

National Climate Change Policies and the future of Arctic Competition

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Abstract

The Arctic climate change environment is undergoing unprecedented change with significant environmental risks and opportunities for economic growth. This study focuses on the way in which these changes are being worked out by Norway and Russia in their respective National Climate Change Policy (NCCPs). Both of these countries see the fast changing Arctic, but have different priorities. Norway highly values the protection, control and reduction of environmental pollution and the active international cooperation, particularly in the Arctic Council. It believes in climate policy as a means of improving safety, sustainable use of the oceans and peaceful cooperation in the region. But Russia sees the melting ice as a strategic opportunity, with the main driver of its growth being economic development which is the main way to improve its influence in the region. It has been spending a lot on enhancing its control over the Northern Sea Route. This

paper examines through a qualitative comparative analysis the official documents, laws, and policy statements from both countries. The study results indicate that the policies adopted in the Arctic have twofold benefits. They foster cooperation in science, safety and the environment, and they raise the stakes for competition over energy resources, shipping lanes, and political control. Research indicates that Arctic climate policy is not only an environmental question but an important way in which national interests can be safeguarded.

Keywords: National climate change policies, Diplomacy, Sovereignty, International relations

1. Introduction

Climate change has become the problem not only in environmental sphere but also a major concern in the international relations, national security, economic planning and foreign policy decision making (Nadyseva, 2026). Climate change is increasingly becoming a consideration for governments as a force that can impact power, sovereignty, and global influence (Malik & Flord, 2025). As a consequence, climate policy has evolved from the environmental field to become a core component of the national strategy and international governance (Spence & Conway, 2026). National Climate Change Policies (NCCPs) are growing in use by countries. They're not only about pollution cuts; they're a means of managing geopolitical risk, safeguarding economic interests and providing a lever to influence relations with other countries and regions (Thoman, Moon, & Druckenmiller, 2023). That's reflected in a more general application of climate policy in the Arctic, where warming is approximately three to four times the global average. The extended shipping seasons and access to hydrocarbons, fisheries and important minerals come as a result of the speed of ice melt. All this increases the Arctic's geopolitical and economic importance (Rabinovych & Bjørnå, 2025). Environmental changes are instead becoming more closely associated with strategic competition between states over shipping lanes, infrastructures and territorial claims, and thus exacerbating inter-state tensions. Thus, Arctic climate change is not only an environmental problem but also is a structural one, which affects power balances and strategic choices among Arctic States.

The interplay between climate policies and foreign policies is a complex one, as is reflected in Norway and Russia. Both countries have vast Arctic coastlines and significant energy, fisheries and maritime interests in the Arctic. Their climate strategies differ significantly, although they

both attend the Arctic governance forum, the Arctic Council. Norway's goals are to reduce emissions, move away from fossil fuels and to promote cooperation in the Arctic regarding environmental challenges (Dutta, 2025). By contrast, Russia prioritizes adaptation to climate change and sees potential economic gains in climate change – thus, the warming in the Arctic is a challenge, but also an opportunity (Spence & Chenok, 2024).

Despite of the heightened geopolitical tension that has followed the war in Ukraine, Norway and Russia have managed to sustain functional cooperation in particular fields, such as fisheries managements, search and rescue operations, and environmental monitoring. The fisheries agreements between Norway and Russia for 2026 serves as a testament to the ongoing effectiveness of practical cooperation mechanisms (Hansen & Gehrke, 2025). However, much of current scholarship often separates climate governance from geopolitics, not sufficiently analyzing how NCCPs can both facilitate cooperation and exacerbate strategic rivalry over sovereignty and resource control (Wilson Rowe, 2018). This research argues that NCCPs act as two mechanisms in the Arctic context. They foster institutional cooperation through common environmental standards and governance frameworks; on the other side, they modify strategic incentives that enhance competition and power imbalances. By systematically reviewing recent climate policies from the Norway and Russia, this study shows how NCCPs are redefining the dynamics of Arctic security and patterns of interdependence amid rapid environmental changes. How do national climate change policies influence patterns of cooperation and competition between Norway and Russia in the Arctic region? And to what extent do national climate change policies function as instruments of environmental governance versus tools of strategic state power in the Arctic?

