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Arctic exceptionalism as institutionalised quarantine: a historical institutionalist reinterpretation of Arctic governance

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Abstract

Arctic exceptionalism has long been invoked to explain how the circumpolar North sustained extensive cooperation despite its enduring strategic significance. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, debate has divided between those who declare that exceptionalism has collapsed and those who deny that it ever existed. This article argues that both positions share a mistaken premise. They treat exceptionalism as a property of the regional security environment rather than as a product of institutional design. Drawing on historical institutionalism, the article develops the concept of institutionalised quarantine. It refers to a governance arrangement in which a fully securitised policy sector is deliberately excluded from an institution's constitutive mandate, reproduced through positive feedback, and sustained only as long as participants accept the legitimacy of that boundary. Using qualitative document analysis and theory-building process tracing across a specified corpus of primary documents from Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk initiative to the Arctic Council's post-2022 record, the analysis shows that the military-security footnote of the 1996 Ottawa Declaration functioned as the constitutive rule of Arctic governance. It further shows that boundary maintenance rather than the absence of rivalry explains why cooperation survived the crises of 2008 and 2014, and that the post-2022 rupture is best understood as institutional drift, meaning the erosion of the boundary's legitimacy while its formal text persists. The article distinguishes quarantine from desecuritisation, compartmentalisation, functional differentiation and rational mandate design, and specifies criteria and scope conditions for testing its transferability to other regimes governing cooperation amid strategic competition.

Introduction

The Arctic occupies a paradoxical position in international politics. Throughout the post-Cold War period it remained embedded in global strategic competition. Russia's sea-based nuclear deterrent stayed concentrated on the Kola Peninsula, the United States and its allies maintained the region as a theatre of surveillance and deterrence, and military modernisation continued on all sides (Boulègue 2019; Huebert 2019; Pincus 2020; Østhagen 2021). Yet across the same decades the eight Arctic states built one of the densest systems of functional regional cooperation in world politics, spanning environmental protection, science, emergency preparedness, sustainable development and an institutionalised role for Indigenous peoples' organisations (Young 1998; Keskitalo 2004; Koivurova 2010; Wilson Rowe 2018; Burke 2019; Rottem 2019). This coexistence of rivalry and cooperation came to be labelled Arctic exceptionalism (Käpylä and Mikkola 2015; Exner-Pirot and Murray 2017; Dodds and Nuttall 2019).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 transformed the debate. The seven Western Arctic states paused their participation in the Arctic Council within days (US Department of State 2022a), Finland and Sweden subsequently joined NATO, and military considerations acquired unprecedented prominence in circumpolar politics (Paul and Swistek 2022; Koivurova and Shibata 2023; Østhagen 2023). One strand of scholarship now reads these developments as the collapse of Arctic exceptionalism (Kornhuber et al. 2023; Dodds and Bennett 2025). Another maintains that exceptionalism

was always more political narrative than empirical reality, since great-power competition never left the region (Käpylä and Mikkola 2015; Huebert 2019; Devyatkin 2023). A third body of work asks whether and how the Council itself can survive the rupture (Gricius and Fitz 2022; Andreeva and Rottem 2024; Spence and Chenok 2024).

The first two positions, despite their opposed conclusions, rest on a shared premise. Both treat Arctic exceptionalism as a condition of the regional security environment, whether real and now destroyed or illusory all along. An important strand of the literature has, to be sure, already observed that Arctic cooperation depended on keeping military security off the regional agenda. Exner-Pirot and Murray (2017) attribute the Arctic Council's success to a negotiated exceptionalism grounded partly in that omission, Byers (2017) shows how Arctic cooperation was compartmentalised from the Crimea crisis, Wilson Rowe (2018, 2020) traces how the boundaries of legitimate cooperation were policed in diplomatic practice, and Rottem (2019) documents how the Council's environmental identity was cultivated in the shadow of geopolitics. What the literature has not supplied is a theoretical account of this exclusion. It has not explained how the boundary was created, why it reproduced itself for a quarter of a century, why it withstood the shocks of 2008 and 2014 but not that of 2022, and what its trajectory implies for institutional theory beyond the Arctic. The gap is not the observation that military security was excluded, which is well established, but the absence of a systematic institutionalist theorisation of the exclusion and of its erosion.

This article supplies that theorisation through historical institutionalism, the tradition concerned with how rules adopted at formative moments channel subsequent development through path dependence, positive feedback and gradual modes of change (North 1990; Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen 1999; Pierson 2000, 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Peters 2012), and with how those dynamics operate in international institutions (Fioretos 2011, 2017; Fioretos et al. 2016; Rixen et al. 2016). On this foundation it develops the concept of institutionalised quarantine, in which a fully securitised policy sector is deliberately excluded from an institution's constitutive mandate and cooperation endures only while participants accept the legitimacy of that boundary.

The research question is accordingly explanatory rather than dichotomous. Through what institutional mechanisms did functional cooperation and strategic competition coexist in the Arctic between 1987 and 2022, and why did those mechanisms fail after 2022 when they had survived the crises of 2008 and 2014? Answering it requires tracing the quarantine through three phases, its construction between the 1987 Murmansk initiative and the 1996 Ottawa Declaration, its reproduction between 1996 and 2021, and its erosion after February 2022, against the observable implications of rival explanations drawn from desecuritisation theory, realism, constructivism and rational institutional design.

The article makes three contributions. Conceptually, it defines institutionalised quarantine through explicit criteria and differentiates it from desecuritisation, issue compartmentalisation, issue separation, institutional and functional differentiation and selective mandate design. Empirically, it re-reads the documentary record of Arctic governance as a single process of boundary construction, maintenance

and drift, drawing on the Ottawa negotiation history and the post-2022 record. Theoretically, it extends historical institutionalist debates on resilience and change by showing that institutional effectiveness can collapse while formal rules persist intact, because effectiveness depends on the continued legitimacy of jurisdictional boundaries and not merely on their legal permanence (Tallberg and Zürn 2019). The next section develops the theory and concept, the Methods section specifies the design and tests, the Findings section traces the three phases, and the Discussion and Conclusion draw out the implications, limitations and further research.

