that they do not have an official Arctic policy document and have limited information available on their interests and activities in the region. The Chinese government did publish the '2013 National Annual Report on Polar Program of China', but this document is mainly focussed on scientific research in the Arctic and Antarctica and does not mention any policy objectives or opinions on the AC as an efficient means to cooperate on Arctic issues. The Netherlands does

mentions that the AC is the most important overarching intergovernmental organisation for cooperation (Rijksoverheid, 2016b). However it also mentions that the Netherlands wants to mainly operate through the AC, the UN, the IMO, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and bilateral contacts with Arctic states. The country with the third highest attendance rates is Japan, who states the following: *“It is also important for Japan to participate actively in international forums other than the AC”* (The Headquarters for Ocean Policy Japan, 2015).

The second indicator on cooperation through other institutions or ad hoc coalitions is, unlike the first indicator, disconfirmed by the data. Most of the observer states in fact name the AC as the main framework for cooperation on Arctic issues, but they also mention a lot of other international institutions, meetings and agreements that are made outside of the AC. One of the most prominent examples is Singapore who is very actively engaging in cooperation through other institutions. Apart from not having an Arctic policy or strategy document, the websites of the Singaporean Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, do not provide a lot of information on its participation in the Arctic Council. These websites do focus a lot on the Arctic Circle, for which Singapore hosted the Arctic Circle Singapore Forum (ACF Singapore) in 2015. In the observer report of the AC, Singapore states the following: *“The ACF Singapore featured plenary sessions on the governance of Arctic sea routes, infrastructure development in the Arctic, and the role of science and research in enabling Arctic shipping”* (Europe Directorate Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, 2016, p.5). The Arctic Circle is an independent organisation established in 2013 by the Icelandic president and facilitates dialogue and cooperation between governments, organizations, corporations, experts, environmental associations, indigenous communities and other interested parties (Arctic Circle, n.d.). According to an article published by Canadian newspaper The Globe and Mail, the establishment of the Arctic Circle can be seen as challenging the primacy of the AC (Koring, 2013). Seeing that the Arctic Circle is more inclusive in admitting anyone who has an interest in the Arctic, from oil companies to research institutes and countries that are not included in the AC.

Later on in the Singaporean observer report, it is mentioned that Singapore recognises the importance of the Arctic and that it will keep on exploring other avenues to increase awareness of Arctic issues. Singapore is not alone in the respect of mentioning other cooperation mechanisms for the Arctic. Another example is Japan, who states that it will

participate actively in the AC, but that it also considers initiating bilateral conferences with Arctic states and that it wants to: *“Enhance Japan’s presence by actively participating in the Arctic Circle, Arctic Frontiers, and other international forums related to the Arctic”* (The Headquarters for Ocean Policy Japan, 2015, p.8).

Even though the AC has several working groups and task forces dedicated to Arctic shipping, most observer countries mention the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) as the leading organisation regarding shipping, as mentioned in the UK policy on the Arctic: *“The UK will promote the IMO as the most appropriate authority for the regulation of international shipping, including that in Arctic waters”* (UK Polar Regions Department, 2013, p. 25). Germany has a similar on Arctic shipping cooperation: *“For all issues concerning shipping in the Arctic, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the foremost body for multilateral cooperation.”* (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013, p.13). Although the AC has contributed to the conclusion of the IMO’s ‘Polar Code’, which provides regulations on shipping and the environment, and collaborates regularly, it is still an organisation that works independently of the AC as a specialized agency of the United Nations (Arctic Council, 2016b; IMO, n.d.).

## 5.4 ITERATED INTERACTIONS

*Prediction: the observer states will participate in more meetings over time, because in the long run cooperation will be rational due to repeated interactions.*

The theory of neoliberal institutionalism is largely based on game theories, which explain that institutions reduce uncertainty and decrease asymmetries in information for states, this ultimately leads to more cooperation over time. In the case of the AC this would mean that observer states will participate in more meetings over time, as they learn that interaction is mutually beneficial. Evidence for the confirmation of this proposition is found in the results from the STAPAC dataset and from the observer reports and policy documents of the observer states.



*Figure 2: average attendance of all observer states per year in percentages with a trendline in black. Data from the STAPAC dataset (Knecht, 2015) and author's own update.*

Figure 2 shows how many meetings the observer states together, have attended over the years. In the first few years the attendance rates were very high, because only there had only been SAO Meetings and a few working group meetings, with a high average attendance. The trendline points out the general trend in the data from each year, showing a slight increase in attendance over the years. It is important to know however, that the dip in the attendance rate in 2005 can probably be attributed to the fact that the data for the SAO Meetings that year was not available in the AC archives. If the data on the attendance was available, the rate for 2005 would probably be higher, and the trendline less steep. Furthermore every two years there is a slight dip in the attendance rates, this is due to the fact that the Ministerial Meetings are only held once every two years. The attendance rates at these meetings are generally quite high, making the rates for the years that there is no Ministerial Meeting comparatively lower. If there would have been Ministerial Meetings each year, the attendance rates would be less diffuse.

Apart from these limitations in the data, the trendline does show a modest increase in attendance rates, from an average of about 31% to 40%, which would confirm that over time slightly more meetings were attended by observer states. However, from these numbers alone it is not possible to make causal inferences, meaning that it is not possible to tell if the increase in attendance rates can actually be attributed to iterated interactions over time. Therefore I have also looked at the policy documents and observer reports for additional qualitative data.

