

# Arctic political geography(-ies)

Haarlem Model United Nations

Stedelijk Gymnasium Haarlem | 1 April 2023

Let's begin with story of discord at Arctic Council—forum otherwise known for collegiality and cooperation

Arctic political geography(-ies)

1. A seat at the Arctic's top table
2. From Westphalia to the Arctic
3. Arctic political geography(-ies)
4. From the Arctic to Westphalia?
5. Murmansk revisited

# 2

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

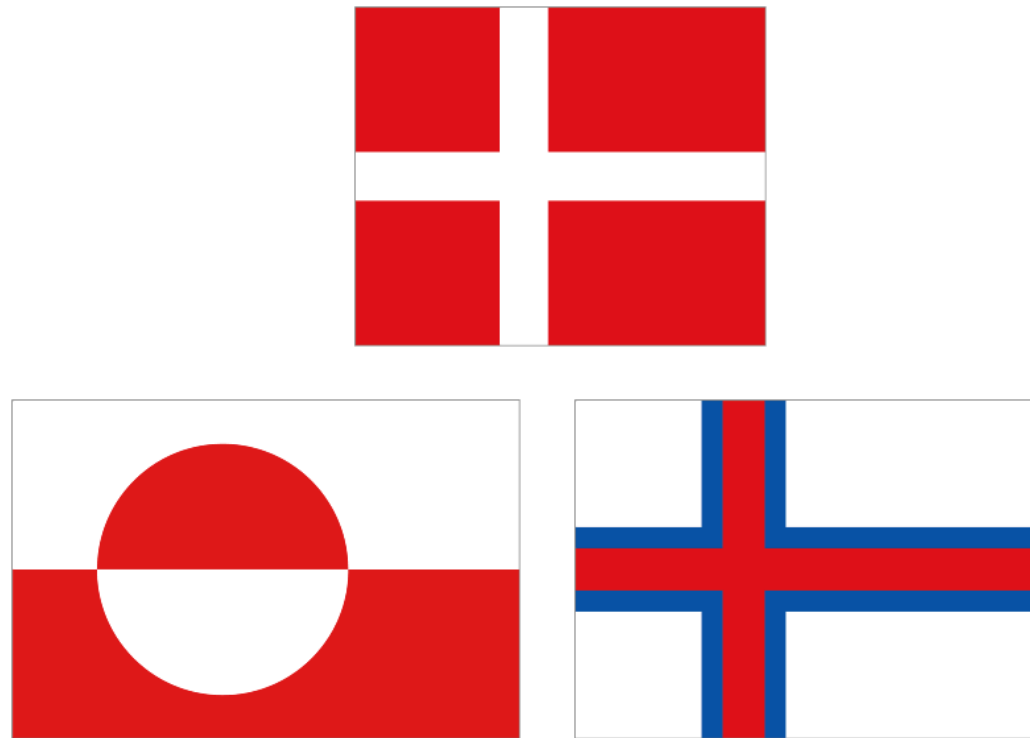


Source: Lief Josefsen/Sermitsiaq (left image); Trude Pettersen/Barents Observer (right image); Polar Aspect

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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

Source: NTV/AFP via *Christian Science Monitor* (left image); *The Economist* (right image); Polar Aspect

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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!

Source: Chris Wattie/Reuters (left image); Zhang Jiansong/Xinhua (right image); Polar Aspect

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# 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

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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