Theory: institutional boundaries and the concept of institutionalised quarantine

Historical institutionalism and the politics of what institutions exclude

Historical institutionalism holds that political outcomes cannot be read off from the distribution of power or the momentary preferences of states. Institutions are humanly devised constraints, formal and informal rules that structure behaviour by allocating authority and defining the range of legitimate political action (North 1990; Hall and Taylor 1996; Peters 2012). They do so with a temporal logic, since choices made at formative moments shape trajectories long after the conditions that produced them have passed (Thelen 1999). Pierson (2000) shows that such trajectories become self-reinforcing through increasing returns. As actors invest in an arrangement, adapt expectations to it and build complementary practices around it, the costs of switching rise, and the arrangement persists for reasons independent of its original rationale. Because institutions rest on shared understandings as much as on formal texts, rules organise behaviour only insofar as actors continue to regard them as appropriate frames for action (Béland and Cox 2011).

The moments at which trajectories are set are theorised as critical junctures, relatively short periods during which structural constraints loosen and agency matters disproportionately for long-run outcomes (Collier and Collier 1991; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). Rigorous use of the concept requires identifying the permissive conditions that opened the choice situation, the productive conditions that selected the outcome, the alternatives genuinely available, and the point at which the juncture closed (Soifer 2012; Capoccia 2015). The analysis below applies each requirement to the founding of Arctic governance and shows that a security-inclusive regional institution was a seriously proposed alternative rather than a retrospective counterfactual.

Two further bodies of work are essential. The first concerns gradual institutional change. Streeck and Thelen (2005) and Mahoney and Thelen (2010) demonstrate that institutions rarely change only through breakdown and replacement. More commonly they change through layering, conversion, displacement and, most relevant here, drift, in which formally unchanged rules lose their effects because the environment on which those effects depended has shifted and actors decline to adapt the rules. Drift

supplies the vocabulary needed for Arctic governance after 2022, when the Council's constitutive rules remained textually intact while their capacity to organise cooperation collapsed. The second body carries these insights into International Relations. Fioretos (2011) and the contributors to Fioretos et al. (2016), Rixen et al. (2016) and Fioretos (2017) show that international institutions display the same temporal politics as domestic ones, and the Arctic case is offered as a contribution to that research programme.

One implication grounds the article's central concept. Institutions govern as much through what they exclude as through what they include, since every allocation of jurisdiction is simultaneously a denial of jurisdiction. Rational design theory treats issue scope as a design variable calibrated to the severity of distribution problems (Koremenos et al. 2001), and the functionalist tradition wagered that cooperation could be cultivated by fencing technical low politics off from contested high politics (Mitrany 1966; see also Haas 1980 on issue linkage and Aggarwal 1998 on the nesting and separation of institutional bargains). Historical institutionalism adds what these frameworks lack, an account of how boundaries, once drawn, acquire a politics of their own, generating feedback, structuring expectations and becoming objects of contestation whose legitimacy can erode independently of their formal validity.

The concern with boundaries also connects historical institutionalism to adjacent literatures on which the argument draws selectively. Sociological work on boundary-work shows that demarcations between domains are actively constructed and defended rather than given (Gieryn 1983), and the sociology of professions treats jurisdiction, the institutionalised link between an actor and a domain of tasks, as the central object of competition and settlement (Abbott 1988). Scholarship on regime complexity examines how overlapping institutions partition issue space and how actors exploit the resulting seams (Alter and Meunier 2009), and organisational ecology approaches to global governance analyse how institutions occupy, defend and cede niches within a populated environment (Abbott et al. 2016). Institutionalised quarantine shares with these literatures the premise that boundaries are made, policed and contested rather than found. What it adds is the special case of a boundary codified in constitutive rules whose operation depends on legitimacy, and the analysis below carries the insights of boundary-work and jurisdictional competition into the temporal framework of historical institutionalism.

Defining institutionalised quarantine

Institutionalised quarantine is defined here as a governance arrangement exhibiting four jointly necessary features. First, a codified constitutive exclusion. A contentious, securitised policy sector is deliberately placed outside an institution's mandate at its founding, and the exclusion is inscribed in the constitutive rules rather than left to informal practice. Second, retained securitisation elsewhere. The excluded sector is neither resolved nor normalised. It remains fully securitised and continues to be governed in separate arenas, so that the exclusion changes the institutional location of the issue rather than its security status. Third, feedback-driven reproduction. The boundary is sustained by increasing returns as participants invest in the bounded institution, build routines around its limited jurisdiction, and police the boundary when it is tested. Fourth, legitimacy-dependent effectiveness. The arrangement

organises cooperation only as long as all key participants accept the legitimacy of the boundary. Because the boundary is a shared political understanding and not merely a legal text, its effectiveness can erode through drift while its formal expression persists unchanged.

The quarantine metaphor is chosen for its entailments. A quarantine does not cure the disease but contains contagion. It is imposed by identifiable agents at a specific moment to prevent spillover from an infected domain into a healthy one, it demands continuous enforcement, and it lasts only as long as those subject to it accept its authority. Each entailment maps onto the Arctic case, where military rivalry was never resolved but only prevented from infecting functional cooperation, the containment was constructed by identifiable negotiators in 1996, it required repeated maintenance work, and it collapsed when a critical participant group withdrew recognition of its legitimacy. The metaphor should not be asked to do more than this. It motivates the concept, while the analytical work is done by the four criteria, which are stated without reference to disease and are individually observable. Wherever the analogy runs out, the criteria govern the concept's application, so quarantine names a mechanism throughout and the imagery carries no inferential weight.

Three clarifications complete the definition. Quarantine is analytically neutral, a governance strategy rather than a normative achievement, and it has distributional effects because it privileges state-military definitions of whose security may be spoken of where (Greaves 2016; Hoogensen Gjørv et al. 2020). The concept also has scope conditions. It is viable only where the excluded sector can be credibly managed in alternative arenas, where every principal prefers bounded cooperation with rivals to no cooperation at all, and where no participant's conduct beyond the region delegitimises it as a partner across all domains simultaneously. The Arctic satisfied all three conditions between 1996 and 2021 and ceased to satisfy the third in 2022.