In a lot of the documents, the observer states mention that they want to participate more in the AC. The states that participate the most in the AC meetings all mention that they want to enhance their contributions to the AC subsidiary bodies. One of the programs to strengthening international cooperation, as part of South Korea's 'Master Plan', is to expand participation in the AC's activities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2013). For instance by establishing a plan to increase participation of experts in the working groups and task forces. The Netherlands mentions that the policy-oriented involvement at the working groups of the AC will be enlarged in the coming years (Rijksoverheid, 2016b). Japan mentions a similar argument on strengthening its contributions to the work of the AC.

Nonetheless, not just the observer states that participate the most in the AC meetings, have mentioned that they would like to increase their contributions. China also wants to: "*further enhance China's contributions to the [Arctic] Council*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2016, p.3). India is the observer state with the second lowest attendance rates of all observers, and does not mention in its observer report, or the pages on its government website that are dedicated to the Arctic, that it wants to increase its activity in the AC (Gawande, 2016; Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2013). Spain is the country that has the lowest attendance rate of the observer states, namely just 25%, since its accession as an observer state to the AC in 2006. What becomes clear from the Spanish policy document on its Polar strategy is that it has focused much more on Antarctica than the Arctic in the past years. Spain has already been active in the Antarctic region since 1988, when it was granted the status of Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty, after which it directed most of its attention, mainly scientific research, to the Antarctic. Only recently Spain has started to also conduct research in the Arctic and become more active in the AC, which makes Spain conclude that: "*the necessary measures must be taken to facilitate and promote the involvement of Spanish researchers in the Council's different working groups.*" (Comité Polar Español, 2016 p.15). This shows that of all the observer states, even those that contribute the least, want to increase their participation and contributions to the AC, except India.



## 5.5 MATERIAL COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

*Prediction: the observer states will define their participation through material costs-benefit analyses, meaning they will mention material costs that refrain them from participating, or benefits that stimulate them to participate.*

The above-mentioned prediction of neoliberal institutionalism assumes that participation is based on a rational calculation of costs and benefits. Countries will participate in meetings of an organisation if the benefits exceed the costs. The indicators for this particular expectation are that participation is defined through a material cost-benefit analysis, where states mention material costs that refrain from participation and mention benefits that stimulate participation. The evidence for this expectation is found in policy documents of the observer states, observer reports and AC documents that might give evidence for (non)attendance of an observer state.

There are almost no observer states that explain why they do not attend certain meetings. The only evidence of mentioning resources that refrained from participation in the AC, is given by Poland: *“In the last two years, Poland continued its involvement with selected working groups and monitored activities of other subsidiary bodies to identify projects and programs, where Polish institutions and experts could make best contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Given the expertise and resources, the currently ongoing undertakings provided less opportunities for engagement compared to the previous years.”* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Legal and Treaty Department Poland, 2016, p.2). This quote shows that the Polish government lacked certain resources to attend as many meetings as they did in previous years. Further on in its 2016 observer report, they mention that the submission of a document on ‘Black Carbon and Methane Emissions’ was not possible in 2016 because of time-consuming verification of emission indicators. This also shows that the costs, expressed in time, for contributing a report to the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane under the TFBCM, were too high for Poland. Although it did submit a similar report on its emissions in 2013, it was not able to do so in 2016 (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2017). However, in the other information regarding Poland and the Arctic on their website and in the Policy Paper by the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), there is no mention of limited resources refraining from participation (Łuszczuk, Graczyk, Stępień, & Śmieszek, 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, 2012a; 2012b). In the policy paper of PISM it is noted

that scientific collaboration through the AC working groups, is one of the best forms of international cooperation in the region as scientific diplomacy. The expansion of scientific activities would also be an *'image-booster'* and would serve as an *'entry ticket to the region'* for Poland (Łuszczuk, et al., 2015, p. 3). Apart from Poland, there are no other observer states that directly address costs of any kind, which makes them abstain from contributing or attending meetings. Nevertheless, just because no evidence of this can be found in any studied documents, does not mean that there are no costs or lack of certain resources that refrain from participation.

Each of the observer states do mention several benefits why they participate in the AC. Some of these are already mentioned in Chapter 5.2, such as conducting scientific research in the Arctic, working on environmental protection and possible access to resources. There are however other reasons for participation in the AC, one example of this is given in an article by the New York Times, which was published on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs of India: *"India's efforts to be included in the Arctic Council reflects the country's desire to exert greater influence on the global stage, as well as on a region that could be key to meeting its domestic energy needs"* (2013). Another example of perceiving the AC as a means to develop influence over the region is found in the Spanish Polar Strategy. Spain regards scientific cooperation, through the AC, as one of the most effective forms of international cooperation, which can develop political capital to defend its own interests (Comité Polar Español, 2016). It is not just Poland, India and Spain, the observer countries that participate the least, who perceive the AC as a means to increase their impact in the Arctic. The Netherlands states that through participation in the working groups of the AC it receives a voice in the changing Arctic, since it naturally does not have a direct say in the region (Rijksoverheid, 2016b).

## 5.6 FRAMING

*Prediction: the observer states participate in the AC to frame their promoted norm by calling attention to it, linking it to universally existing beliefs, provide new information and by discrediting existing norms regarding Arctic issues.*

After having discussed the analysis of the four expectations from the theory of neoliberal institutionalism, I will now focus on the expectations of constructivism, starting with framing. These expectations are based on the theory of norm entrepreneurship, which falls under constructivism. In the case of non-Arctic states in the AC, this means that observer states would participate on the basis of wanting to promote a certain norm. The first essential component of a norm entrepreneur's strategy is the construction of frames. The indicators for the framing of a norm are that observer states: call attention to certain issues; create issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing; linking to universally existing beliefs; provide new information or facts; and discrediting existing norms. The evidence for these indicators is found in policy documents of observer states, reports of AC meetings, and the observer reports.

