

Module 7: Circumpolar Cooperation

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Overview

Cooperation across national borders is necessary to decrease political tension, foster security and increase stability in a region. International cooperation and external relations between nations also promotes human development and democracy, and strengthens the role of civil society (Heininen, Jalonen and Käkönen, 1995).

Post-Cold War circumpolar cooperation is a good example of this. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Arctic region is stable and peaceful with increased and deepened international cooperation, and growing global interest in the region and its resources. However, there are land claims by Indigenous peoples, some asymmetric environmental conflicts, a few disputes on marine borders, and new claims on the continental shelf beyond exclusive economic zones.

This module provides basic knowledge and understanding of the main structures, key actors and current state of circumpolar cooperation. The module will cover contemporary issues that deal with circumpolar cooperation, external political structures and other international relations of the circumpolar North.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you should be able to:

1. Identify and explain the driving forces of circumpolar cooperation.
2. Describe and compare forms of Indigenous circumpolar cooperation.
3. Examine the role of state sovereignty and national borders in international circumpolar cooperation.
4. Compare northern policies, strategies and agendas of Arctic states.
5. Assess the role of the Arctic Council and Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians.
6. Assess and interpret the role of Arctic and circumpolar cooperation in world politics.

Required Readings (including web sites)

Heininen, L. (2010). *Circumpolar International Relations and Cooperation*. In: Lassi Heininen, L. and Southcott, C. eds. *Globalization and the Circumpolar North*. University of Alaska Press.

Key Terms and Concepts

- Border, Boundary, Borderland
- Circumpolar Cooperation
- Environmental Linchpin
- Geopolitics
- Indigenous (Circumpolar) Cooperation
- International Actor(s)
- Northern Dimension
- Northern Policy, Strategy, Agenda
- Regional Cooperation, Regionalism, Region-building
- Trans-boundary Cooperation
- World Politics

Learning Material

Introduction

Travel, trade and other relations across the circumpolar North and between the North and lower latitudes have existed for thousands of years. Early networks and crossroads of cultures involved frequent traveling, exchange of goods and experiences, trade, marriage, migration and mutual visits within the circumpolar North (Schweitzer, 1997; Golovnev, 2001). A thousand years ago during the Viking Age, Scandinavian peoples created communication networks between the north Atlantic, northern Europe and Russia with east-west as well as north-south trade connections. Centuries later, European traders and explorers went to the High North to fish, catch marine mammals and explore the globe. Dutch and English came into northern seas in the 16th century to search for a new sea route to China and India, and although they failed in this particular task, they stayed and started to trade with people in the White Sea region. The explorers were followed by whaler hunters with whom Indigenous peoples, such as the Inuit, established lasting contact based on trade and sale of labour. Fur traders and missionaries followed whaler hunters (Abele and Rodon, 2007).

World War II brought modernization and international activities into the circumpolar North based mostly on the military. The Cold War period led to the militarization of the North, which effectively hampered circumpolar connections and divided the region between two rivals, the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), including the United States, Canada, Denmark, Iceland and Norway; and the *Warsaw Treaty Organization*, which included the Soviet Union. Finland and Sweden were non-aligned.

In spite of high military and political tension, international and transboundary cooperation in the North was not completely frozen. Indigenous cooperation continued and became more institutionalized and there was some international scientific cooperation, such as the International Geophysical Year in 1957-1958. In addition, the international Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears was negotiated and signed by Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Soviet Union and the United States in 1973. The triennial North Calotte's Peace Days organized between people and civil societies of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Soviet Union aimed at promoting peace

and disarmament (Heininen, 1999). In the North Pacific, transboundary cooperation between Hokkaido in Japan, Alberta in Canada and Alaska in the United States started in the 1970s and led to the establishment of the Northern Forum.

In the late 1980s, the industrialized, militarized and divided circumpolar North of the Cold War started to thaw as a result of increased interrelationships between peoples and civil societies and increased intergovernmental cooperation and region building with states as major actors. The end of the Cold War was accompanied by the rebirth of connections between northern peoples and societies and the dawning of a new era of Arctic international cooperation. In 1987, the Murmansk speech by President Gorbachev gave the initial impetus for the current broad and lively intergovernmental cooperation across Arctic national borders opening the door for new connections. The end of the Cold War also caused a dramatic change in the Arctic as military tensions gave way to an atmosphere of eagerness to cooperate internationally and regionally.

This new situation of circumpolar cooperation owed much to the environment. A type of 'connectivity' between northern non-state actors, together with growing concern about the Arctic environment due to increased transboundary and long-range air and water pollution in northern areas, pushed Arctic states to react and become active in northern environmental issues. The first outcome of the process was the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), which the eight Arctic states signed in 1991 (Rovaniemi Declaration, 1991). Consequently, environmental protection became a new field of Arctic foreign policy. Two other significant movements occurred parallel to this: 1) parliamentarians of the eight Arctic states gathered at their first conference in 1993 with the primary aim to support the establishment of the Arctic Council, and later, to promote its work; and 2) the first sub-regional intergovernmental organization in the region, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, was established. The Arctic Council was subsequently established in 1996 by the same eight Arctic states that were involved in the AEPS, with northern Indigenous peoples' organizations involved as Permanent Participants (Ottawa Declaration, 1996).