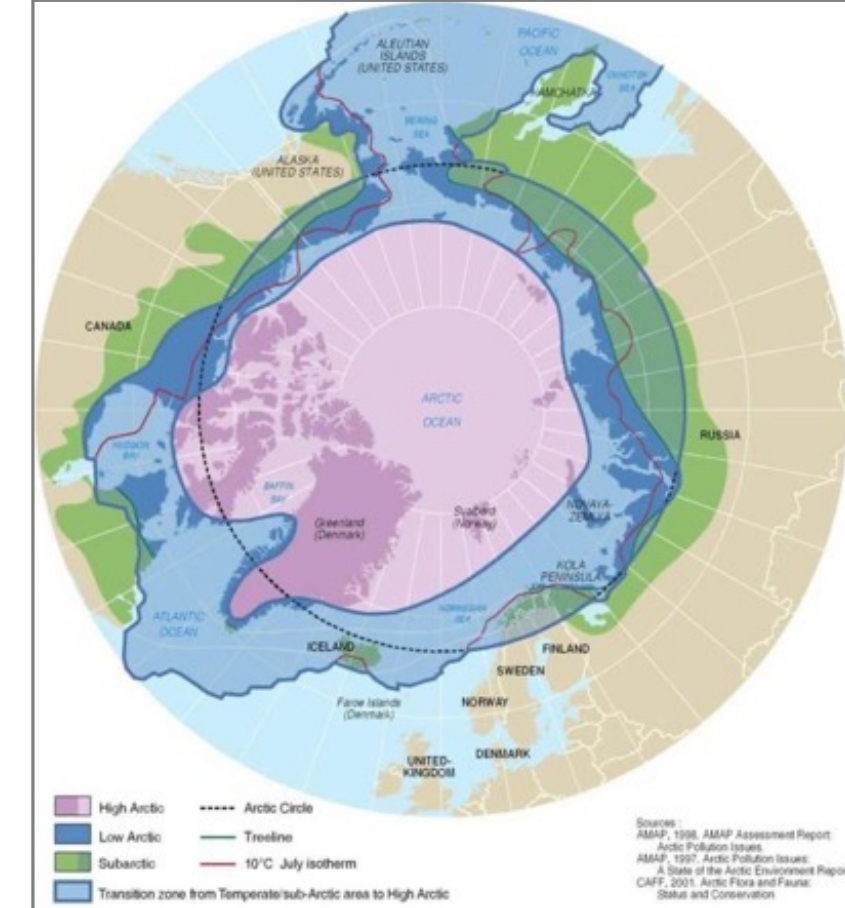
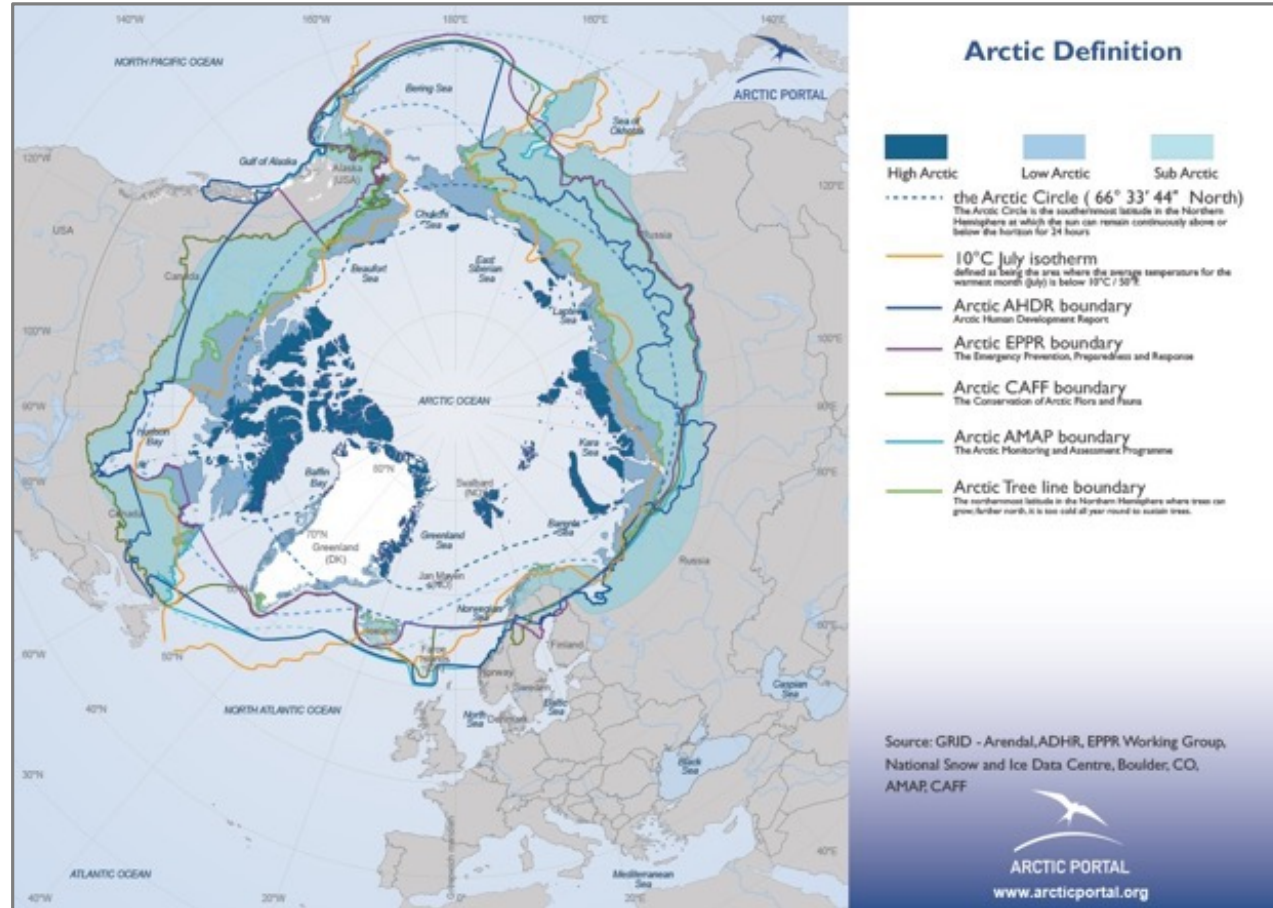
### State equality

