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The European Union Arctic Policy and National Interests of France and Germany: Internal and External Policy Coherence at Stake?

Cecile Pelaudeix and Thierry Rodon

Abstract: Coherence, a fundamental principle of European Union (EU) foreign policy remains a challenge for the EU. For example, the development of an EU Arctic policy raises both internal and external challenges as two non-Arctic member states, France and Germany, move to establish their own Arctic policies. Internally, EU inter-institutional coherence has also been difficult to achieve as shown by the first effort to draft an EU Arctic policy and by the EU regulation on trade in seal products. However, internal coherence has significantly improved since 2008, and the Parliament, Commission, and Council now maintain similar positions, yet the EU is still waiting for its admission to the Arctic Council. External coherence between EU member states on Arctic issues has proven to be more elusive. France is using high-level diplomacy to define its Arctic agenda, and is clearly challenging the EU consensus on co-operation as an unambitious policy. Germany is pointing at inefficiencies regarding the coordination of EU member states while taking a more collaborative approach with Arctic countries and maintaining close ties with the EU. Although EU Arctic policy is now entering a new phase of maturity, the EU will require better coordination and a clearer vision of its role in order to position itself as an effective foreign-policy stakeholder in the Arctic, in particular when new powerful actors like Asian states enter the geopolitics and geo-economics of the Arctic.

Introduction

Since 2008, the European Union (EU) has been developing an Arctic policy on the argument that it is an Arctic entity: indeed Denmark, Finland, and Sweden are EU and Arctic states and full members of the Arctic Council, which was created in 1996. Although Greenland withdrew from the EU in 1985, Greenland has strong links to the EU and is part of the Overseas Countries and Territories. Furthermore, Norway and Iceland are parties to

the European Economic Area. Climate change, energy security, resource development, and the possible opening of trade routes, to name a few, have created a surge of interest within the EU to develop an Arctic policy. Such policy-making, however, has been a challenge for the EU both internally and externally. Internally, by reason of the need to present with a common vision between its four major institutions: the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission, the European Council, and the European External Action Service (EEAS). Externally, because of the need to accommodate differing interests between Arctic and non-Arctic states as, for example, in the EU regulation on trade in seal products.

EU member states have also been active in developing Arctic policies. In 2010, Finland was the first European state to publish its strategy.¹ Denmark, Europe's only Arctic coastal state, developed its own strategy one year later,² as did Sweden the same day it took the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.³ Yet the European picture is recently evolving further with three non-Arctic EU states developing their own Arctic policies: France, Germany, and the United Kingdom⁴. France, which appointed a special ambassador for the international negotiations on both the Arctic and Antarctic regions in 2009, is structuring its Arctic research. Germany has recently published guidelines for its policy in the Arctic. France and Germany have no claims to Arctic waters, except freedom of navigation, and they enjoy observer status on the Arctic Council.⁵ Meanwhile, the EU is still waiting to be granted observer status in the Arctic Council. In this article, we analyze and compare initiatives to develop an Arctic policy by the EU and by two non-Arctic member states, France and Germany. We do not assess the relevance of these actors in the Arctic political arena, a feature sometimes questioned. For our purpose it matters more to understand the process and strategies used by a transnational actor like the EU and by member states with their own Arctic history, interests, and policies. Arctic policy in the EU is considered both internal and external policy, with DG MARE (the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) and the European External Action Service as key institutions dealing with Arctic policy.⁶ In Germany and France the ministries of foreign affairs are responsible for Arctic policy. Our focus, though, is not on foreign policy, but on coherence.

The European Union is characterized by complex multi-level governance with independent institutions whose agendas and objectives sometimes conflict with each other. This situation creates much internal complexity and slows down the policy-making process. In these conditions one might ask whether the EU can produce a credible and coherent Arctic policy. Concordantly, what are France's and Germany's approaches to show their

relevance and to protect and advance their interests in the Arctic? Are these approaches coherent with EU Arctic policy? France and Germany share a keen interest in the Arctic, but seem to adopt different strategies. France keeps a high diplomatic profile with an ambassador for Arctic and Antarctic negotiations, while Germany pursues a more discrete approach based on scientific research, technical expertise, and promotion of commercial interests. Finally, to what extent can EU Arctic policy-making explain moves by France and Germany on Arctic issues?

To answer these questions, we take a comparative approach with emphasis on the concept of coherence, analyzed at both internal and external levels. The issue of policy coherence has been given much emphasis in the development of the EU, in particular in the Lisbon Treaty, which was designed to improve the efficiency of EU foreign policy by increasing coherence between the different areas of its external action, and between these and the other policies (article 10). Policy coherence relates to the absence of contradiction between different policies and the promotion of mutually reinforcing policies across government (Nuttall 2005). In particular, we will look at institutional and sometimes individual actors, their interests, and the strategies they have developed to face internal and external challenges in terms of coherence: internal coherence relates to the coherence of the various EU and national policies between them, while external coherence relates to the coherence of policies with Arctic states and, for France and Germany, Arctic states and the EU Arctic policy.

For this analysis we have relied on official documents, public declarations by decision makers, and interviews with key civil servants and policy-makers in the EU, France, and Germany, as well as on scientific literature.

The European Union: Building Policy Coherence on the Arctic

The EU governance structure presents some challenges, in terms of institutional coherence, that impact its foreign policy (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 121, Portela and Raube 2012). Not only are its structures far more complex in comparison with those of states, but the size of the institutions should not be forgotten as an important factor in the political process. Representing more than 500 million people, the world's third largest population after China and India, the EU's parliament encompasses 766 members, its Commission has forty directorate generals and services, and its Council consists of the heads of twenty-eight member states.

Moreover, when the Arctic policy was still in an early stage, the Lisbon Treaty (in force from December 2009) introduced major changes, in

particularly the January 2011 launch of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which aimed to bring more continuity, coherence, and visibility into EU external affairs.

