

Geopolitical Implications of the Melting Arctic Ice Cap:  
Are States Doomed to Conflict or Convinced to Cooperate?

Jaimie Kent

Illinois State University

Faculty Mentor:

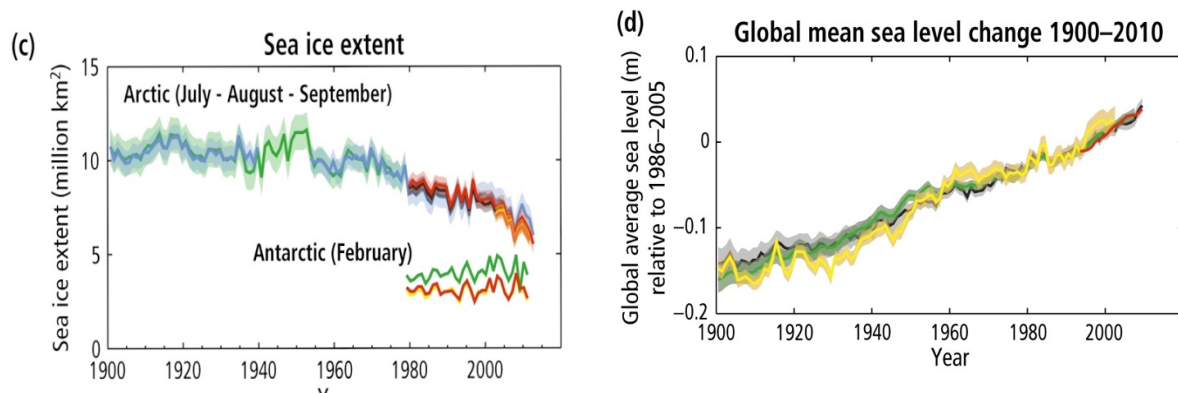
Dr. Michaelene Cox

## INTRODUCTION

While the impact of climate change is widespread, the Arctic region is particularly vulnerable as its average temperature has risen at twice the rate of the rest of the world (Hassol 2004). Currently, a glacial landmass in the Arctic divides circumpolar states: The U.S., Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark. What was once a geographic restraint on trade and sea passage has become a space of territorial dispute among circumpolar nations. With the melting of Arctic sea ice, navigation is becoming easier and resource exploitation is becoming all the more possible. In fact, it is estimated that the Arctic is home to more than twenty-five percent of the world's oil and gas reserves (Isted 2009).

Although the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that there are few adaptation options available to mitigate the already melting Arctic ice shelf, states can work together to tackle the worst effects of climate change (Meyer and Pachauri 2014). Since the 1970s, glacier loss and thermal expansion of the ocean account for seventy-five percent of the global sea level rise (Stocker et al. 2013, 11). Thus, as the melting ice cap opens up the Arctic region for resource exploitation and competition, it also brings with it the devastating environmental effects of sea level rise which no circumpolar nation is immune to. Figure 1 (below) shows Arctic sea ice loss from the years 1900 to 2000 (c) while also indicating a rise in sea level from 1900 to 2010 (d). Although climate change poses a credible threat to state interests, it also provides a platform that creates a space for mutually held concern and consequently, for negotiation and diplomacy.

Figure 1. Arctic Ice Loss and Global Sea Level Rise<sup>1</sup>



Examining how climate change affects policy provides a crucial step in determining not only what is at stake in regions like the Arctic, but how states can work together to combat its worst impacts. Ultimately, the more that is understood with regard to the geopolitical environment in the Arctic, the more states can work together to address and mitigate preventable conflict. A comparative policy analysis for all states with claims in the region will help determine the geopolitical effects of the melting Arctic ice cap. Therefore, Part I of this paper analyzes Arctic policy in all relevant states, looking first at the historical context of the state's claim in the Arctic and then at its policies from 1970 to the present. Part II synthesizes the policy implications in the states under study, providing an overall assessment of the current geopolitical landscape in the Arctic as well as implications for future policy. A theoretical framework is applied to trends in Arctic policy showing a shift from the structural-realist perspective to liberal institutionalism with an increasing propensity toward green theory. Before delving into individual policy, it is important to understand how Arctic territory is currently divided among circumpolar

