

Inuit Political Engagement in the Arctic

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The nation-state has typically been employed as the primary unit for political analysis in conventional international relations theory. However, since the end of the Cold War, transnational issues such as climate change along with a growing number of multinational corporations and international organizations are challenging the limits of that analytical model. This is especially true in the Arctic where indigenous organizations have reframed the region as a distinct territory that transcends national political boundaries. In Canada, the Inuit have remapped the Arctic along cultural lines in an effort to ensure all Inuit benefit from future policy implementation. At the international level, the Inuit are promoting a concept of the Arctic based on cultural cohesion and shared challenges, in part to gain an enhanced voice in international affairs. The Inuit are also utilizing customary law to ensure their rights as a people will be upheld. What is occurring in the Arctic is an unparalleled level of indigenous political engagement. The Inuit are “remapping” the Arctic region and shaping domestic and international policy with implications for the circumpolar world and beyond. This paper explores the unique nature of Inuit political engagement in the Arctic via spatial and policy analysis, specifically addressing how the Inuit are reframing political space to create more appropriate “maps” for policy implementation and for the successful application of international customary law.

“The inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic.”

A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic (Article 3.3)

Introduction

As a result of global warming, the Arctic is now a key focus for the eight Arctic nation-states – Canada, Russia, Denmark (Greenland), the United States, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland – as well as many non-Arctic states. In fact, some scholars would argue that since the Cold War the Arctic has become “the center of world politics” (Heininen & Southcott, 2010: 4). By 2011, each of the Arctic nations had released an Arctic or northern dimensions of its foreign policy clearly illustrating

the surge in geopolitical interest in the region.¹ Even the European Union and China are planning to draft Arctic policies.²

Although the Arctic was a key geopolitical focus during the Cold War, the current situation differs in two important ways. First, the Arctic nations are, for the most part, committed to collaboration on issue-resolution and governance (Brosnan, Leschine & Miles, 2011; Heininen, 2011; Heininen & Southcott, 2010; Keskitalo, 2004 & 2007; Young, 2009 & 2011) including active participation in the Arctic Council, a high-level intergovernmental forum, created in 1996 to foster Arctic cooperation. Second, Arctic indigenous peoples have mobilized politically and effectively in the last 30 to 40 years and now play a significant role in Arctic policy development and decision-making at both the domestic and international levels (Abele & Rodon, 2007; Griffith, 2011; Koivurova, 2010; Shadian, 2010; Plaut, 2011; Wilson, 2007; Wilson & Smith, 2011). The Arctic has become the meeting ground for traditional state geopolitics and indigenous diplomacies. Heininen & Nicol (2007) call the geopolitical reality in the Arctic today “some sort of renaissance of regional co-operation by circumpolar indigenous peoples and civil societies” (Heininen & Nicol, 2007: 161). The combination of a collaborative approach to geopolitics combined with the participation of new actors on the world stage – actors who have distinct values and goals that are not nation-state-centered – may be contributing to a new approach to international relations in the Arctic region.

In international relations theory, the nation-state has traditionally been used as the primary unit for political analysis. Therefore, traditional foreign policies reflect the interests of the nation-state and prioritize national interests over community or individual security or capacity. The northern dimensions of foreign policy for the eight Arctic nations begin to diverge from this tradition placing greater emphasis on state collaboration (Heininen, 2011) including a commitment to working closely with Arctic indigenous peoples to address current and future challenges to communities. At the same time, Arctic indigenous organizations, in particular the international Inuit organization, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)³, are challenging nation-state dominance in international relations by reframing the Arctic as a region that transcends nation-state borders and by asserting their rights as a people. Even mainstream media have noted the growing influence of the Inuit. For example, in March 2010 *The Economist* published an article about how the Inuit are influencing natural resource development in the Arctic noting, “although they are only a small minority – an estimated 160,000 of them are spread across the Arctic – they have achieved a degree of power” (para. 4). Parallel efforts are also found at the national level particularly evident in recent efforts by the national Inuit

association in Canada, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), to redraw the map of Canada to ensure all Inuit benefit from domestic northern policies. Both domestically and internationally Arctic indigenous peoples are challenging the conventional concepts of territory in favor of a regional understanding of the Arctic in an effort to enhance their voice and influence in political affairs.

