The Arctic as a Geopolitical Bond among the European Union, Norway & Russia

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If there is a place of common ground between the European Union and Russia, it is on the fields of energy, environment and migration. The Arctic binds together the EU with its two major energy suppliers, Norway and Russia. In 2014 the EU imported almost 70% of its total natural gas from Norway and Russia and 44% of its crude oil. The EU, Norway and Russia are also bound together by common efforts to protect the Arctic environment. Moreover, the recent migration crisis in Europe not only rattled the foundations of the Schengen treaty but also raised tensions between Norway and Russia especially at their borders. After two world wars, Europe has sought for stability. Moving forward from the difficult past, geopolitical issues were put to the side, but it was Ukraine that violently reintroduced geopolitics in European international relations. This paper seeks to analyse the common – and not so common – ground of these three major actors on contemporary Arctic issues. Energy exploitation and distribution, environmental protection and migration flows are the new geopolitical elements of the "European" Arctic. With my research, I want to present the Arctic as an example of cooperation and mutual understanding rather than a boiling pot. I am going to argue that violence is not inherent to geopolitics but, as the name itself implies, geopolitics explain how politics and international relations are affected by both human and physical geographical factors. The last point that I will make is that geopolitical analysis is crucial for identifying important underlying issues that could lead to political, military or economic destabilisation if disregarded.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the emerging geopolitics of the "European" Arctic as demonstrated through energy, environment and migration. The Arctic environment is harsh and unique compared to the rest of the European continent. However, in the last decade, the decrease in sea ice and the development of new technologies have enhanced human accessibility to the living and non-living resources of the Arctic. Moreover, new navigation routes, the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route, are coming forth. Despite the fact that the Arctic is considered one of the most unspoiled and untouched regions on Earth, it is facing increasing risks both from climate change and human activities. It is time to put aside the reluctance[1] to use geopolitical analysis on contemporary issues, as once again geopolitics could help to foresee and address upcoming adverse developments before they escalate.

After the end of WWII and successful cooperation in Arctic waters between the U.S. and Canada

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for shipping bulk supplies of military and humanitarian cargoes via the Northern Sea Route to support the Soviet Union and the Allies against the Axis, the Arctic became the centre of the Cold-war confrontation. The two adversaries deployed their state-of-the-art army units; submarines and nuclear deterrence facilities were developed in the Arctic, as it was the shortest route between them. The Arctic was valued for its strategic utility, and neither side valued sovereignty of it (Mychajlyszyn, 2008; Beixi, 2016). Soon after the end of the Cold War though, the disputes in the Arctic were forgotten and cooperation thrived among its nations[2] and indigenous populations. In the last twenty years the potential for conflict in the Arctic has risen due to increased accessibility of its abundant resources, climate change, migration flows and the increasing global interest for the region and its resources (Heininen, 2011; Østerud & Hønneland, 2014).

Norway, despite being a small country in terms of population and territory relative to the EU and Russia, is a major actor in the Arctic compared with Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, with more than 470,000 of its population living above the Arctic Circle. Furthermore, it has strategic territories like the Svalbard Archipelago and the island of Jan Mayen which grant to Norway a maritime area in the Arctic of about 1,500,000 km^2, equal to the area of Germany, France and Spain combined (Arctic Council, 2015b). Additionally, it is a major actor concerning its abundant energy reserves and its exports to the EU. Norway is the third largest exporter of natural gas and oil after Saudi Arabia and Russia. 31% of all gas imports of the EU and 11% of all oil imports came from Norway in 2012. From 2004 until 2014 Norway was consistently the second largest supplier of natural gas and oil to the European Union (European Commission, 2016b; Eurostat, 2016b).