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

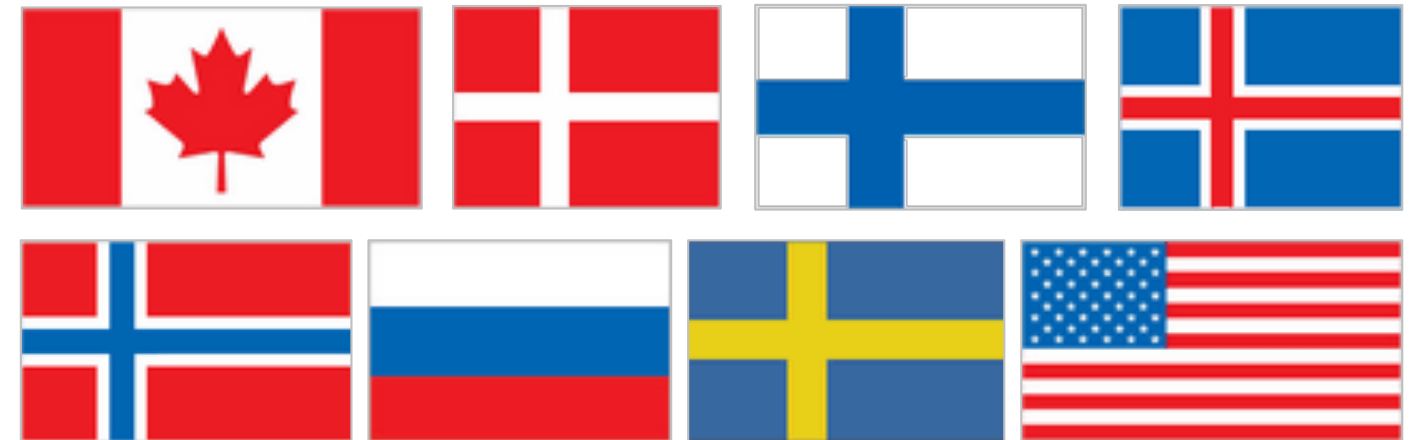
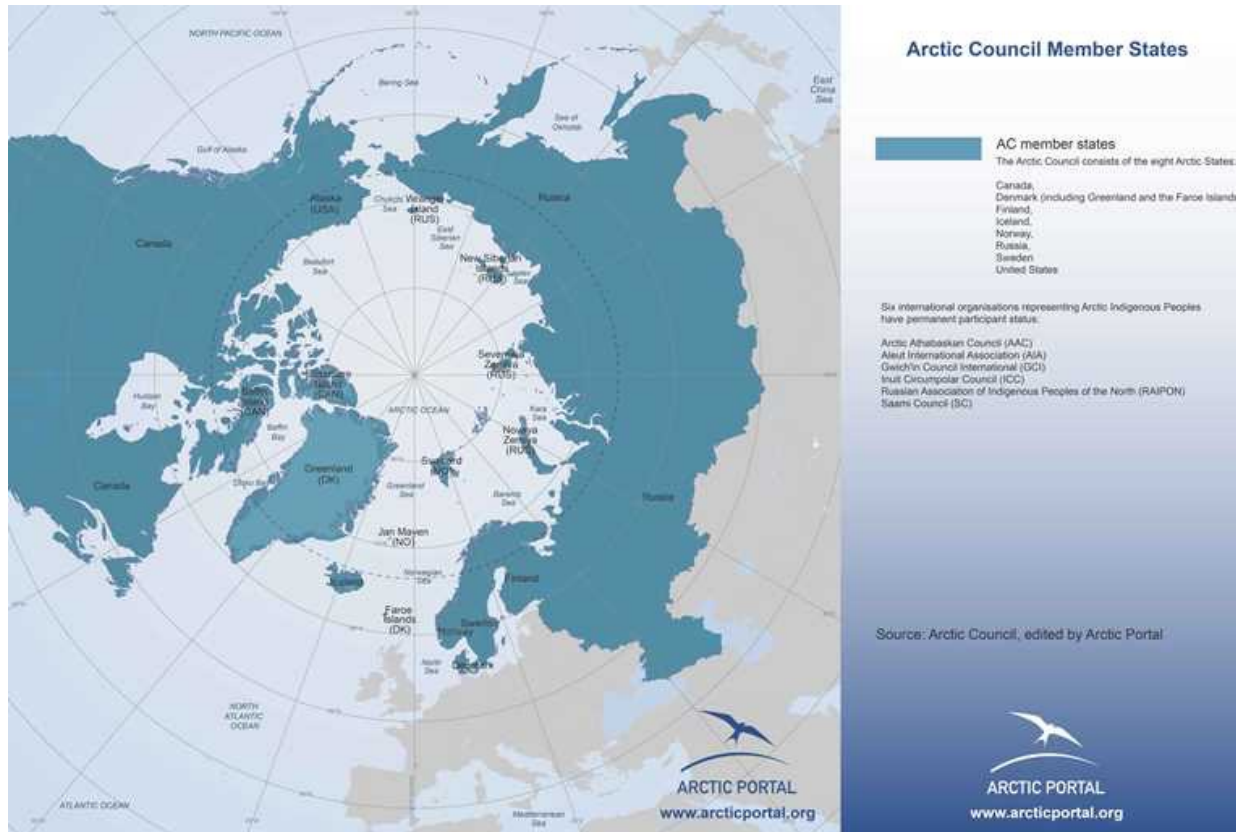
However southern boundary of Arctic defined, cuts through borders of all Arctic states except perhaps Iceland...