New Concepts of Territory in International Relations Theory

Spatial theory provides a broad context for understanding the role of territory in international relations. Prior to the 1970s, the analysis of space or territory was relegated to the study of maps, surveys and physical geography with little relevance to the social sciences. This changes with the publication and translation of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1975/1991). Lefebvre argues that space has inherent value – social relations create space, and space creates social relations. With Lefebvre's work, the politics of space was born. Social scientists begin to develop new and innovative ways of looking at space. From the mid-70s forward, space moves out of “the exclusive domain of geographers” and becomes the “intellectual terrain across a broad spectrum of social science disciplines” (Ferrare & Apple, 2010: 209) including contributing to a better understanding of global relations. The recognition of the limitations of the nation-state model to effectively analyze international relations, combined with an emerging understanding of the inherent relationship between concepts of territory and social justice issues, lends insight into contemporary Arctic geopolitics.

Agnew (1987, 1994, 2005) is credited with reinventing the meaning of geopolitics. He argues that international relations must include an understanding of the role of territory or place in political power structures. In his seminal article, “The Territorial Trap” (1994), Agnew points out that international relations theory has been limited by its insistence on defining states as “fixed units of sovereign space” or “containers’ of society” (Agnew, 1994: 53). Agnew advocates for a redefinition of political space. He calls for the new conceptual framework to foster a more nuanced and appropriate lens within which to understand the evolving nature of political relations at the global level. As the impact of globalization intensifies in the 1980s and 1990s, the redefinition of political space becomes increasingly critical.

Agnew (1994) observes that a growing number of non-state actors have begun to gain significant power at the international level challenging the conventional nation-state framework. These new “networks of power” (Agnew, 1994: 72) no longer fit into the “territorial representations of space”

(*ibid*). Rather, transnational entities are defined by cultural cohesion and/or organized around shared concerns. Agnew (2005) insists that the nation-state model, emphasizing the “geographical expression of authority” (Agnew, 2005: 437) is, as a result, becoming increasingly inadequate in understanding sovereignty. The nation-state model does not provide the appropriate frame to analyze transnational movements such as environmental or indigenous movements. Rather, territoriality, Agnew argues, is only *one* type of spatiality “or way in which space is constituted socially and mobilized politically” (Agnew, 2005: 442). In other words, while the state may indeed exercise a centralized power, there are many types of “diffuse power” (Agnew, 2005: 4) that exert varying degrees of influence in world affairs. The Arctic is a perfect example of how centralized powers and “diffuse” power (international organizations) are interacting to create a new type of international dialogue.

The Arctic Council is the first entity to involve nation-state and non-nation-state actors in decision shaping and policy making at the international level. The eight Arctic nation-states serve as members on the Council along with six Arctic indigenous organizations, or Permanent Participants. The Council is unique in being the only international fora where indigenous peoples are involved in a significant way.⁴ In fact, the Permanent Participant category was created to ensure the indigenous voice on the Council. The Permanent Participants include the Saami Council, ICC, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), Aleut International Association, Gwich’in Council International, and Arctic Athabaskan Council. All of the Permanent Participants, except RAIPON, represent indigenous peoples from two or more nation-states.⁵ There is no question that these transnational entities exercise significant influence in international affairs. Their effectiveness is evident in the fact that three of the Permanent Participants were present at the founding of the Arctic Council and assisted in the development of the organizational structure of the Council and its mandate. The Rovaniemi Meeting in 1989 (the first meeting of the eight Arctic nations) included the ICC, Saami Council, and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (now RAIPON). Rovaniemi was an historic moment not only because it was the first major international accomplishment since the Cold War, but important for this discussion, it was the first time in history Arctic indigenous peoples participated in the preparation of an international declaration. Further illustrating the influential role of the Permanent Participants on the Arctic Council is the fact that the three other organizations – the Aleut, Gwich’in and Athabaskan – were formed *specifically* to have a seat on the Council. Each group understood participation as a way to defend their rights and interests at the international level.