The word "geopolitics" is the combination of the Greek words for "*land/earth"* (γη) and "*politics*" (πολιτική). Put simply, geopolitics deals with the impact of human and physical geography on international politics and relations (Devetak, 2012: 492). In this study, the "*land/earth*" factor consists of two components. On one hand is the Arctic, which, strictly geographically, could be defined as the area north of the Arctic Circle – 66° 33' 39" North. On the other hand is climate change. Climate change has a bifunctional role in this case, as it is not only a geographical aspect but also the catalyst for emerging international relations and security studies, as it facilitates the exploration and the exploitation of Arctic resources, which under different (colder) conditions, would be inaccessible. But now the Arctic is melting, it is melting fast, and abundant fossil fuel resources are at the sovereign states' fingertips. Concerning the "*political*" aspects of this study, the factors that are emerging extend not only among the Arctic rim states – Norway, Russia, USA, Canada and Denmark[3]– but further south to actors like China, Japan, India and the European Union (EU). These actors are very keen to exploit the new energy potential of the Arctic. Recent estimations revealed that the Arctic holds about 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas and 13% of undiscovered oil (USGS, 2008; Gautier, et al., 2009; Hong, 2012). However, these resources and the processes of extraction and distribution are mutually dependent on developments miles away from the Arctic. The clearest example of such bilateral reliance is the annexation of Crimea from Russia on March 18th, 2014 (Walker & Traynor, 2014; BBC, 2014), which was followed by sanctions from the EU on Russia on July 2nd, 2014 (European Council, 2014), after a list of sanctions from the US was implemented in March 2014 (U.S. Department of State, 2014). These developments hindered Russia's plans for the Yamal LNG[4] mega-project, as the Russian companies were in great need of European and US technology, knowledge and funding (Vazard, 2014a; Vazard, 2014b; Marson & Williams, 2015; Reilly, 2015; Mäe, 2016). As a consequence, Russian firms leant on Chinese banks and funds for financial support (Kuersten, 2015). Novatek,

the major shareholder of the Yamal LNG project, ensured funding for the project from two Chinese banks. The Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank signed two 15-year loans, for €9.34bn and €1.3bn (Farchy, 2016; Yamal LNG, 2016). This relatively simple example outlines nicely how contemporary geopolitics function. Ongoing climate change provides access to untapped resources by the shrinking of the sea ice, and actors from all over the globe are gathering around the Arctic waters, seeking their share on these resources. Arctic geopolitics are starting to affect areas further away from the geographical Arctic Circle, not only the EU and its sanctions but also countries like China, which are willing to fund risky infrastructures in order to fulfil their energy demands. So, the emerging geopolitics of the Arctic are advancing to global geopolitics.

In this paper, I present how the EU, Norway and Russia are geopolitically bound by three major Arctic matters. The bond is so deep and strong that it could be argued that in the fields of energy, environment and migration these actors could comprise a security complex "whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national[5] security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another" (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998: 12). The article is divided into three parts. In the first part, the aspect of energy is analysed as one of the three major geopolitical bonds. Energy extraction in the Arctic is a crucial test that humanity is about to win against the relentless environment of the High North. Extraction of energy and its distribution are equally significant. As there are more and more political and technological issues around the distribution of energy, geopolitics offer great opportunities for in depth analysis of the element of energy. Arctic environmental aspects were high in the policy agenda of the EU (European Parliament, 2008) and Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2001). Russia also contributed to the protection of the Arctic environment in 2011 by giving 10 million Euros for pollution prevention initiatives (Arctic Council, 2011). The efforts for the Arctic's environmental protection are continuous. In 2015 for example the Arctic states[6] and indigenous organisations[7] agreed on a common effort to reduce black carbon and methane emissions, which directly affect the Arctic environment (Arctic Council, 2015a). Last but not least, the so-called "polar route,"[8] used mainly by refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria, but also by refugees and migrants from other countries of Asia and Africa, depicts clearly the size of today's globalisation. Furthermore, this extreme refugee route is an addition to the well-known fact that in the contemporary world, the institutions of the traditional state of the 20th century have been eroded and, as a result, known concepts, such as borders, territories and distance are collapsing faster than predicted (Huysmans, 1997: 350-351; Ó Tuathail, 1998: 16-34; Huliaras, 2004). For example, where the iron curtain once stood, one could now cross on a bike without any border control. Nowadays, the threats come from global factors, such as terrorism, piracy, drugs trade, human trafficking and cross-border environmental risks, to name a few. In the 21st century there are many threats that do not take into account borders such as environmental disasters, (i.e. a potential oil spill) or irregular migration at the Arctic. On the other hand, cooperation for the development of vulnerable populations and protection of the environment, are reasons to put disputes aside. Geopolitics, which is fundamentally engaged with borders, resources, flows, territories and identities, could provide the means for critical analysis and understanding on places and communities (Doss, 2007: 3).

First Geopolitical Bond: Energy

During the past decade, the difficulties concerning extraction, processing and distribution of energy from the Arctic have decreased. Nevertheless, the movement of large ice chunks and permanent thick ice can still cause irreversible damage to drilling platforms, offshore rigs, pipelines and ships (Hilburn, 2008; Johnston, 2010). This increases the cost of exploitation, and if the cost of overcoming the Arctic's drilling challenges is greater than the profit of the production, the interested parties are not going to venture in exploitation. The Arctic is still a hard place for extraction works. In more detail, the main challenges are the isolated locations and the relentless weather, the complexity of the surface (icy areas), the inadequacy of equipment and infrastructure, the high costs of any operation, seasonal restrictions on drilling activity, the insufficient infrastructure to counter serious accidents, the lack of technology that has been tested under Arctic conditions, the environmental laws for the preservation of flora and fauna and the lengthy procedures for acquiring an exploration and production licence (Terrapinn, 2013). For example, in 2015 with the plunge in oil prices, Royal Dutch Shell abandoned oil extraction from Alaska's Arctic waters, and Statoil gave up its project in West Greenland (Yeo, 2015; Griffiths, 2015).

