

**THE FAST-CHANGING ARCTIC:  
RETHINKING ARCTIC SECURITY  
FOR A WARMER WORLD**  
Edited by Barry Scott Zellen

ISBN 978-1-55238-647-7

**THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK.** It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at [ucpress@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ucpress@ucalgary.ca)

**Cover Art:** The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

**COPYRIGHT NOTICE:** This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

**UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:**

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

**UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:**

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.

# 16. Stability and Security in a Post-Arctic World: Toward a Convergence of Indigenous, State, and Global Interests at the Top of the World'

*Barry Scott Zellen*

Over the centuries, interest in the Arctic and the commercial and strategic potential of its sea lanes and natural resources has been persistent, from the fur-trading empires of Rupert's Land and Russian America to our own time – but climatic conditions prevented the region's full potential from being achieved before now, holding back its development, and limiting its contribution to the world economy, making it neither a rimland or a heartland but something that more closely resembles what geopolitical theorist Mackinder called *Lenaland*<sup>2</sup> – named for the isolated Lena river valley in Russia and which captured the unique geostrategic insularity of the Far North, which made it possible for the Cold War's two armed and often hostile superpowers to come face to face along their long ice curtain with very little risk of war, in great contrast to the Central Front in the once-divided Germany where a million men stood armed and ready for war for a generation. This long isolation dates back before the dawn of man and accounts for the region's unique fauna, like the polar bear and beluga whale, blending into an environment

defined by ice and snow for millennia. What long defined the region's biological evolution also shaped its geopolitical stability and limited mankind's otherwise heavy footprint.

But all this now looks to be changing, or least the prospect of such a change has tipped from the implausible to the possible – as a result of the rapid warming of the Arctic climate and the measurably accelerated summer ice melts, catching even the most alarmist of ice scientists off guard three years ago with summer ice minimums hitting new lows several decades earlier than anyone had imagined possible.<sup>3</sup>This put the region in play strategically for the first time since the Cold War's end as the renewed promise of unlocking the Arctic's full potential and the simultaneous global natural resource rush stimulated interest in the region among numerous stakeholders, many of whom had otherwise been content to ignore the polar region throughout the 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

## **A Post-Arctic World? Time Again for 'Thinking About the Unthinkable'**

During the Cold War, with the threat of nuclear apocalypse hanging over all of our heads, several bold strategic theorists sought to “think about the unthinkable,” and prepare for all potential scenarios that might unfold in this new dangerous world that greeted us on the morning after Hiroshima. Herman Kahn, the former RAND analyst and founder of the Hudson Institute, was amongst this era's most colorful and controversial thinkers, becoming, according to some observers, the template for the character of Dr. Strangelove in the popular Kubrick dark comedy.<sup>5</sup> Kahn is famous for his *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, which was one of the first explicit attempts to resist political correctness in “defense of thinking” – even about frightening and dangerous things like thermonuclear warfare. His earlier magnum opus, *On Thermonuclear War*, made him a celebrity and was one of the sources of the more apocalyptic elements of *Dr. Strangelove's* unique conceptual vocabulary, like ‘doomsday machines’ and ‘mine-shaft gaps.’ What, one might reasonably ask, does Herman Kahn and the literature of nuclear warfare have to do with the Arctic sovereignty? Quite a lot: from our need to think about some pretty unthinkable things like a potential (though now somewhat less imminent) collapse of the polar ice pack and the possible end of a frozen

Arctic, to a near-term increase in Arctic shipping, resource development, urbanization, industrialization, and even the ultra-long-term possibility of re-forestation – as well, with the potential destabilization of the permafrost and warming of the polar sea, the more worrisome specter of catastrophic methane dumps inducing rapid temperature increases with the potential of outpacing evolution’s adaptive capability, which as Al Gore famously noted in *An Inconvenient Truth*, could mean the end of life itself.<sup>6</sup> These are all worrisome, potentially catastrophic, phenomena, no different than the issues faced in the nuclear age in terms of the underlying risks to mankind and our planet, if the more pessimistic scenarios involving a cascade of worsening feedback cycles such as massive methane dumps into the atmosphere, or the end of our oceans’ ability to serve dutifully as carbon sinks, or even the hyper-acidification of the seas wiping out the bottom of the food chain and invariably causing extinction to all of us who reside higher up the chain. With the stakes of climate change so high, in the Arctic and around the world; and with the clash between the optimists (who critics think of as denialists or flat-earthers) and pessimists (who since Climategate have been laying low) every bit as intense as that witnessed during the Cold War’s doctrinal debates, a look at some metaphors and scenarios for our age makes as much sense as it did for Kahn and the other strategic thinkers of the Cold War.

During the Cold War there were two dominant and competing schools of strategic thought that emerged to manage the unique opportunities and challenges presented by nuclear weapons and their spread. One was Bernard Brodie’s “absolute weapon” concept, which sought to maintain stability by balancing mutual fear of apocalypse, known as MAD or Mutual Assured Destruction, or what some described as the Balance of Terror.<sup>7</sup> Then there was Kahn’s response, more in style than in doctrine since his ideas and Brodie’s evolved largely in sync – which was to imagine nuclear warfighting at every level from localized nuclear wars to a general, total war, with all levels not only considered survivable but also winnable. Their core differentiator was less theoretical or doctrinal, and more emotional: one was guardedly optimistic about the prognosis for an enduring peace predicated upon deterrence, while the other was much more optimistic about a positive outcome of a nuclear war, and our ability to both survive and win one, in the event deterrence failed.