The role and influence of the Permanent Participants effectively illustrates how the conventional nation-state framework is becoming increasingly inadequate to address transnational peoples and their concerns.

Like Agnew, Fraser (2005 & 2009) also critiques the limitations of the nation-state model in international relations theory. Fraser focuses specifically on social justice issues and human rights in global context arguing that such challenges can no longer be fully understood in the nation-state framework thereby pushing the bounds of conventional international relations theory. Fraser points out that until the 1970s human rights were understood, and addressed, within the traditional nation-state context. However, as a result of globalization and “post-Cold War geopolitical instabilities” (Fraser, 2005: 71), social justice issues emerged at the transnational level (e.g. the impacts of climate change). These emerging global challenges called for a new politics of “frame-setting” (Fraser, 2005: 80). According to Fraser, framing territory can be achieved one of two ways. The conventional nation-state model can be revised or affirmed via redrawing boundaries or creating new ones (i.e. the creation of new post-colonial states); or, nation-state borders can be transcended in favor of a new organizing structure that prioritizes transnational interests and issues (Fraser, 2005). For example, Fraser points out that environmentalists and indigenous peoples are “casting off the Westphalian grammar of frame-setting” and “applying the all-affected principle directly to questions of justice in a globalizing world” (Fraser, 2005: 84). A good example of this is found in the recent efforts of the ICC to address global warming as a human rights abuse.

In 2005 the ICC filed a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights charging the United States with human rights abuses as a result of climate change. Prior, human rights had been understood within a local context as the violation of one person’s rights by another or the violation of individual/group rights by one’s own government. In other words, human rights were understood and addressed within the parameters of the nation-state model. Rarely have human rights been understood in the global context or, in the case of the ICC petition, by an international group claiming violations by a foreign government. The filing of the petition by then-president of ICC, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, and 62 Inuit hunters, changed the politics of climate change and how human rights abuses are understood.⁶ The ICC effectively challenged the limits of the nation-state model and its ability to address the growing complexity of international relations in an increasingly globalized world. This is one example of how the Inuit are challenging conventional representations of territory to exert influence at the international level.

Indigenous Diplomacies in International Relations

While there is a large body of literature on indigenous political activism, the role of indigenous peoples in international affairs is a relatively new scholarly focus (Abele & Rodon, 2007; Beier, 2007a & 2007b; Graham & Wiessner, 2011; Wilson, 2007; Zellen, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Beier (2007a) argues that while foreign policy practitioners have realized the effective role of indigenous peoples in international affairs for some time, international relations scholars are just beginning to address this fact. He critiques international studies as focusing primarily on the traditional relationship between nation-states arguing that, “Indigenous diplomacies are not at all new, but merely newly noticed in these fields” (Beier, 2007a: 9). The result is a “small but growing conceptual space within which to consider increasingly important intersections between indigenous diplomacies and the foreign policies of states” (Beier, 2007a: 9). Beier (2007b) observes the “growing currency of indigenous diplomacies in mainstream international politics” (Beier, 2007b: 126). Certainly, the ICC is a perfect example of the “growing currency” of the Inuit in global affairs. He argues that the integration of indigenous involvement in political affairs is destabilizing conventional nation-state relations, and that this destabilization is fast becoming a norm in international relations (Beier, 2007b: 128).

Wilson (2007) applies the concept of indigenous diplomacies directly to the Inuit. He argues that the ICC has played a key role in how the rest of the world understands the Arctic and Arctic foreign relations. The Arctic Council is usually credited with promoting the concept of the Arctic as a region (Keskitalo, 2004 & 2007; Young, 2009 & 2011). However, Wilson argues that the ICC was, in fact, the first organization to provide a regional model for the Arctic. Wilson refers to the ICC as a “multi-state nation” (Wilson, 2007: 77), a concept that challenges conventional nation-state models and allows for a new framework within which to better analyze the complexity of actors in the Arctic today.