Additionally, Arctic drilling is the second most expensive way of oil extraction after that of oil sands. It is worth mentioning that in 2015, when the price per barrel was $37, the break-even price of known but undeveloped oil reservoirs was around $44 for an onshore, Middle East field, around $62 for an offshore, deep-water field and $78.6 for an Arctic one (Bourne Jr., 2016). Another representative example is the Shtokman field, which started being developed in 2008 with the cooperation of the Russian Gazprom with a stake of 51%, the Norwegian Statoil (24%) and the French Total (25%). It is one of the world's biggest deposits of natural gas [3.9 trillion cubic metres of gas and 56 million tons of gas condensate (Gazprom, 2016c)], but remains underdeveloped because of low energy prices, the shale gas revolution in the US and the sanctions of the US and EU on Russia. Signs of reluctance over the project funding and exploitation began in 2009 (Truscott, 2009; Pettersen, 2009), only to be verified in August 2012 with the freezing of the project and the withdrawal of Statoil (Chazan & Belton, 2012). Total sold its share as well in April 2015, making Gazprom the only stakeholder (Shtokman Development AG, 2015). The exploitation of the field was supposed to begin in 2013 but was postponed until 2015 with the first LNG deliveries estimated to be in 2016 (Chazan, 2009). President Vladimir Putin promised in 2012 that the field will start to operate before 2017 (Lenta.ru, 2012; Shtokman Development AG, 2012), but experts are arguing that the production will start no earlier than 2020 or even 2025, depending on the situation of the global oil and gas market (Sputnik, 2015; TASS, 2015). Even with huge difficulties like this in the Shtokman field, Russia has abundant oil and gas production in the Arctic region – onshore – from the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District with the main fields to be the Bovanenkovo, in Yamal Peninsula and the Prirazlomnoye oil field, the Yuzhno-Russkoye field, the Achimov deposits, the Zapolyarnoye and the Yamburg field in the rest of the District (Gazprom, 2016a). Natural gas from these fields comes towards Europe via the "SRTO – Torzhok" pipeline which ends up in the city of Torzhok. From there, via the "Nord Stream" and the "Yamal-Europe" pipelines, natural gas is delivered to Europe (Gazprom, 2016d; Gazprom 2016b; Gazprom, 2016e). Also, a liquefaction plant is being built on Yamal peninsula and LNG could be delivered from there to Europe whenever needed, using specifically designed ships (Staalesen A., 2015). Russia is also planning to deliver LNG to East Asia, thanks to the cooperation of the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Rosneft. Especially during the summer, the LNG ships could

