

Arctic political geography(-ies)

Guest lecture for 'Polar Seas' module

Scottish Association for Marine Science | 26 January 2023

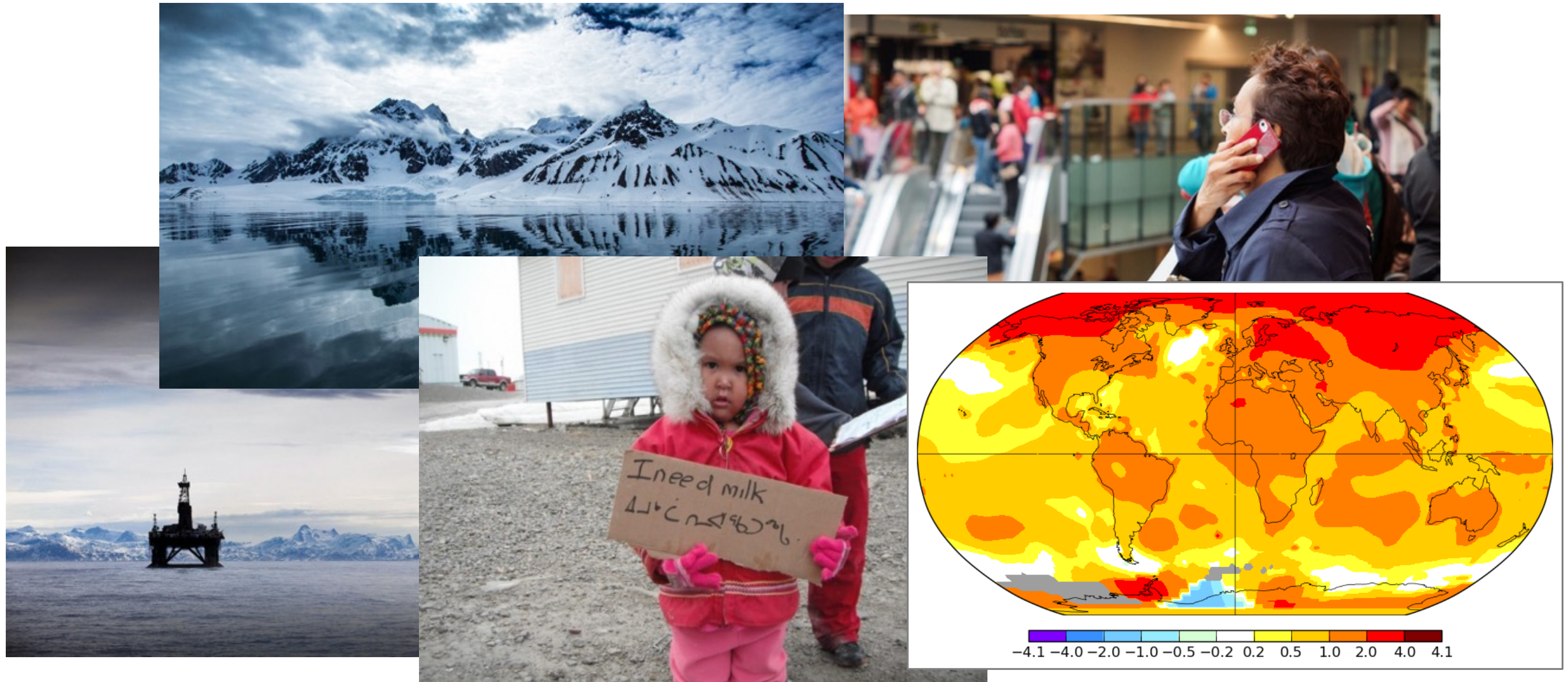
Close your eyes and call up in your mind your image of Arctic—what sort of place do you imagine?

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1. How do you imagine the Arctic?
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4. A seat at the Arctic's top table
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8. Murmansk revisited

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Which one of these pictures matches your chosen mental image of Arctic best?



Source: Nordic Visitor, Filip Gielda/Greenland Today, NASA GISTEMPv4, Feeding My Family, Steve Morgan/AP (images clockwise from top left); Polar Aspect

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Common 'Arctic imaginaries' tend not to have people in them, unless explorers, soldiers, activists—or scientists!



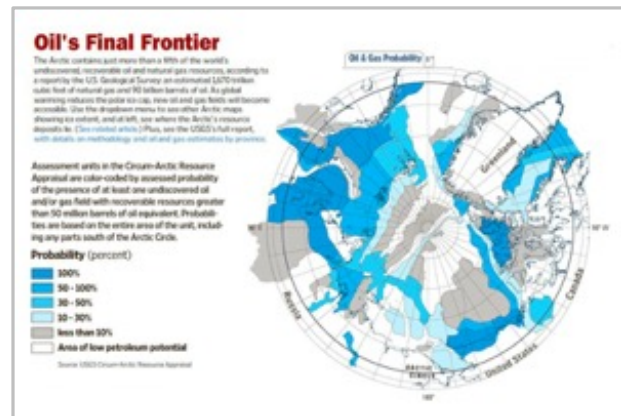
Fragile wilderness



Masculine crucible



Savage wasteland



Resource frontier



Terra nullius



Militarised zone



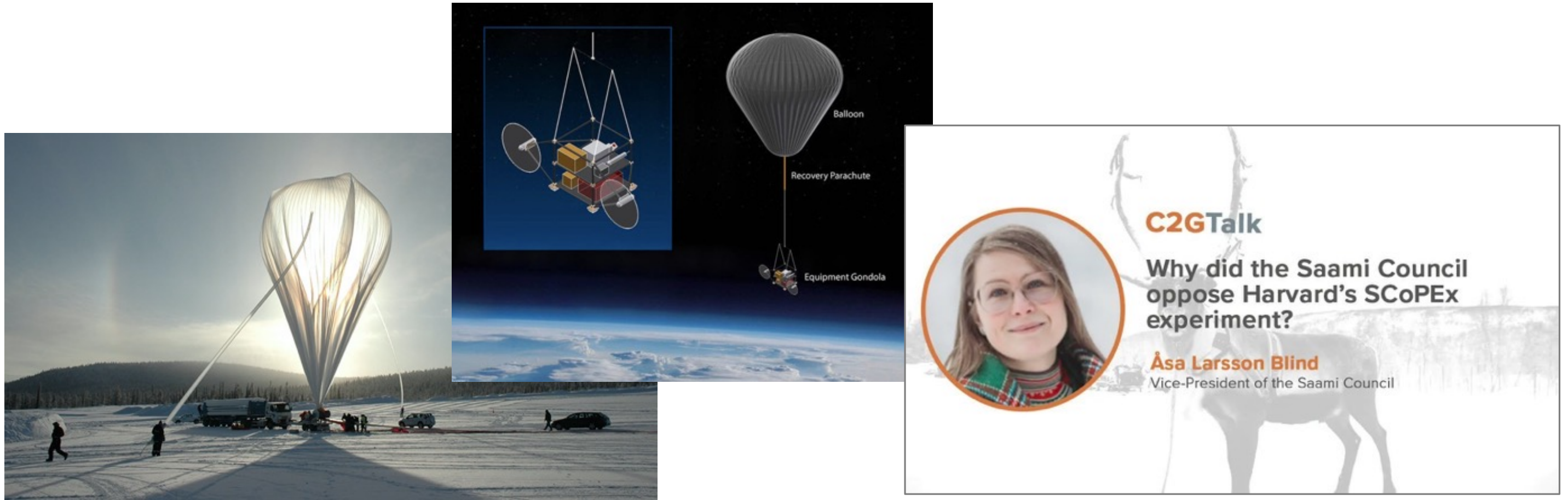
Climate-change canary

Source: Florian Ledoux, Ranulph Fiennes, Nicholas Ray/Paramount Pictures, Greenpeace; US Senator Dan Sullivan, US Geological Survey, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (images clockwise from top left); Polar Aspect

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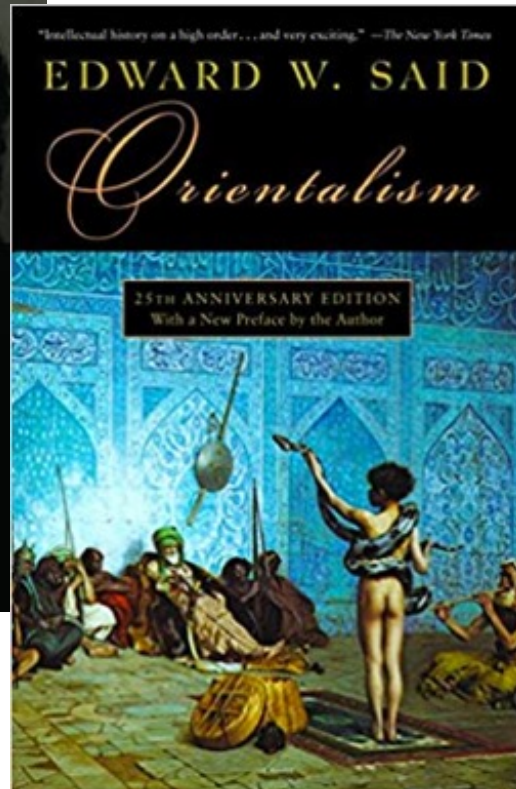
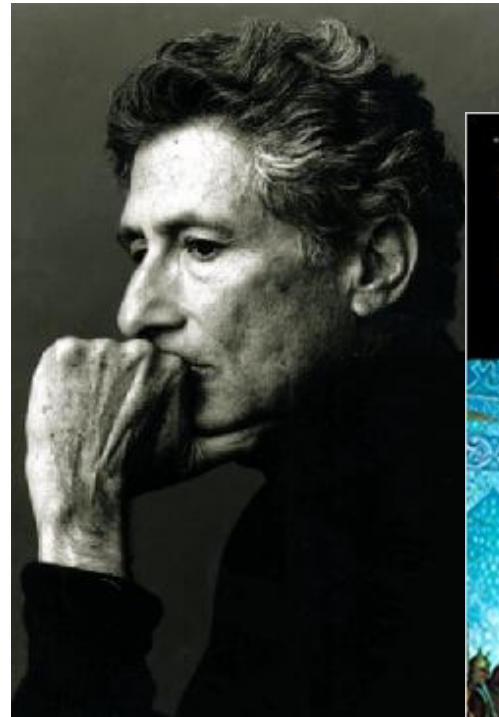