The key objective of this study is to contribute an extensive analysis on how national policies for climate change implemented by Norway and Russia during the period of 2024-2026 guide Arctic strategies and affect state practice in a region with an increasingly diverse situation. The climate challenges are tougher than ever and are increasingly exacerbated by climate change, while geopolitical competition in the Arctic is increasingly manifesting itself, making national climate policies important for state actions. This explanation demonstrates how strategic actions and bilateral relations in the Arctic are affected by different national policy orientations, through a thorough examination of recent policy guidelines, strategic plans and policy implementation, focusing on specific actions regarding energy development, maritime activities, environmental

regulation and regional governance. Another aim of the research is to examine how national climate change policies are a double instrument, as environmental governance and as strategic instruments of state power in international Arctic relations. These policies are officially designed to deal with the risks and lower emission, and are for sustainable development, but they fulfil other political and strategic goals. Climate policies have the potential to strengthen the influence of States with territorial claims, support the expansion of infrastructure, and give States more power over new economic opportunities such as shipping and natural resources. In addressing this twofold role, the study will seek to transcend an exclusively environmental understanding of climate policy and show how NCCPs serve as tools that promote cooperation – while at the same time upholding competitive power relations. In addition, the research will seek to pinpoint and examine institutional and policy mechanisms that foster ongoing cooperation between Norway and Russia, despite the increase in geopolitical tension.

2. Literature review

National Climate change Policies (NCCPs) are plans developed by the governments to reduce GHG emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. They are in general well in line with the climate negotiations and pledges at the international level, notably the Paris Agreements of 2015. Under this agreement, countries have to submit their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which are plans for the emission reductions and adaptation strategies necessary for climate change (UNFCCC, 2015). Moreover, recent research suggests that NCCPs are no longer simply environmental instruments, but also economic strategies, energy security, and international relations are impacted (Hansen & Gehrke, 2025). This is especially the case in the Arctic where the impact of climate change is much faster than in other areas. This rate of warming is 2 to 4 times more rapid than the warming rate for the global average, and is often referred to as "Arctic amplification" by scientists. This is because the melted ice has a lower reflectivity and subsequently more warming (AMAP, 2024). The speedy increase in temperature leads to melting of sea ice, changes in fish stocks, adverse effects on livelihoods and new shipping lanes. The Arctic has thus become an environmental hotspot and geopolitical region. There is a wide array of studies looking at Arctic warming through the scientific lens, and others on Arctic governance, cooperation and conflict. But, there are very few studies that directly link national climate policies

and political action in the Arctic. This gap is significant in the context of the impact of climate policies on Arctic countries' cooperation, competition and conflict resolution.

Norway is well known for its national climate laws, long -term climate goals and its climate leadership in general. Norway's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is already one of the most ambitious in the world, and in June 2025, Norway submitted a new and even more ambitious NDC to the United Nations, committing to 70-75% reduction in GHGs by 2035, compared to 1990. This target is more ambitious than its earlier goal of a 55% reduction by 2030 (Climate Action Tracker, 2025). Norway employs various strategies, including high carbon taxes, investments in renewable energy sources like hydropower and wind, and alignment with European Union climate regulations. Additionally, Norway also has a goal of reaching net- zero emissions by 2050 (Climate Action Tracker, 2025). However, Norway is also a major exporter of oil and gas, which creates what many scholars refer to as a climate paradox. While Norway promotes strong climate action and environmental protection, it continues to produce fossil fuels for the global market (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Most research addresses this paradox by evaluating emissions economic costs, and the ambition of policies. They typically view Norway's climate policies through the lens of environmental issues. However, there are fewer studies that examine how Norway uses climate leadership as a political strategy. In the Arctic Council and other Arctic discussions, Norway often positions itself as a responsible and trustworthy participant. The political role of climate policy is often briefly referenced but not thoroughly examined. As a result, the strategic role of Norway's climate policy in Arctic relations is still under-researched.

In contrast, Russia has a climate policy pathway that is very different from that of other countries, with a relatively low ambition to cut emissions, and a strong emphasis on adaptation and increasing carbon sinks (Climate Action Tracker, 2025a, 2025b). The recent targets are for emissions to reach 65-67% below 1990 levels by 2035 – a target that heavily relies on forest uptake – and are considered insufficiently ambitious (UNFCCC. nd). In this way, the need to phase out fossil fuels is lessened, and currently, more than one quarter of human emissions are being offset by forests, which are, however, at risk of being depleted due to fire and ageing (Shvetsov et al., 2021). Arctic Priorities and Russia's Arctic Policy focus on economic development, national security, and infrastructure projects such as the Northern Sea Route, along with oil, gas, and mineral extraction (U.S Energy information Administration, 2025). The revised plans through 2035 prioritize

sovereignty, territorial integrity, and resource development amid geopolitical challenges (Special Eurasia, 2025). At the 2025 International Arctic Forum in Murmansk, President Putin reaffirmed Russia's leadership in the Arctic, supporting resource utilization for sustainable national growth (Special Eurasia, 2025). The sanctions imposed after the invasion of Ukraine have obstructed Russia's transition to green energy by limiting its access to Western technology and financial resources, thereby increasing its reliance on fossil fuels (Kilcrease et al., 2022). This situation intensifies climate challenges, postponing decarbonization and global objectives, even with ongoing climate research and development efforts (Kitade, 2023). There is a lack of exploration into the environmental rhetoric used to justify control over the Arctic specific industry connections such as fisheries (The Arctic Institute, 2024; Spence & Chenok, 2024). This limits a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical and environmental dynamics involving Russia (Sonmez, 2025).

Despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Norway and Russia upheld strong connections in Barents Sea fisheries, agreeing on annual quotas (Fiskerforum, 2024). In 2023 and 2024, they set online quotas for cod, haddock, and other fish species, utilizing shared scientific knowledge to ensure the protection of fish stocks (Fors, 2023). The Arctic Council paused most of its work with Russia in 2022, but virtual meetings occurred in the late 2024 under the Norway's leadership (Xinhua News Agency, 2025). In 2024, Russia stopped its payments to the council until a full return to normalcy. In December 2025, they agreed on the quotas for 2026: cod at 285,000 tones (Ministry of Trade, Fisheries and Industry Norway, 2025). This shows that cooperation's in fisheries is prioritized over political considerations for the health of the stocks (Fors, 2025).

Over the past five years, climate change has made Arctic security increasingly challenging. The melting ice is leading to the emergence of new shipping routes and resource access, which has resulted in increased military maneuvers and conflicts among powers like Russia and NATO (Knutsen & Pedersen, 2024). Despite financial difficulties stemming from the Ukraine war, Russia has been strengthening its Arctic military capabilities by expanding its bases, increasing its icebreaker fleet, and enhancing its submarine forces to protect its northern regions and assert its power (Conley & Melino, 2019). In response to the rapid ice melt, which is occurring at four times the global average, NATO has identified climate change as a threat multiplier, which increases risks such as heightened shipping activity, espionage, and potential conflict in open waters

(NATO, 2024). Research indicates that climate policies are not merely background considerations; they significantly influence military decisions and peace negotiations (Goodman et al., 2021).

This research addresses these shortcomings by revealing that national climate policies are crafted not only for environmental preservation but also to further political and strategic objectives. It is directed towards Norway and Russia in the period 2024-2026 and looks at the implementation of climate policies, including in the field of fisheries management and Arctic governance. This study will bring together climate policy and cooperation and conflict, thereby bettering the existing understanding of Arctic relations.

3. Theoretical framework

The research is based on a multi-theoretical perspective when dealing with the question of how the National Climate Change Policies (NCCPs) are related to the production of cooperation and competition in the Arctic. No single theory is able to explain the dynamics of Arctic governance fully due to the complexity of Arctic governance. In this way, two main theories and three subsidiary ones are distinguished to provide a more co-ordinated and balanced interpretation. Neorealism and Liberal Internationalism are the two main theories that provide the basis for the analysis, because they directly relate to the two dynamics, competition and cooperation in the Arctic. In neorealist view, Arctic policy is a power struggle and that's about security of resources and the control of routes (Waltz, 1979). This accounts for the growing level of competition in the region but not the effect of the cooperative institutions and norms. Liberal Internationalism, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for cooperation and interdependence, and the critical role of international institutions (Keohane & Nye, 1977). This is a vision that highlights and expands the contribution of non-coastline actors, or NCCPs (Non-Coastline Participants), to scientific research, climate adaptation and green technology. Common environmental problems can bring the Arctic institutional platforms together in the name of peace, however, the theory does not sufficiently take into account the fact that geopolitical competition still exists. These two theories thus provide a two-sided analytical perspective to the inherent two-sidedness of cooperation and strategic competition in Arctic governance. This research draws on the supporting theories of Constructivism, Securitization and Regime Complexity to expand and focus the analytical area. Normativity is added with the idea of constructivism, an understanding that common values and environmental awareness, are able to create a shared Arctic identity which guides state action

beyond material interest (Wendt, 1992). National Climate Change Policies (NCCPs) are thus more relevant than ever, and it is time for political action, as climate change is depicted as a threat to the national stability (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998). Furthermore, the prism of Regime complexity can be applied to the complex overlapping of overlapping governance systems (maritime law, indigenous rights etc.) that is present in the political environment of the region (Young, 2014). This mix of perspectives shows that NCCPs are regarded as 'environmental' and as key strategic instruments, which could serve to manage the evolving geopolitical and institutional complexity in the Arctic.

4. Methodology

This study takes a qualitative and comparative approach for exploring climate change policies at the national level in the Arctic. The main objective is to understand the policies are not only intended to safeguard the environment but also to cater to the geopolitical interests of the Arctic countries. This report is an attempt to compare the response of the two countries, Russia and Norway, to climate change, as it is experienced in the Arctic. By comparing the two countries it is easier to observe the similarities and differences. They're subjected to the same environmental stresses, but they don't react the same way. Much of this is due to the fact that different economic interests and political goals exist. As all of the sources used are open sources, any interested reader can verify these sources. There are three types of sources used in this research: 1) Official government documents such as National Climate Strategy Reports, 2) international documents, often from the IPCC, the Arctic Council, and the IEA, and 3) scientific research, mostly journal articles and books, focused on Arctic politics, Arctic environmental policy. The sources have been thoroughly analysed and contrasted between the two countries. This analysis shows that a climate policy often goes beyond environmental concerns. In the Arctic, it functions as a tool for nations to protect and advance their broader political and strategic goals.