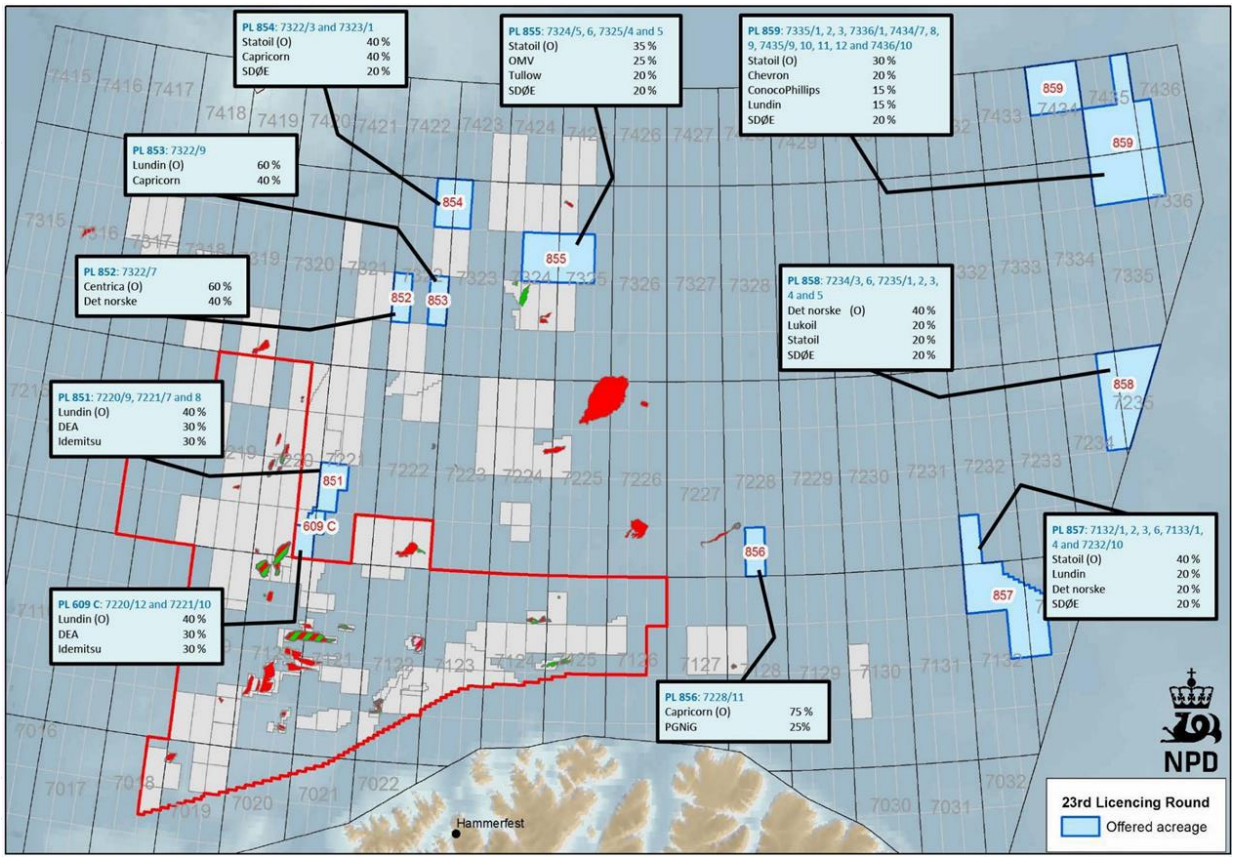
use the Northeast route to deliver LNG to China and Japan, as it will be ice free (Kelley, 2016). Japan is particularly keen on natural gas after the Fukushima disaster and Japanese officials believe that in the future the Arctic resources will be very important for their country (Iwata & Ma, 2014). The ongoing expansion of the Nord Stream with a twin pipeline, Nord Stream 2, which will double the capacity of the original Nord Stream, has already raised tensions among EU officials and transit countries.

The EU consumes 25% of the Norwegian and Russian Arctic's[9] natural gas and oil production (Eurostat, 2015; Hossain, 2015). The rest of the gas and oil production goes to internal consumption and to other markets, mainly to East Asia. In 2012, Norway supplied 31% of total natural gas and 11% of crude oil imports of the EU, while Russia supplied 35% of total natural gas imports and 34% of crude oil. The 12 OPEC countries[10] in combination delivered almost 40% of the oil imports of the EU in 2012, with Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Nigeria having the biggest individual share of around 8% each (European Commission, 2015b; Eurostat, 2016a). Thus, it is clear that Russia and Norway have a major role in the energy security of the EU as just the two of them together supplied almost 45% of the European oil imports, even more than the 12 OPEC countries. Concerning natural gas, the percentage of Russia and Norway combined is even bigger reaching 66% of the total EU imports with Algeria and Qatar to hold 13.6% and 8.5% respectively (Eurostat, 2016a). Regarding Norwegian Arctic production and infrastructure, on 28 September 2015, Norway completed the Polarled, a gas pipeline which is the first pipeline connecting the newly accessible Arctic gas fields of Aasta Hansteen with southern Norway and Europe. This new project enhances the status of Norway as a reliable gas supplier of Europe while at the same time, increases the energy security of the EU (Statoil, 2015a). Norway drills offshore in the Arctic, in the Barents from 2007, in the Snøhvit gas field (Statoil, 2015b). Additionally, on March 12th, 2016, the Goliat became the first oil field to start production in the Barents Sea (Sørheim, 2016; Eni Norge, 2016). The two fields are quite close to each other and this helps their cooperation. Snøhvit is located 140km northwest of the city of Hammerfest and the Goliat 85km in the same direction. On January 20th, 2015, Norway announced the 23rd licensing round for 57 blocks or parts of blocks, 3 of which are located in the Norwegian Sea and 54 in the Barents Sea (Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, 2015). The results were announced on May 18th, 2016, with 40 blocks to be awarded for exploitation in total (Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, 2016a). Three blocks – PL857, PL858 & PL859 – in the Southeast Barents Sea are located in the previously contested area between Russia and Norway, which was resolved with the *"Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean"* (Kremlin, 2010a; Kremlin, 2010b; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010; Harding, 2010; Norwegian Office of the Prime Minister, 2010; The Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation, 2010; Rozhnov, 2010). An interesting development is that 20% of the licence of the PL858 block, which is situated along the borders with Russia, is awarded to the Russian private company Lukoil.