The third scope condition needs sharper edges, since state conduct varies continuously in gravity and a criterion phrased only as delegitimation could be applied after the fact to whatever happened. What marks the threshold is not the misconduct itself but the form of the response it provokes. The boundary holds while responses stay domain-specific and fails when they become domain-general. Economic sanctions, espionage expulsions, election-interference allegations and human-rights censure all occurred among Arctic states between 1996 and 2021 without breaching the boundary, because the responding states punished the offending domain, sanctioning sectors or expelling personnel, and made a point of continuing cooperation elsewhere. Delegitimation in the sense intended here becomes observable when a principal publicly justifies suspending cooperation in one domain by conduct in another and names no regional remedy that would restore it. That is exactly the form the joint statement of 3 March 2022 took (US Department of State 2022a). The condition is measured by the scope of the response, not by any ranking of the gravity of the conduct. Finally, quarantine generates falsifiable expectations, specified in the Methods, which is what elevates it from redescription to explanation.

Why a new concept? Quarantine and its neighbours

Any proposed concept must justify its analytical value. Security studies and institutional theory are already rich in terms describing the management of contentious issues, so why is another needed? Following Sartori's (1970) injunction, a new concept is justified only if it distinguishes a configuration that existing concepts conflate. Accordingly, five neighbouring concepts require individual treatment.

Desecuritisation. In the Copenhagen School framework, desecuritisation moves an issue out of the security realm and back into ordinary politics (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998). Hansen (2012) distinguishes four forms, change through stabilisation, replacement, rearticulation and silencing, but all share the feature that the issue ceases to be handled through the grammar of existential threat. Åtland (2008) offers the canonical Arctic application, showing how the Murmansk initiative enabled a partial desecuritisation of interstate relations. The present argument accepts that account for the civilian sectors while insisting on its limit. Military security itself was never desecuritised, since deterrence, force modernisation and alliance planning remained governed by the logic of existential threat throughout (Boulègue 2019; Pincus 2020; Østhagen 2021). Quarantine therefore describes a configuration Hansen's typology does not capture, an issue that remains fully securitised but is institutionally relocated. Desecuritisation changes the status of an issue. Quarantine changes its address.

Issue compartmentalisation and issue separation. Scholars have described Arctic practice as compartmentalisation, the separation of cooperative dossiers from conflictual ones (Byers 2017), and cognate notions of issue separation appear in the bargaining and linkage literature (Haas 1980; Aggarwal 1998). These terms name the behavioural pattern but describe an outcome rather than theorising a mechanism. Compartmentalisation is typically informal, ad hoc and reversible at the discretion of the parties. Quarantine designates the special case in which compartmentalisation is constitutionalised, written into founding rules, and thereby endowed with path-dependent staying power and a distinctive failure mode, legitimacy erosion, that informal separation lacks. The distinction has empirical bite, since informal compartmentalisation should track the goodwill of the moment, whereas constitutionalised quarantine should exhibit resilience to shocks up to the point of legitimacy withdrawal, which is precisely the Arctic pattern of 2008, 2014 and 2022.

One objection is worth meeting directly. Feedback, path dependence and legitimacy are general features of historical institutionalist analysis, so institutionalised quarantine might look like nothing more than compartmentalisation read through a historical institutionalist lens. The difference lies in the configuration rather than in the ingredients. Any institution studied with this toolkit will display feedback of some kind. Only an institution whose constitutive rules codify the exclusion of a fully securitised sector will display feedback that attaches to a boundary, policing of that boundary as a recurring and observable activity, and a failure mode in which withdrawn legitimacy disables a textually unchanged rule. Applying historical institutionalism to informal compartmentalisation would predict neither the codified stickiness documented below for 2008 and 2014 nor the rules-intact collapse of 2022, because informal separation supplies no constitutive rule for feedback to entrench or for drift to hollow out. What the concept contributes is a specific object of analysis, the constitutionalised security boundary, which that general vocabulary does not by itself supply.

Institutional and functional differentiation. Differentiation theory observes that global governance is segmented into functionally specialised domains (Albert et al. 2013), and Young (2005) characterised Arctic governance as a mosaic of issue-specific arrangements. Differentiation in this sense is a systemic condition, largely unintended and universal. It cannot explain why one sector was singled out for exclusion by deliberate choice, nor why that exclusion required a footnote to enact and diplomatic labour to defend. Quarantine is a purposive act within a differentiated system, not the system's background structure.

Selective mandate and rational design. Rational design theory expects states to restrict issue scope where inclusion would raise distribution problems beyond the reach of agreement (Koremenos et al. 2001). This illuminates the founding bargain of 1996, but rational design explains the origin of a limited mandate rather than its career. It predicts that scope should be renegotiated as conditions change and has no account of why an exclusion persists through increasing returns after its rationale weakens, nor of why it can fail while formally intact. Quarantine carries the design insight into institutional time, and what this article terms the Council's selective jurisdiction is the static legal face of quarantine rather than a free-standing concept.

Demilitarisation. Quarantine must not be confused with the demilitarisation exemplified by the Antarctic Treaty, which prohibits military activity within a territory. Quarantine prohibits nothing in the world. It excludes a topic from an institution's agenda while military activity continues in the region itself. The Arctic was never demilitarised, which is exactly why the institutional exclusion mattered (Dodds and Nuttall 2019).

Table 1 summarises the comparisons. The decisive test, however, is explanatory necessity. The Arctic record presents a conjunction of three observations. First, functional cooperation deepened across the shocks of 2008 and 2014 while military competition simultaneously intensified, which contradicts both the realist expectation of covariance and the desecuritisation expectation of declining military salience. Second, keeping military security off the agenda required continuous, observable institutional labour across three decades, which contradicts the constructivist expectation that shared norms make such labour unnecessary. Third, after 2022 the constitutive rules persisted unchanged while cooperation collapsed, which contradicts the rational design expectation of renegotiated scope and the breakdown-centred expectation that institutional death is textual. Each neighbouring concept accommodates one or two of these observations. None accommodates all three. Institutionalised quarantine derives all three from a single mechanism, a codified exclusion reproduced by feedback and dependent on boundary legitimacy, and that derivation is what the concept contributes beyond relabelling.