As budding Arctic scientists, you must be especially wary of imaging Arctic as giant, open scientific laboratory



Arctic is part of global human community, not just planetary climatic or natural systems

Arctic imaginaries, especially if devoid of people about whom to be concerned, have serious moral implications



Edward Said: Orientalism

- Orient does not exist as physical fact—constructed idea with own ‘history and tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary’, including scientific study!
- Orientalism is ‘style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction’ between Orient and Occident
- From moral perspective, orientalism is ‘Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient’—its territory, resources and peoples

There is ‘borealism’ as well as orientalism

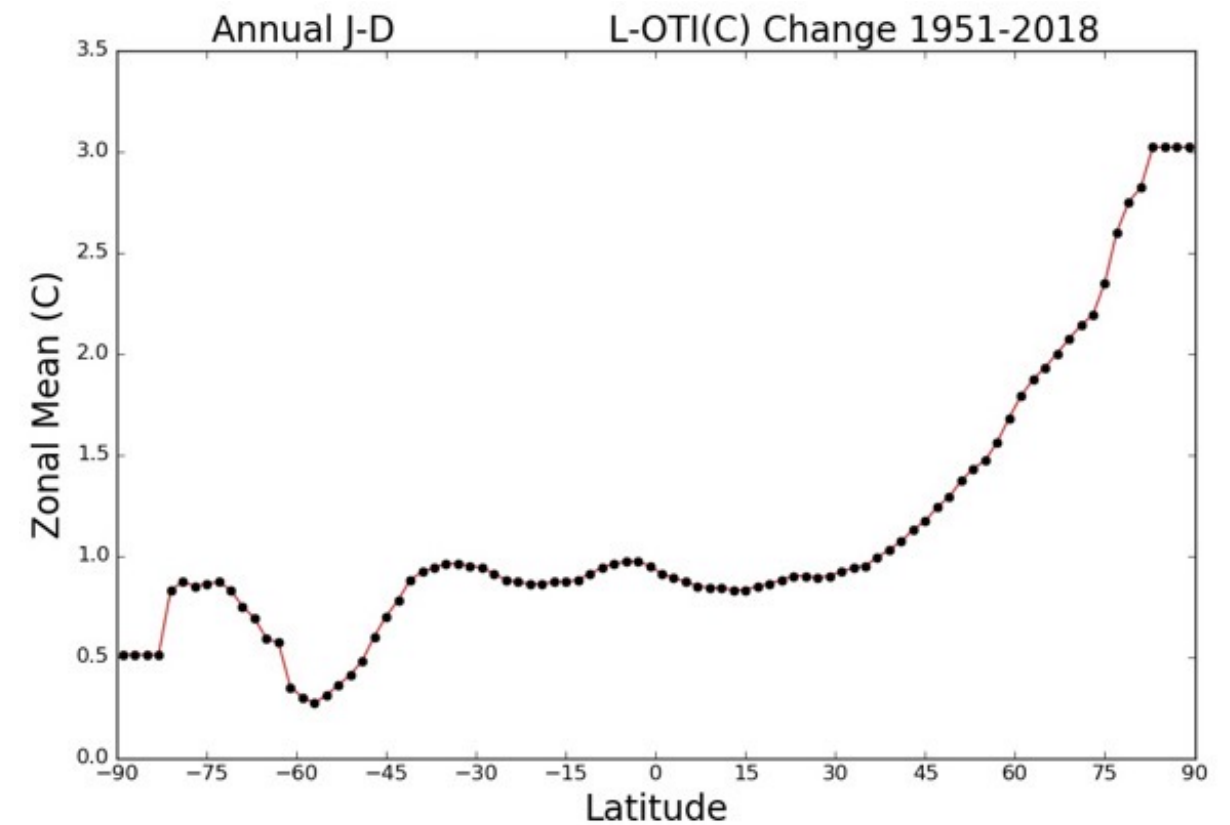
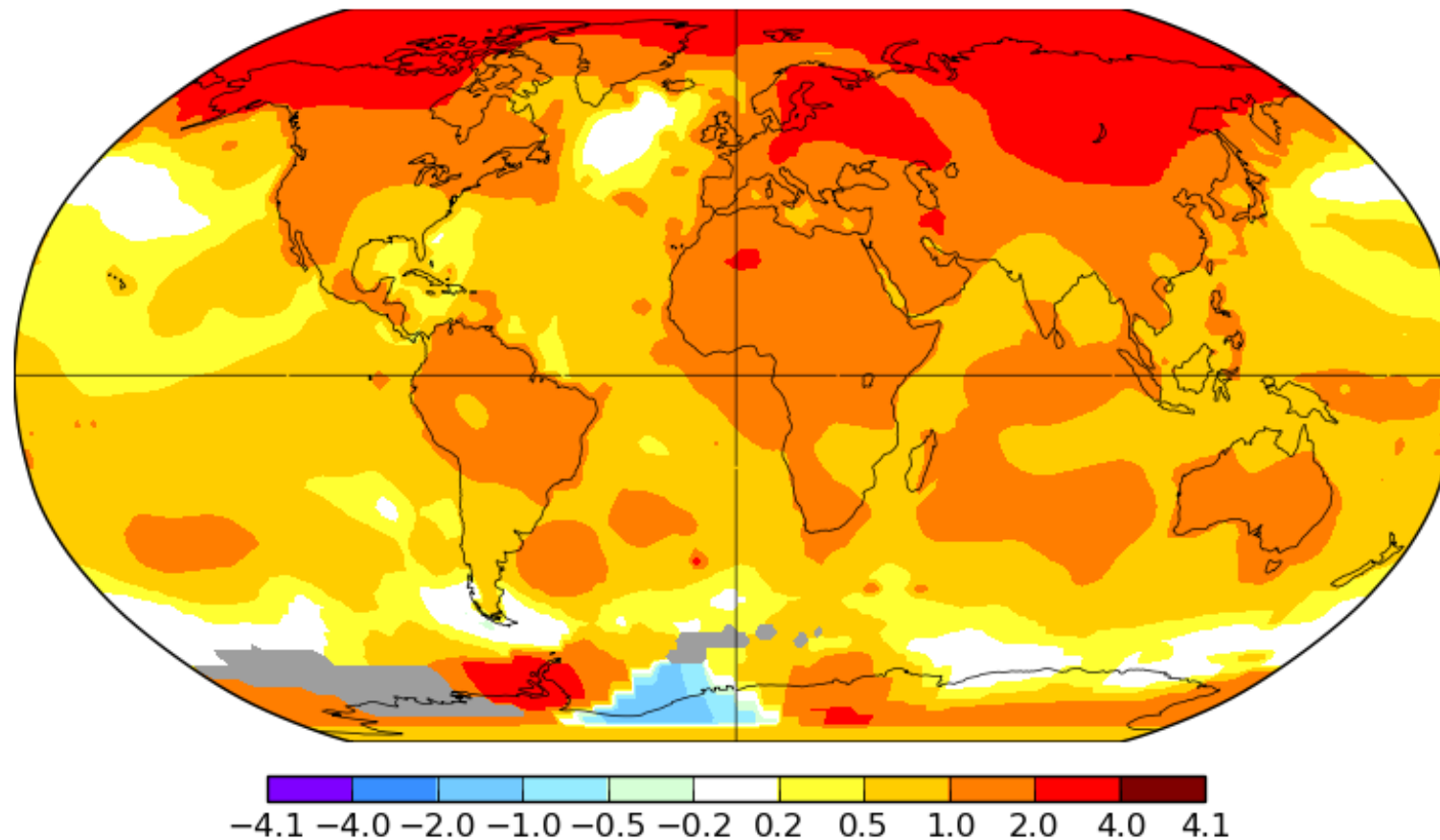
Let's look a bit more closely at a 'human Arctic' with people in it!

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As global climate changes, Arctic has quite rightly become one of most important places on planet...