As of the early 21st century, there are neither armed conflicts nor an uncontrolled race for natural resources in the circumpolar North. Instead, the region hosts a rich variety of multi-layered international, mostly multi-lateral, cooperation across national borders. This new institutional landscape, which includes dozens of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, forums and networks is partly institutionalized between governments, sub-national governments or Indigenous peoples and is partly based on civil societies and civilian activities. From the point of view of state sovereignty, it is relevant that the region remains stable and peaceful with a significant and institutionalized mechanism for international cooperation. A unique focus on Indigenous rights has produced progressive discourse and tangible new forms of governance within existing state sovereignty structures, such as Greenland's Self-Rule and the creation of Nunavut Territory in Canada. While few international legal regimes and globally recognized procedures for marine borders are in place, almost no international treaties exist specific to the region.

Learning Highlight 1

The transition from confrontation to international cooperation represents a significant geopolitical change in the circumpolar North.

7.1 Driving Forces for Circumpolar Cooperation

During the Cold War, the circumpolar North was a strategic security zone and one of the hottest ‘military theatres’ between the Soviet Union and the United States. The region was seen as a significant resource area due to its rich natural resources, colonialism and location on the northernmost periphery of Arctic states (Module 10, CS 100).

Geopolitics and international relations undergo constant change. The transformation from the confrontation of the Cold War period to broad international cooperation in the 1990s was a significant and fundamental structural change in circumpolar geopolitics and international relations. This development emphasized the importance of cooperation across national borders in fostering political, common and comprehensive security, and promoting human development and democracy with new Indigenous and regional voices (Östreng, 1999).

Consequently, beginning in the late 1980s, international and interregional cooperation evolved to the extent that a new regional identity emerged with numerous political initiatives and new fora, and many old and new international inter- and non-governmental actors, and those led by Indigenous peoples.

Learning Highlight 2

International relations and world politics always experience change. Significant change often occurs as a result of a movement in the main international development or trend such as the end of the Cold War period.

The main sets of interrelated processes in circumpolar cooperation and international relations in the current era have been described by the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR, 2004) as: 1) an increasing circumpolar cooperation by and an intentional mobilization of Indigenous peoples’ organizations and sub-national governments; 2) region building or regionalization with states as major actors; and 3) a new kind of relationship between the circumpolar North and the outside world, which demonstrates that the North has relevance in world politics (Heininen, 2004; 2005b). Each of these trends indicates and reflects a dynamic and significant change and together the picture depicts a more complicated and multi-functional process than during colonial days or expected in classical geopolitics.

The new international, mostly multilateral, institutional landscape of the circumpolar North can be interpreted as a success story since the main aim of these international bodies, to decrease military tension and increase political stability, has been fulfilled. The region is stable and peaceful without armed or significant border conflicts and is mostly exempt from modern global crises (e.g. food, climate and poverty) (Heininen, 2008).

Learning Activity 1

Analyze three main themes of circumpolar geopolitics and international relations, and compare them with the state of circumpolar geopolitics and cooperation during the Cold War period.

7.2 Forms of Indigenous Circumpolar Cooperation

It is important to recognize that as a part of the new emerging international circumpolar region there are loud Indigenous and regional voices, including Arctic Council Permanent Participants, the Sami Council, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich'in Council International, the Aleut International Association and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North. The advantage of circumpolar regionalism for Indigenous peoples is that since most Indigenous peoples are minorities within their own countries, regional governance offers opportunities for Indigenous populations to play a greater role as nations and transnational actors (Heininen, 2002).

Arctic peoples, particularly the Inuit and Sami, have been at the forefront of political mobilization of Indigenous peoples internationally. Although there are several examples throughout history of Indigenous peoples seeking rights, redress and recognition at the international level, collective international action by Indigenous peoples is a relatively recent phenomenon. The founding of the United Nations following World War II brought new commitments for decolonization and addressing minority rights issues (UN International Decade of Indigenous Peoples, 1997). In 1975, the UN sub-body the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) introduced the first international legal instrument dealing with the rights of Indigenous peoples with ILO Convention 107 concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries (Wilmer, 1993).

The paternalistic and integrationist focus of ILO 107 was opposed by Indigenous peoples as it did not grant them sovereignty, cultural or land rights, but aimed to integrate them into majority societies. The Convention provided a platform through which Indigenous issues could be discussed at the international level. A revised version of the Convention, ILO 169, was approved in 1989 and is seen as an important international legal instrument to help secure the rights of Indigenous peoples internationally even though it has not been widely ratified (Forrest, 2005).

Connections between Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the Nordic countries gained strength in the 1970s with the founding of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) at an international meeting in Port Alberni, Canada in 1975. George Manuel, a Shuswap Chief, became the WCIP's first president and drew attention to common circumstances and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in his 1974 book, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Manuel and Posluns, 1974).

Northern Indigenous peoples were strongly involved in the development of the WCIP with the second General Assembly hosted by the Sami in Kiruna, Sweden. The WCIP became the first Indigenous organization to receive consultative status at the UN and

paved the way for growth in Indigenous non-governmental organizations at the national and international level during this period (Lewis, 2002).

In 1977, Inuit living in Greenland, Canada, Alaska and the Russian Far East implemented their traditional understanding of their homeland and built pan-circumpolar connectivity with the establishment of their transnational organization, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) (Abele and Rodon, 2007). One of the concrete results was the Alaska-Chukotka Accord for visa-free travel for Inuit within the region (Krauss, 1994).