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: Meyer, L.A. and R.K. Pachauri. 2014. "Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change." IPCC: Geneva, Switzerland. 151.

states. Figure 2 illustrates the territorial borders in and around the Arctic ice cap which is necessary in determining land claims and sea routes in the region as defined by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2. States with Claims in the Arctic<sup>3</sup>



## Part I. Arctic Policy in Circumpolar States

### UNITED STATES

Since the purchase of the Alaskan Territory from Russia in 1867, U.S. policy in the Arctic has been mixed. While economic and national security interests dominated U.S. policy in the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, environmental and technological advancements coupled with growing interdependence have altered policy objectives in the recent past (U.S. Department of State 2015). Further, coordinating policy has proven to be an issue over the years because no

<sup>2</sup> The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea came into effect on December 10, 1982. Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark have all ratified the UNCLOS treaty. Although the United States is not a party to the treaty, it does recognize it as customary international law.

<sup>3</sup> Image Source: "Frozen Conflict: Denmark Claims the North Pole." *The Economist*. December 20, 2014. Printed with permission from: IBRU, Durham University; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

one governmental agency has direct access to all of the relevant information regarding U.S. Arctic territory (Conley 2013). In fact, the U.S. Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, State, Interior Commerce, Energy and Transportation all have jurisdiction over various dealings in the Arctic along with other agencies such as NASA and the National Science Foundation (Conley 2013).

President Nixon's 1971 National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM-144) on Arctic Policy was the first to mention the U.S. responsibility toward minimizing adverse environmental effects in the region. While only two pages long, environmental objectives were briefly summarized and couched between national security concerns and the preservation of the freedom of the sea. Similarly, President Reagan's 1983 National Security Decision Directive (NSDD-90) stated that the U.S. has "critical interests in the Arctic region relating directly to national defense, resource and energy development, scientific inquiry and environmental protection" (1). It was not until the 1994 Presidential Decision Directive (PDD/NSC-26) under the Clinton administration that Arctic Policy began to take a sharp turn toward cooperation among circumpolar countries. Arctic policy under Clinton was marked by the end of the Cold War which welcomed a "new atmosphere of openness and cooperation with Russia" creating "unprecedented opportunities for collaboration among all Arctic nations on environmental protection, environmentally sustainable development, concerns of indigenous peoples and scientific research" (2). Subsequently, George W. Bush's 2009 National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD-66) specifically mentioned climate change. While still reflecting security and economic interests in the region, the NSPD-66 maintained that it is necessary to strengthen institutions in order to encourage cooperation among Arctic nations. A particular emphasis on

the “establishment and ongoing work of the Arctic Council” and to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to “appropriate new international arrangements or enhancements to existing arrangements” reflected the changing dynamic in the Arctic under the Bush administration (3).

Although President Barack Obama has not issued presidential directives on Arctic policy like his predecessors, he has implemented a strategy cognizant of the changing Arctic landscape (National Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013). The following excerpt from Obama’s Arctic strategy report highlights the need to not only balance economic and environmental interests, but to work multilaterally in safeguarding peace and security in the region:

*We will proactively coordinate regional development. Our economic development and environmental stewardship must go hand-in-hand. The unique Arctic environment will require a commitment by the United States to make judicious, coordinated infrastructure investment decisions, informed by science. To meet this challenge, we will need bold, innovative thinking that embraces and generates new and creative public-private and multinational cooperative models (2013, 11).*

The shift in U.S. Arctic policy towards working in concert with other stakeholders in the region served as a precursor to the U.S. chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2015-2017. The U.S. motto of “One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities” reflects the trend in U.S. leadership toward engagement with other nations while serving as acting chair of the Arctic Council (U.S. Department of State 2015). Although the United States is beginning to acknowledge other Arctic actors, it is important to note that U.S. policy has not been deeply rooted in a historical relationship with the region as it is with other states- particularly, Russia.