With the Arctic, we have a similar divergence between optimists and pessimists: some like Canadian author and dedicated Arctic journalist Ed

Struzik have postulated that what we think of as the Arctic is actually coming to an end, and that we now stand at what might very well be the threshold of what I've been calling the "Post-Arctic" world. Struzik referred to the "End of Arctic," which was more elegant and ominous, a phrase he introduced in the early 1990s and still uses to describe our historical and geopolitical moment. The Arctic Ocean and its increasingly active basin will of course still be there – more obviously so as the ice retreats. But its currently dominant characteristics are changing rapidly – in particular the massive, permanent, continent-sized barrier of multi-year ice that sits atop the pole, which could in time disappear and has certainly shown a capacity to retreat further and faster than anticipated, presenting us with something of a strategic surprise that suggests further surprises could arise. As the ice pack retreats, the polar barrier that marked the very "ends of the Earth," or what was long ago called "Ultima Thule" has the potential to become something of a trans-polar crossroad, or what mapmakers long ago imagined to be the "Midnight Sea," and already shipping companies are testing routes across the top of the world linking Northeast Asian ports with their counterparts in Europe, and Russian ports with their counterparts in Canada, in anticipation of new sea lanes becoming a feature of the maritime world.

What Rob Huebert and Brooks Yeager called a "New Sea" in their January 2008 World Wildlife Fund Report will eventually emerge if summer warming trends are sustained (and if decelerations of the ice-melts prove to be only temporary), with huge geopolitical consequences.<sup>8</sup> What was once the "ends of the Earth" now has the potential to become its new center, a literal "*medi-teranean*." Many are worried about these consequences; Ed Struzik, in his 1992 *Equinox Magazine* article titled appropriately enough "The End of Arctic," predicted a world without a frozen Arctic;<sup>9</sup> and more recently, of course, is Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth"<sup>10</sup> thesis (which experienced something of a melt-down on the eve of Climategate when he exaggerated Wieslav Maslowski's predictions of an ice-free Arctic (Maslowski was thinking *seasonally*, and Gore was thinking *messianically*) which echoed Struzik's earlier argument that we are witnessing the end of a unique part of the Earth's heritage.<sup>11</sup> Gore went further, suggesting a potential global catastrophe that threatens to end most life on our planet. But even if such an apocalyptic end does not result from climate change, Arctic peoples and their governments will have to contend with the impacts of shifting wildlife migration patterns, coastal erosion, and permafrost thaws that jeopardize much northern infrastructure. And

even new opportunities such as increased trans-polar shipping will bring new risks and challenges, especially as multi-year ice breaks up and drifts south into the emergent sea lanes, requiring much investment and infrastructure development to ensure adequate safety, search and rescue, environmental cleanup, and marine service capabilities are in place.

There are also some optimists who see us standing at the start of a new era, much like Francis Fukuyama viewed the end of the Cold War as a symphonic Hegelian finale called the “End of History,”<sup>12</sup> and the dawn of a new era of hope. This more optimistic viewpoint believes we’re entering a new “Age of the Arctic,” the title of the well-known book (and earlier *Foreign Policy* article by Oran Young from the winter 1985/86 edition<sup>13</sup>), or as described by the phrase made famous in 1973 by the late Walter Hickel, Alaska’s very own philosopher-king – who not only helped endow the state of Alaska with the necessary land base to be viable (103 million acres), but who would later run the state as governor, serving two separate terms, and who also served in President Nixon’s cabinet as interior secretary – that it’s the dawn of the “Day of the Arctic.”<sup>14</sup> One can look even further back, all the way to William H. Seward’s 1853 “Destiny of America” speech that predicted the expansion of America “so that it shall greet the sun when he touches the Tropic, and when he sends his glancing rays towards the Polar circle.”<sup>15</sup> Seward helped fulfill his prediction when he negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867 – though at the time he was much criticized for such reckless and shortsighted folly infamously known as Seward’s Folly.

Whether you stand at a precipice before a tragic “End of the Arctic,” or at the gateway to a promising “Day of the Arctic,” depends ultimately on whether you approach the climate issue with hope or fear, and whether you anticipate great opportunity, or severe danger. I prefer to think of the coming era as the onset of the “Arctic Spring,” a theme I present in my book, *Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom: The Geopolitics of Climate Change in the Arctic* – and which imagines a forthcoming period of great change that offers tremendous hope as well as risk, a view that is shared by many northerners who look to climate change with something of a “bring it on” mentality, seeing in the thaw a potential economic awakening. “Arctic Spring” has the potential to transform the Arctic basin much like Prague Spring promised to open up and integrate Czechoslovakia with the West, but which in the end was crushed for another generation. However, the hope expressed in 1968 was finally realized twenty years later when the Velvet Revolution succeeded in toppling the communist

regime. As we think about this coming transformation, we should remember that this is a new (and as such unwritten) chapter of history – with the potential for new ideas and innovation.

Former Soviet premier Gorbachev had such a vision for the Arctic at the Cold War's end, expressed in October 1987 in his Murmansk Initiative,<sup>16</sup> which called for the Arctic to become a “Zone of Peace,” and to lead the way forward to an end of the Cold War, a vision articulated by the Inuit as well and which showed a unique alignment of tribal, territorial, state, and international interests. But events quickly sped beyond Gorbachev's control with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the cascading swarms of people-power more speedily integrating East and West than his imaginative Arctic diplomatic efforts. But the idea was a good one, and perhaps worth revisiting. At Ilulissat in May 2008, a similar vision of an Arctic united and governed by international law was asserted; it remains to be seen if this vision ultimately triumphs, but, as Lawson Brigham has recently observed in *Foreign Policy*, the prognosis is good and even recent saber-rattling through military exercises and assertive policy statements has not created frictions “beyond the realm of diplomacy,”<sup>17</sup> or I might add, beyond the realm of optimism. It remains possible that the Arctic basin will become a new arena for cooperation between Russia and the West, much like Gorbachev foresaw at Murmansk before his empire collapsed internally, fostering an East-West unification along the Central Front and not the northern front as he had hoped.