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

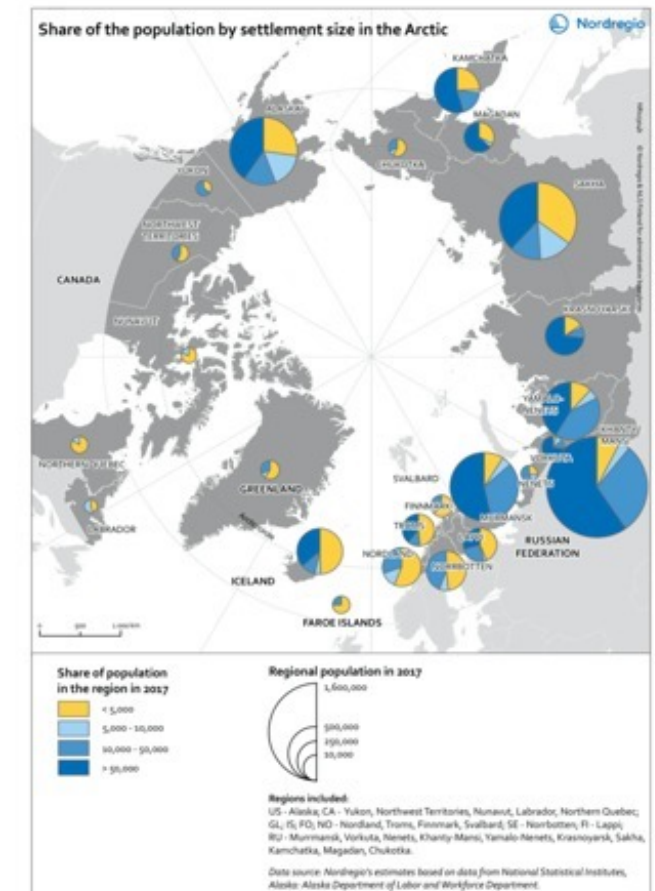
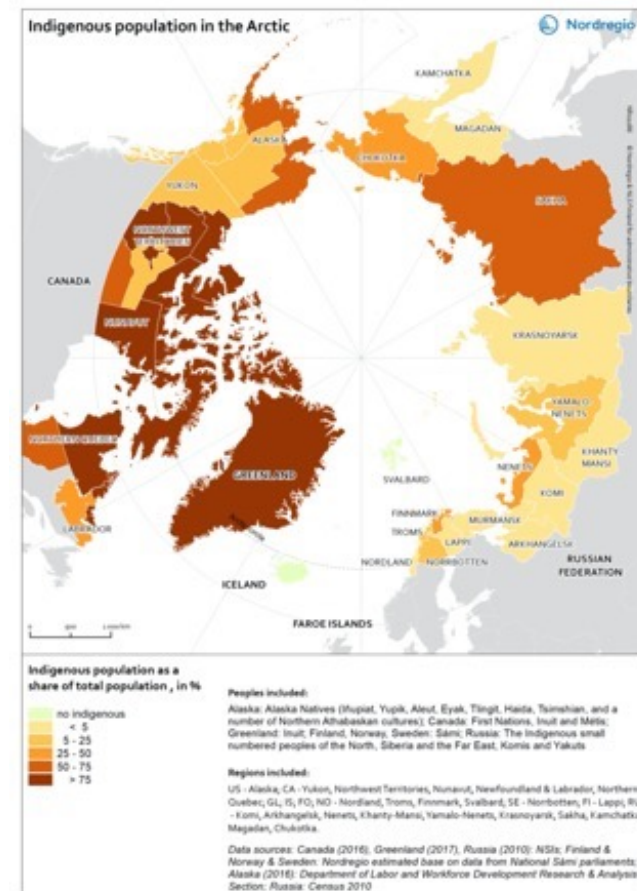
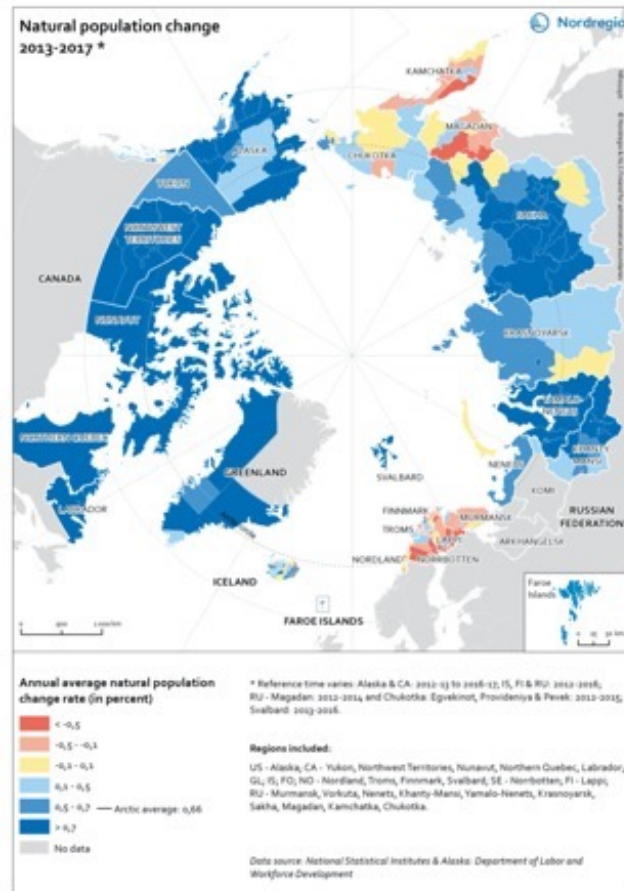