## *RUSSIAN FEDERATION*

The Arctic region has been a symbol of both heroism and pride in Russian culture since the early 18th century when Russia led the first scientific expedition in the region and became the first country to navigate the Northeast Passage (Breyfogle and Dunifon 2012). Arctic exploration served as propaganda for the state throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century through “literature, Newspapers, journals, film and cultural activities” to create “a common language of Arctic assimilation (Josephson 2014, 31). Under Soviet rule, policy in the Arctic focused on industrialization efforts to “modernize [Arctic] inhabitants, control and reshape nature, and extract natural and mineral resources (Josephson 2014, 2). The Cold War saw Soviet Russia move from exploration and scientific practice in the Arctic to large-scale military build-up and strategic defense initiatives (Breyfogle and Dunifon 2012). Due to its deeply ingrained importance in history and culture, it is no surprise that Russia has been the most vocal and predominant player in the Arctic.

Although there was a build-up of Russian ice-breaker technologies for oil exploitation in the 1990s, policy in the region did not gain momentum until 2001 when the Russian cabinet approved a draft document titled, “Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic” (Heininen, Sergunin and Yarovoy 2014). This document outlined Russia’s national interests in the region including natural resource extraction, transportation, preservation of indigenous culture, the environment, industrialization, and military strategy (Heininen, Sergunin and Yarovoy 2014). In 2008, President Medvedev expanded on the “Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic” to outline Russian interests until 2020. While

Medvedev's updated strategy included climate change concerns and a call for cooperation and peace in the region, its military undertones painted a different picture:

*[T]he sphere of national security requires the protection and defense of the national boundary of the Russian Federation, including the preservation of a basic fighting capability of general purpose units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as other troops and military formations in that region (3).*

Naturally, Medvedev's new strategy in the Arctic was not well received by the international community. It was not until Putin updated the document in 2013 that international cooperation and environmental concerns gained momentum in Russian policy. Although the new document under Putin still stressed Russia's need for military strategy and defense of Arctic territory, it did outline an "impressive list of priority areas for cooperation with potential international partners" (Heininen, Sergunin and Yarovoy 2014, 18).

Russia's long history with the Arctic is evidenced in its traditional policies to uphold territorial integrity in the region. Although always active in the region whether for resource exploitation or scientific purposes, Russian policy was virtually nonexistent until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While Russia's policy still reflects a military-based strategy, there is a sign of moving toward more peaceful and cooperative efforts. Whether these efforts hold weight in practice remains to be seen, but policy on paper is undoubtedly a first step in fostering a collaborative and inclusive political environment in the region. The need for reconciling action with political rhetoric is not unique to Russian policy. In fact, Canada faces many of the same issues as explained in greater detail below.



## CANADA

Canada's claims in the Arctic stem from its 1870 purchase of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories from the Hudson Bay Company following an Order-in-Council declaration of its borders in 1880 (Government of Canada 2013). Because of its Inuit population in the North, the Arctic has remained a main policy concern of Canada throughout the past century. While the 20th century saw a great number of Canadian expeditions to the Arctic, the 1970s brought a shift in Canadian policy to protect its sovereignty in the region. Since the 1970s, Canada has maintained a strong Arctic military presence, symbolic of its objectives to protect indigenous populations and secure control over its territorial resources (Government of Canada 2013).

During the Cold War Era, Canadian Arctic policy was marked by security cooperation with the United States where "Canadian sovereignty interests were de-prioritized in favor of issues of North American security" (Dolata 2009, 2). The end of the Cold War brought new concerns to Canada's Arctic policy as Inuit populations became political stakeholders and environmental concerns to preserve their land became priority. Thus, throughout the 1990s social and environmental concerns led to the inclusion of non-state and transnational actors in Arctic policy formation (Dolata 2009).