While examining the data it became clear that different observer states have several norms they want to promote while participating in the AC. First of all they all agree that environmental protection and research on climate change are the most important aspects of their contributions to the AC. This is not surprising as these are one of the main objectives of the AC. Furthermore most of them mention that they want to participate in the AC and be active in the Arctic with respect for indigenous communities, thereby emphasising the human dimension of cooperation on the Arctic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Italy, 2015). However, these norms are already prevalent in the AC and respecting these is a prerequisite for non-Arctic states to becoming an observer state. Part of the criteria for admitting observers are: *“Respect the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants; and accept and support the objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa declaration”* (Arctic Council, 2016a). The main objective of the Ottawa declaration, the founding document of the AC, is to commit to sustainable development (Arctic Council, 1996). This means that the norms on protecting the Arctic environment and respecting indigenous communities are not new norms that are being promoted by observer states as norm entrepreneurs.

Nevertheless, apart from reaffirming these already existing norms of the AC, some observer states also want to advance new norms. First of all, France, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands want to enhance the role of observer states in the AC. Their role is currently limited, they for instance do not have voting rights. In the French ‘National Roadmap for the Arctic’, when mentioning its participation in the AC, it is argued that: *“For years, it has been promoting there [the AC working groups] the principle of placing greater responsibility on states outside the Arctic region, which are also responsible for the sustainable development of this unique and fragile environment.”* (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, 2016, p.4). The Japanese policy document states: *“Japan will participate actively in discussions of expanding the role of observers”* (The Headquarters for Ocean Policy, 2015, p.8). Poland seems to be taking the lead with regards to promoting the norm on increasing the role of observer countries in the AC. It namely initiated the ‘Warsaw Format Meetings’ since 2010, where observer states debate with each other and with the Chair of the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, 2012b). In the next chapter on the expectation of the building of organisational platforms, I will go into more detail on these meetings.

Singapore, South Korea and China did mention in their observer reports that they attended the Warsaw Format Meetings, though they did not specifically mention that they also wanted to enhance the role of observer states (Europe Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs China, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016). The prevailing norm in the AC that observer states are more on the outside and do not have as much influence as the Arctic member states, is thus contested by a few of the non-Arctic states. Framing of this norm is mainly done by providing information on the severity of climate change in the Arctic and how non-Arctic states are responsible for these problems, but also for coming up with any solutions. They argue that the Arctic is of global importance and the AC should therefore engage more actively with non-Arctic countries (UK Polar Regions Department, 2013).

Apart from promoting the norm of a more inclusive policy by the AC for all observer states, Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Poland specifically mention their support for the EU’s candidacy as an observer state. As stated in Chapter 1.2.2 on the observer states, the EU’s request for observer status has been blocked for several years by Canada over an EU

wide ban on the import of seal products. Therefore it is currently a ‘permanent guest’, meaning that it can participate limitedly and is still not officially admitted as an observer. The norm that the EU should be admitted as an observer is mainly framed by showing the importance of the EU for the Arctic. For instance by stating that the EU is heavily invested in Arctic research and that it has more competences for the development of certain policies on fisheries, energy, transport and the environment regarding the Arctic, than the individual EU member states themselves (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2016b)

An already existing norm in the AC is: “*the importance of maintaining peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic*” as stated in the Kiruna Declaration (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2013a, p.1). All of the observer states adhere to this norm and mention the importance of a secure region, especially when melting ice provides potential resources that might cause future rivalry between states. Nevertheless there are also a few countries that believe this is the reason why the AC should further develop itself. The German government for example stated: “*Although the special characteristic of the Arctic region makes it difficult to arrive at an agreed international political and legal framework, Germany believes this underscores just how badly such a framework is needed*” (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013, p.4). By making this statement and by providing a lot of information and facts on the possibility of escalation in the Arctic, Germany argues that the framework that is currently in place is not completely sufficient. In a later section of the same document, they further emphasise the need for legally binding regulations for the exploration and development of mineral resources, since the AC agreements are currently non-binding. Furthermore Germany states that the AC is becoming more institutionalised, but that it still does not address any questions regarding security, thus it needs to be made stronger and more effective. The Dutch government similarly states that due to increasing economic activities, there should be development of additional, strict and binding international norms and agreements for the Arctic (Rijksoverheid, 2016b).

## 5.7 BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL PLATFORMS

*Prediction: the observer state will have directed resources towards contributing in the institutions of the AC or they have developed a national organisational platform, that helps to promote a certain norm,*

The second expectation that is derived from the theory on non entrepreneurship emphasises the importance of building organisational platforms in order to promote a norm. In the case of the AC, there is already an existing institution through which the observer states can advance a certain norm. However, within this institutional framework they can still promote and initiate new forms of organisational platforms or further develop their national institutions regarding the Arctic. The indicators for this expectation are that the observer states promote norms through: the direction of resources towards institutions of the AC; and develop a national organisational platform. The data for analysing this expectation is found in the policy documents of observer states and documents of the AC on contributions by observer states.

As mentioned in the previous chapter on framing, I would further elaborate on the ‘Warsaw Format Meetings’. In 2010, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated these meetings outside the existing institutional framework of the AC, as a way for observer countries to come together and discuss issues of mutual interests together with the Chair of the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Legal and Treaty Department Poland, 2016). According to the PISM Policy Paper this initiative has allowed Poland to build a strong position among the other observer states and has established “*Poland’s role as a promoter of more intense activity and cooperation among AC observers*” (Łuszczuk, et al., 2015, p.6). The most recent meeting was held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, where representatives of all twelve observer states were present, together with the EU and the U.S. Chair of the SAO. During the meetings there are discussions on how the observer states can become more involved within the AC working groups and how to further cooperate on fighting global warming (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2015). The fact that Poland initiated and continues to host these meetings, provides proof that Poland is heavily invested in promoting the norm of strengthening the role of observer states in the AC.