# Applicability of Westphalian state system is therefore particularly unclear in Arctic



No plausible definition of Arctic  
conforms to Westphalian analysis

# 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?

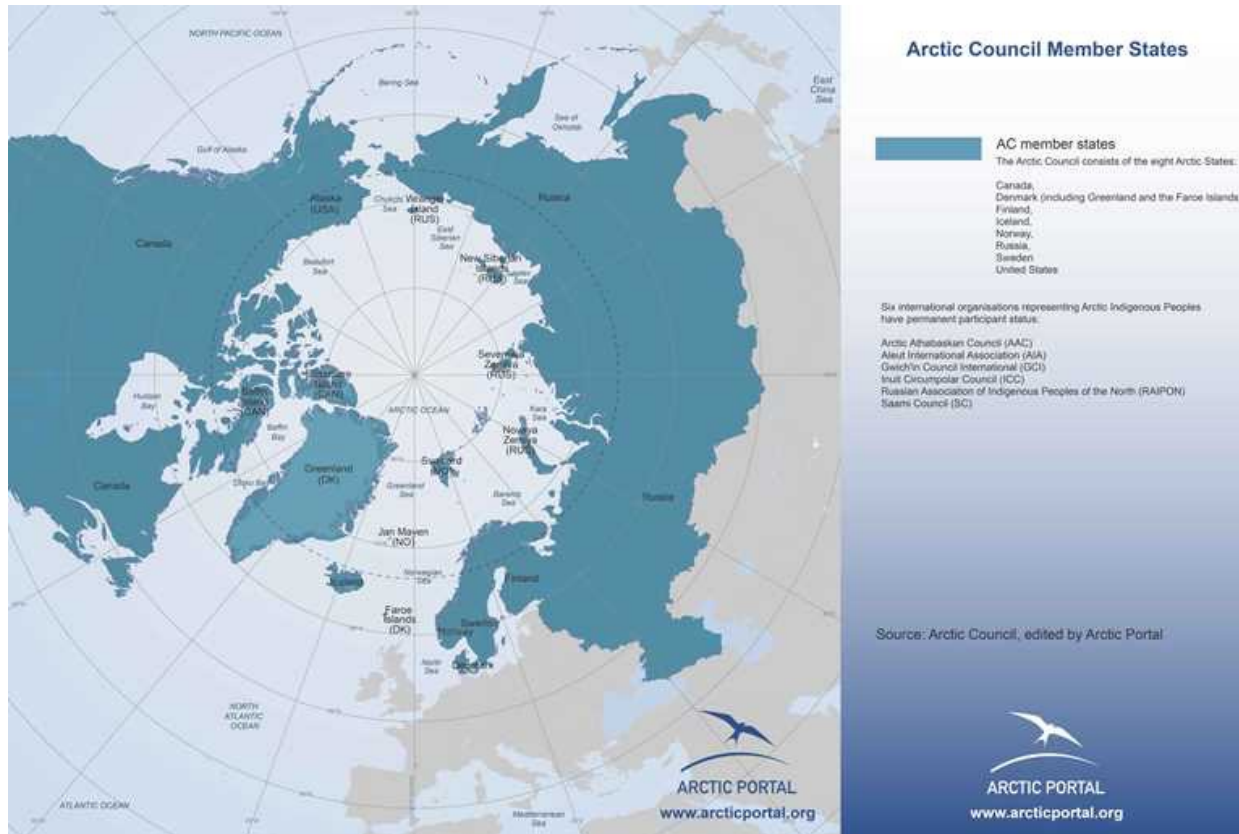


# At least 5 common Arctic political geographies, not all of them Westphalian-style models

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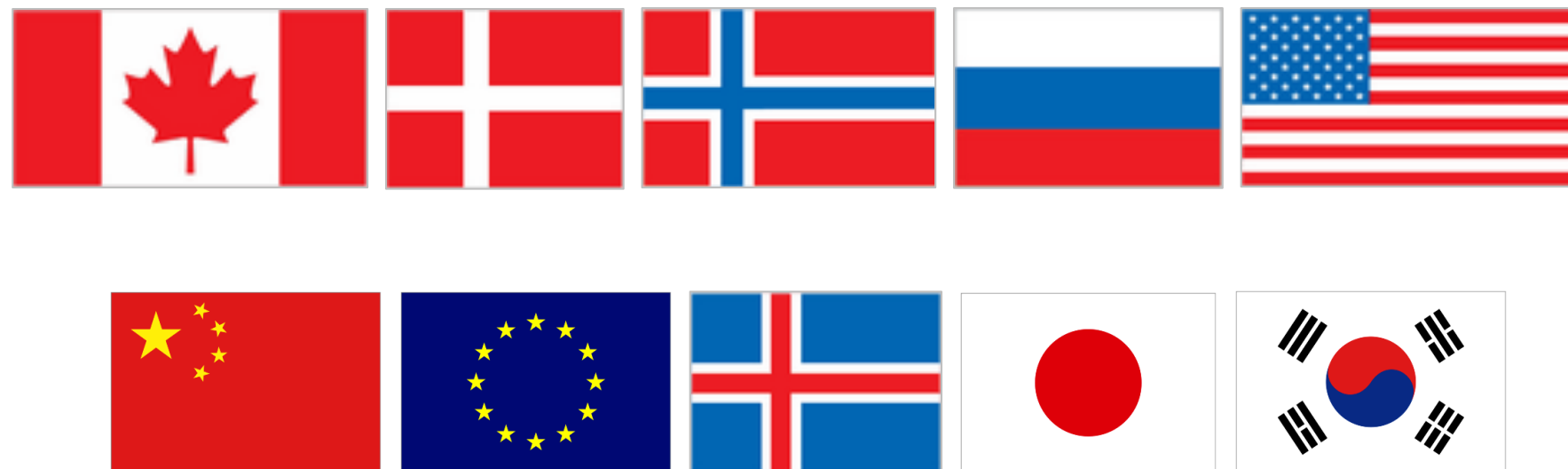
In 'Arctic 8' model, Arctic is closed region of 8 Arctic states, defined by geographic extension northward



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

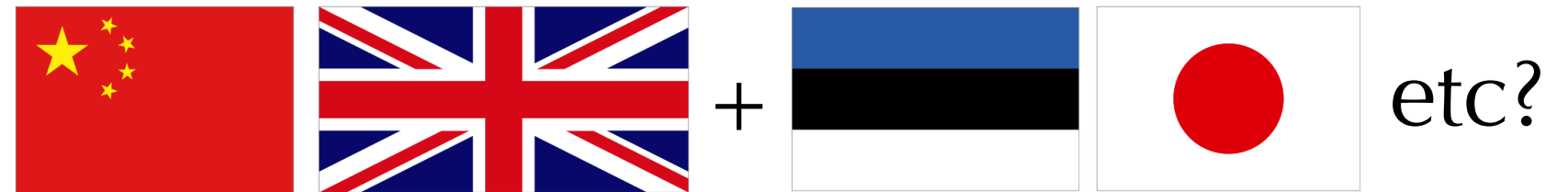
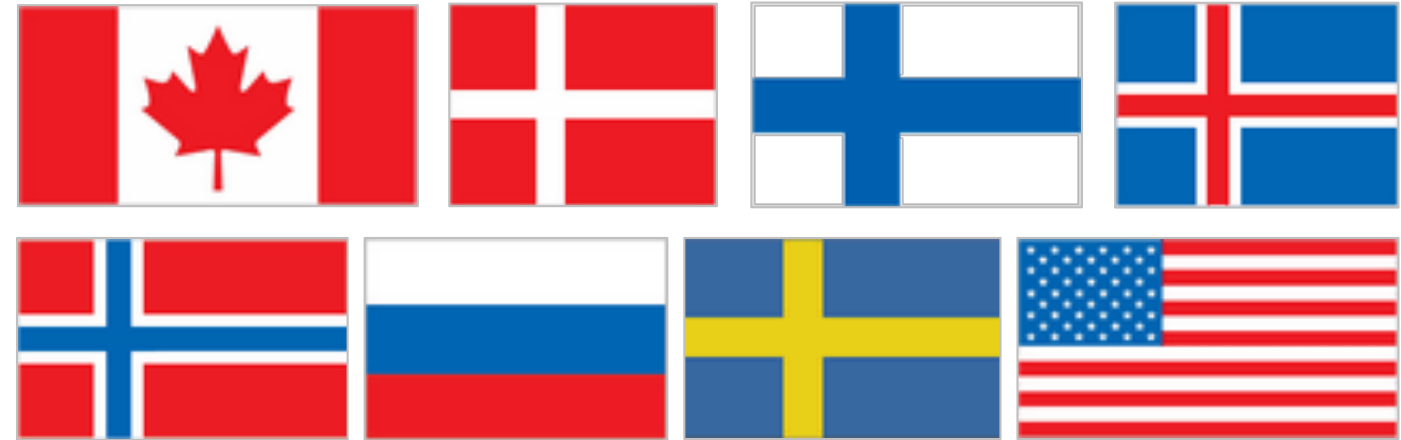