Trend in mean annual surface air temperature (°C, annual J-D 1951-2018)



...but Arctic is first and foremost homeland for Arctic Indigenous peoples

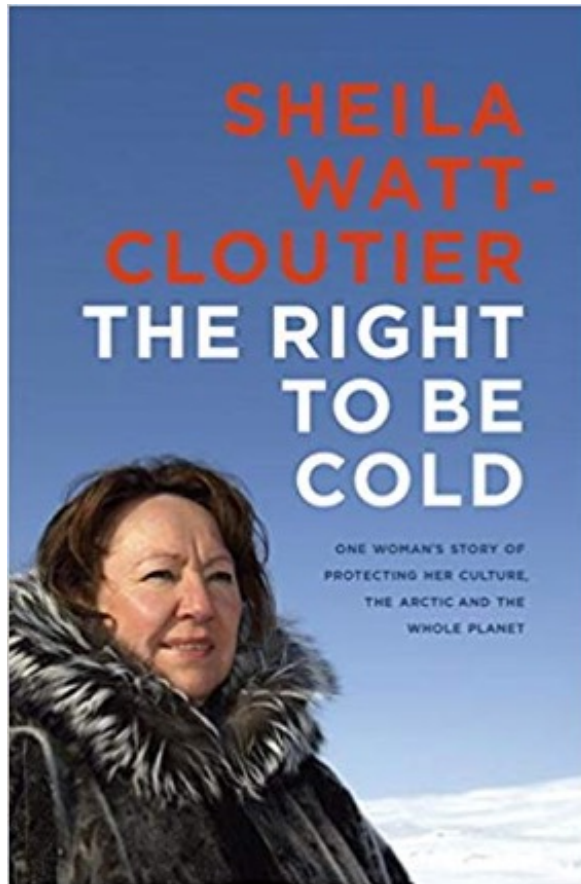


VS



There is borealism in way in which we take starring role in 'saving Arctic' to save ourselves

Arctic peoples gravely concerned about impact of climate change on their land and lives...



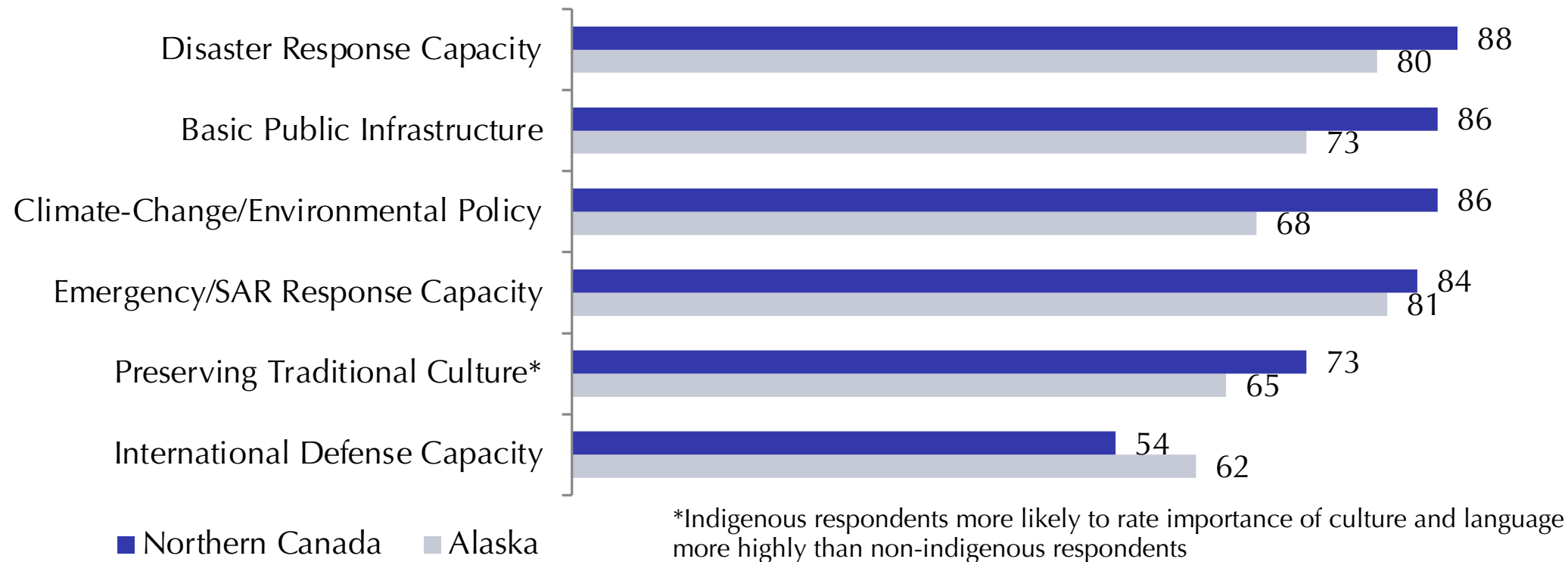
Shiela Watt-Cloutier: Right to be Cold

- For Indigenous peoples whose cultures are based on snow and ice, climate change matter of human rights
- Makes traditional livelihoods less viable (e.g. hunting or fishing from stable ice platforms, etc)
- Makes traditional knowledge less useful (e.g. seasons, ice behaviour, etc)
- Also threatens modern Indigenous society (e.g. villages lost to sea, infrastructure damaged by permafrost melt, etc)

Arctic Indigenous peoples especially threatened by climate change for which they bear little responsibility themselves

...but not necessarily more than other concerns, in areas of human security and economic development

'How important are the following to the Arctic today?' (2015, % agreement)



Other survey responses also point to concerns with high cost of living and inadequate health care

For Arctic peoples, Arctic sustainable development is not only possible, but also necessary!

Source: Gordon Foundation, Arctic Public Opinion Survey, Vol 2 (2015) (data); Polar Aspect

Problems of human Arctic are problems of sustainable development—some examples



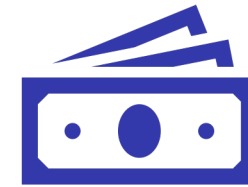
Vulnerable
Indigenous cultures



Rapid climate
change



Limited access to
public goods (e.g.
education, health
care)



High cost of living



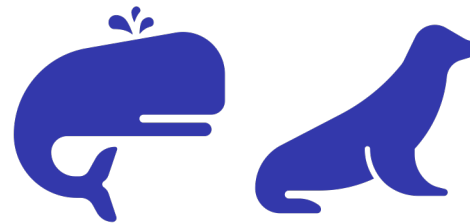
Narrowly-based
local economies



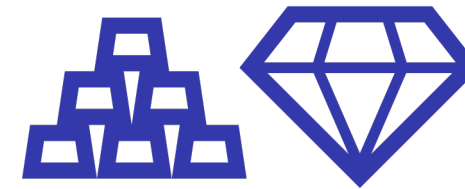
Poor community
infrastructure



High pollutant
concentrations



Fragile ecosystems



Dependence on
natural resource
extraction



Constrained
physical and digital
connectivity

We must learn to imagine and value Arctic as *home*, where life and livelihood matter...



...as well as bellwether of climate change for all of us

Source: Mats Nyvold/Sermitsiaq (left image); Greenpeace/Hamlet of Clyde River (right image); Polar Aspect

Corrective is to listen seriously to 4 million 'Arctic voices'— especially Arctic Indigenous voices



Source: Inuit Circumpolar Council, Lief Josefsen/Sermitsiaq, Samiskt Informationscentrum, Greenpeace (images left to right); Polar Aspect

Arctic Council is premier international forum where these Arctic voices can be heard

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Arctic Council unites Arctic states and Indigenous peoples in cooperation on wide range of common concerns

Arctic States

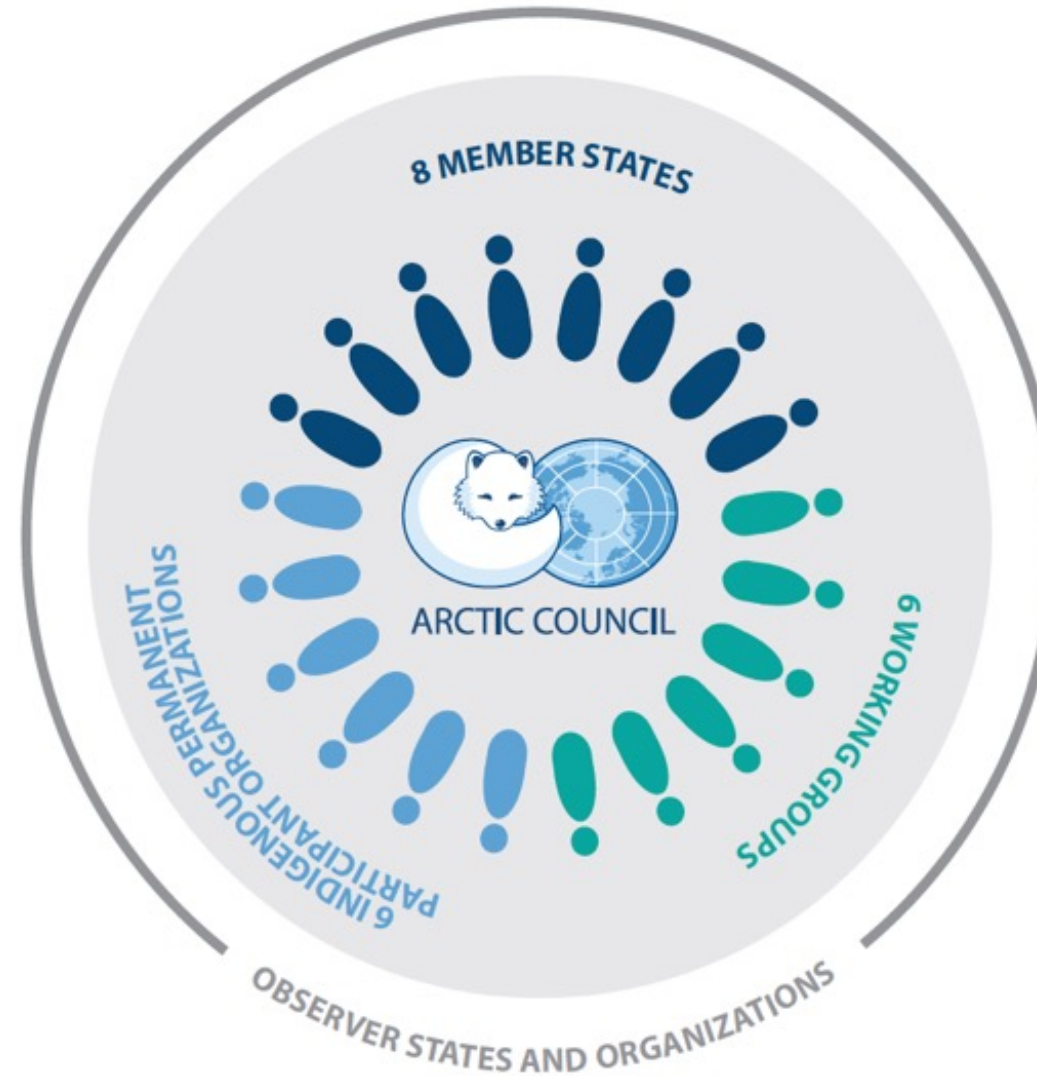
Canada
Denmark
Finland
Iceland
Norway
Russia
Sweden
USA