Abele & Rodon (2007), like Wilson, argue that the ICC has contributed significantly to the regional, transnational concept of the Arctic. They note that the founding of the ICC in 1977 was, in itself, the beginning of the promotion of a trans-Arctic identity. The ICC “was able to promote and participate in the establishment of the Arctic as a coherent political region, to foster international cooperation in a strategic Cold War zone, to develop and advocate a pan-Arctic environmental strategy, to support a non-threatening decolonization of the Arctic, and to establish Inuit people as international actors” (Abele & Rodon, citing Bloomfield, 1981; Lauritzen, 1983; Petersen, 1984; 2007: 55). Abele &

Rodon credit the Inuit for being one of the most effective of all indigenous peoples in challenging nation-state conventions in international relations (Abele & Rodon, 2007: 58).

International studies have, for the most part, ignored indigenous diplomacies or indigenous involvement in political affairs. Nevertheless, that involvement is significant. For example, at the domestic level, the Inuit in Canada are challenging federal policy and even international law as they engage in reframing political space. Internationally, the Inuit have recently drafted two international declarations to assert their voice in the international dialogue on the future of the region. The Inuit are actively remapping and renaming the Arctic and, in the case of the ICC, drafting what could be understood as Inuit foreign policy. These examples illustrate how the Inuit are destabilizing conventional political relations in an effort to carve out space to address their concerns.

Remapping Arctic Territory at the Domestic Level

Land claims are one way, perhaps the most common way, the Inuit have engaged in “remapping” the Arctic region. In the last 30-plus years the four Inuit regions in Canada were settled in land claim negotiations with the federal government – Nunavik (1975), Inuvialuit (1984), Nunavut (1993), and Nunatsiavut (2005). The legal basis for Inuvialuit and Nunavut were identified in the study *The Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* (Freeman, 1976) commissioned by the national Inuit association, then the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC). The ITC was formed in 1971 specifically to protect territorial and resource rights in Canada’s Arctic. As a result of growing concern about the rising number of resource development projects in the Arctic, the ITC requested a study by legal experts and social scientists that would support Inuit land claims. The Government of Canada provided significant funding for the project as part of its growing acknowledgement of aboriginal title based on land use (e.g., hunting, fishing, etc.) and occupancy (i.e., the meaning or value placed on the land). Dozens of researchers were involved in the project resulting in a three-volume document that relies heavily on maps and includes oral interviews and supporting studies from government documents.

The methodology used in this project has become a model for all land claims studies since as it emphasizes “the importance and relevance of oral evidence” (Freeman, 2011: 28). *Our Footprints are Everywhere: Inuit Land Use and Occupancy in Labrador* (Brice-Bennett, 1977) was conducted the following year, utilizing the same methodology and providing the legal basis for the Nunatsiavut land claim settled in 2005. These studies were also the first step in redrawing of the map of Canada along cultural lines. To celebrate the settlement of the last Inuit land claim, the ITC created a new map for

the Arctic in 2005 entitled, *Inuit Nunaat* (Inuit homeland). The map replaced provincial and territorial boundaries with cultural borders effectively challenging conventional notions of territory.

Four years later, the ITK took spatial reframing one step further when the association changed the name of Canada's Inuit regions from *Inuit Nunaat* to *Inuit Nunangat*.⁷ *Inuit Nunaat* is a Greenlandic term that refers to the land only whereas *Inuit Nunangat*, a Canadian Inuktitut term, encompasses land, marine areas, and ice. "As Canadian Inuit consider the land, water, and ice, of our homeland to be integral to our culture and our way of life it was felt that "Inuit Nunangat" is a more inclusive and appropriate term to use when describing our lands" (ITK, 2009). While the significance of the name change may not be immediately apparent, in fact it could have implications for international law. If the Inuit concept of land is broadened to include ice and water, this could have implications for foreign policy including the application of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* to the current dispute over the Northwest Passage. In *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (2008), Saul provocatively asks the question – if Canada were to conceptualize territory from an Inuit perspective, how might this influence international law? "[I]f we were to take on our Northernness and argue from the position of Inuit legitimacy and Inuit concepts – of stable life involving a joining together of land an ice or water," Saul questions, "how would the rest of the world react? Would international tribunals and courts have trouble with this rectification of names? Of course they would ... [b]ut they would be obliged to consider it and therefore to consider differently the very nature of the opposing arguments" (Saul, 2008: 302). In other words, how territory is conceptualized can have far-reaching implications.