From the Northern Dimension to an Arctic Policy: External Coherence

A significant difference exists between current external reception of EU Arctic policy, mostly amongst the Arctic states, and the constructive climate of co-operation that characterized the bilateral relations between the EU and some Arctic states, in particular Canada, in the 1990s when these countries were developing their respective northern dimension policies.

Member of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council since 1993, the EU developed the Northern Dimension in 1999 after the integration of Finland and Sweden. This was a joint policy shared by four equal partners—the EU, Norway, Iceland, and the Russian Federation—to promote cross-border co-operation and where Canada and the US perform the role of observer. Whereas Canada was developing the basis for a Canadian foreign policy for the Circumpolar North, Canada notes that after the integration of Sweden and Finland “not only do EU regional and foreign policies now include an Arctic component, but the Nordic states are in some sense becoming a crossroads for that pan-Arctic co-operation” (Graham 1997). A few years later, Canada welcomed “transatlantic co-operation with the EU” and was “pleased with the synergies and co-operation of different policies concerning the northern hemisphere” (Arctic Council 2002). Canada further stated that the EU “actively participates in the work of the three most important regional bodies of the Northern Dimension region: the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council ... The development of an Arctic perspective in the EU’s Northern Dimension ... can help to strengthen the basis for our future co-operation” (Canada-EU 2002). At that time, the inclusion of the EU in the main institutions of Arctic governance was expected and taken for granted.

The 2008 report submitted by Solana and Ferrero-Waldner to the European Council, “Climate Change and International Security,” suggested that the EU should “develop an EU Arctic policy based on the evolving geo-strategy of the Arctic region, taking into account the access to resources and the opening of new trade routes” (Solana and Ferrero-Waldner 2008). This paper is considered a “seminal document” of EU Arctic policy (Weber and Romanyshyn 2011). The need for access to energy supplies after the worsening gas-related incidents between Russia and Ukraine in 2008, in addition to global interests (navigation, raw materials) and concerns (climate

change), are deemed the main driving forces for establishment of an EU Arctic policy.

That same year, the Parliament passed its resolution on Arctic Governance (EParl 2008), followed by the Communication of the Commission on the EU and the Arctic Region (ECom 2008).⁷ Since then, bilateral relations with some Arctic states have become more complex, and EU Arctic policy-making has been facing internal and external challenges. Internal challenges arise from the difficulties of finding common ground in a multinational polity. External challenges result both from specific EU decisions (like regulation of trade in seal products) and from the entry of this powerful stakeholder into a politically sensitive area while having considerable interests at stake.

Internal and External Coherence at Stake After 2008 and the Lisbon Treaty

It is beyond the scope of this article to assess the coherence of the EU Arctic policy-making (for studies prior to 2010, see Holdus 2010, Airoidi 2010). Rather, we intend to highlight some inconsistencies and their consequences in terms of detrimental effects on the reception of the EU Arctic policy, both internally and externally. We focus on three types of coherence—inter-institutional (horizontal), intra-institutional, and external—and on Arctic-related policy areas like trade and foreign affairs. Indeed, EU Arctic policy, mainly falling under EU foreign policy, is both internal and external. As indicated earlier, three of the Arctic states are EU members and two more are part of the European Economic Area. EU Arctic policy is chaired by the EEAS (European External Action Service) while DG MARE (the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) coordinates the work with other DGs through an inter-service group.

We should keep in mind that the Lisbon Treaty has been implemented and the EU diplomatic service established only very recently to provide a consistent foreign policy—the launching of the EEAS dating back to December 2010. This has implications regarding internal coherence in the EU decision-making triangle (Verola 2012). First, to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the Union's decision-making process, the European Parliament has been empowered to act as a co-legislator with the European Council. It is now on an equal footing with the Council in ordinary legislative business and budget matters. The Lisbon Treaty enhances the Parliament's role in EU external policy, including Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Parliament can, for example, use its budgetary power to set policy priorities. Second, competences of institutions still vary from one policy field to another: the Commission has some decision-making power in various areas like international trade, but not in foreign policy. Still, the boundary

is not always clearly drawn between the Commission and the Council in terms of defining which body is responsible for decision making, and inter-institutional coherence might be challenged.

Arctic-related issues have been mostly in the hands of the European Commission and the European Parliament, both of which are supranational institutions—the latter being the institution where the most intense discussions take place (Weber and Romanyshyn 2011). The role of the European Council, the institution most sensitive to national interests, remains powerful: its conclusions are binding and, except where the treaties provide otherwise, its decisions require unanimity or a qualified majority to pass.

The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, is carefully venturing into Arctic matters at a time of tension with Canada over the seal products ban and tension with Russia over Syria's civil war. In March 2012, the High Representative explained: "In developing our EU policy towards the Arctic, we want to listen to and learn from those who know the region best. I am convinced the EU can play an even more positive role in the future. We want to do all we can to contribute to productive co-operation in the region" (EEAS 2012). The High Representative also stressed the Arctic's importance for the EU: "We want to show the world that the EU is serious about its commitment towards the Arctic region. Developments in the Arctic ... are of increasing strategic, economic and environmental importance to the European Union" (ECom 2012).

Coherence on Governance: From an Arctic Treaty to Co-operation

Section 15 of the 2008 European Parliament resolution on Arctic governance proposes "the opening of international negotiations designed to lead to the adoption of an international treaty for the protection of the Arctic" and that "as a minimum starting point such a treaty could at least cover the unpopulated and unclaimed area at the centre of the Arctic Ocean." A proposal for an Arctic treaty had been developed seventeen years earlier by Donat Pharand (1991), and then by others like the World Wide Fund for Nature in 2005 (Koivurova 2008). Such a proposal was ruled out by the Arctic coastal states, which met in Ilulissat in May 2008 before the vote on the resolution; the Declaration of the Arctic coastal states "recall that an extensive international legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean." Adoption of the resolution did upset some Arctic states. Through the voice of its Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Joe Borg, the European Commission stated

at the Arctic Frontiers meeting in Tromsø on 19 January 2009 that a new legal framework would be unnecessary (Borg 2009: 6).