Table 1
Institutionalised quarantine and adjacent concepts

Concept	Security status of the issue	Locus of the mechanism	Mode of establishment	Characteristic failure mode
Desecuritisation	Desecuritised, returned to ordinary politics	Discursive and political practice	Gradual or managed	Resecuritisation
Issue compartmentalisation / issue separation	Unchanged, dossiers separated in practice	Informal diplomatic practice	Ad hoc, discretionary	Withdrawal of goodwill
Institutional / functional differentiation	Not addressed	Systemic structure of governance	Unintended, evolutionary	Not applicable
Selective mandate (rational design)	Unchanged, excluded by design	Founding bargain over issue scope	Deliberate, at founding	Renegotiation of scope
Institutionalised quarantine	Fully securitised, institutionally relocated	Constitutive rule plus feedback reproduction	Deliberate, codified at founding	Drift via legitimacy erosion

Methods

The methodological choices in this study follow from its explanatory objective. The question concerns how a rule adopted in 1996 shaped cooperation for twenty-five years and why its effects collapsed without its text changing. Rationalist frameworks explain the founding bargain but not its career, constructivist frameworks explain shared expectations but not the observable labour required to police them, and securitisation theory explains discursive status but not institutional location. Historical institutionalism is the tradition whose core machinery of junctures, increasing returns, feedback and gradual change is built for exactly this temporal profile (Pierson 2004; Fioretos 2011; Peters 2012).

The study employs a theory-building single-case design. The Arctic is selected not as representative but as a crucial case for theorising institutional boundaries. It combines an unusually explicit codified exclusion in the Ottawa footnote, a long reproduction period from 1996 to 2021, two intermediate shocks in 2008 and 2014 that function as natural probes of boundary resilience, and a terminal shock in 2022 that permits observation of boundary failure. Few institutions offer a complete life cycle of boundary construction, maintenance and erosion within three observable decades. Within the Arctic, the Arctic Council is the appropriate focus because it is the only circumpolar body encompassing all eight Arctic states and the Permanent Participants, because its constitutive document contains the exclusion under study, and because post-2022 contestation has centred on it (Rottem 2019; Gricius and Fitz 2022; Andreeva and Rottem 2024).

The design combines qualitative document analysis (Bowen 2009) with process tracing in its theory-building mode (Bennett and Checkel 2015; Beach and Pedersen 2019). Document analysis establishes how military security was defined, addressed or excluded across the corpus, and process tracing reconstructs the causal sequence linking the founding exclusion to subsequent cooperation and its disruption. The position is explanatory but mechanism-based, advancing causal claims about how rules shaped behaviour while recognising that intentions and legitimacy are inferred interpretively from documents and diplomatic histories.

The corpus comprises four categories. First, constitutive and programmatic documents: the Murmansk speech (Gorbachev 1987), the Rovaniemi Declaration and Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS 1991), the Ottawa Declaration (Arctic Council 1996), the ministerial declarations from Iqaluit (1998) to Reykjavik (2021) with the 2019 Rovaniemi joint ministerial statement, and the Strategic Plan 2021 to 2030 (Arctic Council 2021). Second, the binding agreements on search and rescue, marine oil pollution response and scientific cooperation (Arctic Council 2011, 2013, 2017) and the Ilulissat Declaration (2008). Third, the post-2022 record: the joint statements of 3 March and 8 June 2022 (US Department of State 2022a, 2022b), the 2023 Norwegian chairship transition statement, the written-procedure guidelines of August 2023 and the February 2024 decision on virtual working-group meetings and project-level resumption (Arctic Council Secretariat 2024), the May 2025 Tromsø statement transferring the chairship to the Kingdom of Denmark, the February 2023 amendments to Russia's Arctic policy foundations (President of the Russian Federation 2023), Russia's 2023 withdrawal from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and its 2024 suspension of Arctic Council payments (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2024). Fourth, contextual security documents, including the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept and analyses of Arctic military posture (Boulègue 2019; Pincus 2020; Paul and Swistek 2022; Østhagen 2023). Selection followed the criterion of constitutive or boundary-relevant status, meaning each document defines the mandate of circumpolar institutions, tests it in crisis, or records its contestation. Technical working-group outputs, assessment reports, national strategies without boundary-relevant content, and media commentary were excluded, since they document activity within the boundary rather than the boundary itself; where relevant they enter through the peer-reviewed literature. For the Ottawa negotiations, where the record is thin by design, the analysis relies on the participant account of the lead US negotiator (Bloom 1999) and the diplomatic histories (Keskitalo 2004; English 2013).

These documents do not all carry the same evidentiary weight, and the inferences drawn from them differ accordingly. Participant accounts, above all Bloom's (1999) record of the Ottawa negotiations, are treated as direct evidence of intentionality, since they report who proposed, who resisted and what was traded. Ministerial declarations are treated differently. As negotiated texts they are the residue of diplomatic compromise rather than windows onto any single actor's motives, and they are used here as evidence of what all parties were collectively prepared to endorse and of what they systematically omitted, not as evidence of individual intent. The claim of deliberateness at the founding therefore rests on participant and historical accounts, while the claim of reproduction rests on the declaratory record,

which suffices for that purpose because reproduction is a property of the collectively endorsed texts themselves.

The process tracing was applied in three steps matched to the three phases, each testing the quarantine account against rivals through stated observable implications. Step one, on construction, tests deliberateness and alternatives, examining whether a security-inclusive design was proposed and by whom, whether the exclusion was contested, and whether it was codified. Step two, on reproduction, tests mechanism, examining whether investment in the bounded institution accumulated, whether boundary maintenance is visible when the mandate was tested, and, decisively, whether cooperation covaried with great-power tension across 2008 and 2014, as realism predicts, or was insulated from it, as quarantine predicts. If desecuritisation explained cooperation, military salience should meanwhile have declined, and if cooperative norms alone explained it, no boundary labour should have been required. Step three, on erosion, tests the mode of failure, examining whether the formal rules changed, whether legitimacy withdrawal is documented on both sides independently of the suspension of cooperation, and whether the configuration matches drift rather than displacement or renegotiation. Each subsection of the analysis reports these tests and states which rivals survive them.

The rival explanations are not treated as foils. None stands in for a monolithic tradition, and each is tested through specific observable implications. Realism is internally diverse. Offensive structural realism expects institutional outcomes to track the distribution of power and the intensity of security competition (Mearsheimer 2001), whereas neoclassical variants admit domestic and perceptual variables that could accommodate lags between strategic rupture and institutional response (Rose 1998). The covariance test below is therefore framed against the structural expectation that regional cooperation tracks great-power relations, which is the version with determinate implications for the Arctic record, and the findings are claims about that expectation rather than about realism as such. Constructivism likewise comes in variants, and the test of whether boundary labour was required targets only the strong claim that shared cooperative norms are self-enforcing. Constructivist accounts in which norms need institutional stabilisation sit comfortably with the quarantine framework and are engaged as complements in the Discussion (Wilson Rowe 2020). Each adjudication below also records where a rival succeeds as well as where it fails, since the point of the exercise is to locate the mechanism that these partial insights presuppose, not to dismiss the traditions from which they derive.

