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ARCTIC COUNCIL'S IMPACT ON MEMBER STATES POLICIES: DOES IT REALLY MATTER? ARCTIC COUNCIL AND NORWEGIAN SHIPPING POLICY

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The Arctic Council (AC) has become a premier international institution to govern the Arctic region. Although there seems to be a general consensus on the future direction of the forum's evolution and further development, the Arctic states differ in their visions of the AC's role in domestic and foreign policies and international practice. This may affect the effectiveness of the Arctic Council and its actual importance for solving the common problems, going beyond political discussions and declarations.

The goal of this paper is to explore the key mechanism(s) of influence through which AC may exert effects on its member states and, possibly, also observers. First, it is examined how the mandate, institutional design and rules of procedure influence decision-making processes within the forum. Second, the case study of Norway as a member state is used to demonstrate how its national agencies are engaged in activities at different levels of AC. The main focus is on AC work on shipping issues, particularly within the working groups on Protection of the Arctic Environment (PAME) and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR). Third, the domestic procedures are analyzed to highlight how the involved national agencies work together to produce an outcome in the form of policy change and to examine whether AC products (both assessments and policy recommendations) exert any impact on these processes. Finally, the paper explores the interplay mechanisms between AC and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the work related to shipping in polar regions, particularly the Polar Code. It is argued that the member states are the key links between the two institutions, regardless of the recent efforts to establish contacts on the institutional level. Certain mechanisms at the inter-institutional level for pursuing interests by AC observers are also related to the preceding analysis, indicating possible solutions for more efficient observer contribution to the work of AC.

This study draws on official documents produced by AC, IMO and Norwegian government agencies, which are set against the backdrop of interviews, observant participation, reports, articles and media material. It employs the process tracing method to deconstruct the underlying mechanisms and conceptualize the framework of interaction between the state and the institution. Overall, the paper illuminates how the Arctic Council is able to influence the member states and observers and discusses ensuing consequences for its broader role in international relation in the region.