Nonetheless, in 2009 the European Parliament prepared a second resolution specifically in favour of a treaty. During the parliamentary debates in June, the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, and the President-in-Office of the European Council expressed the positions of their institutions. The Commissioner deemed that “such a proposal would at this stage not only be ineffective but could prove to be detrimental to the EU’s role and credibility in overall Arctic cooperation. Rather than expending efforts on that cause, the EU’s interests and objectives are better served by building greater multilateral cooperation and making better use of the existing legal instruments” (Ferrero-Waldner 2009). The President of the European Council said that the Council “in line with the Commission communication ... did not express any support for the specific idea of an international treaty” and he recognized “the growing strategic importance of the Arctic region. We agree that the European Union should have a comprehensive and coherent policy” (Vondra 2009). The next day, the European Parliament voted to refer the resolution back to committee, thus postponing the vote. This to and fro communication between the three institutions made for a more consistent approach. In January 2011, the Parliament adopted a “Resolution on a sustainable EU policy for the High North,” which was endorsed for its balanced and holistic approach to Arctic issues (EParl 2011)—a pivotal move in which the EU Arctic Forum, a platform established in the EP for this purpose, has been instrumental in building bridges between political forces in the EU and the various Arctic actors from the sphere of politics, science, business, and the local population (Weber and Romanyshyn 2011).

Governance still remained problematic. Coherence between the three institutions was undermined due to a focus on governance by the European Parliament (in the title of its 2008 resolution) and by the European Commission (in the third goal of its 2008 communication: “enhancing governance”), while the same term was absent from the European Council’s conclusions on Arctic issues in 2009. It is worth noting that the term “governance” is not only descriptive but also normative. This second aspect challenges the state’s central role and is apparently why this term was used to different degrees by the three EU institutions (Pelaudeix 2012). Some Arctic states, like Norway, were dissatisfied with the wording of the COM 2008 (interviewee A⁸), as was Denmark (Holdus 2010: 68). The Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Maria Damanaki, felt compelled to explain the equivalence of “governance” and “co-operation” in several speeches

(Damanaki 2011a, Damanaki 2011b) and in the 2012 joint communication (ECom and High Representative 2012), the first term was systematically replaced by the second. After renouncement of support for an Arctic treaty in 2009, this shift from a regulatory policy focus to a more neutral one of scientific research would be the second major change to EU Arctic policy.

Of Seals and Polar Bears

The regulation on trade in seal products, which passed on September 16, 2009 (EParl 2009), clearly illustrates the various obstacles to coherence the EU has been facing in developing its Arctic policy. Strictly speaking, the regulation is not part of EU Arctic policy. It is part of a trade policy that originated in a 2006 declaration (EParl 2006). The regulation sparked debate that drew on inadequate evidence (EFSA 2007, 52–54), and was voted in a context where lobbies were so active that the efficiency of the political debate was put into question (Sellheim forthcoming), as was the coherence of a political process where emotion and various special interests were prominent. External coherence was weakened by lack of knowledge about the Arctic; and the Inuit contemporary world still remains a distant reality for the EU politicians (Hossain 2012, 10).

Concerned about reception of the regulation by Arctic states and its impact on the development of EU Arctic policy, the European Commission has clearly prioritized this issue by establishing an Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue (ECom 2008). With a goal of "enhancing the dialogue between Arctic Indigenous peoples and the European institutions, the Parliament, the EU Council, and the Commission itself" (Maritime Affairs 2010), this initiative was unable to overcome the resistance of sealing nations and Indigenous peoples to the EU application to observership to the Arctic Council, which was seen a goal of the Dialogue (Gant 2010 and IPS 2011). The Arctic Council's decision to reject the EU's candidacy for observer status in 2009, largely because of the regulation on trade in seal products, and its conclusion in Kiruna 2013 to defer its final decision, definitely linked the regulation to EU Arctic policy.

In 2013, a global ban on trade in polar bear parts was put to a vote at the 16th meeting of the CITES (Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), thus creating another challenge to EU inter-institutional and intra-institutional coherence. The European Parliament passed a resolution in favour of the ban (EParl 2013), while the European Commission tried to come up with a compromise. The decision ended up at the European Council, which was willing to offset the resolution's adverse impact on seal products to win

back Canada and Aboriginal peoples (interviewees C⁹ and D¹⁰). Denmark refused to support the ban, thus creating a blocking minority (interviewee K¹¹). Therefore, the EU member states came to the CITES with a common position: abstention.

Internal EU coherence is also affected by its member states' national activities and interests in the Arctic, in particular the EU Arctic states, but also, as will be discussed in the second part of the article, potentially by France and Germany, which have adopted different positions regarding both national interests and foreign policy.

Foreign Policy and Member States

In terms of intra-institutional coherence, tensions are to be found on the European Council, which is intergovernmental by nature. European foreign policy is a challenge to make, since such policy-making requires that all twenty-eight member states agree and speak with one voice on a common line. Among the Arctic states, Finland has actively promoted EU involvement in the Arctic and is supporting current and upcoming efforts to shape EU Arctic policy, pushing in particular for establishment of an EU Arctic Information Center in Rovaniemi (Halinen 2011). Sweden has proven to be more subdued in its support, whereas Denmark is in a more complex situation, having to accommodate both Greenland and EU interests.

France publicly supported EU Arctic policy during the French presidency of the EU, which organized a ministerial conference in Monaco on November 2008 on the theme "the Arctic, a unique observatory of the global environment" (Stefanini 2008). During drafting of the 2009 conclusions on Arctic issues, France was reportedly the most active of the "Big Three" and took the initiative, whereas Germany proposed a ban on new fisheries in territories not yet covered by an international fishing scheme (Holdus 2010: 59).

Support from EU Arctic states for a strong EU role in the Arctic is not always automatic. Finland strongly supported the EU application in Nuuk (Willis 2011), the decision being postponed to the next ministerial meeting in Nuuk. At this second meeting, Sweden took a more neutral approach and insisted on the pre-eminence of the Arctic Council's eight member states: "We have agreed on the criteria. A decision [on whether to grant observer status] will be taken at the next ministerial meeting [in two years time] at the latest," said Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt (Willis 2011). Indeed, support from EU Arctic states for EU member states on the Arctic Council is not guaranteed. As Carl Bildt puts it: "Let's be realistic. At the end of the day, members are members, and observers are observers" (Willis 2011).