But much depends on the evolution of political attitudes in all of the Arctic states, and whether the political climate warms along with the geophysical climate. It is notable that at the Ilulissat Summit in 2008, only the top foreign affairs officials of the Arctic rim states were invited – suggesting that even as they pledged to collaborate in their efforts to resolve future Arctic disputes, they have yet to fully integrate the input of the region's inhabitants, and in particular its indigenous peoples. This was noted by the Inuit leadership, who a year later issued their own Circumpolar Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty,<sup>18</sup> calling for their rightful, and central, place in determining its future and taking a baby-step forward toward a more robust assertion of sovereignty. In response to the emboldened Inuit response to their exclusion at Ilulissat, Secretary of State Clinton famously waded into the muskeg in March 2010, chastising her alliance partner, next-door neighbor to the north, and primary oil supplier, for excluding the Inuit and the non-rim Arctic states from the next meeting of the A5.<sup>19</sup>

It appears that more than the climate was heating up; with Secretary of State Clinton's diplomatic engagement on behalf of the Inuit, a tectonic shift in the diplomatic balance of power looked to be taking place, with sub-state indigenous groups like the Inuit now finding a sympathetic ear in the U.S. State Department, and values long localized at the tribal level now shared by powerful states, not unlike the alignment that nearly came into balance at Murmansk a generation ago. The next step is to continue to broaden the circle of stakeholders, so that the dynamic and creative efforts of the indigenous peoples of the region, and their many interests and perspectives, can increasingly shape the world's response to the changes taking place at the top of the world. With the new regional governing structures across the Arctic now fully integrating the Inuit, from the North Slope Borough to the increasingly autonomous island-province of Greenland, and settled land claims empowering indigenous peoples with huge tracts of lands and substantial economic resources across the North American Arctic, their participation is not only enabled, it is essential – as the internal and external dimensions of Arctic security come together at the top of our world.

## **The Inuit Political Odyssey: From Assimilation to Empowerment**

Over the last half century, tremendous structural innovations have been made to the the political economy of Arctic North America, stretching from the Bering Sea to Baffin Bay, with the completion of a multigenerational process of negotiating comprehensive Aboriginal land claims treaties to resolve issues of land ownership, and to foster an enduring partnership between the indigenous peoples and the modern state through a variety of new institutions, including Aboriginal regional and community corporations, investment corporations, land administration agencies, a variety of tribe-state co-management boards, plus a complex patchwork of local, regional, and territorial governments created to give a voice to the Native interest. As a result of these changes, which I examine in my book, *Breaking the Ice* and its sequel, *On Thin Ice*, the Inuit and other Aboriginal northerners have become powerful stakeholders in the economic and political systems that govern the Arctic today, and also, importantly, the largest private land owners with direct control over some 10 per cent of North America's Arctic territories, and indirect



influence over a far larger portion of the Arctic land mass.<sup>20</sup>The historical process, seen from Alaska to Nunatsiavut, has been by and large a two-step process. The first step was to address the land question, and to negotiate and, in most cases, implement land claims accords to bring clarity of title, helping to identify who owns which lands and to reconcile the competing interests of tribe and state and thereby open up (or, for sensitive ecosystems and traditional hunting lands, close off) the region to economic development with various mechanisms of co-management helping to keep native and state interests in balance. Once land claims were settled, the next step in the process of northern development has been the pursuit of new systems of Aboriginal self-governance, taking various forms and employing various structures over time (with greater powers becoming available as time went by, and earlier policies of assimilation being replaced by more contemporary policies promoting cultural and political renewal) – from the establishment of municipal or borough governments under existing constitutional law, as we saw in Alaska in the 1970s, to the creation newly empowered tribal councils governed by federal Indian law in Alaska and the NWT in the 1980s and 90s) or the negotiation of entirely new systems of governance – with the most ambitious being Nunavut, with their comprehensive land claim settlement in 1993 linked to the subsequent formation of a new territorial government in 1999, creating a complex and potentially powerful system of self-governance applying a public model to a predominantly indigenous region for de facto indigenous self-governance.

After Nunavut, the evolution toward more distinctly indigenous self-governing structures has continued, as reflected in the Labrador Inuit Land Claim of 2005 with the very first truly Inuit self-governing structure, whose governing principles were articulated in detail in the 2002 Labrador Inuit Constitution. More recently, in November 2008, the far-flung Danish province of Greenland held a referendum on evolving beyond their “home rule” system of autonomy toward formal state sovereignty and independence, which passed decisively – paving the way forward for the eventual emergence of a formally sovereign Arctic state with a majority Inuit population, with literally revolutionary (or devolutionary) implications for the rest of the Inuit homeland. In the years ahead, we may see even further advances in the process of Native empowerment toward increased autonomy and perhaps leading toward the Balkanization of the Arctic into independent (or at least more genuinely autonomous) political units.