Three limitations should be acknowledged. The single-case design supports theory development rather than generalisation. Intentionality at the founding moment is inferred from participant accounts and diplomatic histories rather than archival access. The corpus is confined to English-language documents and official translations, so Russian official documents are treated as evidence of declared position rather than internal debate.

Findings

Constructing the quarantine, 1987 to 1996: a critical juncture with real alternatives

The critical juncture opens not in 1991 but on 1 October 1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking in Murmansk, proposed transforming the Arctic into a zone of peace (Gorbachev 1987). The permissive condition, in Soifer's (2012) terms, was the loosening of Cold War constraint under perestroika, and the Murmansk initiative converted that permissiveness into a concrete menu of options. Crucially, Gorbachev's menu spanned the very boundary later drawn at Ottawa. Alongside civilian proposals for environmental protection, science, resources and the Northern Sea Route, he proposed explicitly military measures, including a Northern European nuclear-weapon-free zone and naval confidence-building arrangements (Gorbachev 1987; Åtland 2008; Devyatkin 2023). A security-inclusive architecture was therefore on the table from the outset, proposed by one of the region's two strategic principals.

The productive conditions operated through the ensuing negotiations. The Finnish-initiated Rovaniemi process deliberately harvested only the civilian items of the Murmansk menu, producing the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy in June 1991. The AEPS committed the eight states to objectives confined to protecting Arctic ecosystems, monitoring pollution and sharing scientific information through four specialised programmes, and even where it touched matters with military origins, such as radioactive contamination, it addressed environmental consequences rather than military activity as such (AEPS 1991; Keskitalo 2004; Rottem 2019). Åtland (2008) reads this as partial desecuritisation, and for the civilian sectors that reading is persuasive. But the sectoral selectivity is the point. What was normalised was environmental and scientific interaction, while the military domain remained untouched and fully securitised (Devyatkin 2023). The precedent that circumpolar cooperation would be built on non-security foundations was set before the Arctic Council existed.

The Council negotiations of 1995 and 1996 turned that precedent into a constitutive rule, and the record establishes that the exclusion was deliberate and contested. The Canadian initiative had envisaged the broader alternative. Prime Minister Mulroney's 1989 Leningrad speech proposed a council of Arctic countries, and the Canadian Arctic Council Panel's 1991 framework report advocated a comprehensive body whose agenda would extend to security questions alongside environmental and Indigenous concerns (English 2013; Exner-Pirot et al. 2019). The United States rejected this vision on each dimension, insisting that the new body be a high-level forum rather than an international organisation, without legal personality or programme budget, operating by consensus, and above all excluding defence and military matters (Bloom 1999; Keskitalo 2004; English 2013). Bloom, the lead US negotiator, records the outcome with lawyerly precision. The Ottawa Declaration established the Council as a forum for cooperation on common Arctic issues, in particular sustainable development and environmental protection, and attached to the phrase "common Arctic issues" a footnote stipulating that the Council "should not deal with matters related to military security" (Arctic Council 1996; Bloom 1999). No subsequent ministerial declaration, from Iqaluit in 1998 to Reykjavik in 2021, ever reopened or qualified the footnote (Arctic Council 1998, 2021). The footnote's marginal typographical status belies its

constitutional function. By defining what the Council could not discuss, it defined the entire space of legitimate circumpolar governance (Exner-Pirot et al. 2019), with environment, sustainable development, science and Indigenous participation inside, and the region's most consequential political issue outside, consigned to national defence establishments, NATO and bilateral channels. All four defining features of institutionalised quarantine were thereby put in place.

The phase permits a first adjudication among rivals. Rational design is consistent with the founding bargain, since issue scope was restricted exactly where distribution problems were insoluble (Koremenos et al. 2001), and it is incorporated into the explanation of origin. Realism correctly predicts that the most powerful state shaped the design but offers no account of why the United States wanted a circumpolar institution at all. A constructivist reading centred on emergent cooperative norms sits uneasily with the record, since the exclusion was not a shared understanding that crystallised spontaneously but a contested demand that one side imposed and codified over the other's preference (Bloom 1999; English 2013).

Reproducing the boundary, 1996 to 2021: feedback, maintenance and two stress tests

The quarantine account predicts that the boundary should have been reproduced through increasing returns, defended through observable policing, and that cooperation should have withstood security shocks so long as all parties upheld it. The record bears out each prediction.

The feedback dynamics are legible in the Council's institutional thickening. The Iqaluit Declaration of 1998 folded the AEPS programmes into the Council as working groups and established the Sustainable Development Working Group, and the Barrow Declaration of 2000 added the action plan against pollution, later a sixth working group (Arctic Council 1998, 2000; Rottem 2019). Successive declarations commissioned landmark assessments, most prominently the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment welcomed at Reykjavik in 2004, which built dense transnational research networks around the Council (Arctic Council 2004; Spence 2017; Wilson Rowe 2018). The Permanent Participant category gave six Indigenous peoples' organisations a standing role unique in international governance (Koivurova 2010; Burke 2019). Each investment raised the stakes participants held in the bounded institution and thickened expectations around its limited jurisdiction (Pierson 2000). The Strategic Plan 2021 to 2030 adopted at Reykjavik projected the same bounded mandate a decade forward without qualification (Arctic Council 2021).

Boundary maintenance is visible wherever the mandate was tested. The 2008 Ilulissat Declaration is the clearest exhibit. Confronted with anxiety about conflict over continental shelves, the five coastal states reaffirmed the law of the sea and pointedly declined to create any new comprehensive regime, managing even sovereignty disputes through legal channels outside the Council (Ilulissat Declaration 2008; Dodds and Nuttall 2019). Equally telling is the institutional geography of the security conversations that did occur. When Arctic states wished to discuss military matters they created separate venues, including

meetings of Arctic chiefs of defence staff and the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable, and when a coast guard forum including Russia was established in 2015 it was constituted outside the Council precisely to preserve the latter's civilian character (Byers 2017; Østhagen 2021). The constructivist expectation that no boundary labour should be necessary is thus not met; the boundary was worked at continuously (Wilson Rowe 2020).