The EU represents multiple interests that can undertake conflicting initiatives. Memories of the 2008 resolution, together with the inefficiency in its internal policy-making still weigh heavily on the EU delegates when they attend international forums such as the Arctic Council, and does not let the EU fully develop its capacity to play a role in the region's future.

Yet the EU has been working effectively with Arctic partners in many areas, such as with Russia on research and on environmental issues in the Kola Peninsula. The EU has invested more than 200 million euros in Arctic-related research over the last ten years and is planning to earmark even more money as part of the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020. The EU signed an agreement with Canada and US on 24 May 2013 on research co-operation in the Atlantic including the Arctic area (Atlantic Ocean research alliance), in keeping with the fruitful collaboration that has lasted between Canada and the European Space Agency for three decades now. The EU is also providing over 1.14 billion euros to develop the economic, social, and environmental potential of the Arctic regions of the EU and neighbouring areas for 2007–2013 (ECom and High Representative 2012).

The 2011 resolution won over support because it proposed a more balanced and holistic policy for the Arctic than the 2008 resolution when it comes to encompassing the views of Arctic actors such as Indigenous peoples, Arctic member states, and European Arctic actors such as the Barents region (EParl 2011b). The implementation of the EEAS has also contributed to a more holistic policy of the EU for the Arctic. Moreover, the establishment of an inter-service group on the Arctic, the mission of which consists precisely in ensuring a coherent approach on EU matters that impact the Arctic (and which meets every two months, chaired by the EEAS and coordinated by DG Mare), has improved internal communication on Arctic issues.

Still, the EU is a complex and huge policy-making structure, where stakeholders have heterogeneous commitments to and awareness of Arctic issues, and where the internal logic of officials moving to other DGs or EU institutions regularly leads to loss of skills and experience. Thus, procedural coherence, as opposed to policy related coherence (Gebhard 2011:106), and related to the bureaucratic machinery, also has an impact on policy-making, which still lacks coordination and long-term vision.

EU Arctic policy, with its impressive output in the field of research, its commitment to address climate change, the support to local populations in Northern Europe and Greenland, and a renowned know-how but unclear vision, still looks very piecemeal at a time when the world's changing balance of power will require a much more focused approach.

France: Promoting National Interest Through the General Interest

France has no territorial claims to the Arctic and no official Arctic policy, but it has been developing its own Arctic agenda. Historically, French involvement has mainly taken the form of scientific exploration through polar expeditions, which were first undertaken by Jean-Baptiste Charcot and then by Paul-Émile Victor. These two adventurers/explorers/scientists were very media-savvy and their adventures have left a lasting legacy that has inspired many French men and women to enter this field of scientific endeavour; the Institut Polaire Français Paul-Émile Victor (IPEV) was created in 1992 to provide France's polar researchers with resources and expertise. France is also involved in Arctic institutions. It was invited to sit as an observer on the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (1990) and at its request was granted observer status on the Arctic Council in 2000. The observer status doesn't allow France to speak at those meetings but both are important forums for Arctic issues, and it enables France to be informed and discuss issues informally with the main Arctic players. This degree of participation in regional bodies attests to the relevance of France's role in the Arctic.

Structuring and Connecting French Arctic Research

Arctic research remains important in France, although the International Polar Year clearly showed that Arctic research was less developed than Antarctic research, as pointed out in Senator Gaudin's report (Gaudin 2008). His report called for the establishment of an ambassador for the poles and for the creation of an Arctic international and multidisciplinary observatory. The second recommendation was acted on quickly by the Minister of Higher Education and Research Valérie Pécresse (Pécresse 2008).

The creation of an Arctic observatory was also supported by the *Grenelle de l'environnement* (Grenelle Environment Round Table), a multi-stakeholder process to develop a French environmental policy. In a law adopted in 2009 (France 2009), article two provides for creation of an international scientific observatory in the Arctic and states that France would strive to bring international environmental regulation into line with the new conditions prevailing in the Arctic Ocean:

[Considering] that the Arctic region plays a central role in the global climate equilibrium, France will support the creation of an international scientific observatory for the Arctic. Furthermore, in order to protect the environment, France will promote or will support, through the appropriate international institutions, the adaptation of the international regulation concerning the Arctic

Ocean emerging use, that are made possible by its increasing accessibility.¹²

With a lack of development on the creation of an international Arctic observatory, it was decided to launch a French Arctic research initiative instead. The Institut National des Sciences de l'Univers (INSU)¹³ took the lead with the support of the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (France's department of higher education and research) by launching *le Chantier Arctique*, an initiative to map out and bring together French Arctic researchers to define an Arctic research agenda. The Chantier is coordinated by the INSU in conjunction with Takuvik, a research laboratory stemming from a partnership between the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and Université Laval. The main event until now was the inaugural symposium entitled "Arctic: the major scientific issues" ("Arctique: les grands enjeux scientifiques") housed at the Collège de France in Paris in early June 2013. A research agenda will be drafted on the basis of the material collected during the Chantier. The CNRS has established bilateral co-operation dialogue and agreements on Arctic research in particular with the United States (National Science Foundation) and Canada (Université Laval).

A French Arctic Diplomacy

The most important move came in 2009 with the appointment of a French ambassador for the international negotiations on the polar regions, the Arctic and Antarctic, another recommendation of the Gaudin Report. Though mostly a symbolic gesture, it did send a signal that France has a stake in both regions and wishes to join in any negotiations. This move's importance was further emphasized by the choice of the ambassador: Michel Rocard, a former prime minister, a former member of the European Parliament (MEP) who had co-sponsored the 2008 European Parliament's resolution on Arctic governance, and one of the negotiators of the Madrid Protocol for Antarctica. His mission orders are not public but according to him it "concerns the instauration of an intergovernmental regulation in order for the Arctic to be protected at a time where the ice is melting rapidly" (Rocard 2013a, our translation).