In 2009 the ITK used *Inuit Nunangat* to challenge domestic northern policy. In July of 2009 the Government of Canada released *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future*. The main map in the document was the conventional political map of Canada's north featuring the Yukon, Northwest Territory, and Nunavut. The map completely excluded the Inuit regions of Nunavik in northern Québec, and Nunatsiavut in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mary Simon, then-president of the ITK, immediately criticized the government for using a map that did not include all of the Inuit regions in a federal policy that implicates all northern peoples. Her comments drew considerable media attention including a half-page article in *The Vancouver Sun* complete with images of the two competing maps (Boswell, 2009). The Canadian government immediately acknowledged the oversight, apologized and promised to reprint the *Northern Strategy*. Though Canada's northern strategy has never been reprinted as promised, the issue of how the Arctic ought to be

conceptualized was provided significant media attention promoting public awareness. This new map is now used by the IITK in any reference to Canada's Arctic, continuing to challenge conventional domestic political jurisdictions.

Re-conceptualizing Arctic Territory at the International Level

At the international level the ICC is also challenging the nation-state-centered approach to international relations and presenting the Arctic as a distinct region in an effort to strengthen Inuit sovereignty claims and to enhance the Inuit voice in Arctic affairs. This occurred most recently with the drafting of two ICC declarations that, it could be argued, serve as foreign policy statements. At one time it was meaningless to speak of a non-nation-state having a foreign policy, but the scenario evolving in the Arctic is giving significant meaning to this development. While each Arctic nation-state has issued its own Arctic foreign policy, as mentioned above, both the ICC and Saami Council,⁸ have released international declarations. To date, the sub-field of foreign policy analysis has not included indigenous policies and declarations as part of the foreign policy dialogue. And yet, this is precisely what is occurring in the Arctic. The potential influence of non-nation-state bodies, peoples and organizations that prioritize the rights of a people in the foreign policy dialogue could have a profound impact on the way we understand the world.

In April 2009 the ICC launched the *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*. The declaration was written to address increased outside interest in the Arctic as a result of climate change and the race for Arctic resources. Griffith (2011) argues that *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* is a manifesto as well as “an outline of a possible legal case against the Arctic states” (Griffith, 2011: 131). He notes, “the Inuit believe that they have a legal right to participate in Arctic governance that coexists with and cannot be trumped by state sovereignty” (Griffith, 2011: 136). Perhaps the most impressive challenge to nation-state sovereignty occurs in Article 2.1 of the declaration:

“Sovereignty” is a term that has often been used to refer to the absolute and independent authority of a community or nation both internally and externally. Sovereignty is a contested concept, however, and does not have a fixed meaning. Old ideas of sovereignty are breaking down as different governance models, such as the European Union, evolve. Sovereignities overlap and are frequently divided within federations in creative ways to recognize the right of peoples. For Inuit living within the states of Russia, Canada, the USA and Denmark/Greenland, issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights must be examined and assessed in the context of our long history of struggle to gain recognition and respect as an Arctic indigenous people having the right

to exercise self-determination over our lives, territories, cultures and languages.

By referencing the European Union the ICC cleverly bases its claims to sovereignty on concepts that have been accepted in the international community, extending these innovative notions of sovereignty to Inuit claims. Indeed, a journalist for *thestar.com* (the digital desk for the *Toronto Star*), introduced the release of *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* by describing the Inuit as “a new party ... shouldering its way into international sovereignty discussions” (Weber, 28 April 2009: para. 1). Mary Simon (2011) argues that *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* defines sovereignty as not incompatible with nation-state membership and that the Inuit have and will continue to take legal action if necessary to ensure their involvement in development in the Arctic.