Yet, under the leadership of Stephen Harper, Canadian foreign policy took a visible turn back to military strategy and sovereignty issues which lessened the role of outside actors. In his "Canada First Defense Strategy" (CFDS) of 2008, Harper outlined a path toward the construction of armed ice-breakers and the funding of patrol ships and radar/satellite technologies for Arctic security purposes. In 2009 Harper launched "Canada's Northern Strategy" (CNS) which focused Arctic policy on exercising sovereignty, promoting social and economic development, protecting

environmental heritage and improving “devolving Northern governance” (2). Although the CNS has and currently reflects Canada’s security concerns in the Arctic, it does acknowledge the need for multilateral policy in the region:

*Cooperation, diplomacy and international law have always been Canada’s preferred approach in the Arctic. As international interest in the region increases, effective Canadian stewardship of our sovereign territory and the active promotion of Canadian interests internationally are more important than ever before (33).*

On the whole, Canadian policy in the Arctic has been mixed since 1970. Moving on from Cold War Era security competition, the Canadian government turned toward environmental and social issues only to return to sovereignty, military and economic objectives in the recent past. While Harper called for cooperation in the region, the allocation of funds for military build-up in the Arctic contradicted his calls for peace and stability. The recent election of Justin Trudeau may change Canada’s foreign policy objectives in the Arctic as he has been known to favor a diplomatic approach over a strong military presence in the region (Wade 2015). Fortunately, as Canada, Russia and the U.S. continue to struggle with a diplomatic approach to Arctic policy, Norway and Denmark offer a great deal of leadership and optimism in moving toward a more inclusive Arctic politics.

#### **NORWAY**

With over half of its territory being north of the Arctic Circle, it is not surprising that Norway has been active in Arctic policy for some time. Norway has a long history in the Arctic mostly in the way of scientific research. Since 1928, the Norwegian government has dedicated funding to the Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI) for research purposes (NPI 2014). Although it

defined its Arctic borders along with the other Arctic nations during the 1970s with the ratification of UNCLOS, it has focused much of its Arctic policy on cooperation with other nations. It was not until the early 2000s that Norway began to legally define its intentions in the Arctic with regard to other circumpolar states. Since 2006, Norwegian policy in the Arctic has focused its overall goal on creating “sustainable growth and development in the High North according to three overarching principles: presence, activity and knowledge” (High North Strategy 2006).

Norwegian policy in the Arctic has been soft-power based from the start. The cooperative nature and knowledge-sharing aspect of its policy is explicitly stated the priorities of its High North Strategy (2006):

- *Exercise authority in the High North in a credible, consistent and predictable way*
- *Be at the forefront of international efforts to develop knowledge in and about the region*
- *Be the best steward of the environment and natural resources in the High North*
- *Provide a suitable framework for further development of petroleum activities*
- *Safeguard the livelihoods, traditions and cultures of indigenous peoples and develop people-to-people cooperation*
- *Strengthen cooperation with Russia (1).*

Further, the High North Strategy is marked by its emphasis on dialogue and an information-based approach to development in the region. Of the seventy-four-page document, only five pages are dedicated to petroleum and maritime resources in the region while the other sixty-nine pages range from the environment and indigenous populations to research and cooperation-based strategies with other nations. A 2009 extension of the High North Strategy detailed even further steps to counteract the impacts of climate change in which the Norwegian government stressed

its commitment to “take environmental and climate considerations into account in everything [they] do” (High North Strategy 2009). Moreover, the latest development in Norway’s High North Strategy came in 2014 in anticipation of the Paris Climate Conference of 2015. Similar to previous policy priorities, the latest document outlined the importance of “international cooperation, the development of a knowledge-based business sector, knowledge development, infrastructure, emergency preparedness and environmental protection” (Norway Arctic Policy 2014, 3). It is evident that Norway is on the progressive end of sustainable development in the region with the environment having been one of its top priorities since 2006. Turning now to Denmark, it is clear that Norway is not alone in its prioritization of the climate and cooperation in Arctic policy.