Even though an Arctic treaty has proven to be a non-starter, Rocard still insists that the Arctic Ocean suffers from a governance gap that needs to be filled, mainly in such areas as fisheries, environmental protection, a safety code for Arctic maritime transit, and regulation of resource exploitation. For Rocard, these issues need international action that would take the form of at

least sectorial agreements (2013a). For the Arctic 5 (Canada, the US, Russia, Denmark, and Norway), however, all these issues can be addressed by the Arctic states among themselves by means of existing national regulations and international instruments, “notably the UN Convention on the law of the sea” (Ilulissat Declaration 2008).

Between General Interest and French Interests

The French ambassador stresses the fact that France has no strategic interests in the Arctic and that French diplomacy aims to contribute to the greater good: “France has no strategic interest in the region and very few economic interests ... Our diplomacy, based on the demand of the scientific community, aims to shape the decisions of the international communities in regard to the Arctic Ocean and region” (Rocard 2010). In an earlier declaration he stated that France “is following a general interest diplomacy; there are no French strategic interests; but we all have a huge strategic interest in navigation safety, orderly fisheries without piracy and an adequate military security” (Rocard 2009).¹⁴

Nonetheless, some commentators do see a strategic role for France in the Arctic, mainly in the event of a crisis, through NATO and the EU, because France is a nuclear power (Collin 2010). France has interests in four other areas: (1) fish stocks; (2) energy resources; (3) commercial interests in oil and gas, mining, and free maritime transit; and (4) scientific research.

In terms of fish stocks, it is the country with the highest consumption of fish in Europe, and half the fish consumed in the EU come from Arctic waters (Plouffe 2012). Access to energy resources is also a concern for France, which already imports oil and gas from Norway and the Barents Sea (Plouffe 2012).

France has some commercial interests in the Arctic, largely through Total S.A.—an oil and gas French multinational. In the Arctic, Total is mainly active in the Barents region but also has projects in the Mackenzie Delta. Nonetheless, its chief executive officer, Christophe de Margerie, has stated his opposition to oil drilling in Arctic waters (Chazan 2012).

France is probably most interested in free maritime transit because of its large commercial fleet. CMA-CGM is France’s leading container shipping group and the world’s third largest. The French government has a 6 percent share in the company. However, the company is not active in the Arctic and has stated its reluctance to use Arctic waters because they are too hazardous (Haquet and Meignan 2011).

France definitely has some important interests in the Arctic: scientific research, access to energy resources and fish stocks, and free commercial

transit. None of them, however, are central for France. It is therefore not surprising that France does not focus its Arctic strategy on these issues even though they are in the background. This non-Arctic state thus prefers to promote a global vision of Arctic issues to remain relevant in this region.

French Arctic Initiatives and External Coherence

French diplomats have been advocating that the Arctic Ocean is a common property that needs to be protected by a treaty or at least by the signing of sectorial agreements that would provide more protection.

On the EU level, based on his experience as a negotiator for the Madrid Protocol (1991), an addendum to the Antarctic Treaty that protects the region from industrial developments for the next fifty years, Rocard at first promoted a similar approach to the Arctic Ocean and advocated the signing of an Arctic Treaty with MEP Diana Wallis (Rocard 2012). For him, the Arctic Ocean was a common good that needed better protection (Rocard 2013b). In fact, Rocard was being consistent with the 2008 European Parliament resolution on Arctic governance, which he had helped to draft as an MEP. It soon became clear, however, that the Arctic states were opposed to an Arctic treaty, and the idea was quickly abandoned at the EU level, as it has been shown above.

Since then, it seems that France has not had as much influence over EU Arctic policy-making, especially within the European Commission, as seen in the release of a more accommodating Commission and High Representative communication (ECom and High representative 2012) that was intended to appease the Arctic states.

Michel Rocard, a high-profile and outspoken ambassador, has been using his position to challenge the Arctic states. Ambassador Rocard has repeatedly pointed out the weaknesses in Arctic governance, notably for fishery management and environmental protection. He has also strongly criticized the statement by the Arctic 5 that they are fully able to deal with Arctic issues and has been lobbying for an increased role for observers on the Arctic Council. It is clear that making the Arctic a global concern will legitimize a greater role for France in the region. Although these positions have never been articulated in an official French policy or strategy,¹⁵ other French actors like Senator Gaudin have joined in calling for the creation of an international Arctic observatory.

Finally, Rocard has been highly critical of the Arctic Council on two grounds: First, it is not a decision-making forum and has no power on even the most pressing issues, i.e., fisheries and resource development. Second, it is a closed forum where only the Arctic states and the permanent

members have a voice, and the observers have no right to speak. This is for him a serious weakness that keeps the Arctic Council from realizing its full potential, since for him Arctic issues are primarily global issues (Rocard 2012). Rocard did send the Arctic Council president a letter, expressing his frustration with the way the Arctic Council was working, but never received a reply (Willis 2011).

In the absence of an official Arctic policy, it is difficult to assess policy coherence between France and the EU, but the French ambassador for the poles is clearly challenging the EU consensus on co-operation.

Germany: Working for a Coherent and Proactive Approach

Germany is currently coordinating its Arctic activities in order to make the Arctic “a central focus of German policy.”¹⁶ Germany has been actively involved in Arctic matters for many years now. It is a signatory to the 1921 Spitsbergen Treaty and it has been an observer on the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy since its first ministerial meeting in 1991 (with Poland and the United Kingdom as observers of the meeting as well) (Graczyk and Koivurova 2013), as well as an observer on the Arctic Council since that body’s inception in 1996.