Indigenous Peoples

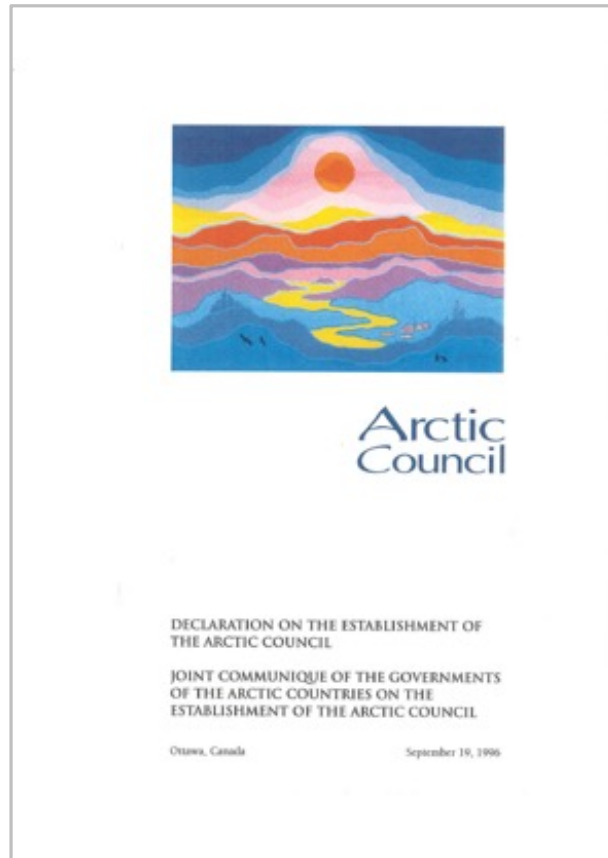
AIA
AAC
GCI
ICC
RAIPON
SC

Working Groups

ACAP
AMAP
CAFF
EPPR
PAME
SDWG



Direct involvement of Arctic peoples, plus rule of consensus, make Arctic Council unique



Ottawa Declaration (1996)

- 'The category of Permanent Participation is created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council' (Article 2)
- 'Decisions of the Arctic Council are to be by consensus of the Members' (Article 7)

Arctic Council also doesn't deal with issues of military security (Article 1(a))

Arctic Council not 'Arctic government' but rather high-level forum—*policy-shaping* not *policy-making* body



Arctic Council well known for 'evidence-based' or scientific approach to its policy-shaping work

Arctic Council concentrates on five different types of work to support good governance and cooperation



Agreements
& Cooperation



Recommendations



Data
& Knowledge



Monitoring



Assessments

Arctic Council has commissioned well-regarded natural and social science to help shape policy—e.g. ACIA, AHDR, ARR

However, Arctic Council's vital technical and diplomatic work has been paused since Russia's invasion of Ukraine



The core principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, based on international law, have long underpinned the work of the Arctic Council, a forum which Russia currently chairs. In light of Russia's flagrant violation of these principles, our representatives will not travel to Russia for meetings of the Arctic Council. Additionally, our states are temporarily pausing participation in all meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies . . .

— Joint statement by governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden & USA

Indeed, despite collegial reputation, Arctic Council isn't immune to political discord—let's look at one past episode

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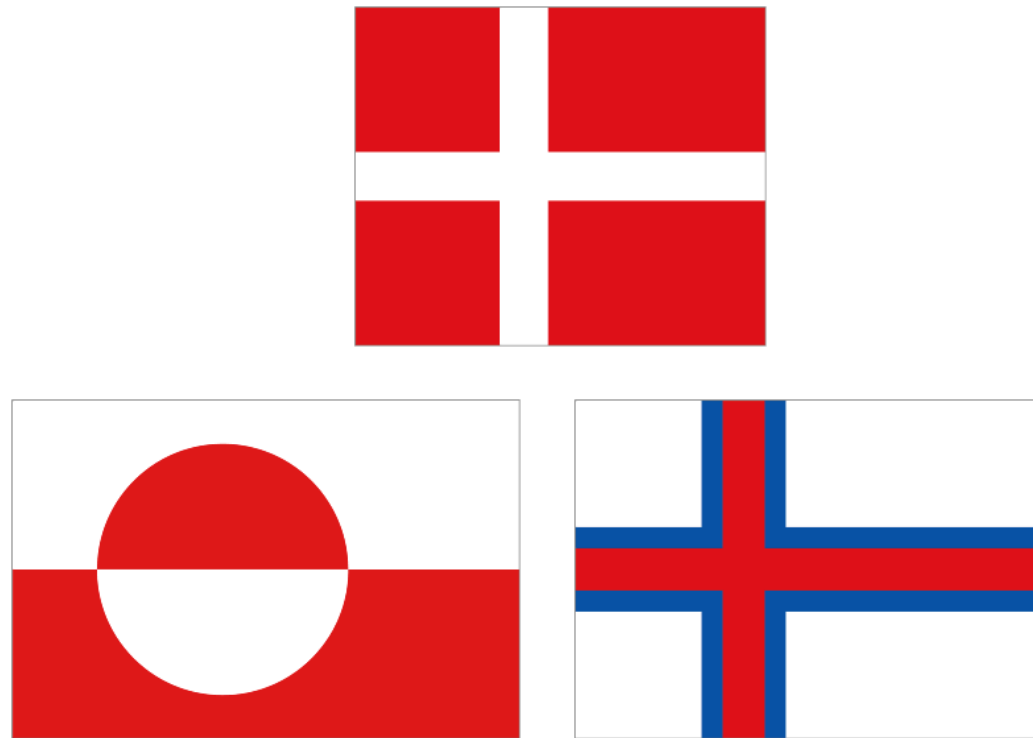
In 2013, Greenland boycotted Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden



Source: Lief Josefsen/Sermitsiaq (left image); Trude Pettersen/Barents Observer (right image); Polar Aspect

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Sweden had decided only one flag for tripartite Kingdom of Denmark at Arctic Council table—that of Denmark...



...rather than usual three flags representing not only Denmark, but also Greenland and Faroe Islands

Chilingarov expedition of 2007 had generated widespread excitement about 'scramble for Arctic'



Stimulated interest from other powerful states and groups to join Arctic Council as Observers—e.g. China, EU

In response, Arctic Council moved to re-assert itself as closed group of sovereign Arctic states



Arctic wasn't 'global commons' in their view—as China had asserted at that time!

As Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic territory, as well as self-governing nation, Greenland was offended



It was Greenland's then-premier who signed 1996 Ottawa Declaration on behalf of whole Kingdom of Denmark

But Arctic Council of sovereign states includes Greenland only in virtue of Denmark, which is the sovereign power...



...not Denmark in virtue of Greenland, which isn't!

Similarly, Arctic Indigenous 'Permanent Participants' have no 'vote' on Arctic Council because they lack sovereignty



Source: Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (image); Polar Aspect

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Canada brokered compromise allowing Greenland to attend 2015 Iqaluit Ministerial and future Ministerials...



- All three parts of Kingdom of Denmark have right of representation at Arctic Council table
- Which part will represent Kingdom of Denmark is for three parts to decide between themselves
- But there will be only one flag at table—that of Denmark

...but question remains—does Arctic really begin with states?