The Sami living in Norway, Sweden, Finland and northwest Russia were among the first northern Indigenous people to challenge state sovereignty and demand recognition of their cultural, resource and land rights. The Sami united in the civilian movement of 1980-1981 to protest the harnessing of the Alta River in northern Norway. This was a mobilization across national borders to reassert their identity as Indigenous people and strengthen their demands for self-determination in order to achieve the “collective right to decide their own future.” Although this radical movement lost its fight over the dam, it spawned a national awakening especially among young Sami (Declaration of Murmansk, 1996) and resulted in self-recognition of the Sami nation as a pan-national actor (Heininen, 2002).

Greenland is a special case with almost 90 percent Inuit population. In 1979, Greenland achieved Home Rule from Denmark and took over many functional responsibilities of government. Since that time and particularly after Greenland left the European Economic Community (EEC – now the European Union) in 1985, the Greenlandic government acquired more responsibility and greater autonomy in several areas such as policy making on languages and the utilization of natural resources. The world’s biggest island has neither special legal status in international law nor international legal capacity or personality, and “cannot be classified as subjects of international law” (Loukacheva, 2007). Through a referendum in 2008, Greenland took steps toward independence when a clear majority was overwhelmingly in favour of loosening ties to Denmark. As a result, Greenland acquired Self-Rule in 2009.

Russian Indigenous peoples joined the active community of Arctic Indigenous peoples with the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East (RAIPON), which emerged from an earlier ‘small peoples’ (meaning small in number or minority) association during Soviet times. The Indigenous peoples’ movement solidly took shape in 1990 at the First Congress of the Northern Indigenous Peoples in Moscow, which was supported by the state (Kohler and Wessendorf, 2002). The sheer size of Russia’s geography and the diversity of its Indigenous peoples and other minority ethnic groups posed a challenge for RAIPON but they formed effective partnerships with other Indigenous groups within the Arctic Council and emerged as a strong international organization.

Indigenous peoples’ organizations in the Arctic are leaders of the global Indigenous movement and primary actors in Arctic international politics. With their status as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council, Indigenous peoples’ organizations have

kept issues such as environmental protection, sustainable development, health and community well being, and linguistic and other cultural rights at the centre of the Arctic political agenda. These organizations have actively cooperated with other international actors and new international northern institutions. As international actors with their own agendas they soon acquired influence in regional and world politics and a place in the epistemic community as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) demonstrates (Meakin and Fenge, 2004).

Internationalization is natural and logical for Northern peoples as they attempt to make their legal position as Indigenous peoples clear and assert their right to self-determination against nation-states. This can be interpreted as continuity with their traditional networks of communications and external relations practices from the past through colonial times to the present (Abele and Rodon, 2007).

The global leadership of Arctic Indigenous peoples can be seen in the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues with a Sami, Ole-Henrik Magga, as its first chair (Lindroth, 2005). Further evidence can be found with the leading role played by former ICC president Sheila Watt-Cloutier in the campaign to raise awareness about the impact of climate change on the Arctic for which she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Learning Highlight 3

Arctic Indigenous peoples have emerged in a relatively short period of time to become leading international actors. While many of their goals to achieve increased sovereignty for their peoples have not been met, there have been many successes particularly in securing environmental protection against external threats and in devising new forms of governance arrangements within their nation states.

This supports the legitimacy of self-determination of Indigenous peoples as they have already received recognition as nations by the governments of most Arctic states. This is a result of their high activity and self-consciousness as nations and the ability of Northern peoples and communities to develop “innovative political and legal arrangements that meet the needs of residents of the circumpolar North without rupturing larger political systems in which the region is embedded” (Young and Einarsson, 2004). The ultimate aim of many of these nations to own and control their land and waters is neither recognized nor implemented in most cases, although Greenland and Nunavut clearly indicate a shift in that direction. In the background is the reality that national borders still carry weight in dividing Indigenous communities. For example, the border between Alaska and Canada is a significant geopolitical border constructed on the basis of attitudes towards Indigenous self-governance and prospects for transboundary cooperation (Heininen and Nicol, 2007).

As part of the discourse on northern sovereignty and geopolitics, northern Indigenous peoples define themselves as nations and the region as their homeland, although the territory is divided by national borders of Arctic states (except Iceland, which is without Indigenous peoples). Indigenous organizations represent their own nations and civil societies despite being minorities in their own countries. They have become viable actors

Learning Activity 2

Compare and trace the relationship between the political development of Arctic Indigenous peoples with the emergence of other new forms of international cooperation in the post Cold War era.

in their own affairs and international actors creating a special northern regional dynamic, ‘connectivity’, and new, louder Northern voices. This characterizes the circumpolar North as a distinctive region and is a direct consequence of the recent geopolitical change of the circumpolar North.

7.3 State Sovereignty and National Borders in International Circumpolar Cooperation

Legally, the circumpolar North is divided by national borders of Arctic states and territories and internal waters that fall under the national sovereignty of these states (Module 4). In spite of institutionalized circumpolar cooperation and stability, sovereignty has become a hot issue in the Arctic region. Legally recognized borders enhance state sovereignty, while security is strengthened through clearly specified delimitations that physically define where states can exercise domestic power. It is in everyone’s interest to have disputes amicably resolved or managed.