5. Results

The Arctic Climate Strategies of Norway and Russia for the years 2024 to 2026 are influenced by the swift changes due to climate change. The Arctic is melting at a higher rate compared to nearly any other part of the world. With the increase of temperature, the sea ice is thawing, opening up new shipping routes and is making it easier to access oil, gas, and stockfish that were previously

inaccessible. These developments are making the Arctic a region where nations are collaborating and competing simultaneously. This research examines the ways in which the climate policies of Norway and Russia have been utilized as political instruments in the Arctic in 2024-2026. The approaches of the two countries differ greatly. Norway present presents itself as a responsible global citizen. It is a leading player in environmental protection that follows the principles of international law and collaborates with the EU and NATO. It bases its Arctic policy on the principles of sustainable development and multilateralism. Russia takes a very different path. It is not concerned with international systems but more committed to ensuring its military strength and maintaining its economy. The core of the Russian Arctic policy is the Northern Sea Route, a transit route that it perceives as a key economic prospect as well as a means of expanding its geopolitical presence (Todorov, 2024). This is increasing tension because it is generating new resources and routes that nations desire to power over.

6. Conceptual Framework

This research utilizes a clear research strategy that revolves around three key dimensions: NCCPs Objective, Tool of Choice, and Relationship to Science. These dimensions can be used to illustrate the evolution of climate policy over a period of time. Initially developed as a basic environmental planning, now it has become strategic foreign policy (Norway in the High North- Arctic policy for a new reality, 2025 & Prospects for the developments of the Northern Sea Route after February 2022 & 2024).

Norway's and Russia's High North Arctic Strategy policy is for 2025. The latter illustrates the fact that rules, cooperation and trust are also important aspects of power in the Arctic, not only the military one: Norway's approach. In Norway, they are interested in dialogue, environmental protection and science. These actions are taken in order to build trust between the other Arctic countries. Norway believes that the use of force is less worthwhile than peaceful means. It's a responsible leader in the area (St0kke, 2024). But, Norway has the Svalbard Treaty (1920) to balance sovereignty and rights afforded to other countries like Russia. In January 2025, Norway adopted new rules to safeguard fragile Arctic ecosystems that limit the number of landing sites for tourism activities, ban fast ice breakage and limit the size of tourism groups. In 2025, during the 100th anniversary, the rules were seen by Russia as a violation of treaties, claiming that Norway

is restricting mining and operations for the benefit of NATO. Here are some examples of the ways that environmental law can be used to assert sovereignty in the face of growing tensions. Russian officials have warned of hybrid threats and potential retaliatory actions, while Norway argues that these rules are essential for biodiversity conservation. Norway plays an important role in the Arctic Council and is the head of environmental monitoring groups. Even after tensions increased after 2022, Norway focused on low-level cooperation. The chairmanship from 2023 to 2025 has prioritized low-level cooperation, avoiding high political issues to ensure ongoing data sharing. The joint fisheries research between Norway and Russia remains active, aiding in the determination of the 2026 Barents Sea quotas through the collaboration of IMR and VNIRO. This strategy aims to build trust through shared scientific research on the fish stocks, including a 16% reduction in cod for its recovery.

7. Russia expanded Arctic Bases in 2025

The arctic policy of Russia is oriented toward a powerful domination of its Northern regions. It is also interested in expanding its economy with the help of oil, gas, and naval shipping routes (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2025). The Northern Sea Route is the route between Europe and Asia along the Arctic coast. Climate change has decreased sea ice, and hence this route is simpler to follow. Nevertheless, in 2025 cargo trade decreased once again because of sanctions (Reuters, 2025). Russia is also producing more Arctic fuel. However, its climate performance is classified as critically inadequate. By 2050 a new climate plan is projected (Climate Action Tracker, 2025). A significant portion of the Arctic permafrost is under the control of Russia. It restricted the disclosure of methane information to western countries since 2022. It undermines global climate action but boosts the strategic status of Russia. This approach is different from Norway, which supports open data sharing (Devitt, 2024).