A Strong Scientific Background, Clear Interests, and Concerns

Germany has a history of polar exploration, having mounted one of its first expeditions to the Far North in 1868. It strongly supports scientific research in the Arctic. The Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI) for Polar and Marine Research, named after Germany’s most important polar researcher, is one of the world’s leading research institutes. The AWI maintains two permanent Arctic research stations: Koldewey Station, in Svalbard, Norway, jointly run with France’s Institut polaire Paul Emile Victor since 1988, and Samoylov Station, in northern Siberia, run by Germany alone since the end of the Cold War. German research logistics also include the services of the research icebreaker RV *Polarstern* and two aircraft, the Polar 5 and the Polar 6.

Besides, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) is intensifying its exploration for Arctic oil and gas deposits to provide reliable estimates of reserves in the region. Indeed, one of the tasks of the BGR is to participate in securing the supply of the Federal Republic of Germany with mineral resources.

The German Federal Government has clearly stated both environmental concerns and interests in the Arctic. The environmental impact of climate change is taken seriously: the melting ice caps may be raising the sea level,

a disturbing trend for Germany (Thönnnes 2010). Environmental protection and sustainable development are broadly shared concerns in German society and politics, according to Foreign Minister Westerwelle, who emphasizes the need to protect “the common heritage of mankind” (Westerwelle speech 2011). Yet this concern has never translated into government support for the proposed Arctic Treaty (interviewee K). The Bundestag (German parliament) was presented in 2011 with a motion for a resolution, made by the minor opposition party Alliance 90/The Greens, but no resolution was developed (Bundestag 2011). In 2009, Westerwelle set a goal of assigning liability for environmental damage.

Germany has various economic interests in the Arctic, of which shipping is certainly the most important one. This country has the world’s largest fleet of container ships (Thönnnes 2010) and the third largest for all vessel classes (Weintrit and Neumann 2011). In Summer 2009, two German merchant ships were the first to complete a commercial transit through the Northern Sea Route in one season. Furthermore, Germany imports 87 percent of the fish it consumes, with 23 percent coming from the Arctic (Thönnnes 2011).

Because of its dependence on Russian oil and natural gas, Germany has made access to natural resources a priority. It imports 97 percent of its oil and 84 percent of its natural gas, mainly from Russia and Norway (Thönnnes 2010). Demand for energy is likely to grow with the decision to phase out nuclear energy and replace it “to a large extent with Renewables” (Meister 2013). Expertise and technology are fields that will interest German companies. Siemens is renowned for its contribution to subsea installations that have made offshore resources accessible, whereas maritime engineering expertise from Bremenports has been required for coordinating the construction of a new port in Iceland.

Building a Coherent Policy

Main actors in Germany are to be found in the polar research institutions, and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which has been developing, in co-operation with Arctic states and at the inter-ministerial level, its Arctic-related activities. In 2009 with Denmark and Norway, and in 2011 with Finland, the MFA organized international conferences on the Arctic region. On the occasion of the latter, Westerwelle deemed the Arctic to be of “crucial significance for the long-term survival of mankind” (Westerwelle 2011).

In 2013, Germany sponsored a series of events with a view to coordinating the Arctic-related activities of the various ministries concerned. In February, the Wegener Institute held the first Arctic Dialogue, which was attended by representatives from six ministries: Education and Research; the Foreign

Office; Environment; Transport, Construction and Urban Development; Economic Affairs; and Defence. Another workshop was held in June. This work resulted in the September 2013 drafting and 25 October 2013 publishing of Guidelines for a German Arctic policy¹⁷ (the Guidelines) with the aim to make the Arctic “a central focus of German policy” (Auswärtiges Amt 2013).

The Guidelines identify ten main points: (1) economic potential and ecological challenges; (2) protection of the environment; (3) Germany as a partner with vast expert knowledge in research, technology, and environmental standards; (4) promotion of freedom of navigation; (5) promotion of Arctic research; (6) commitment to ensuring that the Arctic is used for peaceful purposes only; (7) commitment to international and regional conventions; (8) recognition of the special status of Arctic Indigenous peoples; (9) multilateral co-operation, in particular in the Arctic Council; and (10) support for an active EU Arctic policy and for horizontal coherence on Arctic issues.

The Guidelines focus on ensuring coherence in a few focused sectors, in particular with regards to economic development, which is closely linked to ecological challenges, a field where Germany is promoting its research and technology expertise. On the occasion of the Arctic Energy Summit in Akureyri, on 8 October 2013, German Ambassador to Iceland Thomas Meister highlighted the potential contribution of German know-how and “high environmental standards” to sustainable economic development in the Arctic, and referred to the exhibition “Renewables–Made in Germany” displayed in Akureyri.

In the Guidelines, freedom of research is highlighted as important, Germany having actually been denied access by Russia to some areas near the Siberian coast where the Wegener Institute planes intended to document changes in ice thickness (Schwägerl and Seidler 2011). Since understanding the current changes in the Arctic is seen as crucial, the director of the Wegener Institute, Karin Lochte, emphasized the “need of access to allow our scientists to move about and work throughout the entire Arctic” (Schwägerl and Seidler 2011).

As far as security is concerned, the Federal Government is opposed to militarization of the Arctic (interviewee K) and considers the region’s stability to be absolutely essential for both Europe and Germany (Thönnies 2010).

External Coherence of German’s Arctic Policy

The publication of the Guidelines for a German Arctic Policy are said to be driven by purely internal factors, i.e., the need to know where the country

is going with its Arctic activities and how to coordinate them. Its activities are said to complement EU Arctic Policy (interviewee C). Indeed, Germany cannot act alone to be influential (interviewee K), and needs the framework of the EU: it supported the EU application to the Arctic Council as an observer in 2011. Nevertheless, several aspects of this policy suggest that the EU could have done more and been better coordinated. The Federal Government supports an *active* EU Arctic policy and is “working to ensure *horizontal coherence*¹⁸ on Arctic issues within the Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as in the domains of research, environmental protection, energy and raw materials, industry and technology, transport, and fisheries” (Witschel 2011b, Auswärtiges Amt. 2013). Furthermore, regarding the Northern Dimension, which Germany is interested in further developing (interviewee K), the Guidelines highlight the necessity to coordinate the EU Arctic policy and the Northern Dimension in particular when it comes to the environmental partnership (Auswärtiges Amt 2013: 16–17).