Tension over sovereignty is due to the fact that a state-centric viewpoint does not represent the whole picture because hundreds of different Indigenous peoples with rich, diverse cultures, heritage and respective claims to land and water also live in the region. Agreements on land and water between northern Indigenous peoples and central governments first emerged in the 1970s and are now standard practice for resource management and development in most northern regions.

There are a number of maritime jurisdiction and boundary disputes in the Arctic region (IBRU, 2009), particularly on how to divide sea areas between two or more exclusive economic zones and different proposals on how to draw these borders. Of relevance are waters beyond the twelve mile territorial sea that make up states’ 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), which the five littoral states of the Arctic Ocean (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States) and Iceland established based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This was particularly important for Iceland, which depended heavily on fishing. In fact, the only inter-state conflict in the Arctic region after World War II was the 1973 ‘Cod War’ between Iceland and the United Kingdom based on Iceland’s protection of its fishing waters. Canada and Russia declared claims of sovereignty in their respective northern passages (Canada over the waters of the Northwest Passage and Russia over the Northern Sea Route) despite counter claims they are international straits. In the Arctic Ocean there are new claims by some littoral states to continental shelf outside and beyond exclusive economic zones.

The impact of climate change on the physical geography of the Arctic Ocean (Nicol, 2009) may exacerbate the potential for conflict over sovereignty in the Arctic. The Canadian Arctic is particularly critical in this sense. If or when the Northwest Passage becomes a more important route for global shipping (Huebert, 2009), there will be increased pressure to have the route recognized legally as Canadian internal waters or as an international strait open to innocent passage. Sovereignty disputes are predicted to be more pressing as global warming proceeds and “the jurisdictional map of the Arctic Ocean remains a work in progress” (Macnab, 2008).

While the Arctic hosts a few loosely structured international regimes, such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) signed in 1991, there are almost no international treaties specific to the region. The few that exist include the Treaty of Spitzbergen signed in 1920, which deals with the archipelago of Svalbard and nearby waters by declaring the archipelago demilitarized; the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears signed in 1973, which protects the polar bear population and its physical environment within Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States; and the Search and Rescue Agreement signed at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland in May 2011.

The most important international treaty applicable to the Arctic is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Module 4). It is strategically important because it extends state sovereignty and control into northern waters and makes it possible for littoral states to expand their economic and other national interests beyond their internal waters (Macnab, 2008). Due to significant geopolitical changes in the past few years there are grounds to argue that as early 21st century northern borders become easier to cross and less strategic, they are deconstructed. Geopolitical imagination and (re)interpretation of borders have changed and made possible the existence of new borderland communities and slogans such as “The Borderless North” (Brunet-Jailly and Dupeyron, 2007; Northern Research Forum, 2006).

Northern borders are becoming more like borderlands and less like fences in the sense that they are being increasingly perceived as places where transnational flows from trade, culture and science are encouraged. A good example is the European North and its successful region building of the Barents Euro Arctic Region (BEAR), although with governments as major actors, and deconstruction of peripheral thinking concerning the region toward “local identity narratives” caused by reorganization of space in frontiers of the region by the post-Cold War transition (Koivumaa, 2008; Zalamans, 2001). On the other side of the circumpolar North in the Bering Strait area, the thawing geopolitics of the North meant the start of transboundary cooperation across the United States-Russian border. This American-Russian oriented cooperation is mostly non-governmental, bottom-up and people-to-people cooperation promoting Indigenous communities and their resource management and helping to collect scientific information (Heininen and Nicol, 2009).

This kind of bridging is not new but goes back to a tradition of regional co-operation in northern Europe and Eurasia before the implementation of modern national borders. It is possible to argue that a borderland model has begun to replace a borderline model in the contemporary circumpolar North and that this represents a renaissance in regional and local co-operation. The contradiction is that the North remains situated in a world where it is historically perceived as a “frontier”, a region unified by virtue of its emptiness and remoteness rather than its linked human populations and activities. Whether new security parameters have changed the nature of border linkages and, if so, whether the change has been effective throughout the North are questions that remain to be answered.

Current circumpolar geopolitics and international relations are following three interesting discourses on how to (re)define sovereignty and national borders: 1) the discourse on the Arctic as a distinct international region, 2) region building with nations as major actors, and 3) nation building based on self-determination and self-governing by northern Indigenous peoples. The first two are discussed.

Learning Activity 3
Can the Arctic be defined as a “distinct international region”?

Since the late 1980s, there has been a discourse to (re)define the Arctic as a distinct international political region (Griffiths, 1988). The discourse is often taken as a vision, although there have been a variety of concomitant political initiatives towards regional cooperation and region building. The Arctic has been taken as a distinctive region partly in order to analyze the region and its geopolitics after the end of the Cold War, and partly to study human development as it exists within an international cooperative region, not just a single country (Heininen, Jalonen and Käkönen, 1995; Young and Einarsson, 2004). The Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) is an example of the latter since the idea was to make a scientific assessment on human development of the Arctic region. The discourse is strongly supported by three main success stories of the AHDR: 1) northern cultures can remain viable even in the face of rapid and multi-dimensional change, 2) there are feasible applied advanced technologies to address social problems, and 3) innovative political and legal arrangements have been developed to meet needs of residents so they do not rupture embedded larger political systems (Young and Einarsson, 2004).