The greatest motive for the EU concerning its involvement in the Arctic is natural resources. It is well known that most of the energy consumed in the EU comes from Norway and Russia. The European Commission (EC) estimated at the beginning of the new millennium that by 2030 the energy dependence of the EU will reach 70%. Imported gas will account for nearly 70% of the total consumption of natural gas in the EU and the imported oil will account for nearly 90% of the total consumption of oil in the EU (European Commission, 2000). These numbers actually rose in 2007, with gas to reach 84% and oil to touch 93% of the imported dependence respectively

(European Commission, 2007). It is clear under this light how energy security grew so fast in the political agenda of the EU and now holds a position on the foreign policy agenda as well. Eurogas predicted in 2007 that by 2030 the EU will have to import 443 to 478 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year to cover its needs –with 88 bcm at least to be imported from Norway– (Eurogas, 2007: 9). The prediction seems rational today as in 2015, the consumption of natural gas in the EU increased again after four years by 4.1%, to reach the total of 426.3 bcm (Eurogas, 2016).

Figure 1: The 23rd Licencing Round Results



Source: Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, 2016b

The ongoing turbulence in oil production areas, like the militants in Nigeria delta, the political unrest in Venezuela, the ISIS infiltration in Libya and Canada's wildfires, will probably increase oil and most likely also gas – prices (Johnson, 2016). It is clear that oil and gas prices have been connected with geopolitical matters and this is the reason for a predicted sharp rise in the coming winter. Under this light, the EU has to enhance its energy security and energy diversification. Norway's new fields and pipelines are a reliable supply for Europe, while the new Nord Stream pipeline would ensure unhindered deliveries to the EU. What is more, sanctions concerning Arctic energy exploration and exploitation could be suspended as an example of good will from EU towards energy integration with Russia. Still, both parties have a mutual dependence, with Russia to seek a steady demand from EU in order to attract investors, while the EU seeks uninterrupted and economical energy deliveries from Russia. In this system, a potential EU cut off from Russia's energy could have undesirable results, because if Russia has less stake in the system, it also has less to lose in disrupting it.

Second Geopolitical Bond: Environment

The protection of the fragile environment of the Arctic is a high priority for Norway and Russia. The EU may still lack the status of official Observer in the Arctic Council, but it is engaged in Arctic matters, even in a period when global awareness has moved to other affairs due to low oil, fewer Arctic shipments and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Nevertheless, there is no decline in interest in matters like climate change, environment and regional development. Additionally, the EU is a core actor in promoting collaboration and stability with Russia. Moreover, Europe acts beneficially for the Arctic as it sets stringent targets for its environmental Arctic policy (Østhagen & Raspotnik, 2015; European Commission, 2015a). The EU presented an integrated policy report in April 2016 that tries to engage all Arctic members in the environmental protection of the Artic and provides ground for cooperation with Russia (European Commission, 2016a; Eriksson, 2016). Last but not least, the EU finances 30% of environmental projects in the remote Nenets Autonomous Okrug[11], specifically in the Amderma village. The target is the setup of four wind turbines that will make the village energy autonomous, environmentally friendly and create more jobs for the local population (Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 2016; Staalesen A., 2016b).

Russia lacks robust legislation for the protection of the Arctic. Of course, the risks to the environment from the Arctic's exploitation could never disappear, but they could be effectively managed under a coherent framework (Rice, 2013). Four specific gaps and their response measures have been identified in the Russian legislation. The first measure takes into consideration an "Expansion of the protected natural areas", adoption of *Measures of climate change adaptations for the Arctic territories* and a revision of *Response action related to oil spills and other contaminants as well as emergency and contingency cases*. The second measure, while it takes into consideration the *Foundations of the Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond* and the *Strategy of the Arctic Zone Development and National Security of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2020* documents, supports the development of coherent legislation in order to take into consideration all the varieties of harmful activities in the Arctic region. The third measure highlights the lack of targeted laws considering the protection of the Arctic's environment, and the inability of the existing laws to protect it. The last measure advocates the compulsory scientific validation of any project that might take place in the Arctic for minimizing the threat of pollution and contamination. Also the sharing of experience among Arctic states concerning Arctic projects is vital for almost every venture in this unique area (Kokorin, 2007; Gladun, 2015). The Russian government, in an attempt to draw the attention of the public to sustainable development, conservation of biological diversity and environmental security, will conduct "The Year of Ecology" in 2017 (Russian Ministry of Environment, 2016). However, green parties and Non-Governmental Organisations are still under the fear of prosecution in Russia (Staalesen A., 2016a).