The two intermediate shocks function as natural experiments. After the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, Arctic cooperation deepened, with the Council's first legally binding agreement, on search and rescue, signed at Nuuk in 2011 and the second, on marine oil pollution response, at Kiruna in 2013 (Arctic Council 2011, 2013). After the 2014 annexation of Crimea, a far more severe rupture, defence-track venues suspended Russian participation, sanctions proliferated and Canada boycotted a working-group meeting on Russian soil. Yet the Council proceeded to the Iqaluit ministerial in 2015, and in 2017 all eight states, Russia included, signed the third binding agreement, on scientific cooperation, at Fairbanks (Arctic Council 2017; Byers 2017; Gricius and Fitz 2022). The realist expectation that cooperation should covary with great-power relations is contradicted by this pattern, since relations deteriorated dramatically while bounded cooperation advanced. The desecuritisation expectation fares no better, for the same years saw sustained Russian military modernisation, the reactivation of Northern Fleet infrastructure and intensifying allied exercises (Boulègue 2019; Huebert 2019; Pincus 2020; Paul and Swistek 2022). The military sector remained fully securitised throughout. The pattern is most consistent with the quarantine account. Shocks in the strategic domain were contained there because all eight states, including Russia and the United States, continued to accept the legitimacy of the boundary. Even the Council's genuine crises in this period arose within the civilian mandate, as when the 2019 Rovaniemi ministerial produced no joint declaration owing to disagreement over climate language yet left the Council's jurisdiction uncontested (Rottem 2019; Gricius and Fitz 2022).

None of this maintenance was effortless, however, and episodes in which the boundary was strained without being breached belong in the account. After 2014, NATO's reinforcement of its northern flank and the resumption of large-scale exercises, most visibly Trident Juncture in 2018, drew Russian protests linking alliance activity to the climate of regional cooperation, while Russian military modernisation prompted reciprocal Western statements in kind (Boulègue 2019; Østhagen 2021). The sharpest rhetorical intrusion came at Rovaniemi in 2019, when the US Secretary of State used the eve of the ministerial to frame the Arctic as an arena of great-power competition and to warn against Russian and Chinese conduct, importing into the Council's antechamber the very register the footnote excluded (US Department of State 2019). In 2021 Russia proposed resuming the suspended meetings of the Arctic chiefs of defence staff, a probe of whether security dialogue might be relocated closer to the circumpolar institutions, and the proposal was declined (Paul and Swistek 2022). In each episode the boundary bent without breaking. The speech stayed outside the formal proceedings, the military dialogue stayed outside the Council, and no delegation proposed amending the mandate. Such episodes show that boundary maintenance was contested labour rather than the automatic operation of consensus, and they establish that the boundary could absorb rhetorical and military pressure short of legitimacy withdrawal, which sharpens the contrast with 2022.

Eroding the boundary, 2022 onwards: drift and the withdrawal of legitimacy

The full-scale invasion of February 2022 initiated a rupture different in kind, and the quarantine framework locates where the difference lies. What changed was not the level of strategic competition in the Arctic, which was already high and rising (Østhagen 2021, 2023), but the willingness of seven of the eight members to continue treating Russia as a legitimate partner within any cooperative boundary at all.

The record permits the erosion to be traced through independent indicators rather than inferred circularly from the suspension of cooperation. On 3 March 2022 the seven Western Arctic states declared a pause in their participation, justifying it not by Arctic-specific conduct but by Russia's flagrant violation of international law in Ukraine (US Department of State 2022a). The boundary's premise, that extra-regional conflict would not determine intra-regional cooperation, was explicitly repudiated. On 8 June 2022 the same seven announced a limited resumption of project work not involving Russia (US Department of State 2022b), reorganising cooperation around Russia's exclusion and converting a consensus institution of eight into a de facto grouping of seven within an unchanged legal shell (Koivurova and Shibata 2023). The May 2023 transition of the chairship to Norway was accomplished without an in-person ministerial, through a short statement and written procedure, which Andreeva and Rottem (2024) document as organisational survival at the lowest feasible level of political contact. The written-procedure guidelines of August 2023 and the February 2024 decision permitting virtual working-group meetings restored only laborious technical activity (Arctic Council Secretariat 2024; Spence and Chenok 2024). The pattern has hardened into routine. The chairship passed to the Kingdom of Denmark in May 2025 through another virtual meeting and a short statement issued at Tromsø, and, apart from the virtual sessions convened to effect the chairship transfers, the Council has met neither at ministerial level nor at the level of Senior Arctic Officials since 2022 (Balton and Koivurova 2026).

Russia's own documents record the reciprocal withdrawal. In February 2023 presidential amendments to the Basic Principles of State Policy in the Arctic to 2035 deleted the references to cooperation within Arctic multilateral formats in favour of the primacy of national interests (President of the Russian Federation 2023). In September 2023 Russia withdrew from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and in February 2024 its foreign ministry suspended annual payments to the Arctic Council pending resumption of what it called full-fledged work (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2024). The structural conditions of the founding bargain dissolved from the Western side as well. Finland's accession to NATO in 2023 and Sweden's in 2024 left the Council composed of seven allies and one adversary, and the alliance's 2022 Strategic Concept had already identified Russia's High North capabilities as a challenge (NATO 2022; Koivurova and Shibata 2023; Østhagen 2023). The membership of the civilian institution now maps directly onto the military confrontation it was designed to bracket.

Two features of this record carry the theoretical weight. First, the formal rule persists. The Ottawa Declaration has not been amended, the footnote stands, and the Council still does not discuss military security. What has failed is not the text of the boundary but the shared understanding that sustained its

function. This is drift in the precise sense of Streeck and Thelen (2005) and Mahoney and Thelen (2010), an institution whose rules are held constant while a transformed environment, and the refusal of key actors to reinvest in the old understanding, strips those rules of their effects. Organisational survival has decoupled from institutional effectiveness, a distinction the resilience literature often elides and which the Arctic case renders unmistakable (Gricius and Fitz 2022; Andreeva and Rottem 2024). Second, the erosion discriminates between the boundary and the bargain it protected. Since the Council never discussed military security before 2022 and still does not, in what sense has any boundary eroded? The answer is that the quarantine was never merely the issue exclusion but the exclusion in the service of a bargain, cooperation with all eight states despite rivalry among them. The exclusion survives. The bargain has collapsed, because the rule's operation presupposed a legitimacy that seven members have withdrawn from the eighth and the eighth has reciprocally withdrawn from the institution. Legitimacy-dependent effectiveness, the concept's fourth feature, is thus not an ad hoc rescue but the element that renders the post-2022 configuration intelligible. The rules are intact, and the quarantine is dead. Nor is this final claim an immunising manoeuvre. Legitimacy-dependent effectiveness was specified as a defining criterion before the post-2022 record was examined, and it committed the argument in advance to drift, rather than renegotiation or exit, as quarantine's characteristic failure mode. That commitment could have failed. Had the seven amended the Ottawa Declaration, expelled Russia or founded a successor body, displacement or breakdown, not drift, would have been the correct description.