Regardless of the jurisdiction, whether in Alaska or Arctic Canada, or beyond the shores of North America, indigenous peoples have shown tremendous ingenuity in their effort to build new systems for self-governance since the land claims movement took root in the 1960s, creatively adapting existing institutions or creating new ones when possible, lobbying for and negotiating to further advance their powers. Ideas and institutions for reconciling the interests of indigenous northerners and the modern state have evolved, following, broadly but with some exception (such as James Bay and Northern Quebec, due to the intensification of Quebec's hydro-electric power development activities in its northern reaches), a west-to-east arc across the North, becoming stronger with each new iteration and reversing many of the negative consequences of the colonial experience, and transforming the domestic balance of power to lean heavily in favor of tribal interests, particularly on social, environmental, and economic matters. This increasing shift in power has increased the capacity for the indigenous peoples of the North to confront the many social and economic challenges that remain in their communities, providing the tools necessary to face these broad social and economic challenges, to innovate new opportunities, and to grapple with the complex challenges (as well as potential opportunities) associated with climate change and a potential Arctic thaw.

Social conditions in Alaska and the Canadian Arctic have been described by many as a Fourth World, with Third World conditions exacerbated by climate, isolation, and limited infrastructure including a near absence of roads and rail networks – making seasonal ice roads and summer sea lifts an economic lifeline.<sup>21</sup> Communities are generally small, ranging from just a few dozen people to several hundred, with the larger administrative centers being home to just a few thousand people; their populations are predominantly indigenous, with subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping still essential to their nutritional and cultural survival. Fuel costs are high, as are imported foods, making hunting and fishing all the more important. Economic opportunities have been limited, with natural resource development presenting one of the more enduring opportunities, from last century's Klondike gold rush to the oil boom of the 1970s, to the diamond rush of the 1990s, to the more recent rush for all manner of Arctic natural resources. Land claims have helped to ensure that when economic development does take place, local concerns and tribal interests are not overlooked, with indigenous leaders becoming governing partners in assessing environmental risk, mitigating impacts to

traditional subsistence, and ensuring economic participation through jobs, training, and resource royalties. This can create deep rifts within the Native community, as tradition and modernity collide. But the new governing structures were designed in part to intermediate this collision, converting thesis and antithesis into a truly northern synthesis. The settlement of land claims and emergence of new structures of self-government have increased the role of indigenous peoples in the decisions made about the Arctic and its future. One dramatic illustration: in the 1970s, when the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry was held by Justice Berger, the struggle was primarily between corporate interests and tribal interests, with the latter excluded from the decision-making of the former. During the more recent Mackenzie Gas Project, the Aboriginal Pipeline Group sat with the oil companies as an Aboriginally-owned equity partner; and the Joint Review Panel examining the environmental and social impacts of the proposed pipeline was empowered by the settled regional land claims, providing an indigenous perspective on both sides of the table – contributing to a slow pace but a unique review process with indigenous inputs at all levels.<sup>22</sup>

## **Alaska Native Claims: Starting the Process**

When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was enacted in 1971, it aimed to quickly bring Alaska Natives into the modern economy and at the same time to clarify the limits of Aboriginal title, making it possible to fully develop the state's natural resources and in particular to build the trans-Alaska pipeline. Because its objectives were largely economic, its corporate model became its defining and most transformative characteristic – not without controversy, since the corporate model was viewed with some skepticism by indigenous leaders as a tool of assimilation, and there remains a continuing debate over the appropriateness of the corporate model to the indigenous North. ANCSA formally extinguished Aboriginal rights, title, and claims to traditional lands in the state, while formally transferring fee-simple title to 44 million acres – or some 12 per cent of the state's land base – to Alaska Natives, with \$962.5 million in compensation for the lands ceded to the state, \$500 million of which was to be derived from future oil royalties (as a result of which over half the “compensation” was to be derived from resources extracted from the Inupiat homeland – an irony not missed by Alaska

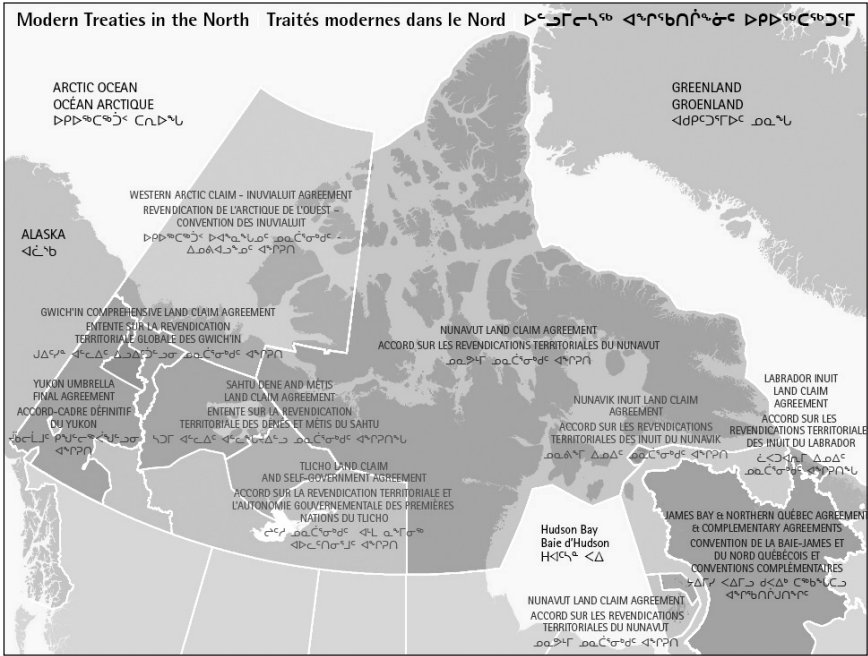


FIG. 1. COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIMS ARE NOW SETTLED ACROSS THE ENTIRE ARCTIC COAST OF CANADA, FROM THE 1984 INUVIALUIT FINAL AGREEMENT IN THE WEST TO THE 2005 LABRADOR INUIT (NUNATSIAVUT) LAND CLAIM AGREEMENT IN THE EAST.