To answer this question, it will be helpful to introduce idea of world order of sovereign states

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Idea of state sovereignty implies international world order known as 'Westphalian system'



1648 Peace of Westphalia traditionally thought to have set down principles of modern international state system

Source: G Terborch, *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster* (1648) via *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (left image); *Espace Mondial: L'Atlas*, Institut d'études politiques de Paris (centre image); City of Osnabrück (right image); Polar Aspect

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Origin of state system debatable, but 'Westphalian' principles long entrenched in international relations

Principles of Westphalian state system

State sovereignty

Every state has—and only states can have, of themselves and not in relation to other states—the supreme power to make and unmake law within their borders

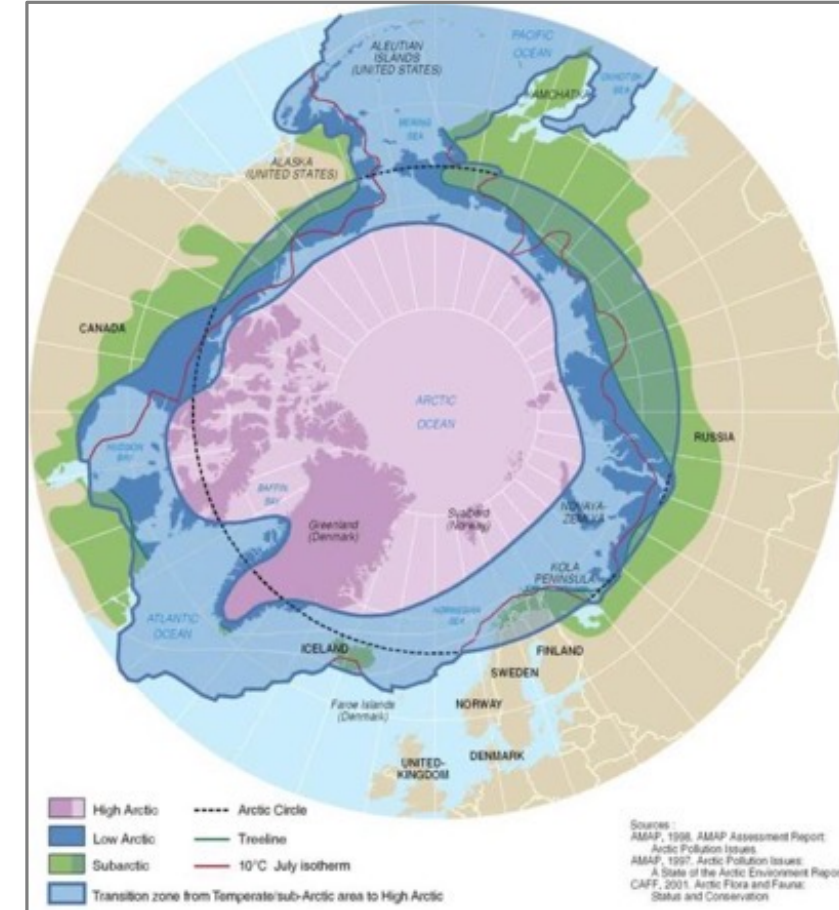
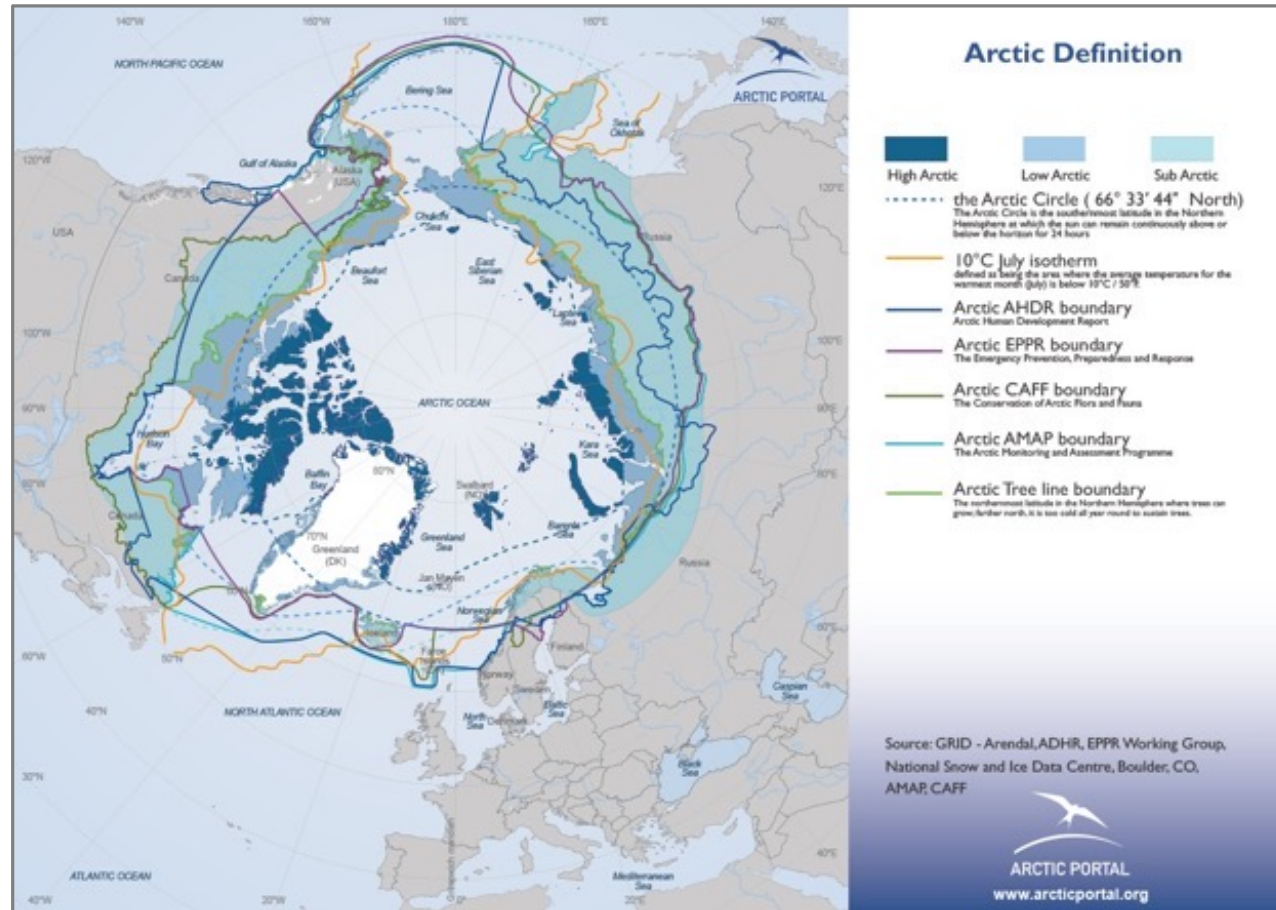
State equality

In virtue of their inherent sovereignties, every state is equal to every other state, and only states can deal with one another as equals—*i.e.* states have the monopoly of international affairs

Non-interference

Following from the above two principles, no state can legitimately interfere in the domestic affairs of another state, and no state is obliged to answer to another state for its domestic policies

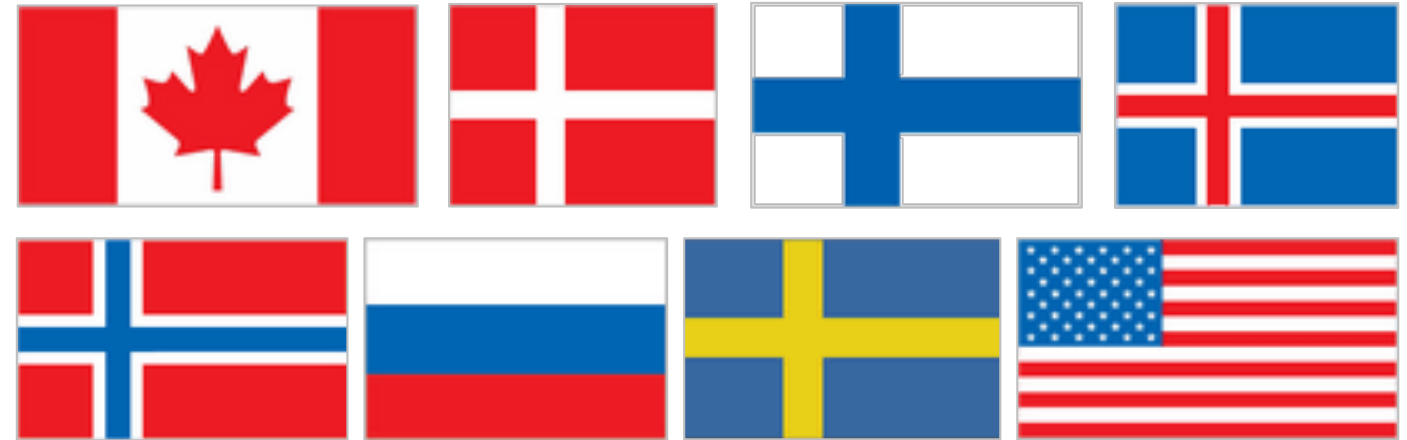
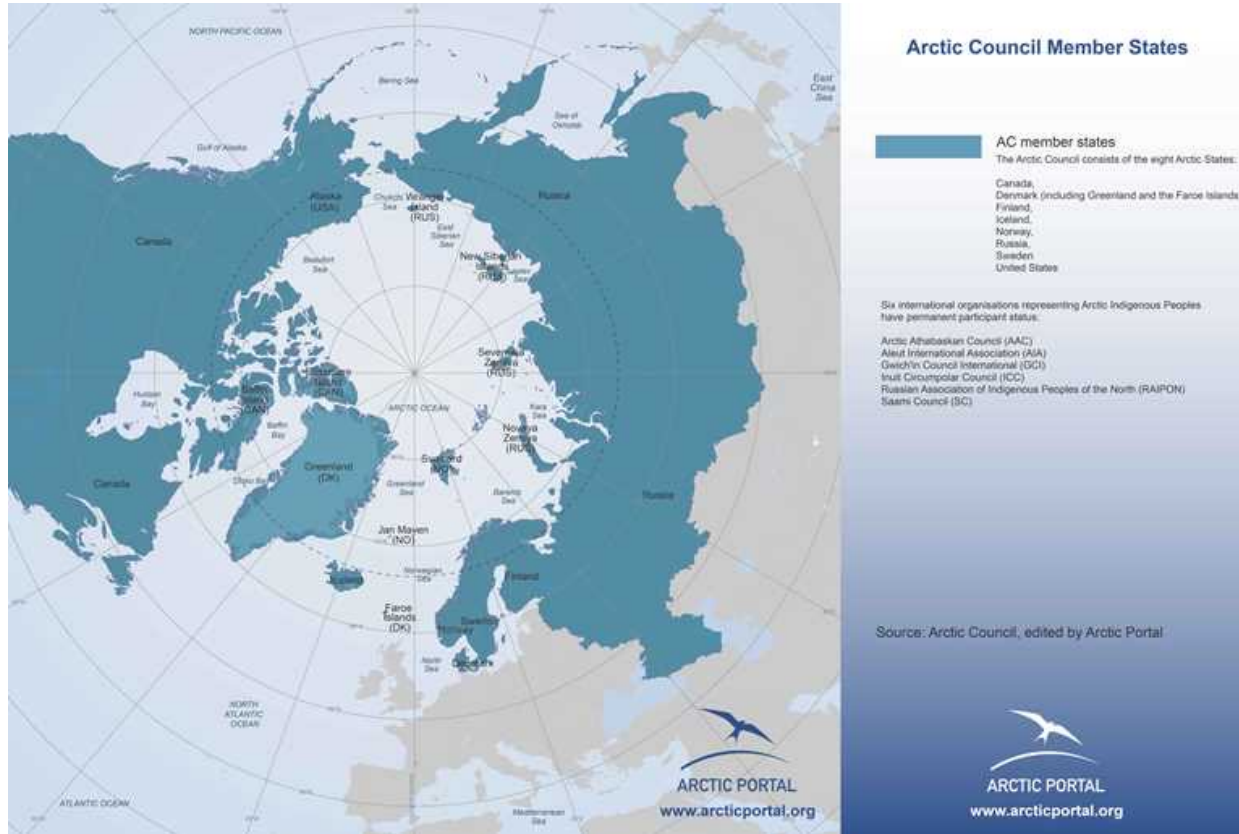
However southern boundary of Arctic defined, cuts through borders of all Arctic states except perhaps Iceland...