# 'Arctic 5' model has been used in maritime-policy contexts, using hydrographic definition of Arctic Ocean



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)?

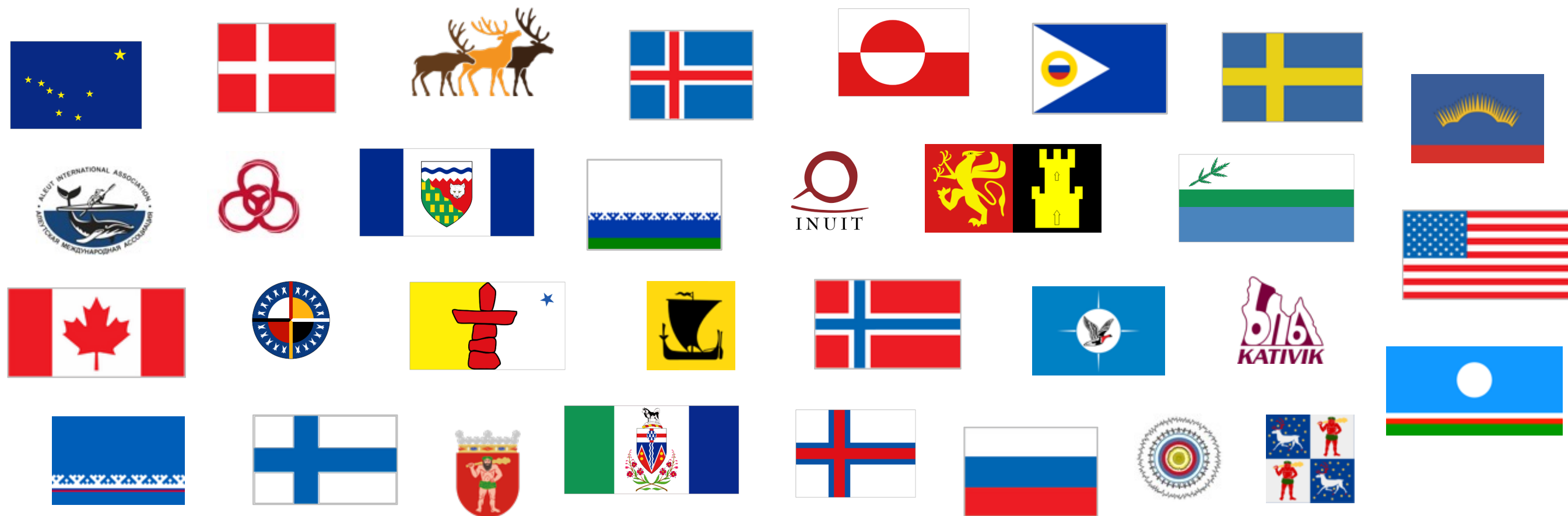


# 'Arctic global commons' model suggests at least some part of Arctic transcends sovereignty of Arctic states



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

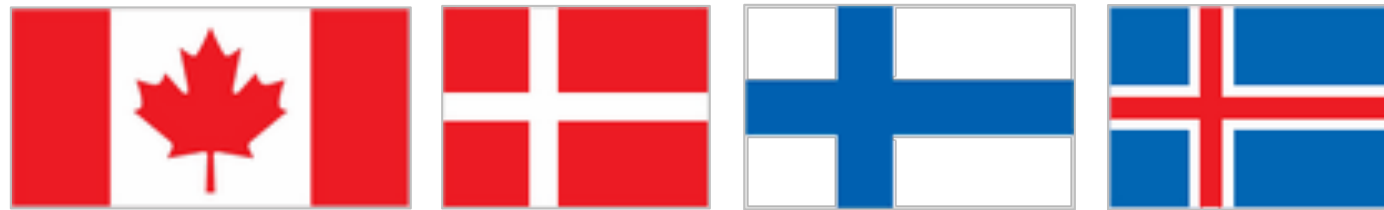


It's not that any one model is right and others wrong—  
tensions between them help explain Arctic politics!