Although the discourse has come under criticism (Keskitalo, 2004), it is a vision supported by northern Indigenous peoples’ organizations like the ICC (Abele and Rodon, 2007) and scholars, scientific and higher-educational institutions such as the University of the Arctic. These are organizations and institutions that specifically deal with northern issues, often with the aim of building trust after the Cold War, promoting environmental protection and sustainable development in the North, and have the potential to secure a stronger voice for Arctic interests in a global context. Although the fundamental geopolitical reality is the circumpolar North consists of eight states with sovereignty and national borders, these states can be interpreted to support the vision de facto since “the Arctic is becoming a spatial entity of political and geographical contiguity between the Arctic states – an area for joint implementation of pan-Arctic decisions” (Östreg, 1999).

Region building is identified as one of the main trends of circumpolar geopolitics and international relations. It is mostly based on activities by unified states and partly based on regional cooperation and regionalism as a new political structure to define borders for governance and development (Hettne, 1994). It is possible to estimate that northern region building, with nations as major actors, is the result of a timely government initiative based on a rich tradition of regional cooperation as is the case with the BEAR (Barents Euro-Arctic Region).

Region building was made possible by significant change in the international system at the turn of the 1980s - 1990s, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union with new premises and paradigms of the international community. Region building is part of an important trend in international relations and a sophisticated way to interpret state interests. Rather than seeking control through the exercise of power, it focuses on achieving a socially stable and environmentally sustainable order. Region building represents theories of neo-realism, which emphasize the importance of stability, balance of power and force through integration, while at the same time interpreting the international system as anarchic where international trade and cooperation exist mainly between allied states (Waltz, 1979).

Learning Highlight 4

There continues to be a high importance of state sovereignty and national borders even in the age of internationalization and globalization.

The circumpolar North is not terra nullius, a no man's land, but the opposite because all territories are under national sovereignty with fixed and controlled national borders and most maritime boundaries have been agreed upon by relevant littoral states. The reality is that nation states are major actors in circumpolar region building. Achieving political and social stability through intergovernmental cooperation does not weaken national sovereignty. Region building has increased transboundary cooperation and made national borders less important but not demolished them. Neither necessarily means an acknowledgement of interdependence nor bottom-up regionalism.

7.4 Northern Policies, Strategies and Agendas of the Arctic States

Following the new era in international relations in the Arctic and increased levels of cooperation developed through the Arctic Council and fora, individual states and the European Union began to adopt specific foreign policy strategies regarding the region. Among the eight Arctic states most have recently approved a northern policy or strategy: Denmark in 2008, Canada in 2009 (following an earlier one in 2000) (Government of Canada, 2009), Iceland in 2009, Norway in 2006 (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006) and 2009, Russia in 2008, the United States in 2009 (The White House, 2009) and Finland in 2010. In many ways these documents are a blend of domestic strategies to address the challenges and opportunities of the North and foreign policies for working with neighbours. They address traditional 'high politics' issues of peace, sovereignty, security and

economic development along with more disparate elements of the new Arctic agenda, such as the environment, peoples and culture (Northern Research Forum and the Ocean Futures, 2009). Sweden is expected to release its High North policy in 2011. This is significant and in many ways an unprecedented wave of high-level policies released by members of a shared political region.

There was an earlier, smaller development phase of northern policies after the establishment of the Arctic Council. During the late 1990s, the “Northern Dimension” became a political term and policy focus in the European Union and Canada. It also became a metaphor for new kinds of relations occurring between capitals of Arctic states and their northern peripheries.

Although the European Union and Canada adopted the ‘Northern Dimension’ term for their policy documents, their processes were different (Heininen and Nicol, 2007). In Canada, the procedure was based on three simultaneous consultation processes within the federal government, between the federal government and territorial and provincial governments, and with non-governmental organizations and stakeholders (Simon, 2000). The European Union’s Northern Dimension was mostly developed by EU institutions in a process between EU member states and partner countries each having particular emphases and initiatives (Heininen, 2001).

In 2000, Canada launched Northern Dimension Canada’s Northern Foreign Policy (NDFP). The objectives were to enhance security of Canadians and northern peoples, entrench Canada’s sovereignty in the North, establish the circumpolar North as an integrated entity, and promote human security and sustainable development (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2000). These objectives aligned with other discussions on northern issues in Canada, such as the role of Indigenous governance and geopolitical, legal and economic implications of climate change (Huebert, 2001). Recently within Canada there has been a push for a greater focus on the human dimension, a critical element of all foreign policy initiatives, in relation to the Arctic. Concerns have also been expressed that Canada should complete the “Northern Strategy/Northern Vision” initiative begun December 2004 and focus on domestic rather than foreign policy and issues including northern social, political and economic development. (Report and Recommendations, 2006).

The European Union’s Northern Dimension Action Plan, adopted in 2000, is a framework and process for continuing dialogue on cooperation between the European Union and its northern neighbours, especially Russia, and for co-ordination or management of cross-border cooperation across European Union borders (European Union, 2003). The main aim of the plan is to increase stability and civil security, enhance democratic reforms, and create positive interdependence and sustainable development. Its focus has been on human resources and social issues, such as education; environment issues, such as nuclear safety; and interrelations between the two, such as threats posed by pollution and health problems affecting people living in the North. The European Union framework covers a geographically diverse area, ranging from Greenland in the west to northwest Russia in the east and from the Arctic to the southern extremity of the

Baltic Sea (Heininen, 2001). Northern Dimension policies carry the potential for a new kind of relationship between the Arctic and political centres in the south at least in the northern hemisphere. To have the Arctic as a “cross-cutting issue, main-streamed within each key priority” emphasizes the role of Northern societies and helps form new and more fruitful north-south relations (European Union, 2003).