#### *DENMARK*

Since the 1300s when Denmark first settled Greenland, the Arctic has played an important role in Denmark’s policy agenda. Until the Cold War, Denmark’s claims and policy toward the Arctic centered on integrating Greenland into its economy and culture through industrialization (Sørensen 2007). During the Cold War, Greenland served as a strategic base, cutting off the Northwest Passage to Soviet ships bound for the Atlantic. Denmark’s policy during the Cold War Era was therefore focused on military strategy with the United States in counteracting Russian control of the region (Sørensen 2007). The 1980s and 1990s saw climate research in Greenland emerge first as a result of “geopolitical, strategic and patronage factors” followed by a move toward a more cooperative and knowledge-sharing approach (Martin 2013, 64). Like Norway, Denmark’s policy toward the Arctic did not gain momentum until the early 2000s as a result of the changing Arctic landscape and environmental concerns. Once a site for military and strategic

geopolitical control, the Arctic has increasingly become an important fixture in Denmark's foreign policy.

In 2008, Denmark's foreign minister Per Stig Møller called all circumpolar states to Ilulissate, Greenland to create a cohesive environmental plan for the Arctic region (Hvidt and Mouritzen 2009). In what came to be known as the Ilulissate Declaration, Danish policy in the region became marked by its ability to bring other stakeholders to the table in discussing matters of mutual concern. Denmark's release of its Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020 further outlined its goal of an inclusive-based approach to Arctic management:

*The rising strategic interest and activity in the Arctic region necessitates a continued prioritising of a well-functioning international legal framework for peaceful cooperation, a special need for enhanced maritime safety, and persistent focus on maintaining the Arctic as a region characterised by peace and cooperation (13).*

The 59-page document not only provided a detailed summary of bilateral and multilateral relations with each circumpolar nation but sought to foster "new bilateral collaborations and dialogues on opportunities and challenges in the region" (55). Although the document explained that it is in Denmark's interest to safeguard its territory and resources, the main emphasis was on managing climate change and protecting the environment through multilateral action. Denmark's policy approach to the Arctic is therefore the most progressive in terms of environmental management, information-sharing and collaboration when compared to other circumpolar states. The sharp turn in Denmark's policy from the time of the Cold War to the present characterizes a shift in international cooperation in the region, where policy trends

among circumpolar states show an inclination away from military strategy and relative-gains in favor of inclusivity and sustainable growth.

## **PART II. Understanding Arctic Policy Trends**

The above Arctic policy assessments show a trend toward liberal institutionalism with a green theory orientation by circumpolar states. As the Arctic community moves on from Cold War Era strategies, it moves further away from a structural realist approach to international relations. This section will first synthesize Arctic policy during the Cold War and show how it fits well with the tenants of structural realism. Next, analyzing post Cold War policy and the development of institutions to manage Arctic relations will show the trend toward liberal institutionalism. Finally, a look at environmental concerns as they have made their way into policy will highlight the increasing role of green theory as it reflects the impacts of climate change occurring in the region.

### *COLD WAR ARCTIC STRATEGY AND STRUCTURAL REALISM*

The actions of circumpolar states in the Cold War Era undoubtedly reflect John Mearsheimer's account of offensive realism. Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism is founded on five key tenants including an anarchic world order, the possession of offensive military capabilities by great powers, unknown intentions by other states, survival as the primary goal and great powers that are rational actors. All five of the above tenants were reflected in the foreign policies of circumpolar states during the Cold War. During this time, states were not only concerned with maintaining their sovereignty in the region but with their relative gains for economic exploit as well. Being that the United States and Russia are both circumpolar nations,

it is not surprising that the Arctic region reflected the security concerns of these two great powers during the Cold War.