In 2011, the ICC released its second declaration, *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat* to respond to the growing interest in resource development in the Arctic by nation-states and transnational corporations. The release of *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat* was to coincide with the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Nuuk, Greenland in April 2011. The declaration draws on the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* arguing that Inuit rights are protected under domestic and international law. While there is considerable debate within ICC regarding natural resource development, the Inuit want the right to decide on the future of the region as “a people.” The two declarations are effectively challenging traditional nation-state-centered concepts of territory and sovereignty and furthering Inuit rights to land and resource use.

The Role of Customary Law in Inuit Political Engagement

In addition to challenging conventional concepts of territory at the domestic and international levels, the Inuit are increasingly using international law to ensure their rights and voice on the international stage. There is a growing body of literature from legal experts (Christie, 2011; Graham & Wiessner, 2011; Griffith, 2011; Koivurova, 2010) anticipating the impact of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) on enhanced indigenous involvement internationally.

Koivurova (2010) and Griffith (2011) address legal notions of territory and the potential use of international law to further the rights of Arctic indigenous peoples. Koivurova examines how indigenous peoples have been successful in utilizing international law to their advantage. He acknowledges that while the primary subject of international law continues to be the nation-state, “it

is interesting to study how much space peoples (which are not states) have been able to carve out for themselves in international law” (Koivurova, 2010: 192). Koivurova notes that since WWII international law has focused increasingly on peoples rather than states and that this may have some bearing and even legal ramifications for how self-determination is understood. In particular, Part 1, Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976, states, “all peoples have the right of self-determination.” Koivurova calls this “pretty explosive stuff” (Koivurova, 2010: 192) as this implies there is a legally binding obligation to honor the self-determination of peoples.

Griffith (2011) examines how international law could become a more effective tool for the Inuit, in particular. The challenge, according to Griffith, is that international law was initially used against indigenous peoples and, that the principal subject of international law has always been the state. Therefore, only states can bring cases to the International Court of Justice or “benefit from the prohibition on the use of force and other forms of trans-boundary intervention” (Griffith, 2011: 132). However, using the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) as an example, Griffith describes how what was once a set of guiding principles has become customary law. Today, Griffith explains, the majority of states act in accordance with the UDHR and do so out of a sense of legal obligation (Griffith, 2011: 139). Increasingly UNDRIP is being referred to in declarations and by commissions and has every possibility of similarly becoming customary law in the future. Once the UNDRIP has achieved the status of customary law then the Inuit can argue that “not having a role in Arctic governance will threaten their internationally recognized rights as a people” (Griffith, 2011: 142). According to Griffith, this would then provide the Inuit with “a solid claim to the rights they seek” (Griffith, 2011: 142).

Christie (2011) insists that it is only via the UNDRIP that the Inuit will be able to successfully challenge nation-state dominance in the Arctic. Christie is not convinced that the Arctic Council equates to the new paradigm in international relations. When the Inuit, or other indigenous groups, participate in the Arctic Council proceedings, decision-making is still bound by the limitations of “intergovernmental relations” (Christie 2011, 336). However, if the rights of indigenous peoples are increasingly recognized in international law, then these dynamics may shift. According to Christie, indigenous rights as “a people,” affirmed by the UNDRIP, is challenging the “‘absolute’ nature of territorial sovereignty” and fostering the “growth of international institutions” (Christie, 2011: 336). The primary issue here is one of territory or the framing of the political map as well as the effective integration of the UNDRIP in future legal decision making in the Arctic.

International law, like international relations, has traditionally utilized the nation-state as its primary unit of analysis. However, as the UNDRIP evolves from a guiding principle to international customary law, it has the potential to safeguard indigenous rights globally and to provide the Inuit, in particular, with an effective tool in assuring their voice and rights in the dialogue on the future of the Arctic. The ICC strategically included mention of their rights as “a people” under the UNDRIP in both *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2009) and *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat* (2011).