The newest Northern Dimension of the European Union adopted in November 2006 was developed to reflect a common policy by the European Union, the Russian Federation, Iceland and Norway in and for Northern Europe (Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document, 2006). Rhetorically, this is a strong statement to promote dialogue and concrete cross-border cooperation and strengthen stability and integration in the European circumpolar North. It can also be interpreted to support region building discourse by state actors because the European Union, the Russian Federation, Iceland and Norway are equal “partners” in the strategy and it promotes the objective of visa free travel between the European Union and Russia (Heininen, 2007).

Regardless of whether the European Union “is inextricably in the Arctic Region”, the EU’s interests in the region are seen to be implemented through the Northern Dimension, but also through various policy areas dealing with energy, security, climate change or maritime issues (Wallis, 2008). Due to the fact that Greenland left the European Economic Community in the early 1980s, the Arctic window of the Northern Dimension, initiated by the Home Rule Government of Greenland, brought the European Union into the Arctic and the Arctic became another crossing-point in the second Northern Dimension Action Plan. Northern issues were given higher priority on the EU’s agenda in November 2008 when the European Union Commission (EU) approved its official Communication on the Arctic Region. The Communication showed the Union’s growing interest in the North around three main policy objectives: protecting and preserving the arctic environment and its population, promoting sustainable use of resources, and “contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance” (Commission of the European Communities, 2008).

Learning Activity 4

How is the European Union juristically and politically related to the Arctic region?
What is the geopolitical and juridical position of Greenland in the circumpolar North?

In the early 21st century, the circumpolar North is legally and jurisdictionally divided by national borders of the eight unified states with the exception of the archipelago of Svalbard, which is under an international treaty. There are almost no disputes regarding territorial borders, although there are internal land claim disputes from northern Indigenous peoples. Hans Island, which sits equidistance between Canada and Greenland in the Nares Strait, remains unresolved. The picture is not as clear concerning maritime borders since there are disputes dealing with division lines of exclusive economic zones and claims on two northern

passages in Russia and Canada respectively. As a new phenomenon and debate there are new national claims by littoral states of the Arctic Ocean on the Arctic Ocean's continental shelf beyond the EEZs and possibly more disputes in the future as well as growing international interest toward the Arctic and its rich energy resources. This neither signifies "a return of the Cold War" particularly since "[the] Arctic is the only NATO region where Russia is participating constructively with NATO countries" (Störe, 2009) nor necessarily means a conflict or war since Russia also affirms "[the] Arctic should remain an area of peace and cooperation" (Russian Federation, 2009).

7.5 The Arctic Council and the Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians

Region building in the North is part of broader intergovernmental cooperation in the Arctic as the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Region indicate (Heininen, 2004). Promoting civility and sustainability, regionalization processes have successfully decreased military and political tension and increased stability. These regionalization processes have removed the threat of widespread war in Europe and between former rivals the United States and Soviet Union.

Recent region building in the North is a domain of states. The Arctic Council serves as an intergovernmental platform for discussing environmental cooperation and sustainable development, but does not have wide sub-regional representation. The two councils of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) gather central and sub-national governments within northern Europe to discuss issues of common concern (Kirkenes Declaration, 1993).

The eight Arctic states established the Arctic Council (AC) and dominate its work, although six Arctic Indigenous peoples' organizations are permanent participants. Alongside other fora, organizations and networks, the Arctic Council has been successful in promoting peace and stability, developing a model for sustainability and emphasizing human security in the North. However, sensitive issues, such as security policy, are excluded from the agenda of the Council whose founding declaration states it "should not deal with matters related to military security" (Ottawa Declaration, 1996).

The Arctic Council is widely considered a soft-law instrument (Koivurova, 2008; Lennon, 2008) and issues dealing with mass-scale utilization of natural resources, especially issues of marine mammals, and oil and natural gas drilling have been avoided. Sustainable development has been defined as the second pillar of the Arctic Council and action on contaminants and protection of the Arctic environment and energy cooperation are among its fields of activity (Salekhard Declaration, 2006).

The Chair of the Arctic Council rotates among member states for two-year periods. During these chairmanships, a nation hosts a number of policy meetings between senior bureaucratic representatives of countries and a Permanent Participant Organization known as Senior Arctic Officials (SAO). Decisions from these meetings move the Arctic Council's agenda toward a Ministerial Declaration, normally adopted at the last meeting of a state's chair period in a meeting of minister-level representatives. The day-to-day work of the Arctic Council is largely done by various working groups, many of which

pre-date the Arctic Council to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. Currently, working groups include the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), and the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). The working groups coordinate scientific research, outreach and other background work normally supported by small secretariats and report to the Arctic Council.

The ultimate aim of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was to decrease tension in the former 'military theatre' through transboundary cooperation. The first years of cooperation were a success as the Barents Sea emerged from a period of high tension to a phase of international, mostly inter-regional, cooperation (Heininen, 2008). A more concrete achievement was a new international border crossing between Finland and Russia. The Bering Strait area's cooperation provides a contrast to that of the Barents Sea region since in the north Pacific Rim there is no international body for institutionalized inter-governmental or regional cooperation across national borders (Heininen, 2004).