As mentioned above, Arctic policy under the Reagan administration was focused primarily on national security concerns. Further, both Canada and Denmark engaged in military operations with the United States in their relative Arctic territories. Russia was also heavily engaged in military build-up in the region which symbolized the bipolarity of the world order at the time. Military build up in the Arctic during the Cold War epitomized Mearsheimer's (2001) point that not only do "great powers fear each other" but they behave so as to ensure their security in order to achieve hegemony (33). Thus, the focus on maintaining sovereignty in Arctic policy by all circumpolar states reflected this move toward hegemony. Although the battle for hegemony was fought mainly between the U.S. and Russia it is important to point out that Norway, Canada and Denmark all prioritized sovereignty concerns in their foreign policies as well. Yet, as Canada and Denmark were pushing these concerns in their policies, they were also letting the United States use their territories for strategic purposes. This echoes what Davide Fiammenghi (2011) refers to as 'bandwagoning' where "neutral states begin to reflect on the costs of their neutrality, especially if one side should defeat the other leaving them with little choice but submission (133). Although the Cold War Era brought structural realist tendencies to the forefront of international relations, recent Arctic policy does not reflect such a strong emphasis on relative-gains and power struggle in the region. In fact, recent policy suggests that a cooperative-based strategy is now preferred over economic and military competition in the region.

## *MOVING TOWARD LIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM*

Although the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) brought nations together insofar as their territorial boundaries were concerned, it was limited in its scope for two major reasons. First, the United States never ratified the document and second, it fell short of bringing Arctic nations together in generating a dialogue throughout the Cold War Era. Fortunately, the Arctic Council formed in 1991 and managed to bring every circumpolar nation to the table in open talks on the future of the region. Coincidentally, its formation came the same year as the Cold War ended, paving a new way forward for Arctic diplomacy and for liberal institutionalism in general.

Jennifer Sterling-Folker (2013) asserts that while liberal institutionalism views states as rational actors, it is more optimistic than structural realism in that it believes states choose cooperation through institutions over conflict in their cost-benefit analyses. Moreover, interdependence by circumpolar nations has made the move to institutionalism all the more attractive. As Folker (2013) points out, not only are states economically intertwined, they “have a common interest in preventing the depletion of environmental resources” (117). When these tenants are applied to the foreign policies of circumpolar nations, Denmark, the U.S. and Norway have all shown signs of moving toward mutually beneficial environmental arrangements. The opening of this paper provided a brief summary of the environmental costs of climate change in the region where Arctic ice loss has contributed to rising sea levels. Because sea ice loss is threatening the sensitive ecosystem and indigenous populations in the region, it is clear that not only have circumpolar states all contributed to the problem of climate change, but they all have a common interest in mitigating its worse effects.



In fact, sea ice loss presents a two-fold issue. On the one hand, states are inclined to cooperate due to mutually held environmental concerns. On the other hand, economic interdependence and opportunity are increasing in importance. As sea ice loss makes the Arctic ocean more navigable, all states can potentially benefit from new and shorter distance shipping routes along the Northeast Passage. While the U.S., Denmark and Norway have all been on a promising path toward cooperation, Canada and Russia have only recently shown signs of prioritizing cooperation in their foreign policies. Axelrod and Keohane (1985) might suggest that the lack of cooperation on the part of Canada and Russia can be attributed to the perceived payoff structure of negotiation where “interests are not based simply upon objective factors but are grounded upon the actor’s perceptions of their own interests” (229). This observation alludes to the power of the leader in determining foreign policy. Although Canada took a tough security stance in Arctic policy under Stephen Harper’s leadership, Justin Trudeau has an altogether different perception of Canada’s interests in the region. Trudeau’s leadership might very well be the path to cooperation in the Arctic that liberal institutionalism suggests. Moreover, although Russian Arctic policy took a hardline stance under Medvedev’s leadership, Putin’s recent foreign policy arrangements suggest that Russia is moving toward a more environmental and cooperative approach in its engagement with other circumpolar actors.