Lack of coordination also plagues relations between EU member states on the Arctic Council activities, in particular when it comes to Denmark and the unique situation of its former colony Greenland (interviewee K). For the Danes, European Union solidarity ends at the Arctic Circle, and countries like Germany are only welcome as “guests” (Schwägerl and Seidler 2011). The Guidelines for a German Arctic Policy state that “The Arctic policy should be part of long-term strategic considerations of EU policy.”

Germany remains cautious in advancing its policy (interviewee K)—being only an observer on the Council, Germany does not publish a strategy or a policy, rather it publishes “Guidelines.” Moreover, on the principle that it has no Arctic territories, Germany is keen on recognizing the regional nature of Arctic policies, i.e., the “regional policy of the Arctic Council member states” (Meister 2013). Yet on two occasions it has expressed concerns about Arctic governance. First, Germany was worried that the claims of the five Arctic coastal states to the continental shelves would hinder access to Arctic Ocean routes and air space regarding sites for research. Although the Convention on the Law of the Sea guarantees freedom to pursue marine research, this right is disregarded by many countries when it comes to basic research, according to Rüdiger Wolfrum, a professor at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law and a judge on the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea: “Either permits are denied or conditions are defined that make research difficult or even impossible.” Furthermore, it is not always easy to distinguish basic research from applied research for economic development of the continental shelf (Budde 2011). The Convention’s 320 articles provide only a very general framework,

explains Wolfrum. The case of the *Polarstern* stopping its 2010 seismic tests in Lancaster Sound at the request of an Inuit association also illustrates the complexity of accessing research sites in the Arctic Ocean since the tests were approved by both the Canadian federal government and the Nunavut territorial government, the latter through the Nunavut Research Institute and the Nunavut Impact Review Board. In spite of this, the Nunavut Court of Justice ruled on 8 August 2010 that the Canadian federal government did not do enough to involve local communities in its decision making (Pelaudeix 2012).

Another bone of contention, and a major one at that, arose with the new rules that the Arctic Council brought in for observers in 2011. Germany's ambassador to Canada, Georg Witschel, roundly criticized several provisions: observers have to agree to the existing legal framework, they must submit written statements for ministerial meetings, and they may be excluded from the Arctic Council under certain conditions (Witschel 2011a). He moreover

...urged the members of the Arctic Council to integrate the permanent observers in the widest possible manner into the work of the council while respecting the elevated status of permanent participants and member states. Germany is not an Arctic state and therefore our interests are limited compared to those of the members of the Arctic Council. But they are not in the least less legitimate, and generally they are in line with Canadian interests. Germany will continue to contribute positively to the future of the Arctic region, hopefully more and more often together with Canada. (Witschel 2011b)

The German Federal Government went even further in the Guidelines for a German Arctic Policy with the suggestion to extend observer countries' participation rights on a case-by-case basis, if an observer can substantially contribute to resolving an issue (Meister 2013).

Discussion

The EU is difficult to ignore in the Arctic context. It provides the most funding for scientific research in the Arctic and represents over 500 million people and twenty-eight states, three of which are in the Arctic and, pending the final decision of the Arctic Council on its request for observer status, the EU may attend the Arctic Council proceedings as an ad hoc observer.

The seal ban issue and the global ban on trade in polar bear products, as well as other issues (like offshore regulation) that we cannot address in this

article, show how the internal coherence of EU policy can be challenged and how policy-making can be hampered. Decision making within the European Commission and the European Council also tends to work its way down to the lowest common denominator or to a decision that is unrepresentative of the Council but in line with another EU policy, as was the case with the global ban on polar bear products. On that issue, the EU finally voted to abstain, to avoid antagonizing Arctic players. The EU's internal coherence is also affected by its member states' national activities in the Arctic. As we have seen, France and Germany have adopted different positions.

When it comes to external coherence, France's position on the Arctic was at first very consistent with the EU's. Rocard, then a Member of the European Parliament, pushed for a resolution that pointed to the region's lack of governance and the need for a treaty. The resolution was passed in 2008 by the European Parliament but created quite a stir among the Arctic states. Since then, it seems that France has not had as much influence over EU Arctic policy-making, especially within the European Commission, as seen in the release of a more accommodating Commission communication that was intended to appease the Arctic states.

Although France at first was using the EU to promote its agenda, it has now launched its own initiatives, since the European Commission and EEAS proceed cautiously and try not to antagonize the Arctic states. Nonetheless, France does support the EU's candidacy for a seat on the Arctic Council. Conversely, EU Arctic policy-making has had no apparent impact on France's development of an Arctic policy, this process remaining mostly internal. At present, France does not seem to be much involved in EU Arctic policy-making, and the ambassador has had few contacts with the EU policy-makers who shape Arctic policy (Rocard 2013b). In spite of this lack of coordination, France is not at odds with the EU regulation on trade in seal products; our interviews confirmed that the issue is not seen as a problem for relations with Arctic states (Rocard 2013b and interviewee G).

Germany does see its reflection on an Arctic policy as complementary to the EU's policy (interviewee C). Its position at the European Council regarding the ban on seal products import was neutral (interviewee K). Nevertheless, several aspects of EU Arctic policy have led to the observation that the EU could have done more and been better coordinated. This country also regrets the lack of coordination between EU member states on the Arctic Council. Germany seems willing to support EU Arctic policy while not being totally satisfied with current developments in this policy.

The Quest for Effectiveness

At the outset of this article we asked how we could assess the internal and external coherence of EU Arctic policy and interpret the relations between the EU and two of its member states, France and Germany, which are also developing their own Arctic policies.

As shown above, EU Arctic policy has gained intra-institutional coherence whereas its external coherence is concordantly evolving. The EU's relevance in the Arctic, however, has still to be proven since the Arctic Council has deferred its final decision regarding the EU observer status. Its Arctic member states already sit on the Arctic Council, and this fact has been used to argue against giving the EU a Council seat. This argument is not convincing since the EU is now an independent actor in foreign policy. It has, moreover, provided the most funding for Arctic research—a key activity of the Arctic Council, and it is a significant contributor to sustainable development. The need to maintain the confidence of the European Arctic states has slowed down the process of developing the EU Arctic policy, and a coherent EU vision for the Arctic is still overdue.