...and capitals of all Arctic States lie south of any plausible Arctic boundary, except perhaps Reykjavík

Source: Arctic Portal (left image); GRID-Arendal (right image); Polar Aspect

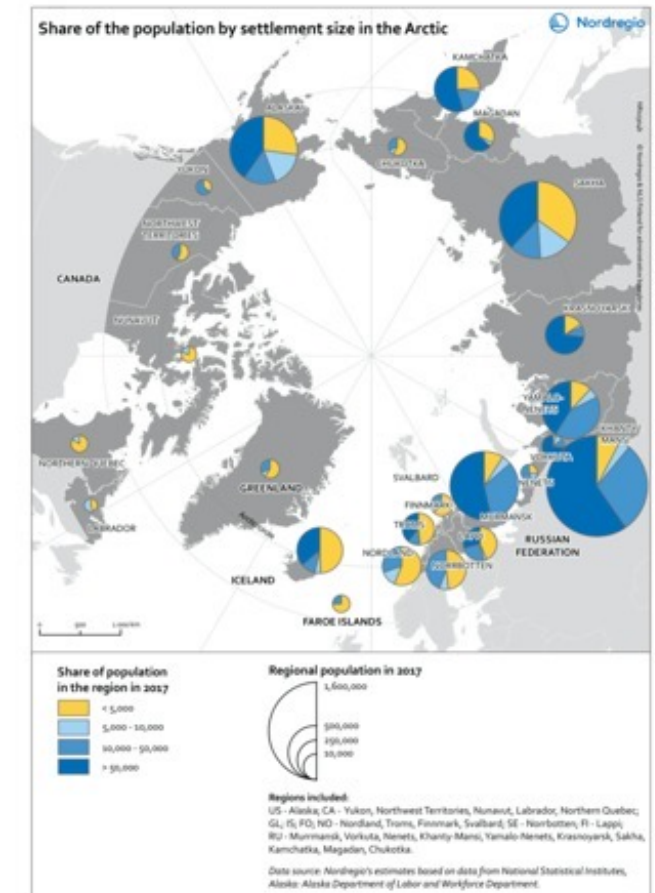
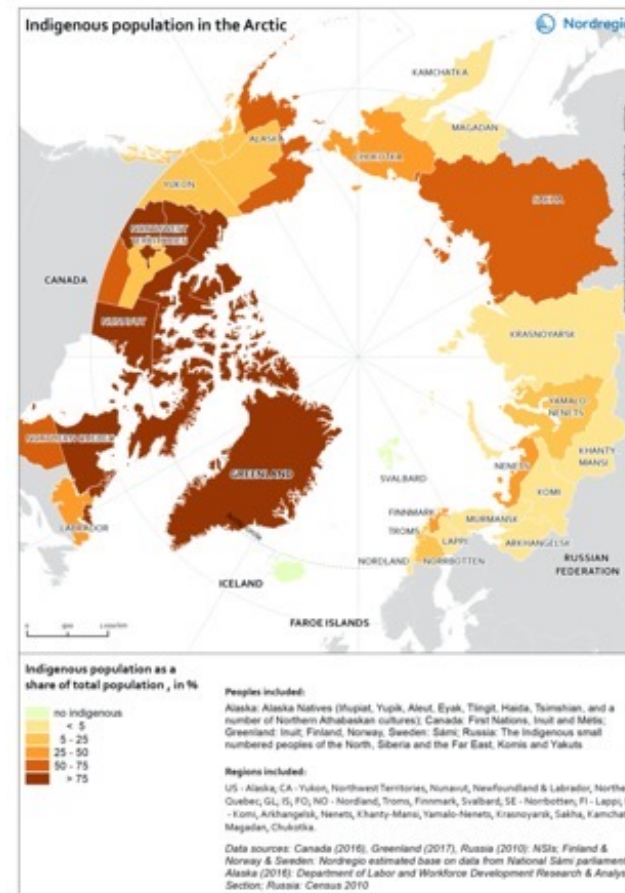
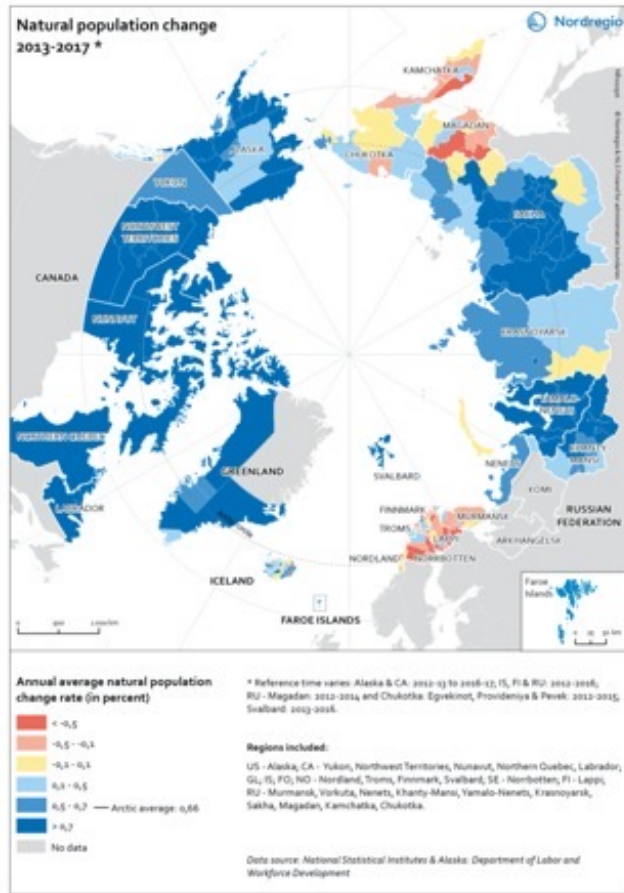
Applicability of Westphalian state system is therefore particularly unclear in Arctic



No plausible definition of Arctic conforms to Westphalian analysis

Source: Arctic Portal (left image); World Flag Database (flag images); Polar Aspect

Is Arctic best understood as region of sovereign states in Westphalian sense?