Another means for observer states to strengthen their capacity to be active in the AC, is by developing their national institutions regarding the Arctic. Japan for instance, who also wants

to promote the norm on changing observers responsibilities in the AC, has an Arctic Ambassador. In an interview with *The Diplomat* (2017), the Japanese Arctic Ambassador mentioned that: *“the Arctic Council should consider more active involvement of Arctic observers in the Council in some way which allows observers a chance to express opinions and make presentations and formulate a framework for binding agreements.”*. At the same time she also stressed that she did not ask the AC for a special institutional arrangement for observers. France similarly has a special Ambassador for the Poles who works under the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, which, according to France, reaffirms their commitment to the Arctic (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, 2016). In 2016, the Netherlands also appointed an Arctic Ambassador, who is also the ambassador for sustainable development (Rijksoverheid, 2016a). Likewise, South Korea appointed an Ambassador for Arctic Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016). Singapore also has an ambassador who is a Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, 2012). Poland has an ambassador for the Legal Status of the Arctic and the Antarctic. Germany has a division of its Foreign Office dedicated to Arctic Policy and the United Kingdom has a Polar Regions Department, but they both don't have an ambassador. While Italy, Spain, China and India do not have a special department or ambassador directed at Arctic affairs, but for instance a committee or representative. This shows that observer states that attend the most meetings, have developed their national institutional structure regarding the Arctic the furthest, since they all have a specially dedicated ambassador or a department for the Arctic.

When looking at the first indicator on the direction of resources towards institutions of the AC, it is difficult to say if the resources that are mentioned, are actually directed at promoting a new norm. A lot of observer states present a budget for Arctic research, however this does not say anything about directing resources towards promoting the norm on the role of observers, supporting the EU bid for observer status or wanting to develop the AC institutionally. Furthermore, there is no available information on the financial contributions of observer states to the working groups and task forces. The document on the 2016 funding of the AC states that the working groups primarily receive their funding from the Arctic states. Any other sources of direct funding are contributed by observer states and ‘other entities’ (Arctic Council Secretariat, 2016a). Unfortunately it is never specified which of the observer states contribute to the budget or how much. Nevertheless, resources do not only have to

expressed in financial contributions, because the attribution of resources such as time, providing experts or otherwise are also valuable.

There are a few other observer states, similar to Poland, who have hosted meetings or seminars for the AC. South Korea, albeit not promoting a new norm, seems particularly invested in this respect, in 2016 it for instance hosted a seminar in celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, 2016). France mentions, that in order to promote placing greater responsibility on non-Arctic states, it provided, together with Germany and the UK, a comprehensive national report on black carbon and methane emissions to the AC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development France, 2016). This contribution would show the importance of observer states in contributing to scientific knowledge and cooperation in the Arctic.

## 5.8 SOCIALISATION STRATEGY

*Prediction: the observer states participate in the AC with a deliberate socialisation strategy in order to persuade others by mentioning how material and ideational resources will be allocated and by identifying challenges and solutions.*

The third expectation of the theory of norm entrepreneurship is having a socialisation strategy, in order to convince others to accept the proposed norm. This deliberate socialisation strategy to persuade others, can consist of: mentioning how material and ideational resources will be allocated; and by identifying challenges and solutions of the norm. The costs can be expressed in material values, but also for instance in legitimacy, since states care about their reputation and credibility. The evidence for this expectation is found in policy documents of the observer states, reports of AC meetings and in the observer reports.

As stated before, Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Poland all try to promote the admittance of the EU as an observer in the AC. They mainly advance this norm by making a claim on the EU as a legitimate Arctic actor and by providing evidence of financial contributions it has made to Arctic research. According to several sources, the EU has committed over 200 million euros to research and development programmes in the Arctic in the last ten years (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, 2016;



German Federal Foreign Office, 2013). Furthermore Germany states: “*the EU has legitimate interest in the Arctic because of its geographic and political proximity*” (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013, p.16). Next to this it is often mentioned that the EU already has Arctic programmes in place and has recently published its own ‘Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic’ (European Commission & High Representative, 2016).

There are also challenges that are mentioned, such as that the EU still has: “*troubled relations with some Arctic partners*”, probably referring to Canada not being pleased with the EU import-ban on seal products or deteriorating relations with Russia (Łuszczuk, 2015, p.5). Therefore the observer states directly address to member states of the AC, by stating that these are already strategic partners of the EU (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013; Rijksoverheid, 2016). Moreover the EU is currently already involved in Arctic cooperation through other agreements and institutions, such as the Northern Dimension, a partnership between Russia, Norway, Iceland and the EU (Rijksoverheid, 2016). By addressing the importance of the EU for the AC in general and Arctic states specifically, the EU member states try to convince the member states of the AC, that the EU is a legitimate partner for the AC and that it can also contribute financially. There is however no mention of how material and ideational resources will be allocated exactly if the EU will actually become an observer in the AC.

On the promoted norm of more observer responsibility by France, Poland, the UK and the Netherlands, there is also a clear socialisation strategy. As stated in the chapter on the expectation of framing, the observer states emphasise the importance of an inclusive AC with a bigger role for non-Arctic states. In order to give strength to their argument the observer states mention their willingness to keep contributing with time, energy, experts and financial contributions to the workings of the AC. How these resources will be allocated exactly is not mentioned, but it is clear that the observer states try to persuade the AC and its member states of their importance and their eagerness to further cooperate on Arctic issues. One persuasion strategy stated by Germany is that it gave a statement on behalf of the other observer states at the SAO Meeting in Fairbanks in 2016, to illustrate the importance of observer states in the AC (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013). A possible challenge that is identified regarding this specific norm, is that changing the role of observers might be affecting the sovereignty and authority of the member states in the Arctic. The French government for example, states that: “*As an observer in the Arctic Council, France recognises the Arctic states’ sovereign*

*rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic*” (2016, p.57). “*However, the nature and the scale of the issue calls, now more than ever, for greater international cooperation*” (2016, p.4). By stating that the observer states will respect the sovereign rights of the Arctic states, the environment and for the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, they try to overturn any reservations the member states of the AC might have with regards to expanding the role of observers (Polar Regions Department UK, 2013).