Those alternatives deserve explicit treatment, because the reading of the post-2022 configuration as drift has to be earned against the typology of gradual change rather than asserted. Displacement, in Mahoney and Thelen's (2010) specification, requires the removal of existing rules and the introduction of new ones, and its Arctic signature would be a successor arrangement, whether a seven-state instrument replacing the Ottawa Declaration or an amended mandate admitting security discussion. No such rules have been introduced, and the seven have insisted throughout that the Council's founding instruments remain in force (US Department of State 2022b; Koivurova and Shibata 2023). Breakdown, understood as institutional death through dissolution or exit, would require the withdrawal of members or the abrogation of the constitutive text, and its regional exemplar is the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, which Russia left outright in 2023. The Arctic Council, by contrast, retains all eight members and an unamended declaration. Nor does the record show conversion, since no actor is redeploying the Council's rules to new purposes, or layering, since no parallel rules have been grafted onto the old ones. What remains is drift in its full specification, not the bare observation that rules persisted while effects disappeared. The rules are held constant by actors who hold veto power over formal change, who operate in a transformed environment, and who decline to adapt the institution to it (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). The post-2022 record documents each element on both sides, since the seven preserve the text while withholding the practice, and Russia demands the practice while suspending its contributions.

The erosion phase completes the adjudication among rivals, and fairness requires stating where each performs well. Realism correctly anticipates that a sufficiently severe rupture would disrupt cooperation, and 2022 vindicates that expectation, but the same framework predicted disruption in 2008 and 2014

and none occurred. The two accounts divide the explanatory labour. Realism explains why a rupture of sufficient magnitude could destroy the arrangement, but not why cooperation was insulated from the ruptures of 2008 and 2014, and not why the collapse of 2022 took the form of drift rather than exit or renegotiation. Realism accounts for the fact of collapse, the quarantine framework for its timing and its mode. Negotiated exceptionalism correctly identifies the bargain, but an arrangement sustained by ongoing negotiation should have produced observable renegotiation attempts, whereas the record shows drift, with the parties leaving the text untouched while withdrawing the practice. A desecuritisation reading would interpret 2022 as resecuritisation, which captures something real at the level of discourse, yet resecuritisation presupposes a prior desecuritisation of the military sector that never occurred. The quarantine account does not so much refute these rivals as specify the institutional mechanism through which their partial insights operated, and it is the account under which the 1996 codification, the 2008 and 2014 resilience and the post-2022 rules-intact collapse are observations of a single process.

Discussion

The findings speak to four bodies of scholarship, and the dialogue sharpens what the concept adds and what it owes, before closing with the question of how far it travels.

Within Arctic scholarship, the argument reconfigures rather than dismisses the existing positions. Young's (2005) mosaic image correctly captured the functional differentiation of Arctic governance, but the analysis shows that the mosaic had a load-bearing wall, since differentiation acquired its political significance from the one codified exclusion that made the civilian tiles safe to lay. The negotiated-exceptionalism account of Exner-Pirot and Murray (2017) is the argument's closest neighbour, and the framework builds directly on their insight. What it adds is the mechanism and the trajectory, explaining why the omission, once constitutionalised, reproduced itself through feedback, why it withstood 2008 and 2014, which a merely negotiated arrangement need not have, and why it failed in the specific mode of drift after 2022. Realist readings (Huebert 2019) are vindicated in their insistence that rivalry never left the region and refuted in their implication that cooperation should have tracked great-power relations. Constructivist accounts of Arctic cooperative culture (Wilson Rowe 2018) capture real resources on which the quarantine drew, but the boundary policing documented above indicates that norms operated through, and were stabilised by, institutional rules rather than substituting for them (Wilson Rowe 2020). Against both the collapse position and the never-existed position in the post-2022 debate (Käpylä and Mikkola 2015; Kornhuber et al. 2023; Devyatkin 2023; Dodds and Bennett 2025), the analysis relocates what was exceptional. It was not the regional security environment, which was always competitive, but the institutional architecture that kept competition and cooperation in separate rooms, an architecture that could, and did, die while its texts survive (Koivurova and Shibata 2023; Andreeva and Rottem 2024). The framework also speaks to the survival literature. Studies documenting how the Council endured the pause (Gricius and Fitz 2022; Andreeva and Rottem 2024; Spence and Chenok 2024) record organisational persistence at the technical level, and the quarantine framework explains why such

persistence should not be mistaken for recovery, since the technical machinery was always downstream of the political boundary that has eroded.

For securitisation theory, the case identifies a configuration the desecuritisation typologies do not accommodate. Hansen's (2012) four forms all terminate in the issue leaving the security register, and Åtland's (2008) partial desecuritisation characterises the civilian sectors but not the military core, while Devyatkin's (2023) reconstruction confirms that Russian discourse likewise never removed the Arctic from strategic calculation. Institutionalised quarantine offers an additional analytical category for such cases, full retained securitisation combined with institutional relocation. The payoff runs in both directions. Securitisation scholars gain a concept for security politics managed through jurisdictional design rather than discursive transformation, while the quarantine framework inherits from the Copenhagen School the insight that stability rests on speech and recognition, which is why the arrangement proved vulnerable to a legitimacy shock rather than a capability shock.

For institutionalist theory, the case makes two contributions. To rational design (Koremenos et al. 2001) it supplies the temporal sequel, since the exclusion's persistence through two decades of changed conditions, and its failure while formally intact, require the apparatus of increasing returns and drift (North 1990; Pierson 2000; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Fioretos 2011). To the resilience literature it offers a corrective with reach beyond the Arctic. Resilience is conventionally indexed by rule persistence and organisational survival, yet the Arctic Council after 2022 exhibits both while organising almost nothing. Effectiveness, the case shows, is a function of the continued legitimacy of jurisdictional boundaries among the actors they bind, an argument connecting institutional theory to the research programme on the legitimacy of international organisations (Tallberg and Zürn 2019) and to ideational accounts of how shared understandings underpin formal rules (Béland and Cox 2011).