8. NCCPs as National interest Force Multipliers (2024-2026)

From 2024 to 2026, countries used National Climate Change Policies (NCCPs) to protect and expand their national interests in the Arctic. These policies were not only about climate action. They also supported economic goals and strategic competition (U.S. Department of Defence, 2024). Norway focused on cooperation, sustainability, and international law. It encouraged green energy and aimed to meet its climate targets. Norway has a strong sustainability policy and is a

leader in renewable energy that promotes its Arctic policy. The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI, 2025) classifies Norway as 11th among the countries in the world and has an overall high rating. The country ranks first among all countries in Renewable Energy, with a very high rating in the specific category. However, Norway receives a low rating in climate policy and very low in energy use, reflecting areas where significant improvement is still needed. Regarding its emission framework, Norway's Climate Change Act, in force since 2017 sets out GHG emissions reduction targets of 55% by 2030 and 90-95% by 2050 compared with 1990. Norway revised its climate commitment in June 2025 and aimed to reduce emissions by 70-75 percent by 2035 (against 1990) (Climate Action Tracker, 2025). The Arctic policy of Norway is not solely an environmental policy, but it also involves other important elements of the economy like fisheries and energy. The policy focuses on security, stability and interest-based international cooperation, and strongly supports international law in the Arctic (Norwegian Government, 2021). Security-wise, Norway collaborates with NATO, who is at the center of ensuring stability in the High North. The mission of NATO in the Arctic is deterrence, defense, and protection of sea routes, as well as preserving the region under the jurisdiction of international law (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2025). At the same time, the Arctic is an area of growing rivalry, especially on the basis of national interest between Norway and Russia. In 2025, GPS signals in the Svalbard region were also reported to be disrupted, but it was thought to be connected with Russia (Barents observer, 2025a). Despite political rivalry, Norway and Russia still cooperate in certain areas. The fisheries are regulated by the joint Norwegian- Russian Fisheries Commission, which does not depend on the broader political disputes (Spence & Conway, 2026). In 2026, the two nations settled on the fishing quotas of 285,000 cod (16% less than the year before) and 153,293 tons of haddock, which is 18% higher than the year before (The Barents Observer, 2025b). This indicates that collaboration prevails even in times of tension. About 15-20% of its GDP is in oil and gas and is the owner of the largest fleet of nuclear icebreakers. Russia also indicates its emissions within the framework of UNFCCC, such as the Land Use, Land- Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) sector (UNFCCC). In 2025, it postponed the option to deep-sea mine in Arctic waters because of the environmental issues (Greenpeace UK, 2025). Additionally, NATO's Cold Response exercises in Norway have involved tens of thousands of troops, reflecting ongoing military activity in this region (Norwegian Armed Forces, 2026).

National Climate Change Policies approach (NCCPs) are documents that officially publicly represent a government's approach to Climate change management (Ministry of Climate and Environment ,2025). In the Arctic, the Arctic NCCPs are both a strategic tool to reconcile global rules with national political interests and make the Arctic community competitive and cooperative (Khorrami, 2026). Norway centers on two key objectives. First, it strives for sustainability in the management of natural resources such as fish while secondly coordinating its security needs at sea with NATO. In essence, Norway seeks to manage its maritime resources sustainably and maintain its military strength within the context of its alliances (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). While Russia has its own approach to Arctic exploration. Russia's primary concern is its economic security, as its economy relies heavily on oil and natural gas, which are a vital component of its gross domestic product. At the same time, Russia develops Arctic shipping by building, for examples, nuclear icebreakers (Sharmina et al., 2021) Despite significant political differences between Russia and the western world, there are still some areas where both sides cooperate in practice. Examples include ongoing cooperation regarding Barents Sea Fishing Rights, ocean ecosystem monitoring programs, and climate science research, including the effects of ice melting and wildlife migration (Kristiansen et al., 2025). But this cooperation also comes amid rising tensions (Reuters & Andreeva, 2025), which are fueled by disagreements over the status of Svalbard, accusations of Russian GPS signal interference, and increased military activities, including NATO's Cold Response military exercises. The impact of these policies extends well beyond the Arctic Circle. Through the increased use of Arctic Sea routes, Russia enhances its trading capabilities, leading to shifts in the global economy. This puts pressure on other nations such as Pakistan to look for alternatives as far as energy supplies and trading partners are concerned (Ali &Shahab, 2024). As for NCCPs in the Arctic region, it is generally accepted that the national interests of a state should prevail over environmental protection and stability in the region, which should be achieved by means of careful management in the changing political system. Therefore, states employ climate policy as a means to achieve their interests, and environmental protection comes second.