Natives). ANCSA also created twelve regional Native corporations (and later a thirteenth for non-resident Alaska Natives), and over two hundred village corporations to manage these lands and financial resources.

These new corporate structures introduced a brand new language and culture, as well as a new system of managing lands and resources that seemed at variance with the traditional cultures of the region and their traditional subsistence economy. The early years of ANCSA were famously described by justice Thomas Berger as dragging Alaska Natives “kicking and screaming”<sup>23</sup> into the twentieth century, and many native corporations approached the brink of bankruptcy, forced to monetize their net operating losses in a last desperate bid to stay in business. A new cottage industry of northern investment, legal, and policy advisors emerged – sometimes to the benefit of their clients, but often not.

In addition to the *corporatization* of village Alaska, ANCSA's original design also had some structural flaws that also nearly proved fatal to the land claims experience, including a twenty-year moratorium in transferring shares in Native corporations to non-Natives, which many feared would inevitably result in the dilution of Native ownership, known as the *1991 Time Bomb*. While critics of the land claims process are correct to point out these original structural flaws and the assimilating pressures introduced by new corporate structures, the land claims model has nonetheless proved resilient and adaptive, as Native corporations matured and their boards, managers, and shareholders found ways to better balance traditional and modern values, learning from their crash course in capitalism as they went – so today the Native corporations represent a huge economic force in the state of Alaska.

## **The Inuvialuit of the Northwest Territories: Evolving the Land Claims Model**

Across the border, the Inuvialuit of the Western Canadian Arctic had a front-row seat to ANCSA and were impressed by all the money that was flowing north, as well as the new corporate structures created and the sizeable land quantum formally transferred to Alaska Natives. But they also noted the continuing threat to indigenous culture and the lack of adequate protections of subsistence rights, traditional culture, and environmental protection and were determined to do better. So when they negotiated the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in the late 1970s, the land claims model became significantly enhanced – in addition to creating new Native corporations, the IFA also made an equal institutional commitment to the preservation of Native culture and traditions, to preserve the land and the wildlife, and to empower, not just new corporate interests, but also traditional cultural interests as well, by creating new institutions of co-management and more powerful hunter and trapper committees. They also made sure all Inuvialuit became shareholders and that no non-Inuvialuit ever could, learning from the Alaskan experience. The Inuvialuit thus successfully modified the land claims concept so that its structure included a natural institutional balancing – not unlike our own balance of powers concept – that has enabled a greater commitment to cultural and environmental protections.

Their land claim entitled the 3,000 Inuvialuit living in six communities to 35,000 square miles of land; co-management of land and water use, wildlife, and environmental assessment; wildlife harvesting rights; financial compensation of \$45 million in 1978 dollars, inflation-adjusted to \$162 million, for lands ceded to Canada; and a share of government royalties for oil, gas, and mineral development on federal land; the formation of new national parks in their settlement area that further protect their land base from development, while allowing subsistence activities unhindered; and a commitment to meaningful economic participation in any development in their settlement area. This model has remained largely intact in later comprehensive land claims, showing a twenty-five-year endurance as a model for northern development. But one issue that was not yet on the table in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the Inuvialuit chose to pursue their own regional land claim (and thereby gain some control over the intense oil boom in their homeland) was the establishment of new institutions of Aboriginal self-government, something that the Inuit of the central and eastern Arctic (the future Nunavut territory) decided to wait for. The Inuvialuit felt they did not have the luxury of time given the frenetic pace of oil and gas exploration in their lands. But Nunavut remained more isolated, providing more time to rethink, and renegotiate, the land claims model.

## **Nunavut: Augmenting Land Claims with Regional Political Power**

In the years separating the signing of the Inuvialuit land claim in 1984 and the signing of the Nunavut land claim in 1993, much progress was made on the political question, and an increasing respect for Aboriginal rights in Ottawa enabled the establishment of a new concept: reshaping political boundaries to correspond to a land-claims settlement area and establishing a new government to administer this region, augmenting the land claims with real political power. In 1993, with their signing of their historic accord, the Inuit of Nunavut were awarded \$1.1 billion and title to 135,000 square miles of land, including 13,600 with subsurface rights, on top of various co-management boards, clearly defined rights protecting subsistence, and royalty sharing from resource development activities. Nunavut has a population of around 30,000 in twenty-eight communities spread out across over 770,000

square miles, or one fifth of Canada's land mass, including the High Arctic islands and the central-Arctic coastal mainland. While its population is tiny, its jurisdiction is vast and its resource base potentially tremendous, and the sea lanes that cross through the territory include the famed Northwest Passage.

The most striking innovation of the Nunavut claim was the way it was formally linked to the division of the Northwest Territories and the formation of a brand new territory, resulting in the 1999 birth of Nunavut. Nunavut has now been up and running for well over a decade, gaining valuable but often painful experience in self-governance – and thus showing many strains as it struggles to confront some daunting social and economic challenges in one of the most challenging geophysical environments imaginable. There have also been intergovernmental frictions with Ottawa over implementation and a growing perception of a crisis in Canada's youngest territory. But there is still much reason for hope for the future; the roots of the problems facing Nunavut go deep and are not likely to be quickly overcome, but the solutions developed can now be Northern solutions, rooted in a deep understanding of Northern social realities. Since its population is predominantly Inuit, a public government can, at least for now, govern in an indigenous style – as the principles of the Nunavut land claim and the governing power of the new territorial government mutually reinforce one another. There is a long-term risk the territory could become more like the Yukon, especially if a major mineral strike results in a new mining center. But, for now, a public model in an indigenous context is a creative way to bring about self-government by other means.