On the other hand, Norway has published the *Norwegian Government's High North Strategy* and the *New Building Blocks in the North* reports in 2006 and 2009, respectively, in which environmental protection has a primary role (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). Specifically, until 2025, Norway will focus on developing knowledge about climate and the environment in the High North, improving monitoring, emergency response and maritime safety systems in northern waters, promoting sustainable development of offshore petroleum and renewable marine resources, advocating onshore business development, and further development of the infrastructure in the north, continuing to exercise sovereignty firmly and strengthen cross-

border cooperation in the north and safeguarding the culture and livelihoods of indigenous peoples (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009). Since interest in geopolitics of the Arctic is rising, Norway updated its policy in 2014, stressing the significance of international cooperation, development of a knowledge-based business sector, knowledge development, infrastructure and emergency preparedness and environmental protection (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). In accordance with the Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), Norway comes fourth out of 41 countries[12] concerning environmental policies, as the country has developed comprehensive regulatory systems and a big percentage of energy consumption comes from renewable sources (SGI, 2015). Comparing data provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), one could see that carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions[13] measured as tonnes per capita were reduced by 15.3% in the EU and by 2.3% in Norway from the beginning of the new millennium to 2012. On the contrary, emissions increased by 7.6% in Russia and by a total of 11.4% across all OECD countries. Moreover, in the same time span, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions[14] were reduced by 14% and 12% in the EU and in Norway respectively, while in Russia and in OECD countries, they have increased by 14% and 11% respectively (OECD, 2016). It is clear that Russia falls behind concerning environmental protection but there is a mutual will among the three parties for enhancing that common purpose.

Third Geopolitical Bond: Migration

The Schengen treaty[15] rattled under the intensity of migration flows that made EU officials and leaders of European countries struggle to find a solution for preserving the treaty intact. The first efforts began in August 2015 (EurActiv, 2015). Despite these actions, the Schengen treaty was on the verge of collapse in November 2015 (Holehouse, 2015). As Greece failed to take responsibility for controlling its external borders on behalf of the other Schengen States, it was threatened with expulsion from the Schengen zone. A three-month probation period was given in order to comply with the Schengen rules, while the EU helped Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to reduce the migration flow, with a desirable outcome for the EU (Traynor, 2016; BBC, 2016a).

A part of the migration crisis in Europe took place in the Arctic region, mainly between late September 2015 and December 2015. A sharp increase was observed in September 2015 when 420 asylum seekers reached the Norwegian border crossing station of Storskog, the only legal crossing between Norway and Russia, 400 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. The number is not big compared with the numbers in the Mediterranean Sea[16], but is a considerable number for the Arctic region, as only few asylum seekers crossed the border between January and August 2015. Only five asylum seekers reached Storskog in 2014, whereas more than 600 had arrived by early October 2015 (Higgins, 2015). From August to December 2015, over 5,000 migrants and refugees crossed the Russian – Norwegian border, most from Syria and Afghanistan, but including others from over 20 different countries (Nilsen, 2015d). The reasons that such a long and difficult route was established could be the cost of human smuggling through the Mediterranean Sea[17] and the fear of drowning, the building of fences on the borders of countries along the "Balkan or Aegean Route"[18] and the temporary reintroduction of border controls by several European/Schengen countries.[19] Norway does not belong to the EU, but is a member of the Schengen area, which allows travel to the EU without a visa.

On this Arctic border, a loophole has been exploited by human smugglers that allows refugees to

cross from Russia to Norway on a bicycle, as Russia does not allow crossing on foot and Norway does not allow undocumented people to cross in automobiles (Standish, 2016). Norway warned the asylum seekers in October that they could be sent back to Russia, as many of them they had residence permits in Russia (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015a). In November, Norway passed a fast track procedure in order to reject asylum requests of migrants who had previously resided in Russia or who had Russian transit visas, and introduced border controls (Nilsen, 2015a; Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015b). Finally, in December, Norway passed a legislation containing 40 legal amendments to current migration laws in order to deal with the ongoing situation, and 371 rejected asylum seekers were sent back on the same bikes that they used to enter, and 13 by bus (BBC, 2016b; Staalsen, 2015b; Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015c). The reverse flow, from Norway to Russia, stopped after security concerns from the Russian side on January (Deutsche Welle, 2016), but eventually Russia accepted to receive in Moscow - by plane - almost 300 people with legal permits to stay in Russia in early February (Pettersen, 2016a).