Table 1: Synthesis of Arctic NCCPS: Norway's VS Russia (2024 -2026)

Strategic Pillar	Norway: Institutional Deterrence	Russia: Sovereign Militarization
Main Goal	Normative Conservation Ensuring stability through global legal frameworks and environmental management.	Strategic Autonomy: Economic development through resource extraction and territorial governance
Legal Authority	Administrative Sovereignty Employing the Svalbard Treaty 1920 to implement ecological regulations by 2025	Revisionist View: Interpreting environmental norms as hybrid threats and NATO's containment strategy.
Climate Utility	Collaborative Mechanism Utilizing climate data as a de-escalation bridge to sustain regional dialogue.	Strategic Asset Data Nationalism to retain methane and permafrost data for leverage
Conflict strategy	Functionalism Prioritizing low- level technical cooperation (for example, the 2026 fisheries Quotas).	Securitization Improving infrastructure for the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the A2/AD capabilities of the fleet.
Resource Policy	Ecological Limitations Implementing a 16% cut in Barents Sea Cod quotas to facilitate long term recovery of stock	Financial Urgency Emphasizing the enhancement of oil and gas production alongside the addition of 10 ice breakers by 2035
Synthesis Result	Governance Based on Rules Positioning the High North within global institutional context.	Fortress Arctic Creating a self-sufficient area focused on military and energy security

A Comparative Study of Norway and Russia's Arctic and Conflict Policies (NCCPs) reveal a significant strategic divide. This investigation adds to the scholarship of international relations by examining the securitization of climate and environmental policies in the areas of conflict. Focusing on the Norway-Russia fisheries partnership in the Barents Sea, it shows that issue-specific regimes can have dual ecological and strategic functions. It challenges the idea of lasting Arctic environmental exceptionalism, demonstrating that cooperation can still occur selectively, even when high-level multilateral efforts come to a standstill. Norway emphasizes institutional collaboration through common regulations and a focus on environmental issues, while Russia emphasizes sovereign control with military and economic priorities. This division is transforming

Arctic governance as the ice melts more quickly, tensions have increased since 2022, and resources such as oil, gas, fish stocks, and shipping routes are increasingly contested. Norway's updated 2025 strategy, *Norway in the High North: Arctic Policy for a new Reality*, replaces the previous 2017 strategy. It underscores security, total defense, Nordic partnerships with Sweden and Finland, community development, infrastructure, and business interests. The strategy designates Russia as the foremost threat to Europe since World War II, making a transition from previous collaborative efforts to a defense-oriented focus while maintaining low-level interactions like fisheries. Norway plans to apply the 1920 Svalbard Treaty to set 2025 regulations that restrict tourism, ice-breaking, and group sizes to protect the environment. Russia has claimed this constitutes a violation during the 2025 events, arguing that it supports NATO's mining restrictions. Norway is leading Arctic Council monitoring groups (2023-2025 chair). on practical issues. Collaborative fish research by Norway's IMR and Russia's VNIRO is setting the 2026 Barents quotas, reducing cod limits by 16% to promote recovery, which helps build trust. Russia considers the Arctic as its own territory. This strategy established for a new plan that will last until 2050. The nation aims to expand its oil and gas operations. The Northern Sea Route (NSR) connects Europe with Asia, and the reduction in ice is beneficial; however, trade in 2025 decreased due to sanctions. Since 2022, Russia has been withholding methane data from melting permafrost. This data nationalism supports its position but negatively impacts global climate efforts. Russia is constructing ports, radar systems, and aims to build 10 ice breakers by 2035 (Maritime Executive, 2026). The Northern Fleet is receiving funding for trade and defense. Russia accuses Norway of violating treaty rules regarding Svalbard, which it claims favor NATO and obstruct mining. Over all this summarizes these points: Norway utilizes legal measures for cooperation, while Russia is fortifying its Arctic presence.

The findings have shown that NCCPs are really not about protecting the environment in the Arctic, but also protecting national interests. Thus, what is unfolding is that geographically driven states involved in the politics of climate are projecting ideology. Norway illustrates this point. The country is preoccupied with climate cooperation and supports the Arctic Council, which makes it look like a responsible environmental actor (Keohane, 1984). But in reality, Norway uses its environmental rules to protect its own power in the Arctic. Its fishing policies, maritime conservation areas, and resource policies are aimed at managing the Arctic waters and excluding other nations. Neorealism gives an explanation that Norway is not a member of international institutions because it is concerned with the environment, but the institutions assist it to defend its