## **After Nunavut: The Labrador Land Claim and the Dawn of Inuit Governance**

Half a decade after Nunavut made headlines around the world, the final Inuit land claim along the North American Arctic and Subarctic coast – the Labrador Inuit (Nunatsiavut) Land Claims Agreement – was settled. It was ratified in December 2004 and came into effect a year later, presenting a new stage in the evolution of Inuit governance, making the two-step process more of a one-step process, further redefining the limits of self-government within a land settlement area – transcending the public model applied by the Inuit of Nunavut and the Inupiat of the North Slope. The agreement created

the 28,000-square-mile Labrador Inuit Settlement Area with an adjoining 18,800-square-mile ocean zone extending as far as Canada's territorial waters. The settlement area includes 6,100 square miles of Labrador Inuit Lands, five predominantly Inuit communities, and 3,700 square miles set aside for the Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve (following a tradition established by prior Inuit land claims to create vast national parks in which subsistence was protected) – with the Inuit retaining special rights in each of these areas. The Government of Canada will pay the Labrador Inuit \$140 million in 1997 dollars in compensation for lands ceded to the Crown.

Just as the formation of the Nunavut territory was the really cool innovation of the Nunavut land claim, the emergence of truly Inuit self-government is the hallmark of the Labrador claim. As described in section 17.2 of the claim, it “exhaustively sets out the law-making authorities and self-government rights of Inuit,” with the newly created Nunatsiavut Government to be governed by the “fundamental law of Inuit” as enunciated by the 159-page 2002 Labrador Inuit Constitution. The constitution, among its many components, included an Inuit charter of human rights, recognized Inuit customary law and its application to “any matter within the jurisdiction and authority of the Nunatsiavut Government,” and embraced laws to protect Inuit culture, language, and traditional knowledge. The Labrador Inuit Constitution created a blueprint of Inuit values and a pathway to the rapid formation of a truly Inuit system of government in a region that's adjacent to coastal waters of emergent strategic significance, with active commercial and subsistence fisheries, major strategic mineral deposits such as the Voisey's Bay project, and the prospect of much future economic potential. It also showed a new path toward Aboriginal self-government, one that did not require a secession like Nunavut but instead forged a regional sub-government within an existing province, but with unique governing principles.

## **A Path toward Sovereign Independence: Beyond the Land Claims Model**

The Arctic land claims model, with its subsequent modifications, has become an inspiration to many, proof positive of what can be gained through a determined, forward-looking effort to rebalance and modernize the relationship between the indigenous people of the North and the modern state. As with



any land reform effort, changes in land tenure can have a profound impact on the domestic balance of power, shifting, not just title to land, but the wealth created from that land, resulting in concentrations of economic power in the hands of a small indigenous population numbering in the thousands or tens of thousands. In Alaska and the Canadian Arctic, the Inuit have become owners of vast tracts of land, making them a landed elite with control over numerous economic and, increasingly, political levers. While not formally sovereign, they are poised to become influential stakeholders, partners in the consolidation of state sovereignty and in the economic development of the northern frontier. A comparable situation exists in the post-Ottoman Middle East, with extended tribal families and clans sitting at a powerful and lucrative nexus of land ownership, natural resource wealth, and political power. While northern Natives in Arctic North America are not in command of the ultimate levers of sovereign state power, such as military forces or national treasuries, they do have in their possession or within reach many tools of regional power, making them dominant regional elites. As the climate warms and the Arctic basin yields more natural resource wealth, the economic resources in their possession will also increase, and with that political influence.

In 2008, Greenland held a non-binding referendum on increasing the island's autonomy and eventually restoring its sovereign independence; it was approved decisively, showing how the desire to be self-governing is universal across the Arctic.<sup>24</sup> Denmark has shown a unique openness to the possibility of Greenland becoming formally independent (in contrast to the other Arctic states which attach great economic, strategic, and emotional/ideological significance to their Arctic territories), and if independence happens, it would mark perhaps the final stage in the process that began with ANCSA nearly half a century ago, with the full restoration of sovereignty to an Arctic nation. Other microstates are sovereign (even if unable to defend that sovereignty) – from the South Pacific to the city-states of Europe. So why not in the Arctic? What a sovereign Arctic state will look like, how it affirms traditional Native values and balances modernization with tradition, will be fascinating to observe. The risks are real; Iceland's economic collapse, Nunavut's persistent social challenges, the near-collapse of Alaska's Native corporations, are cautionary tales to consider.

## **Fostering a Tribe-State Partnership: A Sea Change in America's Arctic Policy**

In the closing hours of President George W. Bush's presidency, the White House issued the first new American Arctic policy since 1994 – a fascinating document full of multilateralism, pledging the United States to work with international, regional, local, and even tribal organizations that continued to provide a blueprint for the Obama Administration, and appears to have been written with the new era in mind. The collaborative spirit of the policy update was so unexpected that the initial response was largely one of denial, with media attention fixating on the few unilateral components relating to national and homeland security, but not on the dozens of other more collaborative dimensions. Those unsung affirmations of a multilateral Arctic future reflected a rather sophisticated awareness of the transformation of the Arctic and showed an appreciation of the increasing role of its indigenous peoples – marking a collaborative and multilateral conclusion to his highly controversial presidency.