After some reports that Russian border guards did not stop undocumented travellers during October (Nilsen, 2015b) and the abrupt stop of migrants heading to Storskog on November 30th, suspicions were raised about the role of Russia in the flow. What is more, the flow changed direction to Finland, a country which belongs both to the EU and to the Schengen treaty, only to also stop abruptly on March 4th. Norwegian, Finnish and EU officials suspected Russia of facilitating the establishment of these new routes because the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) border guard unit[20] has the same inhibitory effect as the bad weather has in the Aegean Sea passage. The Arctic migration route is highly dependent on FSB, as the Russian borders and the adjacent roads are heavily militarised (Higgins, 2016). The Ukraine crisis could be in the background here as well. Russia could be using the migration flow as a power show to the already refugee-burdened EU and/or even as a political tool which would dissolve the unity of European countries concerning the economic sanctions against Russia that have resulted from the Ukraine crisis. In November, the Russian embassy in Norway argued that they strictly follow international law, and there is a well-established cooperation between the foreign ministries of Russia and Norway (Russian Embassy in Norway, 2015). Additionally, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin referred to the Arctic migration route in a speech to the board of the FSB meeting on February 2016, arguing that "We should tighten monitoring of the refugee flows coming into Russia or transiting onwards to European countries" (Bortnikov, 2016).

Joint actions among Norway, Russia and Finland dissolved the tensions on their common borders during the Arctic migration crisis, and the legal gaps that were uncovered have been addressed quite fast and comprehensively. However, it should not be neglected that migration is an ever-changing situation, and Russia had already warned about illegal trespassing from the beginning of November, as the FSB had already stopped 29 attempts of trespassing (Nilsen, 2015c). Furthermore, while Norway is building a 200m long and 3.5m tall fence at Storskog, migrants made their first try to cross the Russia-Norwegian border by sea, before they were stopped by FSB, in March 2016 (Nilsen, 2016; Staalesen A., 2016c). As the Arctic migration route is fading, cooperation among cross-border neighbouring regions is intensifying again. Transnational programs like the "*Kolarctic*"[21] funds transportation and border infrastructure but also large cultural events (Belkin, 2016; Myllylä & Cicero, 2015). The program is co-funded by the EU, with no effect from the economic sanctions on Russia.

Conclusions

The concept of Arctic Geopolitics was forgotten, after the Cold War. New developments that concern EU territory, such as the Crimea crisis, the migration crisis, energy and environmental security, have brought geopolitics back into the spotlight in the past five years. Developments in the Arctic, such as the shrinking of sea ice, the presence of fossil fuels and new shipping routes, brought geopolitics into this region as well. As the Arctic becomes more and more militarised, compared with the post-Cold War period, many have argued that a new Cold War is coming to Arctic waters. Nevertheless, during the Cold War the Arctic was an area of interest not because of which country it belonged to but merely due to its proximity to both USA and Russia. Nowadays, the biggest concerns in the Arctic are not the military developments, but the cooperation to protect the environment and overcome the challenges in energy exploitation. There are already the *Search and Rescue Treaty* and the *Oil Spill Response Treaty*, signed in 2011 and 2013, respectively. After the Cold War, the security agenda has been broadened to other issues, more prominent than military conflict, such as human security, environmental security and energy security. Another parallelism that should be avoided is the comparison of the Arctic Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea in terms of geopolitics. Comparisons to the Mediterranean may have the same meaning as the "Balkanisation" has for continental areas. Balkanisation – and Mediterraneanisation? – is inherited with instability, border disputes, fatal interventions, drowning of thousands refugees and violations of national sovereignty.[22] There is only one common political characteristic between the Arctic and the Mediterranean; both the USA and Turkey have not ratified the UNCLOS.[23] It would be preferable to build on the already robust, peaceful cooperation on the Arctic and then to try and disseminate the model rather than trying to downgrade all the important efforts that have led to the current cooperative status in relation to the Arctic.

In terms of energy, one could argue that it is not geopolitically 'clever' to transfer or spread the turbulence of one region – Crimea – to another – the Arctic – as the EU does due to implementation of sanctions which hinders Arctic energy exploration and exploitation. Of course, among the great powers involved in the Arctic terrain – the EU, USA and Russia – there are areas of cooperation and fields of conflict. The Arctic is a case that includes both. Cooperation in the field of energy should be promoted as in the fields of environment and migration. The Arctic and especially Arctic energy is rising in global geopolitics. This is an important reason for the EU to cooperate with Russia, despite ongoing conflicts between them.