territory and interests in a legal manner (Waltz, 1979). Thus, Norway applies the concept of environmental cooperation as a wise political tool to enhance its role in the Arctic. Russia even goes further to say it puts national interest first. Russia implements its climate policy to manage its resources, develop infrastructure, and increase its power in the Arctic. The best example is the Northern Sea Route (NSR). As the Arctic ice melts, Russia sees this not as an environmental problem but as a big economic and strategic opportunity (Humpert, 2014). Russia is setting up formidable icebreakers, militarizing their discourses as an effective means of disguising their primary goals, which are gaining power, controlling land and sea, and securing economic benefits. The Neorealist state-centered theory of international relations (IR) (Waltz, 1979). Liberal Institutionalism points out that states bring in international institutions such as the Arctic Council to collaborate, but this fails to protect the environment because it advances their own interests (Keohane, 1984). Thus Arctic climate regimes essentially become political constructs refashioned in environmental bases and stringent shipping regulations to regulate this key trade route. This behavior can be offensive Realism which states that as long as countries have the opportunity to take power, they do it (Mearsheimer, 2001). For Russia, climate change is not a crisis to solve but an opportunity to exploit for national gain. The case with Svalbard illustrates as well that the national interest precedes environmental concerns. Norway enforces stringent environmental regulations in Svalbard to appear as a good environmental guardian, but the regulations also ensure that Norway tightens its grip on the islands. Russia does not agree to these rules because it feels that Norway's is exploiting the environment to restrict the rights of Russia under the Svalbard Treaty (1920). Regime Theory reveals that international rules tend to be an arena where nations struggle to protect themselves, but not mutual interests (Stokke, 2011). Constructivism posits that Norway and Russia views the same rules from different perspectives, each shaped by their respective unique historical contexts, identities, and national interests (Wendt, 1999). The environment is simply the arena where these political battles take place. This is most clearly illustrated by Securitization Theory. Nations have started to consider climate change a security threat, which provides them with a justification for taking strong military and political actions (Buzan, 1998). Russia has employed this framing to enhance its military forces, expand its Arctic bases, and tighten its control over the Northern Sea Route. Norway has similarly increased its military activities and surveillance in the Arctic region. Both nations are using climate change as a justification for extending their influence. This situation creates a dangerous environment where

each country views the other's actions as a threat, leading to heightened tension and competition instead of cooperation.

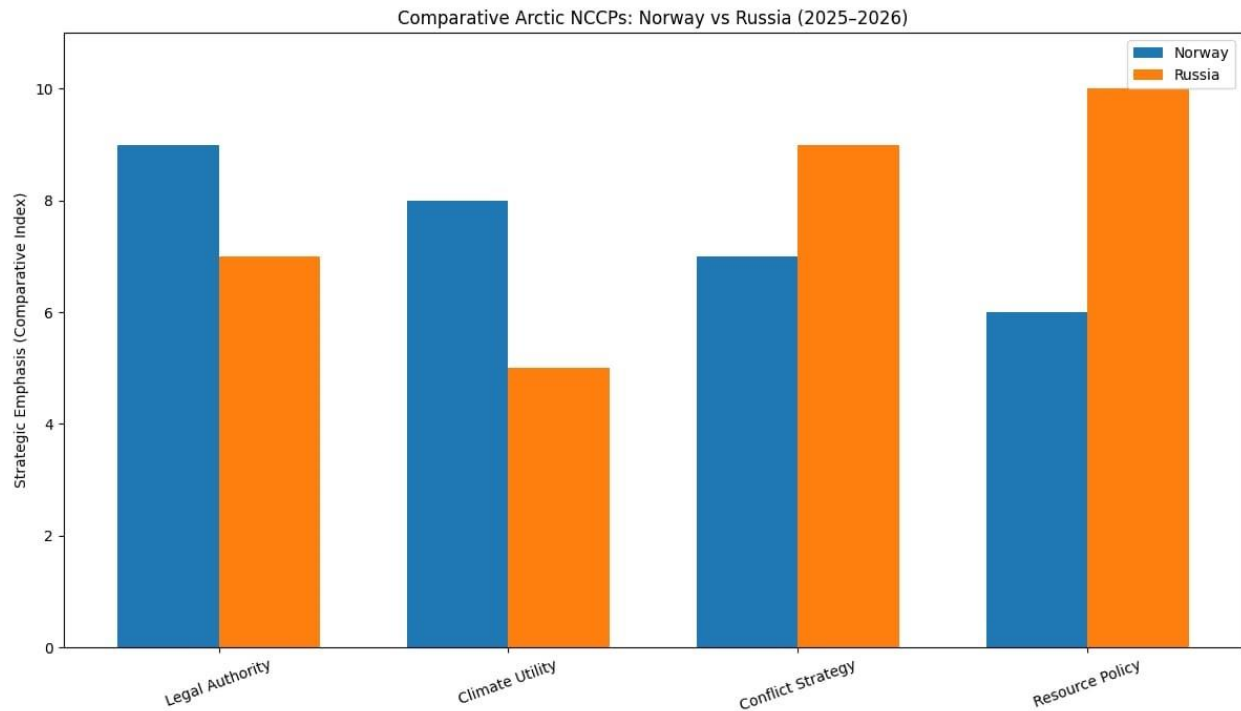


Figure 1: Comparative Arctic NCCPs: Norway vs Russia (2025-2026)

Overall, the evidence in this research clearly concludes that Arctic climate policy is not about protecting the environment but about defending national interests, not about protecting the environment. Heavy reliance on the theories of Neorealism, Liberal Institutionalism, Regime Theory, Constructivism, and Securitization reveals the same insight those Arctic nations climate policies are motivated by national interests, protecting the country's power, territory, and economic interests. Environmental protection is set out as a cover. As the Arctic warms, opens up, and becomes navigable, the intensifying competition can only grow stronger. The real challenge is not just protecting the Arctic environment but finding ways to stop countries from turning the Arctic into a zone of dangerous political rivalry before it is too late.