Conclusion

The Arctic is going through a dramatic change as a result of global warming. Increased access to natural resources and new shipping routes are focusing international attention on the region. The implications of this change are unpredictable particularly concerning geopolitics. A number of non-Arctic states and organizations are pursuing Observer Status on the Arctic Council, including China, Japan, Italy, South Korea and the EU. There is no question, according to a recent front-page article in *The New York Times*, that “the world’s superpowers are increasingly jockeying for political influence and economic position” (Rosenthal, 2012: A1) in the region. While significant research is being conducted on how international law might resolve competing interests in the Arctic, much less attention is given to how Arctic indigenous peoples are reframing the political map to develop a method of governance better suited to the unique challenges of the circumpolar world. What distinguishes international relations in the Arctic today from the Cold War, is that there are new actors on the world stage who are exercising a relatively influential role in how future global interests in the region will play out. Arctic indigenous peoples are forming effective transnational political organizations (Permanent Participant organizations), challenging conventional concepts of territory, drafting international declarations, and securing their rights as a people via international customary law. These efforts are effectively enhancing the Arctic indigenous voice and influence in domestic and international affairs and transforming the global dialogue concerning the Arctic region. According to Wilson & Smith (2011), the Inuit voice has “challenged the state-centric status quo and dominant economic ideologies that shape the current world order” (910). What is occurring in the Arctic is an unparalleled level of indigenous political engagement. Arguably, for the first time in history, indigenous peoples and nation-states are working together to resolve some of the most significant environmental, social and geopolitical challenges of our time. The Inuit are “remapping”

the Arctic region and shaping domestic and international policy with implications for the circumpolar world and beyond.

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Notes

1. The United States issued its first Arctic foreign policy in 1994 and, the second as a directive from Homeland Security signed by the outgoing Bush administration, in 2009; Canada produced a northern dimensions of foreign policy in 2000, and a northern strategy in 2010; Norway released its high north strategy in 2006, and an updated version in 2009; Denmark and Russia issued their respective Arctic strategies in 2008; Finland in 2010; and, Iceland and Sweden released their Arctic strategy and policy, respectively, in the spring of 2011. See also Lassi Heininen's article in this volume which outlines the Arctic strategies in detail.
2. The European Union released a communication on the Arctic in 2008, "The European Union and the Arctic Region" laying the groundwork for an Arctic strategy (see European Union, External Action, http://eeas.europa.eu/arctic_region/index_en.htm). An additional communication was released in June 2012; see Weber et al.'s commentary in this volume. China does not have an Arctic policy but there is considerable mention in the media that a strategy is forthcoming.
3. The Inuit Circumpolar Council is a multinational non-governmental organization founded in 1977. The primary goal of the organization is to strengthen Inuit unity across the circumpolar North, promote Inuit rights and interests, and ensure the survival of Inuit language and culture. The ICC represents about 155,000 Inuit from Greenland, Alaska, Canada and Chukotka (Russia).
4. Permanent Participants do not have the same status as the member states, however they may raise points with the chair and must be informed of all decision-making and activities. Few decisions are made within the Council without the support of the Permanent Participants.
5. Seven of the eight Arctic Council member states have significant Arctic indigenous populations represented by the Permanent Participants. Permanent Participant organizations must represent an Arctic indigenous people from more than one nation, or many indigenous groups within a nation as with RAIPON.
6. For a full account of Watt-Cloutier's petition and testimony, see the Earthjustice website at <http://earthjustice.org/news/press/2007/nobel-prize-nominee-testifies-about-global-warming>.

7. At the 10 June 2009 annual general meeting of the ITK in Nain, Nunatsiavut, the Board of Directors adopted a change in terminology for Canada's Inuit regions. See the ITK website, <http://www.itk.ca/publications/maps-inuit-nunangat-inuit-regions-canada>.
8. The Saami Council represents about 70,000 individuals from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

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