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Theme 5: Arctic Observations in the context of Global Observing initiatives

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Poster title (brief) Arctic Militarisation and the Effect on Sustainability and Local Development

Abstract - text box

The highly sensitive environment of the Arctic has led to a vast and broad range of research on sustainability issues including climate change and changing ecosystems within the Arctic. Arctic sustainability issues revolving around natural resource extraction and exploitation and sustainable growth are becoming increasingly important topics to understand and solve. In the 1980's, the Arctic was an area of heavy militarisation; in the 1990's and 2000's the shift in affairs has moved toward environmental issues 1, melting sea ice leading to increased transportation and shipping routes 2 and access to further oil and gas extraction 3 .

The role of the military worldwide is still very important, but it is seldom discussed in relation to sustainability. Currently, there is little research on the impact that the military has on sustainability within the Arctic and this study explored the effect that militarisation has on sustainability and local development in the Arctic region. To undertake this, this research develops a conceptual framework from three areas of literature; Arctic sustainability, military sustainability and Arctic militarisation. Arctic sustainability is analysed to determine what this means and how to define sustainability in the Arctic; given the vast amount of valuable resources that may be extracted in the future. Economic and societal growth in the Arctic will be evaluated, and whether this has been, or can be, sustainable.

The second area of research is on military sustainability; what this means and how is this defined. This research studied whether militarisation can be sustainable, given its extensive resource and land use, and what policies militaries worldwide are adopting to become more sustainable. Finally, an evaluation of the effect that (un)sustainable militarisation has on local towns and the environment.

This study will connect these existing research areas and investigate the effect that militarisation has on the Arctic region. Can militarisation in the Arctic be sustainable and what effect has militarisation had on local Arctic towns; sustainability and standard of living indexes will be analysed, along with the environmental and sustainability regulatory framework and other economic and demographic indicators to determine the impact. Fairbanks, Alaska, will be used as the base case study analysis and these research questions are applied and analysed to Fairbanks as a starting point to show the validity and usefulness of the conceptual framework in showing the impact of militarisation on Arctic sustainability.