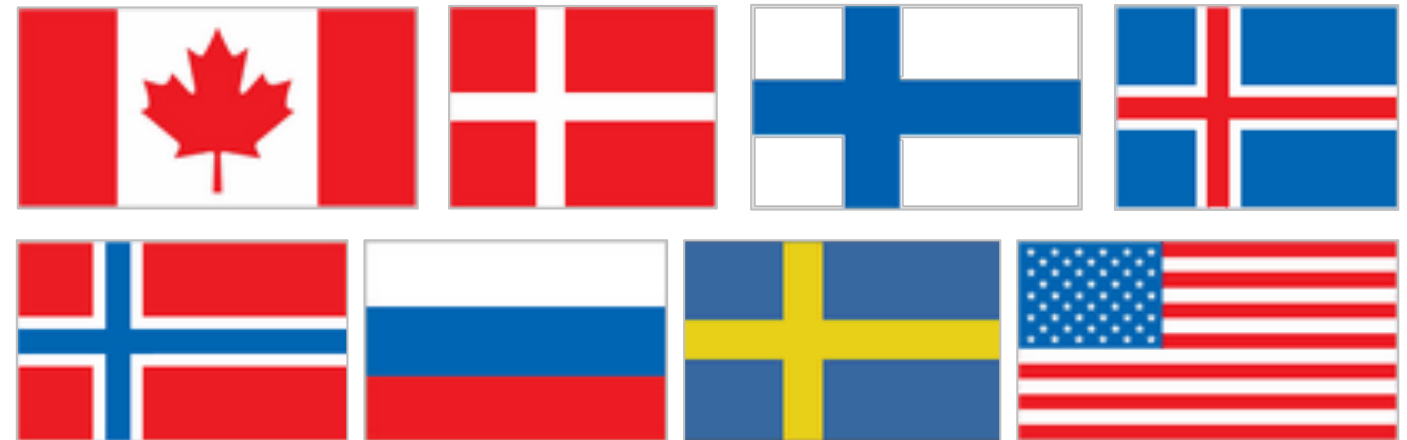
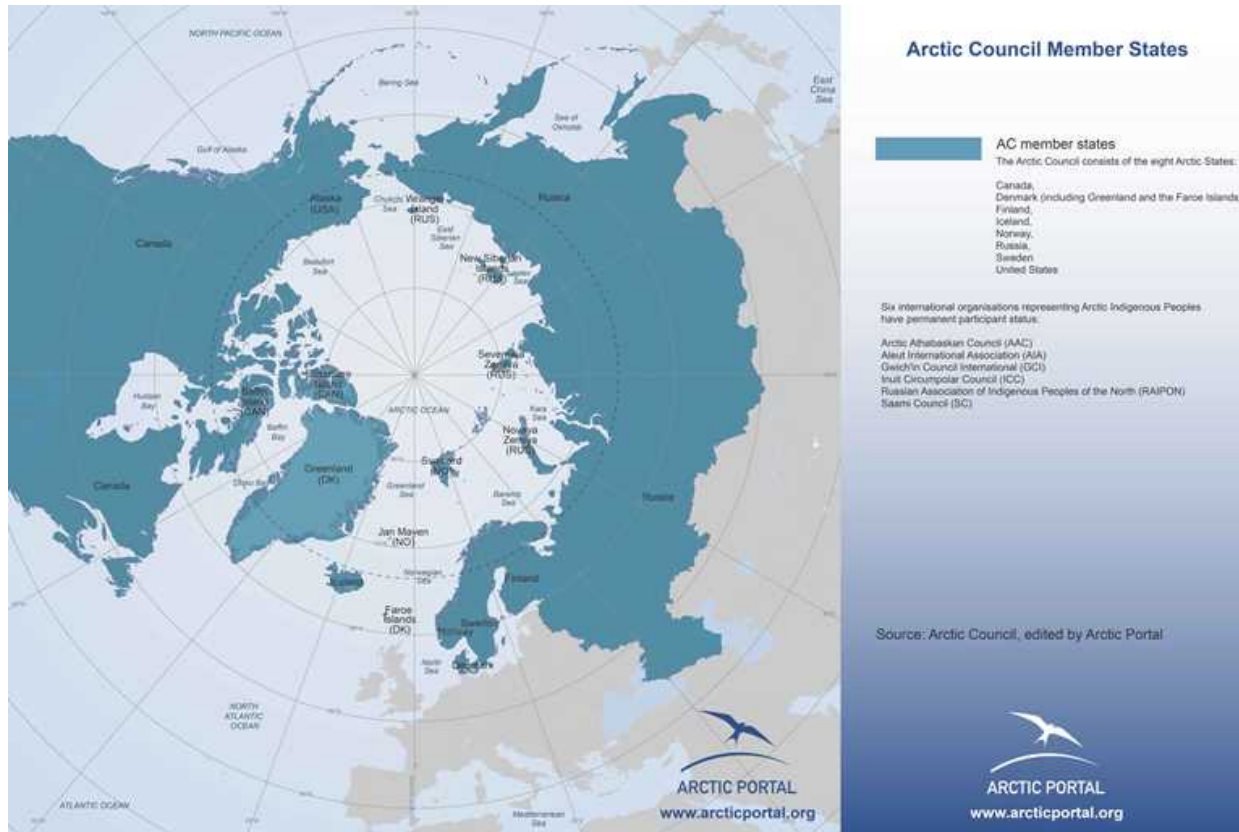
Or is it better understood as 'region of regions' or 'community of communities' as sometimes called?

At least 5 common Arctic political geographies, not all of them Westphalian-style models

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In 'Arctic 8' model, Arctic is closed region of 8 Arctic states, defined by geographic extension northward



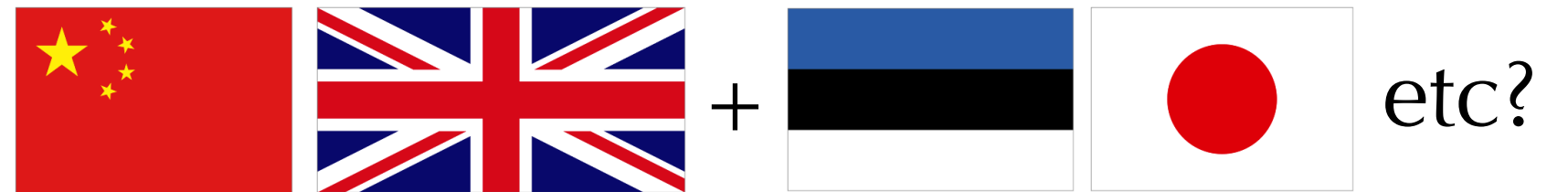
In this Westphalian model, other states, sub-state actors and peoples participate to extent permitted by Arctic states

'Arctic 5' model has been used in maritime-policy contexts, using hydrographic definition of Arctic Ocean



Has been widened to 'Arctic 5+5' to include other jurisdictions with Arctic-capable fleets

'Arctic and near-Arctic' model posits three geographic 'ranks' of states—Arctic, near-Arctic and non-Arctic



China and UK have claimed 'near-Arctic' status—but would that mean e.g. Greenland is near-Chinese (Holm-Olsen)?

'Arctic global commons' model suggests at least some part of Arctic transcends sovereignty of Arctic states



Implies Arctic Council should make way for internationally open 'Arctic treaty' similar to Antarctic Treaty System

'Arctic region of regions' model envisions complex Arctic of states, sub-states, communities, peoples



Implies Arctic Council membership should be broadened

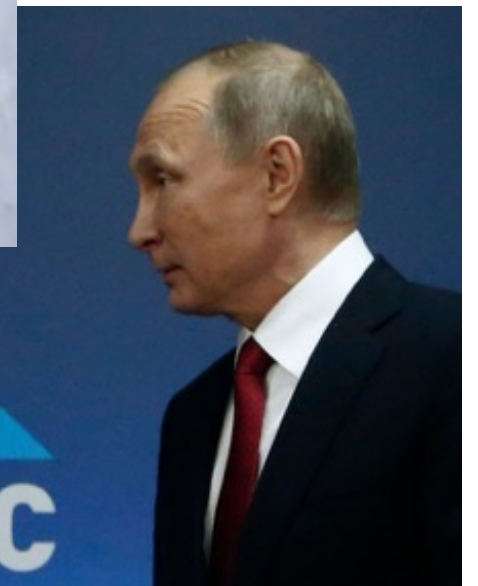
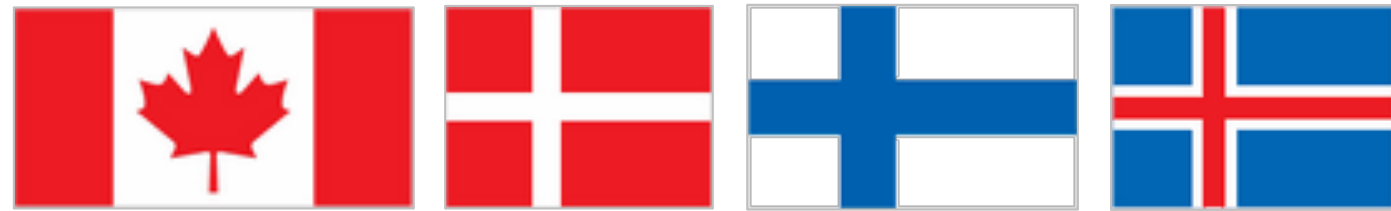
Source: Various Arctic Council, Wikipedia, World Flag Database (images); Polar Aspect

It's not that any one model is right and others wrong—tensions between them help explain Arctic politics!



Greenland's 2013 Arctic Council boycott was story of tensions between 'A8' 'global commons' and 'region of regions' models

Perhaps becoming necessary to add sixth Arctic political geography model—'Arctic 7 and Russia'?



Can Arctic really be considered coherent international region any longer—and not simply for constructivist reasons?