The Netherlands and Germany both adhere to the promotion of the norm on a more binding regime in the Arctic through the AC and to further institutionalize it. Although the Netherlands mentions that it wants to have a more regular dialogue with Arctic states to investigate the possibility for more scientific and policy-oriented cooperation, there is no mention how it exactly wants to persuade AC member states (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Similarly, Germany also does not state, apart from increasing its participation, how it wants to persuade other states of the importance of further defining the structure of the AC to make it stronger and more effective (German Federal Foreign Office, 2013).

## 5.9 RESILIENCE

*Prediction: there will be a willingness to sustain criticism from other actors on the promotion of a certain norm, evident in negative reactions on the particular norm entrepreneur or the new norm and defence of the existing norms, when participating in the AC.*

The last expectation of the theory on norm entrepreneurship is called resilience. This means that the observer states, in case of promotion of a certain norm, should show willingness to sustain criticism on a proposed norm, because the new norm might be contested, while old norms are defended. A willingness to sustain criticism will be evident in negative reactions on the norm entrepreneur or new norm and defence of the existing norms by other actors. Evidence for the confirmation of this expectation will be found in reports of AC meetings and in the policy documents of the observer states.

First of all, it is clear that there is a discussion on the status of observers in the AC. This is emphasised by the Netherlands who state that the relation between observer states and member states and the role of the observers is topic of discussion. Especially now more

countries show an interest in becoming an observer and the fact that it becomes clearer that the Arctic is also influencing non-Arctic states, who see the (future) importance of this region. (Rijksoverheid, 2016b). This means that the observer states are aware that wanting to enhance their position in the AC might be controversial for its member states. Unfortunately there is no available information on the course or content of the ‘Warsaw Format Meetings’ that are held between the observer states and the SAO Chair on their role in the AC. This would have provided evidence on how the Chair or other states responded to the discussion on the role of observers.

The debate on expanding the role of observers also ties in with the debate of being more inclusive, for instance by letting in the EU as an observer state, a norm that is being promoted by most of the EU member states. As stated before, Canada resists the admittance of the EU as an observer state, but Russia has also: *“long been wary of outsider interest in the Arctic and of the perceived internationalisation of Arctic Affairs”* as stated in a piece by the European Council on Foreign Relations on EU relations in the Arctic (Depledge, 2015). Especially since the EU’s sanctions, targeted at Russian oil projects in the Arctic, Russia’s stance against the EU as an observer has been hardened. The resistance of letting the EU into the AC, has once again been affirmed after the member states did not admit the EU as an observer in the most recent Ministerial Meeting, while Switzerland did obtain this status (Arctic Council, 2017a). France has already been mentioning their support for the EU as an observer state in their policy document originating from 2013, which shows that observer states are willing to promote their norm, even in the face of criticism by member states.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter I will present the findings of the analysis of Chapter 5, per theory. I will discuss if the evidence found for each indicator, as stated in Chapter 4 and presented in Appendix II, of the expectations was strong, weak or non-existent. If the evidence was strong it means most, or all, of the observer states gave ample information that was in accordance with the indicator. If the evidence was weak, it means that evidence could only be found in data of a few of the observer states or if it was not completely conform the indicator. If the evidence was non-existent, it means that no evidence at all could be found that agreed with the indicator of a specific expectation. On the basis of the amount of evidence that was found for each of the indicators, I will conclude if the expectations for each of the theories can be confirmed or not.

### 6.1 NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM

*Table 1: indicators per expectation and the amount of evidence for neoliberal institutionalism.*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Absolute gains	
Mentioning commercial self-interest in the Arctic	strong
Participation and contributions in meetings that are concerned with commercial activity	weak
Reduction of transaction costs	
Mentioning the AC as efficient means to attain self-interested goals	strong
Will not cooperate through other (ad hoc) coalitions on issues discussed in the AC	none
Iterated interactions	
Observers will participate in more meetings over time	strong
Material cost-benefit analysis	
Participation is defined through a material cost-benefit analysis	weak
Mentioning material costs that refrain from participation	weak
Mentioning benefits that stimulate participation	strong

In Chapter 5.2 on the analysis of the expectation of absolute gains, in the policy documents, but also in the observer reports, enough evidence can be found that economic opportunities are definitely part of the interests of observer states in the Arctic. So the fact that the observer states have a commercial interest in the Arctic region in general is true. However, there is not enough evidence that the commercial potential of the Arctic is also the main reason for actual participation in the AC. This is principally because the AC is more of a platform for cooperation on sustainable development and environmental protection, and not only for advancing ones own commercial interests (Arctic Council, 2017c). The information found in the attendance rates from the updated STAPAC dataset and the contributions of observer states, is inconclusive. There is no evidence that the observer states are mainly participating in meetings that are concerned with economic activities over those that work on climate change or research. Furthermore, there is no difference found between observer states that participate the most, or those that participate the least, in regards to the indicators. Therefore the expectation on absolute gains, as part of the neoliberal institutionalist theory, cannot be fully confirmed.