The Arctic Council has an innovative and flexible, post-modern structure such as the Institution of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations as Permanent Participants. The Council has institutional weaknesses and obstacles like the lack of sub-regional representation (Koivurova, 2009). The issue is whether 'soft' power, e.g. multilateral cooperation, by and between state actors and non-state actors, such as the Arctic Council, is sufficient in international politics especially when sovereignty and national security remain an important way to exert control over Arctic situations. There has been discussion recently about whether the 'soft-law' approach is sufficient for the region to deal with threats such as climate change and the increased activity it will bring or whether a formal international legal regime similar to the Antarctic Treaty is needed.

The critical question is whether the Council will be able or willing to deal with these challenging issues in the context of the main institutionalized instrument of northern multilateral cooperation or if these issues are too embedded in national interests. If not for the Arctic Council, these discussions might occur in a bilateral context or in the context of ad-hoc based arrangements such as ministerial meetings of the five littoral states of the Arctic Ocean in May 2008 (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008) and March 2010, which may marginalize the Arctic Council.

During the 1980s, growing interest in environmental issues and protection among northern Indigenous peoples, and governments taking environmental protection seriously and acting upon it, made possible the establishment of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). The AEPS and the Arctic Council can be regarded as soft-law regimes that "[have] no actual ability to make binding law" (Lennon, 2008), but they may represent a first step towards the creation of an international regime for the Arctic. Many scientists have argued there is a need for an Arctic Convention or Treaty or other agreements or regimes to provide international regulations for the region (Harders, 1986; Koivurova, 2008).

In the early 21st century, the idea of a legally binding treaty to regulate the use of natural resources and thereby limit sovereignty has been discussed by politicians, scholars and NGOs in meetings of Arctic Parliamentarians (Kiruna Statement, 2006). Yet, there are no signs from Arctic states or within the Arctic Council in support of this approach. To do so will require decision-makers and lawmakers to engage in intensive international cooperation on issues of human and sustainable development and promotion of Arctic governance with the aim of having an internationally recognized regime or legally binding international agreement for the region (Kristiansen, 2007). The creation of a treaty is seen to have benefits like greater political and bureaucratic commitments, firmer institutional and financial foundations, and providing legal status to environmental principles and standards; although possible downsides include a lengthy negotiation process and creation of a complex treaty organization that could be difficult and expensive to maintain and enforce (Koivurova, 2008).

A more modest option would be the “establishment of a voluntary regime for free scientific research in the Arctic” (Macnab, 2007) similar to what exists in the Antarctic. Arctic states are less likely to agree to the creation of an international Arctic Treaty System with many signatories because they would lose too much sovereign control and freedom to implement national interests. As Sloan and Hik (2008) aptly note, “. . . what worked in the context of the Antarctic is not directly applicable to the Arctic.”

In conclusion, a common theme in these efforts of region building is to increase transboundary cooperation and lessen the impact of national borders and the importance of state sovereignty. Region building represents an alternative geopolitical approach to classical geopolitics dominated by state power and traditional security. It is one of the most relevant new trends in circumpolar geopolitics and international relations.

7.6 Arctic and Circumpolar Cooperation in World Politics

In the 21st century, the Arctic is not isolated but closely integrated into the current globalized world and international community. Discourses and interpretations argue in the northernmost regions of the globe a strategic game or race on energy resources is occurring, as the following headlines indicate: “The Race for the Arctic” (Beary, 2008) and “Diamond Rush” (The Guardian, October 4, 2007). There is an implication that there will be a “Battle for the North Pole” (Traufetter, 2008) or that “the Arctic could descend into armed conflict” (Borgerson, 2008) in a fight over natural resources within the continental shelf.

Learning Activity 5
Explain the main geopolitical differences between the Arctic and Antarctic.

In the Arctic region, there is increased utilization of natural resources and ongoing competition for energy resources as there have been for fish stocks and marine mammals over the centuries. This is due to growing interest in the rich potential energy resources of the region, which include approximately 90 billion barrels of untapped oil, 1,670 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Four-

hundred oil and gas fields north of the Arctic Circle exist ‘hidden’ on the shelf of the Arctic Ocean (USGS Fact Sheet, 2008).

Unprecedented growth in the importance of the North in world politics is occurring. Behind the more obvious geostrategic and military-strategic reasons, the North is prized as a laboratory or workshop for science, natural and cultural diversity, rich international cooperation and innovations in governance, and political and legal arrangements (Module 10, CS 100; Heininen, 2005b). The latter emphasizes innovations in Indigenous governance and co-management. The Arctic Council is a good model of international governance that could be applied in other regions. This innovation and good governance becomes necessary when viewed against climate change and the role of the North as a test laboratory for the impacts of climate change and a workshop to discuss social and cultural uncertainties related to climate change.

Scenarios for the future have been established (Brigham, 2007) and security and threat implications due to global warming have been drawn (Hubert, 2009).

Several strategic issues and developments surround foreign policy of Arctic states, including melting of the Arctic ice cap, the first ministerial meeting of the five littoral states, and reflection of the wider geopolitical framework to include impacts of the financial crisis and global recession in the High North (Störe, 2009). Certain factors are indicative of on-going and potential changes in northern geopolitics, including: 1) national sovereignty, particularly national borders and border disputes perceived endangered by climate change; 2) military presence, such as routine border patrols by vessels and aircrafts in defence of sovereignty and national security of states; 3) mass-scale utilization of natural resources and their transportation; 4) technology, with the irony that climate change assists navigation through sea ice and makes it easier to “conquer” and exploit the North Pole; and 5) climate change with its multi-functional challenges to northern communities, posing bigger risks and causing insecurity (Report and Recommendations, 2006; Heininen, 2008).