France chose a very high diplomatic profile, with an ambassador for international negotiations on the Arctic and the Antarctic and an agenda focused on promoting this region as a common global resource. Meanwhile, Germany pursues a more discrete strategy based on scientific research, technical expertise, promotion of commercial interests, and recognition of the regional nature of Arctic policies. The two EU member states also differ in their attitudes towards co-operation. While France is developing a more standalone policy and is relying on bilateral co-operation in research (US, Canada), its other bilateral Arctic-related activities are unclear—understandable, given that its ambassador is mandated to promote the general interest of the international community. On the other hand, in addition to its well-developed Arctic research, Germany has since 2009 engaged its foreign affairs ministry in co-operative activities with Arctic states like Finland, Denmark, and Norway. These differences in foreign policy on the Arctic can be explained by different contexts and traditions. France has a tradition of being a great power and is still pushing for global influence in the face of new and dynamic challenges (Kramer 2002). Germany has been gradually moving away from a postwar low profile (Lantis 2002).

Conclusion

The EU, as a new foreign-policy stakeholder, has been trying to develop its Arctic policy with more coherence, internally and externally. Internally, there has been some improvement in inter-institutional coherence. We will see how far this trend will continue with the next two stages: the new EP resolution, now being prepared, and the forthcoming European Council conclusions on EU Arctic policy. There nonetheless remain ongoing challenges: ensuring inter-institutional coordination, informing EU institutions about increasingly complex Arctic issues, and fostering dialogue with Arctic stakeholders.

External coherence has been improved through the emphasis on co-operation rather than on governance, and a better communication of the existing EU contribution to research and sustainable development in the Arctic. Yet, despite its substantial contribution to research—the key EU policy in the Arctic so far—and its Arctic territories, the EU is still waiting for its admission in the Arctic Council. It has to contend with the consequences of its regulation on trade in seal products, particularly the adverse effects on Indigenous peoples despite an exemption clause, and is still waiting to see when it will have observer status on the Arctic Council.

Meanwhile, member states seem to be moving to establish national Arctic policies of their own. Will this trend challenge the coherence of EU Arctic policy-making? France and Germany are pursuing two different strategies. France seems to be using high-level diplomacy in an effort to define its Arctic issues and agenda, while Germany is taking a more collaborative approach by developing bilateral relations with Arctic countries, by wishing to strengthen its role of observer within the Arctic Council, and by maintaining close ties with the EU.

Certainly this issue will need further investigation regarding, in particular: (1) the reception in Germany and in the EU of the Guidelines for a German Policy and the intent to make Arctic policy a “central focus” of German policy, (2) the upcoming developments of French Arctic policy, (3) the consideration of the UK strategy for the Arctic released in October 2013, and finally (4) a seventh EU member state (Italy) being granted observer status in the Arctic Council in May 2013. EU representation in international institutions has often been challenged by the national positions of member states (Cameron 2012: 19). This is also the case with the Arctic Council where Denmark, for example, has to accommodate the sometimes diverging views of Greenland and the EU, and where Sweden and Finland, as members of the Arctic Council, enjoy direct relations with such major international powers as the US and Russia. To what extent would an EU coordination at the level

of the Arctic Council hamper the privileged relations of EU Arctic states within the Arctic states arena?

EU Arctic policy is entering a new phase of maturity with the expected development of a vision of its role and contribution to the Arctic, and with increasing attention to coordination of EU and national interests in the Arctic—on research, in particular, which is a key area of EU Arctic policy. New balances of power are emerging in the world, and they are reflected in the new geopolitics and geo-economics in the Arctic region, which is seeing more and more activity by Asian states, like China, that have suffered less from the economic and financial crisis. All of this will require better coordination by the EU so that it can position itself as an effective foreign-policy stakeholder in the Arctic.

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Notes

1. “Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Region.” <http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/images/stories/attachments/Finland.pdf>.
2. “Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands: Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020.” http://um.dk/en/~media/UM/English-site/Documents/Politics-and-diplomacy/Arktis_Rapport_UK_210x270_Final_Web.ashx.
3. “Sweden’s Strategy for the Arctic Region.” <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/16/78/59/3baa039d.pdf>.
4. The United Kingdom released its Arctic strategy on 17 October 2013. It could not be included in the present study. “Adapting to Change: UK Policy Towards the Arctic.” Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251216/Adapting_To_Change_UK_policy_towards_the_Arctic.pdf.
5. The Arctic Council has a total of seven European observer states: France, Germany, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom, and Italy.
6. For example, the last communication on EU Arctic Policy was a joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative (ECom and High Representative 2012).
7. Since 2008, the EU has published a number of documents on Arctic policy, including two European Parliament resolutions (in 2008 and 2011), one

communication by the European Commission (in 2008), the European Council conclusions of 2009, and one joint-communication by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2012). A third European Parliament resolution is currently being prepared.

8. Personal interview, June 19, 2012.
9. Phone interview, June 21, 2013.
10. Personal interview, April 11, 2013.
11. Phone interview, July 1, 2013.
12. LOI n° 2009-967, August 3, 2009 on implementation of the *Grenelle de l'environnement*. Available at: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020949548>. Our translation.
13. The INSU is part of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), which encompasses all of France's research facilities.
14. Our translation.
15. At present (July 2013), an official Arctic policy is being developed but it is only at the interdepartmental consultation stage (interviewee G, phone interview, July 8, 2013).
16. "Die Bundesregierung strebt daher an, den Besonderheiten der Arktis Rechnung zu tragen und sie zu einem zentralen Gegenstand deutscher Politik zu machen." Auswärtiges Amt 2013, p. 1.
17. Leitlinien deutscher Arktispolitik. Verantwortung übernehmen, Chancen nutzen.
18. Our emphasis.

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