The next expectation of neoliberal institutionalism is on the reduction of transaction costs by institutions. The first indicator seems to be largely confirmed by the data, as evidence in the observer reports and policy documents show that the observer states find the AC one of the most important intergovernmental institutions to cooperate on Arctic issues. This indicator could not be confirmed for India, China and Singapore, mainly because these states do not have an arctic policy yet and have not provided a lot of information on their objectives in the Arctic and AC. However, the fact that most states mention the AC as an efficient institution to attain their goals regarding Arctic issues, does not mean that the observer states only cooperate through the AC. They namely mention many other institutions and arrangements, such as the IMO and the Arctic Circle. This means that the evidence contradicts the second indicator of the prediction on the reduction of transaction costs. Therefore the expectation on the reduction of transaction costs can only be partially confirmed.

The policy documents of all of the observer countries, excluding India, mention that they want to increase their contributions and participate more in the different bodies of the AC. This means that they actively seek to expand their cooperation in the AC, which is also visible, albeit slightly, in the STAPAC dataset over the years. Therefore, the evidence for one

indicator of the expectation on iterated interactions, that observers will participate in more meetings over time, is strong. Apparently the experiences the observer states had in cooperating through the AC were positive and mutually benefitted them, which causes them to want to participate more over time. Overall it is possible to confirm the prediction of neoliberal institutionalism on iterated interactions, though there is no evidence that this prediction is more valid for states with higher or lower attendance rates.

The last expectation of neoliberal institutionalism is about the material cost-benefit analysis the observer states would make when deciding to participate in the AC meetings. On the whole it is clear that there are enough benefits that all the observer states mention, which motivate them to participate in the AC. However, in the studied documents there is only evidence that Poland acknowledges costs that refrain from participation, such as time and limited resources. Since there is only strong evidence to be found for one of the indicators of the expectation on a material cost-benefit analysis, this expectation can only be partially confirmed. Furthermore, the evidence shows that this expectation cannot explain the difference in participation between the observer states, it is namely not true that states that attend the least meetings mention more costs that refrain from participation than others.

## 6.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM AND NORM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

*Table 2: indicators per expectation and the amount of evidence for constructivism*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Framing of norm through:	
Calling attention to certain issues	strong
Creating issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing	strong
Linking to universally existing beliefs	none
Provide new information/facts	strong
Discrediting existing norms	strong
Building organisational platforms	
Direction of resources towards institutions of the AC	strong
Development of a national organisational platform	strong
Socialisation strategy	

Mentioning how material and ideational resources will be allocated	strong
Identifying challenges and solutions	strong
Resilience, willingness to sustain criticism	
Negative reactions on the norm entrepreneur or promoted norm	strong
Defence of the existing norms by other actors	strong

The first expectation of norm entrepreneurship as a part of the theory of constructivism is on the framing of promoted norms. While all observer countries mention the importance of the existing norms on scientific research and sustainable development, not all observers provide evidence that they want to promote a new norm. For China, Singapore and India, the lack of evidence for wanting to promote a norm could be due to the fact that there is limited data available on their Arctic strategies, since they have not fully developed an Arctic policy yet. South Korea, Italy and Spain have developed an Arctic policy document, but they seem to want to work within the existing norms of the AC without promoting new ones. For France, Japan, Poland, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany the expectation on framing can be confirmed, as there was enough available evidence that they want to promote norms through framing these in a certain way, by calling attention to issues and providing information and facts. They also discredit existing norms that are prevalent in the AC. The norms that these observer states try to advance are to increase the role of observer states in the AC, to admit the EU as an observer and to further institutionalise the AC. Due to strong evidence, the expectation on framing is confirmed by the data for six of the observer states, although it is not possible to say that it can explain the difference in attendance rates.

The second expectation is the building of organisational platforms by observer states to promote a certain norm. From the data it is possible to conclude that most observer states try to advance their position as observers in the AC through the building of numerous institutional frameworks, either within the AC or nationally. The most prominent example of this are the ‘Warsaw Format Meetings’, initiated by Poland. The states that attend the most meetings: Japan, the Netherlands, the UK and South Korea, together with a few states that participate less, have all developed a national polar department or appointed a special ambassador for the Arctic. The establishment of these institutional frameworks might give them better institutional resources to advance their own interests and promote their norms, than those who have not developed their national institutions regarding the Arctic. Overall it becomes clear that strong evidence in agreement with the indicators for this expectation can

be found for all of the observer states that try to promote a new norm. Thereby confirming the expectation on building organisational platforms, especially for Poland, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Japan and South Korea.

The next expectation from the theory of norm entrepreneurship is on forming a deliberate socialisation strategy, in order to persuade others of a norm. Strong evidence can be found in the data, that there is such a socialisation strategy, regarding certain promoted norms. Especially for the promotion of the norms on greater observer responsibility of the AC and admittance of the EU as an observer state, there are strategies where material and ideational resources are allocated and challenges and solutions are identified. The norm on a more effective and institutionalised AC that is being promoted by Germany and the Netherlands does not seem to have a socialisation strategy to persuade other states. Therefore this expectation can be confirmed for two of the three norms, which are being promoted by France, Japan, Poland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

The last expectation of this theory is called resilience, meaning that the states that promote a norm have to show willingness to sustain criticism. In the data there is no direct mention of criticism or negative reactions on the promoted norm by the German and Dutch governments on further institutionalising the AC to make it more effective. However, it is clear, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that the member states want to preserve their sovereignty regarding their Arctic regions, thus making more binding agreements through the AC will probably not be welcomed. Apart from this, the countries that promote the other two norms show a clear willingness to sustain criticism in the face of negative reactions, especially as the EU is once again not admitted by the member states as an observer state in the last Ministerial Meeting. This confirms the expectation on resilience for the theory of norm entrepreneurship for these specific norms.