While the complete realization of liberal institutionalism has not yet been achieved in the region, it is clear that structural realism is no longer the main motivating principle behind Arctic policy. Even though foreign policy remains mixed, there is a clear commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change in the region. The Arctic Council has been at the forefront of this movement which speaks not only to the increasing role of institutions in instilling cooperation,

but to the 'greening' of Arctic policy more broadly. The Arctic Council's creation of the 2011 Task Force on Short Lived Climate Forcers not only encourages all circumpolar nations to act on behalf of climate change but also outlines the mutually beneficial nature of the Council itself:

*The Arctic Council can encourage the exchange and sharing of knowledge and data; facilitate collaboration and collective action where needed among Arctic nations; and incentivize sustained actions to reduce emissions of black carbon and methane. The Arctic Council can also facilitate the pursuit of common objectives among Arctic nations to reduce short-lived climate forcers in collaboration with other international forums and Observer nations (1).*

Thus, the Arctic Council's role in facilitating cooperation among Arctic nations cannot be overstated. Moreover, the objectives of the Council with regard to climate change concerns highlight the salience of environmental issues as they are increasingly prioritized in the foreign policies of circumpolar states.

#### *PROPENSITY TOWARD GREEN THEORY*

The foreign policies of Norway and Denmark in particular mark a turning point in Arctic strategy as environmental protection gains momentum in the region. According to Robyn Eckersley (2013), environmental justice entails the realization of several factors including concern for future generations and animal/plant species, participation in the decision-making process by all stakeholders, the minimization and even distribution of risk, and redress for unfairly affected populations. Current Arctic policy reflects the incorporation of all of the above factors to varying degrees by circumpolar states. For example, all circumpolar states have not only acknowledged environmental concerns in their Arctic policies, but have also recognized that climate change unequally affects indigenous populations in the region. Norway, Denmark, Russia, the U.S. and

Canada have all gone so far as to include their indigenous populations in the decision-making process. In fact, indigenous groups in all circumpolar states have a permanent membership status on the Arctic Council. Further, the above excerpt from the Arctic Council Task Force on Short-Lived Climate Forcers speaks to both to the minimization and even distribution of risk with regard to mitigating the adverse affects of climate change. As a forum for both environmental protection and concerns from indigenous groups, the Arctic Council provides the foundation for green theory to flourish in Arctic policy.

While states like Denmark and Norway are paving the way for environmental concerns to be the main priority in Arctic policy, other states such as the U.S., Canada and Russia have some catching up to do. It is important to point out that domestic and historical context play a large role in determining the move toward greener policy. Just as the Cold War brought with it the structural realist framework of Arctic policy, so too do certain domestic and international factors contribute to the current yet evolving policies seen today. Hunold and Dryzek's (2002) comparative analysis of state context is a solid framework for analyzing such an evolution in green policy. Future research might speculate on the domestic factors that are at play in determining why Norway and Denmark are leaders in the green theory movement and why states like Russia, Canada and the U.S. are not quite there yet.

### *CONCLUSION*

The above comparative policy analysis shows that not only are circumpolar states more inclined to turn to institutions on Arctic matters, but that their Arctic policies are 'greener' than ever before. While the changing Arctic landscape opens up new areas for economic exploitation, it also brings with it an impending climate crisis which is increasingly acknowledged and

prioritized in circumpolar state policy. There is no doubt that while rising sea levels threaten Arctic communities, the melting ice cap provides incentives to cooperate on issues of mutual concern. Moving on from Cold War Era military strategy, the Arctic has become an increasingly important area of concern that when managed correctly, provides the incentive for liberal institutionalism and green theory to develop. While there is much work to be done in the way of cooperation and climate change mitigation in the region, circumpolar states are showing a promising move toward addressing common concerns and working together to protect the volatile ecosystem. It will be interesting to see how the continuously melting ice cap affects policy in the region. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the opening of waterways will further encourage states to cooperate or provide a turning point back to Cold War Era strategy marked by military confrontation and security concerns. Perhaps most noteworthy is the drastic transformation taking place in the physical Arctic landscape. It just so happens that while the physical landscape changes, so too does the political landscape continue to evolve. The question here is whether circumpolar states will move forward alone or act in concert and continue to progress together.

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