As it was predicted in May 2016, the two parties – EU and Russia – extended their sanctions (Stratfor, 2016; Pettersen, 2016b) in late June-beginning of July. Russia on June 29th, 2016 announced the expansion of the counter-sanctions till December 31st, 2017 (TASS, 2016) and the EU extended the sanctions on Russia on July 1st, 2016 until January 1st, 2017 (European Council, 2016b). Taking these developments into account, the EU is not going to be a permanent Observer in the Arctic Council in the near future. With oil prices rising slowly, and with renewables not yet a sufficient source of energy, the EU has to push for cooperation with Russia on energy matters. The Arctic could be an exception to the EU's sanctions in order to develop sufficient and environmentally friendly extraction fields. This will benefit the EU, ensuring its energy supplies despite global disruptions. While the demand of energy in Europe is inherently connected with the energy on offer from Russia, cooperation is the only way to ensure mutual profits.

The Arctic migration route made clear that migrants and refugees will take whatever route is

possible for fleeing war and poverty. Migration flows are as flexible as water; if you close one road they will just find another one; and to raise walls to stop migration it is like raising walls to protect from the rising sea levels. In the Arctic, due to cooperation among neighbouring countries, the flow was treated adequately, despite misunderstandings and temporary tensions. Nevertheless, the EU and Russia have to find solutions not only for the flows but also for the reasons that produce these flows, which means that they have to cooperate on establishing peace in Syria and tackle poverty and instability in the Middle East and Africa. Again, Arctic developments and fast reactions on migratory legislation could be a great example for the rest of Europe. Respect for the Arctic rim states' sovereignty and strong cooperation in the Arctic concerning environmental protection, search and rescue, human mobility, energy technology and infrastructure will not abolish security concerns, but could at least minimise them.

Notes

1. After WWII, geopolitics faded as it was connected with the Nazi regime. Although, many politicians, intellectuals and diplomats continued to produce geopolitical ideas and to act on the basis of geopolitical thinking even if they did not use the term explicitly. Critical geopolitics are a new scientific approach that seeks to uncover and explore contemporary, inherently connected, geographical and political aspects.
2. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Russia, USA, Canada and Iceland.
3. It should be noted that even if Iceland, Sweden and Finland are Arctic states and permanent members at the Arctic Council, they have limited or no access at all to Arctic waters and energy resources.
4. Liquefied Natural Gas.
5. Although the EU is not a nation state, the main energy strategy of the EU focused on building interconnectors among its member states, increasing their energy resilience and acting as one, stronger, body.
6. Which are: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Republic of Finland, the Republic of Iceland, the Kingdom of Norway, the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Sweden, and the United States of America.
7. Which are: The Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Aleut International Association, the Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council.
8. Instead of following more common routes into Southern Europe, some migrants and refugees took a longer route to Norway and Finland via Russia.
9. The Norwegian and Russian Arctic. It includes all the extractions that are taking place 66°33'39' north from the equator.
10. Which are: The Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Qatar, Libya, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador, and Angola. Indonesia and Gabon re-joined in 2016.
11. The Nenets Autonomous Okrug is a federal subject of Russia. Amderma is located on the coast of Kara Sea and near the Kara Strait.

12. A mix of EU and OECD countries.
13. Gross direct emissions from fuel combustion only.
14. The sum of seven gases that have direct effects on climate change: carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF6).
15. Signed in 1985, it removes border checks within Europe. It means anyone, regardless of nationality, can move freely between member states without showing a passport or visa. Most of the EU states are members as well as Switzerland, Iceland and Norway (European Commission, 2016c).
16. By September 2015, almost 500.000 migrants and refugees arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Malta while more than 2.800 died or have been missed (International Organization for Migration, 2015; Frontex, 2015).
17. From Libya to Italy the Journey costs €4-5.500. From Turkey to Greece the price range is €1.8-2.700, and especially from Bodrum to Kos even less, ranging from €900-1.400. The overall cost estimated to €3-4 thousand in order to reach Germany or 10-12 thousand to reach England (Yeginsu & Hartocollis, 2015; Sly, 2015).
18. Initially, a fence rose between Greece and Turkey in 2012; Bulgaria followed with a fence on its borders with Turkey in 2014 (Hackwill, 2016). The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia rose a fence at its borders with Greece in November 2015 while Hungary rose fences to its borders with Serbia and Croatia in October 2015 (Almukhtar, Keller, & Watkins, 2015).
19. Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Norway (European Council, 2016a).
20. A branch of Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia tasked with patrol of the Russian border.
21. It involves eight northern regions from Norway, Russia, Finland and Sweden.
22. Cyprus Dichotomy, Mavi Marmara case, Imia Crisis, Greece's 6n.m. limitation, Arab springs, to name a few.
23. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is the international agreement that resulted from the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea from 1973 to 1982 and entered into force on 16 November 1994 (UN, 1998).

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