The framework must also absorb, not evade, the critical and Indigenous security literatures. The quarantine had distributional effects. By constitutionalising a state-military definition of what could not be discussed, it narrowed what security could mean inside Arctic governance, marginalising comprehensive and human-security framings in which environmental change, livelihoods and Indigenous self-determination are themselves security issues (Greaves 2016; Hoogensen Gjørv et al. 2020; Heininen and Exner-Pirot 2020; Greaves and Lackenbauer 2021). The Inuit Circumpolar Council's sovereignty declaration gave voice to just such an alternative register (Inuit Circumpolar Council 2009), and Permanent Participants have borne concentrated costs of the post-2022 disruption, from severed scientific networks to divided transboundary communities (Spence and Chenok 2024; Spence et al. 2024). Recognising this specifies whose boundary the quarantine was, drawn by states in the idiom of states, and cautions against reading the concept as a normative endorsement.

The dialogue closes, finally, with the question of reach. Four comparative settings indicate how the concept structures further research. The Antarctic Treaty System offers the closest contrast. The Treaty demilitarises a territory, which quarantine does not, yet the consensus practices of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings have long kept the parties' wider disputes off the agenda, and post-2022 strains

within those meetings suggest that this informal boundary is subject to the same legitimacy dynamics theorised here (Dodds and Bennett 2025). The comparison would test whether codification matters, since the Arctic exclusion was written into the constitutive text while the Antarctic practice rests on convention. ASEAN presents the reverse configuration, since its bracketing of members' security disputes is informal and discretionary, closer to compartmentalisation than to quarantine, and the framework predicts that such an arrangement should track the goodwill of the moment rather than exhibit codified stickiness. Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation supplies a within-region contrast with a different failure mode, since Russia exited that institution outright in 2023 rather than remaining inside a drifting shell, and explaining why one circumpolar body died by exit and the other by drift is a question the framework is designed to pose. Space governance offers a case in which a quarantine-like arrangement has so far survived the same legitimacy shock, as operational cooperation on the International Space Station continued after 2022, and identifying the conditions distinguishing that survival from the Arctic outcome, plausibly the density of physical interdependence and the treaty basis of the arrangement, would refine the scope conditions specified above. In each setting the concept's four criteria and three scope conditions supply the comparative checklist, which is what makes quarantine a framework rather than a case description.

Conclusion

This article has reinterpreted Arctic exceptionalism as institutionalised quarantine, a deliberately constructed, codified exclusion of a fully securitised sector from the constitutive mandate of regional governance, reproduced for a quarter of a century through institutional feedback and boundary maintenance, and destroyed after 2022 not by the arrival of geopolitics, which had never left, but by the withdrawal of the legitimacy on which the boundary's operation depended.

The contributions are threefold. Theoretically, the article adds to historical institutionalism a concept and a demonstration, showing that institutional boundaries are active governance mechanisms whose effectiveness is legitimacy-dependent, so that institutions can die by drift while their rules survive intact. Empirically, it re-reads the documentary record from Murmansk to the present as a single boundary life cycle, establishing the deliberateness of the founding exclusion, the feedback dynamics of its reproduction, its resilience through 2008 and 2014, and the drift of 2022 onwards through independent indicators on both sides. Conceptually, it differentiates quarantine from desecuritisation, compartmentalisation, issue separation, institutional and functional differentiation, mandate design and demilitarisation, specifying the configuration, retained securitisation plus constitutionalised exclusion plus legitimacy-dependent effectiveness, which existing concepts capture only partially. The policy implication follows directly. If the diagnosis is drift rather than textual failure, rebuilding circumpolar cooperation is not primarily a matter of new organisations or amended declarations but of the harder task of re-legitimating a boundary, establishing conditions under which the parties again accept one another as partners within some agreed jurisdiction. Institutional engineering cannot substitute for that precondition, though careful design, for instance insulating scientific and Indigenous cooperation tracks, may lower its threshold (Spence and Chenok 2024).

The claims are bounded by four limitations. The single-case design supports theory development and the specification of scope conditions rather than generalisation, and the comparative programme sketched in the discussion is a requirement of the argument rather than an optional extension. Intentionality at the founding moment is inferred from participant accounts and diplomatic histories rather than archival access, so the deliberateness of the 1996 exclusion rests on a narrower evidentiary base than the later phases. The corpus is confined to English-language documents and official translations, meaning the Russian side is read through declared positions rather than internal deliberation. And the erosion phase analyses an unfinished process, since the events traced here run to 2025, the Danish chairship has only begun, and the possibility that the boundary is re-legitimated remains open, so the characterisation of the post-2022 configuration as drift is a judgement about the trajectory to date rather than a verdict on the institution's final state. A related conceptual risk should be named, since transferring quarantine to new settings invites the stretching against which Sartori (1970) warned, and the four criteria and three scope conditions are offered as the means of disciplining such transfer.

These limitations define the research agenda. Comparative work should test the concept's portability across the Antarctic Treaty System, ASEAN, Barents cooperation and space governance, archival research on the Ottawa negotiations could harden the account of founding intent, and continued observation of the Danish and subsequent chairships will show whether a quarantine, once dead, can be reconstituted. Beyond the Arctic, the argument points to a wider agenda. Institutionalised quarantine offers a potentially transferable analytical framework for understanding how regional institutions sustain cooperation under conditions of enduring geopolitical rivalry, and the comparative programme outlined above is the means of testing how far it travels.

Declarations

Author Contribution

E.G.L. and O.L. contributed equally to the conception and design of the study, the development of the theoretical framework and methodology, the analysis and interpretation of the findings, the discussion and conclusions, and the writing, reviewing and editing of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Data Availability

This study does not generate or analyse primary quantitative datasets, surveys, or machine-readable numerical data. The documentary corpus and supporting analytical documentation underpinning the analysis are available in the Supplementary Files submitted with this manuscript. No restrictions apply to their accessibility.

Ethics Statement

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Data Availability

This study does not generate or analyse primary quantitative datasets, surveys, or machine-readable numerical data. The documentary corpus and supporting analytical documentation underpinning the analysis are available in the Supplementary Files submitted with this manuscript. No restrictions apply to their accessibility.

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