A tectonic shift – toward greater collaboration with, and participation of, the numerous tribal, national, and international actors on the circum-polar stage – was evident in the first comprehensive re-articulation of U.S. national policy on the Arctic region since 1994.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is noteworthy that among the six policy objectives identified in Section III, Part A of National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (NSPD-66/HSPD-25) – issued on January 9, 2009, in the final days of the Bush administration – were to “Strengthen institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations” (objective 4) and to “Involve the Arctic's indigenous communities in decisions that affect them” (objective 5). This is historically significant and demonstrates both an increased awareness of, and respect for, the growing political and economic participation of the Arctic peoples in governing their own affairs, as well as a continued commitment to a collaborative, multilateral approach to solving the region's challenges. Also of significance: while the very first policy objective listed in Section III, Part A, is to “Meet national security and homeland security needs relevant to the Arctic region,” a point that dominated initial news coverage and commentaries on the new Arctic policy, the second objective listed is to “Protect the Arctic environment and conserve its biological resources,” while the third is to “Ensure that natural resource management and economic development in

the region are environmentally sustainable,” which will directly benefit the foundational pillars upon which the indigenous Arctic cultures depend for their cultural, nutritional, and economic survival. The sixth policy objective listed, to “Enhance scientific monitoring and research into local, regional, and global environmental issues,” further reinforces America’s renewed commitment to multilateralism at the top of the world, and to increasing its environmental knowledge at all levels, from the local to the global, during this time of Arctic transformation.

These important dimensions to the new U.S. Arctic policy were largely overlooked by many observers, in particular by the op-ed pages of several newspapers north of the border that emphasized the national security and unilateral dimensions of America’s new Arctic policy. But somehow, the unprecedented level of collaboration that the White House embraced – with its top-level commitment to indigenous as well as global participation, and its refreshingly holistic approach to the region’s environmental and ecological health as well as to continued scientific research in the interest of protecting this fragile domain – got overlooked in the first round of commentary, analysis, and opinion that greeted the release of the directive. Clarifying its policy, on 13 January 2009, the U.S. State Department provided a statement in response to a question at its daily press briefing in which it explained: “The new directive is the culmination of an extensive interagency review process undertaken in response to rapid changes taking place in the Arctic, the principal drivers of which are climate change, increasing human presence in the region, and the growing demand for Arctic energy deposits and other natural resources” and noted the “directive focuses on seven broad areas of Arctic policy.”<sup>26</sup> The State Department also reiterated its commitment to Arctic cooperation, noting that “states safeguard their national security interests in numerous ways, some on their own, and some in cooperation with others. The United States wants to cooperate with other governments in the Arctic. The best way to address both the challenges and opportunities of the Arctic is through cooperation. Any U.S. action would respect international law.”<sup>27</sup> This certainly does not suggest a go-it-alone attitude by the United States. Quite the contrary, it reflects an awakening to the increased participatory role of indigenous peoples, circumpolar neighbors, and international organizations in the management of the Arctic and the continued need for a multilateral approach to managing the Arctic’s unique challenges in the years ahead. While the new policy does not reflect a change of perspective on the legal status of

the Northwest Passage, or a softening in America's commitment to freedom of the seas, it does suggest a sea change is underway in its perception of, and sensitivity to, the numerous challenges mounting at the top of the world as the ice continues its retreat and the prospect of a post-Arctic world enters the realm of the possible. Most importantly, it shows a far greater sensitivity to the interests and perspectives of the indigenous peoples as well as America's Arctic neighbors, and a willingness to work together in a joint effort to resolve these challenges in the years ahead – so much so that America's Arctic policy remained unchanged under the Obama administration, with Secretary of State Clinton, as noted above, providing her vocal support to the Arctic's non-state peoples.

## **The Circumpolar Inuit Declaration: Reasserting Indigenous Sovereignty in the Arctic**

On April 28, 2009, a delegation of Inuit leaders from Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia presented a Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty<sup>28</sup> in Tromsø, Norway, where the Arctic Council was meeting. It represented the Inuit response to their exclusion at Ilulissat, and while it does not directly consider the many details presented in the new U.S. Arctic policy, it nonetheless illustrates that both the Inuit and the modern state are converging in their conceptualization of Arctic sovereignty, with both viewing it to be an increasingly collaborative and mutually reinforcing concept. The declaration emerges from the work of the first Inuit Leaders' Summit on November 6–7, 2008, in Kuujuaq, Nunavik, in Northern Quebec, where they “gathered to address Arctic sovereignty” and “expressed unity in our concerns over Arctic sovereignty deliberations, examined the options for addressing these concerns, and strongly committed to developing a formal declaration on Arctic sovereignty.”<sup>29</sup> There, the Inuit leaders “noted that the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration on Arctic sovereignty by ministers representing the five coastal Arctic states did not go far enough in affirming the rights Inuit have gained through international law, land claims and self-government processes.”<sup>30</sup> In many ways, their declaration was their direct response to the foreign ministers of the Arctic states for their exclusion at Ilulissat, and it constructively redresses this exclusion and persuasively argues for their central role in determining the fate of the Arctic. As the ICC observed in a press release

issued at this start of their effort in November 2008: “Sovereignty is a complex issue. It has a variety of overlapping elements, anchored in international law. But fundamentally it begins with the history and reality of Inuit use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters; that use and occupation is at the heart of any informed discussion of sovereignty in the Arctic. Arctic nation states must respect the rights and roles of Inuit in all international discussions and commitments dealing with the Arctic.”<sup>31</sup>