9. Key Updates and impacts

The Norwegian approach for 2025 will be to combine the objectives of security and the environment through cooperation with the allies in NATO such as Sweden and Finland, creation of environmentally friendly jobs, information sharing, restricting tourism in Svalbard, and limiting emissions from ships (Norwegian Environment Agency ,2025). On the other hand, the Russian

Arctic runs until 2035 and centers around issues related to national Security, economic growth, energy supplies, and the Northern Sea Route, highlighting the rising tensions between NATO and Russia in the region (NATO Defense College, 2020). Therefore, cooperation on climate issues between Norway and Russia is still underdeveloped, even though there is fisheries cooperation in the Barents Sea that includes the agreement on fishing quotas in 2026 (High North News, 2025). Nonetheless, such cooperation takes place amidst rising geopolitical tensions and resource rivalry, while the involvement of Russia in Scientific cooperation with western partners becomes more difficult (Shields, 2026).

10. Limitations of the Research

This study explains how climate change policies affect relations between countries in the Arctic, but it has some limits. First, the study uses secondary data like reports and Arctic data because some important information is not available. Second, it looks at only a few countries, so it may not show the full situation. Third, climate policies and international relations change over time, but this paper only covers a specific period, so future changes are not included. In addition, the indicators used in this research, such as rankings and targets, cannot fully explain the complex political decisions of countries. This paper uses specific theories that focus more on cooperation and may not fully explain conflict and power politics. The results are only for the Arctic region and may not be true for other areas. There may also be small personal bias in understanding the data. Even with these limits, the study gives useful ideas and helps future research.

11. Conclusion

There is a great strategic rivalry in the Arctic, but the situation there is stabilized very well. The national climate change policy or NCCPS acts in favor of each individual nation but also protects the environment. For instance, Norway's climate policies enable the country to safeguard its fishing sector and maritime regions that fall under the jurisdiction of NATO. In contrast, Russia utilizes its Arctic oil and gas deposits, along with control over crucial water passages, with powerful nuclear icebreakers. Regardless of differences in purpose, NCCPs facilitate environmental preservation through collective actions such as regulated fishing in the Barents Sea, joint scientific research, and counting the number of seabirds in order to prevent over-fishing, study climate change, and preserve Arctic ecosystems. From the perspective of international relations, NCCPs

provide opportunities for practical cooperation, such as practical cooperation, such as the activities of the Arctic Council related to fisheries and scientific research despite sanctions and political disputes. As well as these, policy decisions promote competition evident from conflict regarding Svalbard, the issues relating to the potentially disrupted GPS signals and the NATO Cold Response military exercises in the region. New sea routes through the Arctic region will provide Russian access to global markets, develop energy and trade ties with the states of Central Asia, and prove the significance of the region in international policy, environment, and economics. Both Norway and Russia have distinct yet interrelated strategies for the Arctic region. Norway prioritizes international law, specifically the Svalbard Treaty, as the basis of its policy and concentrates on safeguarding the environment, fostering cooperation, and maintaining good governance, as reflected in its active role within the Arctic Council and joint research projects with Russia. At the same time, the approach chosen by Russia is more aggressive in its nature. The country is developing its military presence, infrastructure, territorial claims, and shipping routes so, it limits data exchange and complicates climate change activities. The way forward is that the Arctic will always be of great significance so therefore, there is a need for effective diplomacy and proper integration of policies, as well as cooperation among states to ensure there are no conflicts. In conclusion, NCCPs appear to have been used as a means of achieving national power or strategy with environmental protection and cooperation as secondary motives.

12. Future Recommendations for Enhanced Arctic Cooperation

The countries of the Arctic region, such as Norway, Russia, and other members of the Arctic Council, needs to enhance multilateral cooperation to ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region. This can be achieved through developing platforms for inclusive discussions, setting up effective dispute resolution systems, and ensuring the transparency of information regarding the environment, emissions, climate change, and ecosystem sustainability. There is a need for Arctic states to create National Climate Change Policies (NCCPs) that will seek to protect the environment and ensure sustainable development as primary objectives. The National Climate Change policy (NCCP) should not be concerned much with the country's interests but with common regional interests. There is a need for cooperation amongst Arctic states by sharing information, taking common action, and implementing joint projects to cope with the effects of the climate.

In conclusion, National Climate Change Policies are primarily tools of national strength and strategy. Environment and collaboration are very important but secondary. Still, the Arctic is a great place where countries need to manage the balance of competition and cooperation. However, with diplomacy and cooperation, the Arctic can continue to be stable, safe and sustainable in the future.

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