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

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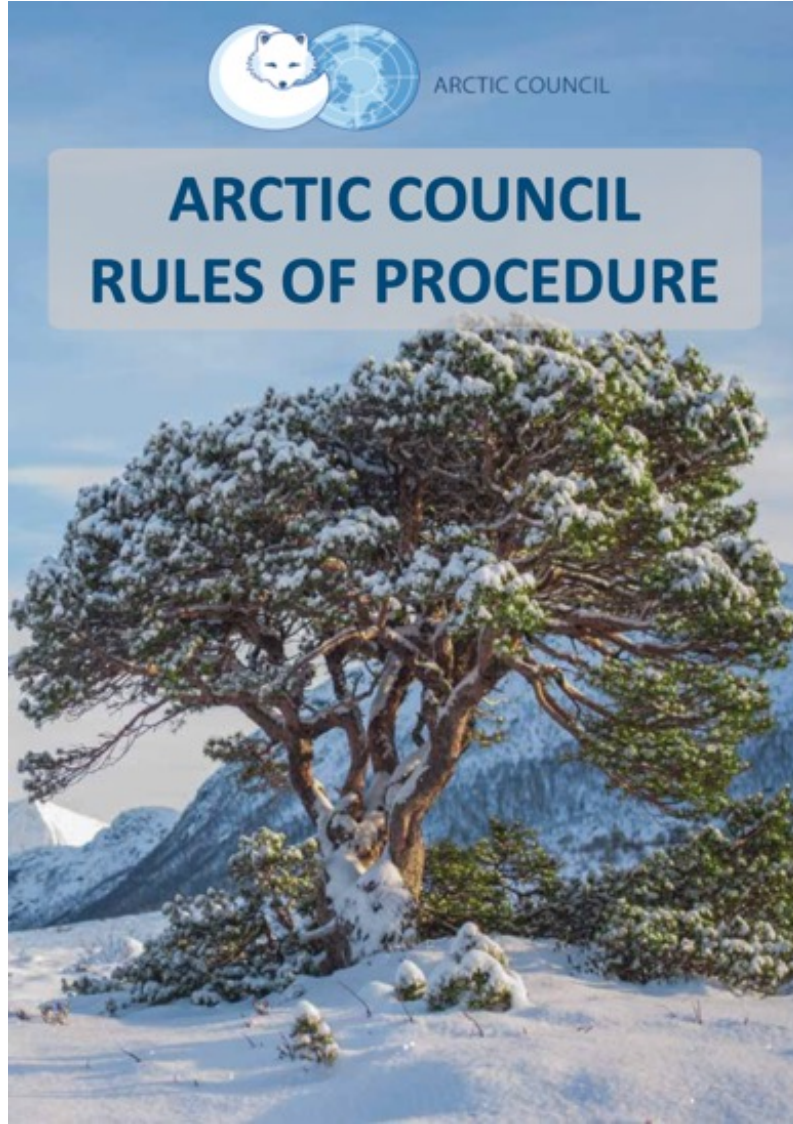


# Arctic international relations since Chilingarov expedition of 2007 has suggested 'Westphalianisation' of Arctic

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



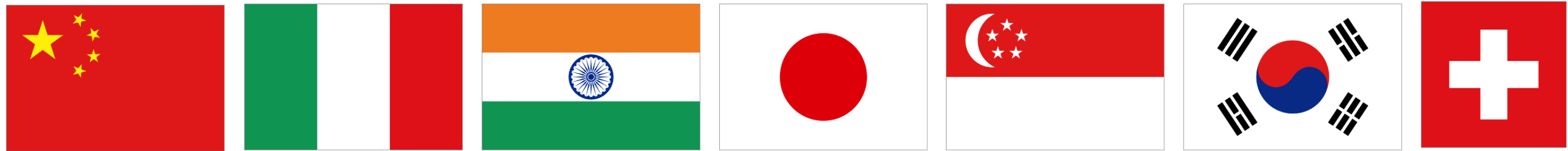
## Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, Annex 2 (2013)

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 Framsenderet in Tromsø, Norway, to oversee work...