## 7. CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter I discussed the results of the analysis for each of the expectations of the theory of neoliberal institutionalism and norm entrepreneurship, as part of the theory of constructivism. In this last chapter I will answer the research question, to conclude which of the two theories has the most explanatory power for the differences in participation of the observer states in the AC. Furthermore I will point out the limitations of this research and make recommendations for any future studies on the topic of observer states in the AC.

### 7.1 ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question was as following:

*Does the theory of neoliberal institutionalism or constructivism provide the best explanation for understanding the differences in participation of the observer states in the Arctic Council?*

The aim of this research was twofold, first of all to fill the gap of explaining the participatory behaviour of observer states with the two theories. Next to this the goal was to test the explanatory value of these international relations theories that are generally used to explain cooperation between states in international institutions, but not actual participation. The research question is answered through the use of a congruence analysis of different types of data, such as attendance rates found in the updated STAPAC dataset by Knecht (2015) and various types of documents from the AC and the observer states themselves. The eight falsifiable expectations that were derived from the two theories were tested with the empirical observations from the data and show the level of congruence.

As stated in the previous chapter, one of the expectations of neoliberal institutionalism can be confirmed, while the three other expectations can only be partially confirmed, or fully confirmed for just one country. Such as the expectation on material cost-benefit analysis, which can be confirmed for Poland, as it mentions costs that refrain from participation in the AC meetings, but cannot be confirmed for the other observer states. However, all four of the expectations from norm entrepreneurship, derived from the theory of constructivism can be confirmed for six of the twelve observer states. Overall the theory of constructivism,

expressed in the expectations of norm entrepreneurship, seems to have the largest explanatory power for general participation of observer states in the AC. Of the eleven indicators that were derived from the theory, strong evidence was found for ten of them, while only half of the indicators of neoliberal institutionalism could be confirmed with strong evidence. This means that the participation of observer states can be explained by their aspirations to promote a certain norm in the AC. It must be noted however, that the strong evidence could only be found for a number of the observer states and not all, namely Poland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Japan. Consequently it is also not possible to state that this theory can explain the difference in participation, since these states have various attendance rates and the theory does not only cohere to states that participate the most or the least. It is thus not true that those who state that they actively want to promote a new norm as norm entrepreneurs, participate more than those who do not make these statements. The only expectation of the theory on norm entrepreneurship that does seem to be able to explain the difference in participation is on building organisational platforms. The states with the highest attendance rates have developed their national institutions regarding the Arctic the furthest, with either an Arctic ambassador or a dedicated department.

The theory of neoliberal institutionalism did not have a lot of explanatory power for this case. This is mainly because the observer states do have a commercial interest in the Arctic, but this is not the reason why they specifically cooperate through the AC or why they choose to participate in some meetings and not in others. Though this is probably due to the nature of the AC, which primarily focuses on issues concerning climate change, sustainable development and scientific research. Given all of the evidence, it is possible to tentatively conclude that the theory of constructivism, articulated in norm entrepreneurship, has the most explanatory power for general participation in the AC for six out of 12 observer states. But these all have different attendance rates, so this theory can't help understand the actual difference in participation, leaving the research question largely unanswered.

The second aim of this research was to see if the two theories were also useful for explaining actual participation in meetings, instead of just cooperation through international institutions. Evidence from the data to answer this question remained inconclusive, as it seems that there might be other factors that are more appropriate in explaining the actual participation. An example of this could be the general motivation states have in participating through an institution. This can be expressed in setting up a special department or appointing an

ambassador to increase institutional resources for participation, for which evidence was found in the expectation on building organisational platforms.

## 7.2 LIMITATIONS

Now that I have discussed the answer to the research question it is important to make note of the limitations of this research. First of all, there was minimal data available for some of the observer states. More specifically for India, China and Singapore, who have not published a specific Arctic policy. Although for all of them there was information on their government websites and secondary data. Still, the abundance of data for the other observer states and the underrepresentation of evidence that could be found for these three states, might have given a distorted image on their policy objectives and participatory behaviour in the AC. It was also not possible to obtain all of the data that was necessary to get the complete picture of the participation of observer states, such as the financial and specific contributions of observer states to the working groups and task forces. Furthermore, for all of the observer states that do not use English as their first language, there might have been more available data in their native language, which I could not access due to limited translation skills.

Next to this it is also important to note that I mainly analysed the formal policy documents of states and the AC, showing the official statements of countries. In reality the unofficial objectives and behaviour of the observer states might slightly deviate from the official statements. Despite these limitations, it was still possible to find sufficient data in the documents provided by the observer states and the AC. Together with the extensive amount of data that was analysed from the updated STAPAC dataset (Knecht, 2015), a clear picture could be drawn on the participation of observer states of the AC.

## 7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the time and scope of this research I chose not to conduct interviews. This later seemed an appropriate decision, after coming in contact with AC officials on obtaining working group documents, made it clear that during the time of writing this thesis they were all very busy with preparations on a Ministerial and SAO Meeting. However, for future research it might be beneficial to interview not only AC officials but also national

representatives to the AC, to diversify some of the official information found in the policy documents and obtain more in-depth information. Furthermore this study was a first attempt at explaining the participation of observer states theoretically. Therefore there might be other theories worth studying that would provide a better understanding of the difference in participation in the AC or institutions in general. I also chose to only use a small part of the theory of constructivism, namely norm entrepreneurship, a more comprehensive analysis of this theory might also give interesting insights into the explanatory value.