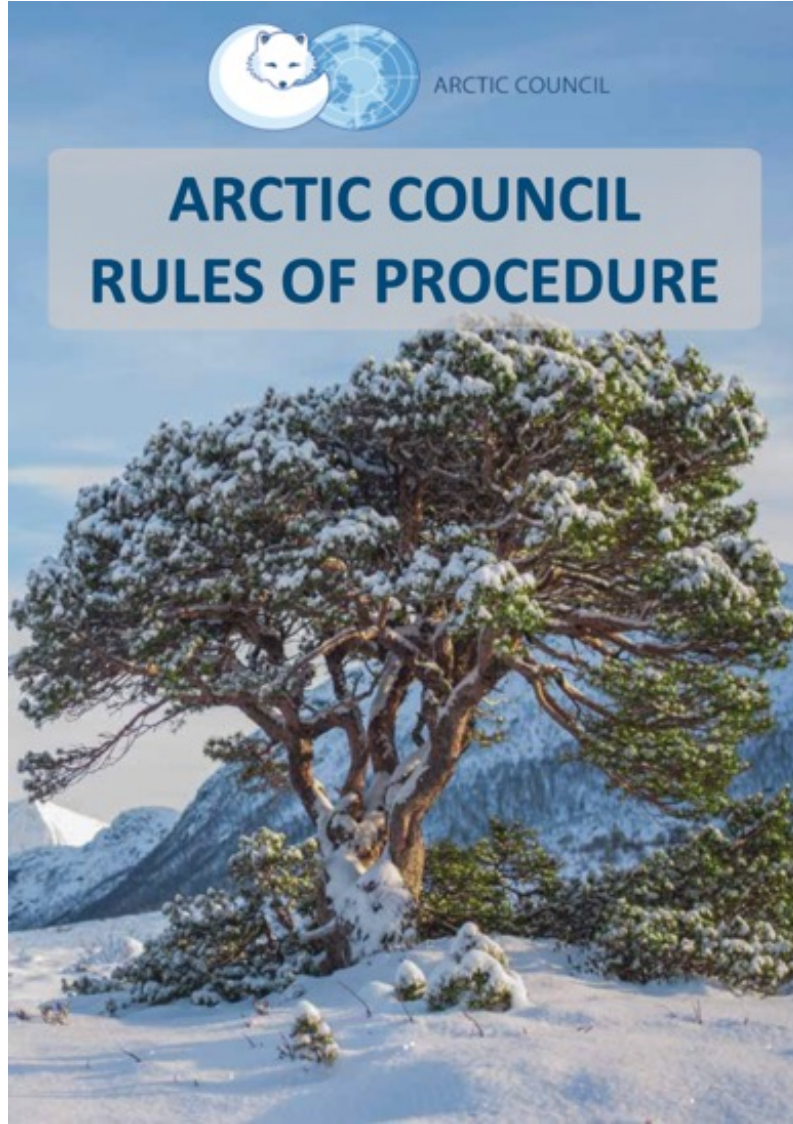
Source: World Flag Database (flag images); Alexey Ereshko/Russian Federation Ministry of Defence (top right image); Sergei Karpukhin/AFP (bottom right image); Polar Aspect

Arctic international relations since Chilingarov expedition of 2007 has suggested 'Westphalianisation' of Arctic

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Arctic Council adopted new rules for Observers designed to underscore Arctic State sovereignty...

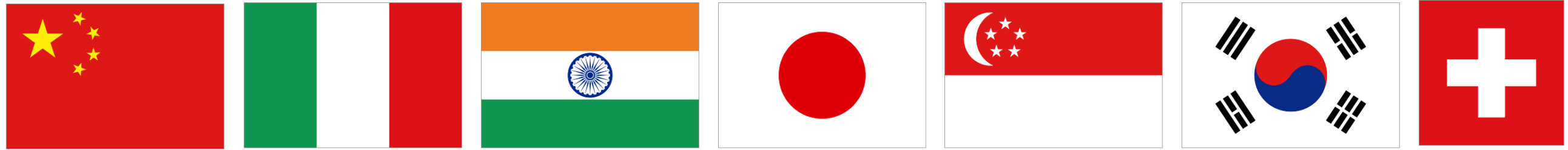


Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, Annex 2 (2013)

6. In the determination of the general suitability of an applicant for Observer status the Arctic Council will, *inter alia*, take into account the extent to which the applicant:
- ...
 - b. recognizes Arctic States' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic;
 - c. recognizes that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean including, notably, the Law of the Sea, and that this framework provides a solid foundation for responsible management of this ocean;
 - d. respects the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants;
 - ...

...allowing it to respond to pressure to admit new Observers, including powerful non-Arctic states

Observers admitted to Arctic Council since 2013



But also to justify not admitting others,
such as EU, Greenpeace

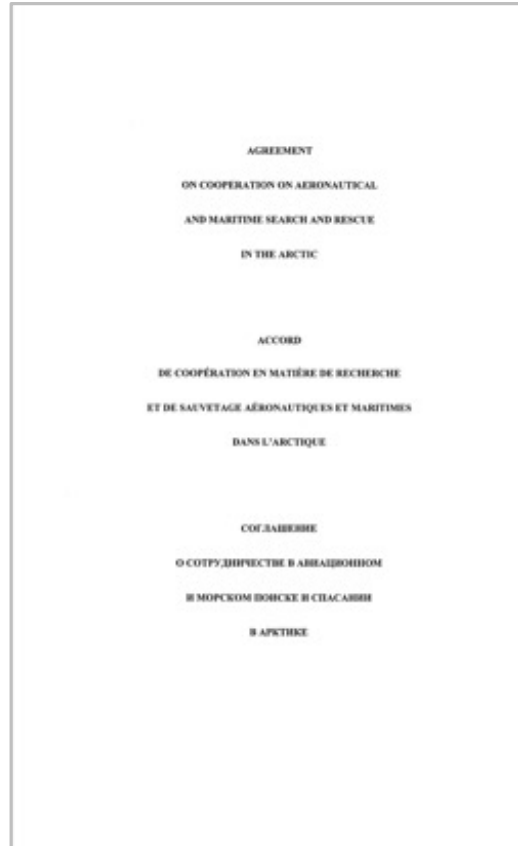
Arctic Council also established permanent Secretariat at Framcenteret in Tromsø, Norway, to oversee work...



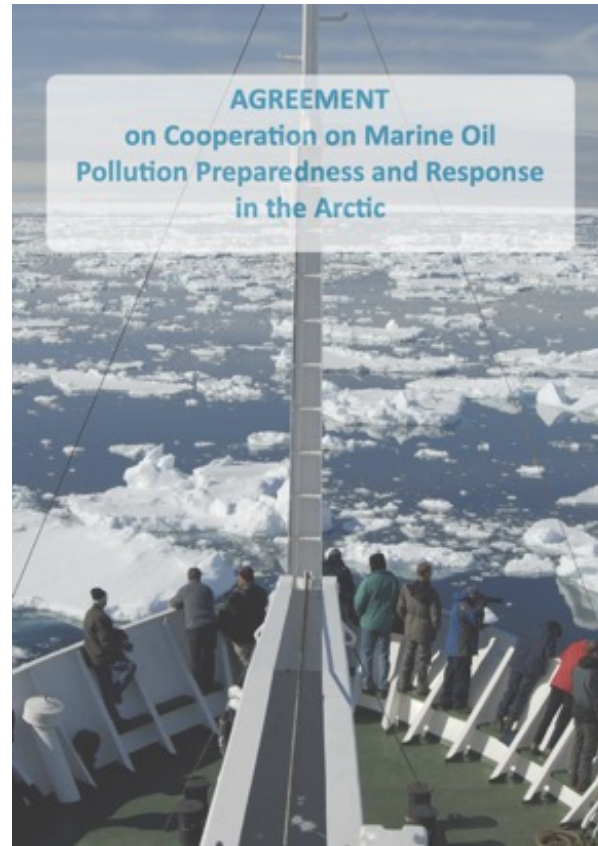
Source: Ronald Johansen/Framsenteret (image); Polar Aspect

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...which began to include negotiating and settling binding international treaties between Arctic States



Agreement on Cooperation
on Aeronautical and
Maritime Search and Rescue
in the Arctic (2011)



Agreement on Cooperation
on Marine Oil Pollution,
Preparedness and Response
in the Arctic (2013)



Agreement on Enhancing
International Arctic Scientific
Cooperation (2017)

Were such developments natural steps in the 'maturation' of a young international forum...



...or also a 'Westphalianisation' of the Arctic?

Source: Arctic Council Secretariat (left image); G Terborch, *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster (1648)* via *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (right image); Polar Aspect

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How then shall we answer question posed earlier in this lecture—does Arctic begin with states?

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Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech set Arctic on path of decreasing tension and increasing cooperation



What everybody can be absolutely certain of is the Soviet Union's profound and certain interest in preventing the North of the planet, its Polar and sub-Polar regions and all Northern countries from ever again becoming an arena of war, and in forming there a genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation.

— Mikhail Gorbachev, Murmansk, 1 October 1987

Became possible to think of unified international Arctic,
leading ultimately to establishment of Arctic Council

Has Murmansk moment now passed—and with it many political geographies we mentioned?



"We hope the pause will not be too long. Now, more than ever, it is important to continue the Arctic cooperation to protect indigenous peoples' cultures and the Arctic environment.."

THE SAAMI COUNCIL'S STATEMENT ON THE ARCTIC COUNCIL PAUSE
13.03.2022

Without Russia, there are no 'A8', 'A5', 'A5+5' or 'Arctic and near Arctic' models

Source: Viewsridge/Wikipedia (right image); Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (centre image); Sámiráđđi (right image); Polar Aspect

We should pause before thinking 1987 beginning and 2022 end, and taking 'A7 and Russia' model as only alternative



Let's remember 'Utqiagvik moment' of 1977, 'Dálvadis moment' of 1953, 'Tråante moment' of 1917, etc

Perhaps Arctic begins with peoples, and not with states...



...but is 'region of regions' model qualified by new fracture in Arctic?—ultimately, states control borders

Thank you

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