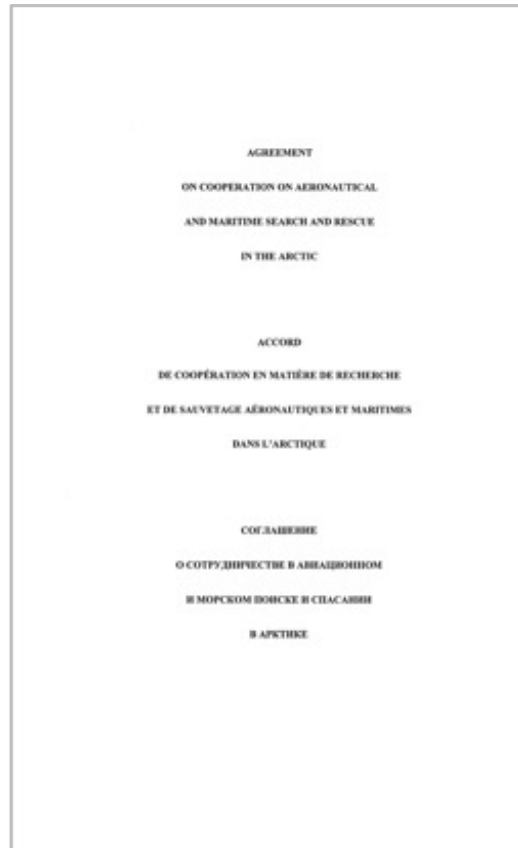


Source: Ronald Johansen/Framsenderet (image); Polar Aspect

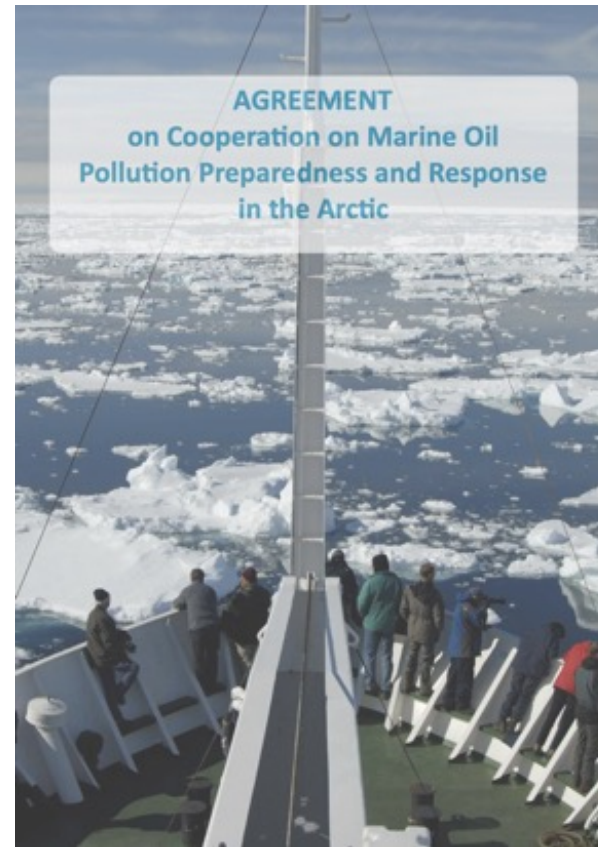
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# ...which began to include negotiating and settling binding international treaties between Arctic States



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 presentation—does Arctic begin with states?

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

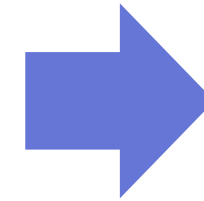


*What everybody can be absolutely certain of is the Soviet Union's profound and certain interest in preventing the North of the planet, its Polar and sub-Polar regions and all Northern countries from ever again becoming an arena of war, and in forming there a genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation.*

— Mikhail Gorbachev, Murmansk, 1 October 1987

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

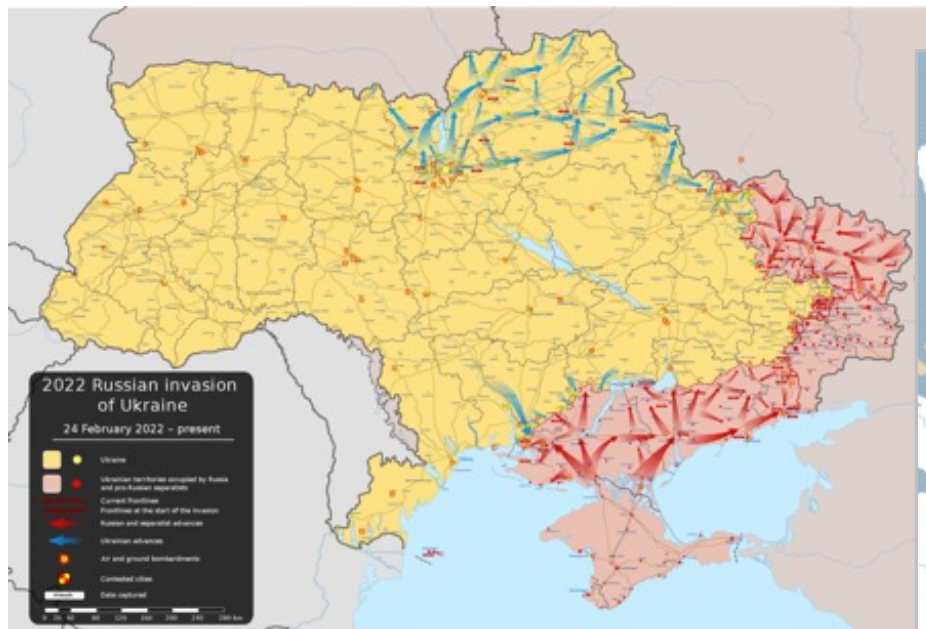
But Arctic that wasn't possible before 1987 'Murmansk moment' was Arctic of cooperating sovereign states



Murmansk moment represented leap forward from divided and militarised Arctic of Cold War



# 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

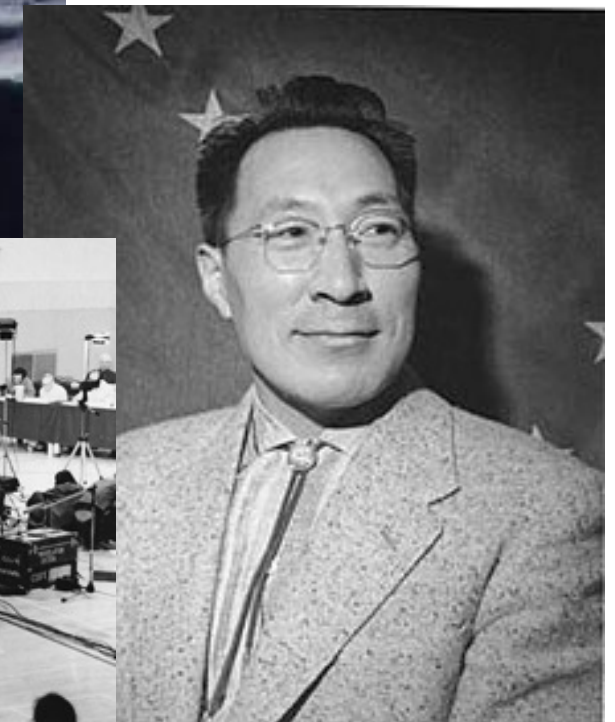
Without Russia, there are no 'A8', 'A5', 'A5+5' or 'Arctic and near Arctic' models

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

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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, 'Dálvvadis 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 / Dank u

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