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## APPENDIX I – TABLE OF EXPECTATIONS, INDICATORS AND REQUIRED DATA

*Table 3: table of expectations, indicators and required data.*

expectations	Indicators	Required data
Absolute gains	<p>mentioning commercial self-interest in Arctic</p> <p>Participation and contributions in meetings of working groups or task forces that are concerned with commercial activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy documents that give information on interest in Arctic</li> <li>- The type of meetings that are attended in STAPAC dataset, commercially oriented or not</li> <li>- contributions to those meetings in AC documents</li> <li>- observer review reports</li> </ul>
Reduction of transaction costs	<p>Mentioning the AC as efficient means to attain self-interested goals</p> <p>Will not cooperate through other (ad hoc) coalitions on issues discussed in the AC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> <li>- observer review reports</li> </ul>
Iterated interactions	Observers will participate in more meetings over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- results from STAPAC dataset over time</li> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> <li>- observer review reports</li> </ul>

Material cost-benefit analysis	<p>Participation is defines through a material cost-benefit analysis</p> <p>Mentioning material costs that refrain from participation</p> <p>Mentioning benefits that stimulate participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> <li>- AC documents that give evidence for (non)participation of observer state</li> <li>- Observer review reports</li> </ul>
Framing	<p>Framing of norm through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- calling attention to certain issues</li> <li>- creating issues by naming, interpreting and dramatizing</li> <li>- linking to universally existing beliefs</li> <li>- provide new information/facts</li> <li>- discrediting existing norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> <li>- reports of AC meetings</li> <li>- observer review reports</li> </ul>
Building organisational platform	<p>Promotion of norm through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direction of resources towards institutions of the AC</li> <li>- Development of a national organisational platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> <li>- documents of AC on contributions by observer states</li> </ul>
Socialisation strategy	Observer states have a deliberate socialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy documents of observer states</li> </ul>

	<p>strategy to persuade others of norm, mentioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how material and ideational resources will be allocated</li> <li>- identifying challenges and solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reports of AC meetings</li> <li>- observer report</li> </ul>
Resilience	<p>Willingness to sustain criticism on promoted norm, evident in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- negative reactions on the norm entrepreneur or new norm</li> <li>- defence of the existing norms by other actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reports of AC meetings</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX II – PERCENTAGE OF ATTENDANCE FOR DIFFERENT MEETINGS

*Table 4: percentage of attendance of observer states in Ministerial Meetings*

<b>Ministerial Meetings</b>	
United Kingdom	100%
Spain	100%
China	100%
India	100%
Italy	100%
Japan	100%
South Korea	100%
Singapore	100%
the Netherlands	89%
France	88%
Germany	78%
Poland	78%
<i>Total</i>	<i>94%</i>

*Table 6: percentage of attendance of observer states in Senior Arctic Official Meetings*

<b>SAO Meetings</b>	
Spain	100%
China	100%
Japan	100%
South Korea	100%
Singapore	100%
United Kingdom	97%
the Netherlands	88%
India	88%
Italy	88%
France	71%
Germany	67%
Poland	67%
<i>Total</i>	<i>89%</i>

*Table 5: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Working Group*

<b>AMAP WG</b>	
Japan	100%
South Korea	100%
the Netherlands	85%
China	50%
Italy	50%
India	25%
United Kingdom	15%
Germany	10%
France	6%
Poland	5%
Spain	0%
Singapore	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>37%</i>

*Table 7: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group*

<b>EPPR WG</b>	
Singapore	71%
South Korea	71%
Italy	43%
India	14%
Japan	14%
Poland	13%
Germany	8%
the Netherlands	4%
China	0%
France	0%
Spain	0%
United Kingdom	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20%</i>

*Table 8: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group*

<b>PAME WG</b>	
South Korea	75%
France	28%
China	25%
Italy	25%
Japan	25%
Poland	19%
Singapore	13%
Germany	9%
the Netherlands	9%
United Kingdom	9%
Spain	0%
India	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>20%</i>

*Table 10: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Sustainable Development Working Group*

<b>SDWG</b>	
South Korea	88%
the Netherlands	85%
United Kingdom	37%
Poland	26%
China	25%
India	25%
Italy	25%
Japan	25%
France	24%
Germany	22%
Spain	20%
Singapore	13%
<i>Total</i>	<i>35%</i>

*Table 9: percentage of attendance of observer states in Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group*

<b>ACAP WG</b>	
Poland	25%
China	13%
France	13%
India	13%
Italy	13%
South Korea	13%
United Kingdom	13%
Germany	0%
Japan	0%
the Netherlands	0%
Singapore	0%
Spain	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>8%</i>

*Table 11: percentage of attendance of observer states the Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention*

<b>TFOPP</b>	
France	80%
Germany	80%
Italy	80%
Japan	60%
Singapore	60%
India	40%
South Korea	40%
China	20%
United Kingdom	20%
the Netherlands	0%
Poland	0%
Spain	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>40%</i>

*Table 12: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Task Force on Black Carbon and Methane*

<b>TFBCM</b>	
Japan	67%
Germany	33%
South Korea	33%
United Kingdom	33%
China	17%
India	17%
France	0%
Italy	0%
the Netherlands	0%
Poland	0%
Singapore	0%
Spain	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>17%</i>

*Table 13: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic*

<b>TFTIA</b>	
Germany	67%
Italy	33%
China	0%
France	0%
India	0%
Japan	0%
the Netherlands	0%
South Korea	0%
Poland	0%
United Kingdom	0%
Singapore	0%
Spain	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>8%</i>

*Table 14: percentage of attendance of observer states in the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation*

<b>TFAMC</b>	
Germany	100%
South Korea	100%
United Kingdom	100%
France	67%
the Netherlands	33%
Singapore	33%
China	0%
India	0%
Italy	0%
Japan	0%
Poland	0%
Spain	0%
<i>Total</i>	<i>36%</i>