Learning Highlight 6

The circumpolar North, with its relative stability, rich international cooperation, and innovations in governance, political and legal arrangements, can be a good model of peace-building and international governance applicable to other regions of the world.

The impacts of climate change are not only quickly changing the physical geography of the Arctic (ACIA, 2004) since “the projected future of the Arctic is today” (Serreze, 2008/2009) but have become a new metaphor for environmental security. They are also causing a potential threat to states’ national sovereignty, e.g., Canadian sovereignty in the Northwest Passage (On Thinning Ice, 2002). Climate change is a significant factor in northern geopolitics as it brings uncertainty into societies, politics and governance of the region.

Other actors exerting influence on the North include major powers from outside of the region such as Britain, France, Japan and China. These countries have a growing interest in many aspects, including energy, transportation and research, and more recently because the International Polar Year 2007-2008 allowed the waving of a national flag without owning territory (The Guardian, August 22, 2007; Gao, 2009). There are intergovernmental organizations with a growing interest in the North due to energy security or climate change and its impacts. The European Union has interests in the region, which are implemented through various policy areas dealing with energy security, climate change or maritime issues (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). The United Nations (UN) plays an important role in northern regions through the influence of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UN International Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). If the IPCC is the authority on distributing information on climate change, UNCLOS has even more duties within the region due to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

Northern regions and seas are an area for growing economic, political and military interests of Arctic states' central governments, major powers outside the region and transnational companies. Major attractions are the huge potential energy resources of the region where states' activities aimed at ensuring energy security is an important element in foreign policy and the potential contribution of northern sea routes for global shipping (Proninska, 2007).

Conclusion

The Arctic has been an important region in international relations for centuries largely due to the economic lure of its natural resources. Since the end of the Cold War, the Arctic has taken up its own global voice. Changes that occurred since Mikhail Gorbachev's historic 1987 speech in Murmansk have established new forms of regionalism and international cooperation between northern actors and international regimes where the monopoly of the nation-state as an international actor have given way to a plurality of actors such as Indigenous, scientific, environmental and non-governmental organizations. While similar transitions in the conduct of international relations have taken place in other parts of the world, nowhere else has the transition from a periphery to an active and dynamic international region been so stark.

The levels of cooperation that exist in the Barents region today may best exemplify the geopolitical changes in the Arctic. International cooperation from individuals and small cultural organizations to national and sub-national governments have replaced the 'frozen' relations of the Cold War dominated by mutual suspicion and military tension. The extension of the European Union into the region, with the addition of Finland and Sweden to the EU, has also brought new elements of cooperation between Europe and Russia and new ideas about borders and transnational connections.

Learning Activity 6
Interpret the role of the circumpolar North and its institutionalized cooperation in world politics.

The impact of the Arctic Council as a forum of international cooperation in the region cannot be underestimated. By moving its political agenda beyond issues of military security towards human concerns of the environment, sustainability and cultural self-determination, the Arctic Council opened the door to the establishment of new connections and gave hope to a future where northerners would finally determine their own paths to development.

Earlier economic and political interests that drove international relations in the Arctic during the colonial period and Cold War have disappeared. Recent trends underscore the continued importance of the region's natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons. A significant level of rapid and multi-functional environmental, geo-economic and geopolitical change is occurring in the circumpolar North, particularly related to strategic energy resources, energy security and climate change. Climate change acts like a trigger to increase the use of natural resources and the making of new claims that will be impacted by obvious changes in the physical environment and activities required for submission of evidence within ten years of the ratification of the UNCLOS by littoral states of the Arctic Ocean.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the main successes of circumpolar cooperation in the past twenty years? What are some remaining challenges?
2. Do Indigenous peoples have an adequate level of influence in the Arctic Council?
3. Read the [Arctic Council Ministerial Declaration](#) from May 2011. What do you see as the main developments or achievements from this meeting?

Study Questions

1. Are northerners losing political power to determine their own future gained since the end of the Cold War because of rising political and economic interests from the rest of the world?
2. What sparked the thawing of tensions between Arctic states in the 1980s and 1990s?
3. What are the main elements of various national strategies and policies of Arctic states?
4. What are some of the ways in which Arctic Indigenous peoples cooperate and participate in Arctic politics?

Glossary of Terms

Environmental Linchpin: The Arctic has become an environmental linchpin with a critical role in global environmental issues because first it is a laboratory and workshop for science and multidisciplinary research on the environment and climate change; and second, because of its useful models for future action based on international environmental cooperation.

Geopolitics: The study of the relationship among politics and geography, demography, and economics, especially with respect to a nation's foreign policy.

International Actors: Main categories of international actors: unified states, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), subnational governments and transnational corporations (TNCs).

Regionalism: Regional and cross-border activities by local, regional and civil actors. Regionalism refers to a new institutional landscape and dynamic based on wide international, mostly multilateral, cooperation with several external structures. The post Cold War world society is promoted through the interrelated processes of “civilianization”, “regionalization” and “mobilization”.

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