The April 2009 declaration unveiled at Tromsø updates the Inuit policy on sovereignty in the Arctic and asserts that “central to our rights as a people is the right to self-determination,” which “is our right to freely determine our political status, freely pursue our economic, social, cultural and linguistic development, and freely dispose of our natural wealth and resources. States are obligated to respect and promote the realization of our right to self-determination.”<sup>32</sup> Section 2 of the declaration concerns the “Evolving Nature of Sovereignty in the Arctic,” and notes sovereignty “has often been used to refer to the absolute and independent authority of a community or nation both internally and externally” but that it remains a “contested concept, however, and does not have a fixed meaning.”<sup>33</sup> Further, the declaration notes, “Old ideas of sovereignty are breaking down as different governance models, such as the European Union, evolve,” where “sovereignties overlap and are frequently divided within federations in creative ways to recognize the right of peoples.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, for the Inuit, “issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights must be examined and assessed in the context of our long history of struggle to gain recognition and respect as an Arctic indigenous people having the right to exercise self-determination over our lives, territories, cultures and languages.”<sup>35</sup> The Inuit further note that “recognition and respect for our right to self-determination is developing at varying paces and in various forms in the Arctic states in which we live,” and that:

Following a referendum in November 2008, the areas of self-government in Greenland will expand greatly and, among other things, Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) will become Greenland’s sole official language. In Canada, four land claims agreements are some of the key building blocks of Inuit rights; while there are conflicts over the implementation of these agreements, they remain of vital relevance to matters of self-determination and of sovereignty and sovereign rights. In Alaska, much work is needed to clarify

and implement the rights recognized in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In particular, subsistence hunting and self-government rights need to be fully respected and accommodated, and issues impeding their enjoyment and implementation need to be addressed and resolved. And in Chukotka, Russia, a very limited number of administrative processes have begun to secure recognition of Inuit rights. These developments will provide a foundation on which to construct future, creative governance arrangements tailored to diverse circumstances in states, regions and communities.<sup>36</sup>

The Circumpolar Inuit declaration observes that in “exercising our right to self-determination in the circumpolar Arctic, we continue to develop innovative and creative jurisdictional arrangements that will appropriately balance our rights and responsibilities as an indigenous people, the rights and responsibilities we share with other peoples who live among us, and the rights and responsibilities of states,” and that in “seeking to exercise our rights in the Arctic, we continue to promote compromise and harmony with and among our neighbours.”<sup>37</sup>

However, even though the Ilulissat Declaration pledged the Arctic rim states to “use international mechanisms and international law to resolve sovereignty disputes,” thus far “in their discussions of Arctic sovereignty,” the Arctic rim states “have not referenced existing international instruments that promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples. They have also neglected to include Inuit in Arctic sovereignty discussions in a manner comparable to Arctic Council deliberations.”<sup>38</sup> The Inuit declaration thus reminds us that the “inclusion of Inuit as active partners in all future deliberations on Arctic sovereignty will benefit both the Inuit community and the international community,”<sup>39</sup> and that “extensive involvement of Inuit in global, trans-national and indigenous politics requires the building of new partnerships with states for the protection and promotion of indigenous economies, cultures and traditions.”<sup>40</sup> These partnerships, the declaration contends, “must acknowledge that industrial development of the natural resource wealth of the Arctic can proceed only insofar as it enhances the economic and social well-being of Inuit and safeguards our environmental security.”

Anything less will be rejected by the Inuit, and, with their many settled land claims accords, regional and territorial governments, and numerous mechanisms of co-management and environmental regulation, proceeding without the full support of the Inuit might be surprisingly futile. That's why the Inuit have drawn a line in the tundra, and so vocally insisted that their exclusion from the table at Ilulissat must be redressed so that the future development of the Arctic is a truly joint effort, not just between the Arctic states, but between the states and the Inuit as well.

## **The Warming Earth and the New Sea: Onset of the Arctic Spring**

But there is still reason for hope, as evident by the tremendous progress made since 1971. But the challenges are still substantial – and just as we approach the end of this long journey of Native empowerment, with the institutional transformation of the Arctic nearing completion, a new challenge emerges: that of rapid climate change. The visible evidence is overwhelming, as illustrated by the record ice melts (coming decades ahead of scientists' predictions), the greening of the tundra as southern flora migrate north, and the melting of permafrost (affecting northern infrastructure and releasing methane trapped below, which could accelerate the warming trend.) The geophysical landscape of the Arctic is in a rapid transition. While this presents new economic opportunities for the least-developed part of North America and promises to alleviate endemic poverty with new jobs and new sources of revenue for the emergent Inuit governments, there is still much uncertainty and risk – particularly to subsistence hunting that depends on predictable wildlife migration patterns and on stable winter ice and summer ground conditions. At risk are the indigenous cultures that have evolved along with the unique Arctic ecosystem and all its interconnected components. But all of the efforts to modernize the Arctic's political economy over these past forty years have empowered the indigenous people of the region to directly address, mitigate, and potentially resolve these new challenges, and to leverage the emerging economic opportunities – with a wide assortment of new tools and increasing levels of power. While that can't stop or even slow the warming, it can at least enable the peoples of the Arctic to contribute toward the creation of new solutions, as they rise to the new challenges of this era.

While many climate-change pessimists have concluded that the Earth system is heading into a profound climate crisis, and that action is required at a planetary level to prevent the coming tragedy caused by rapid climate change, a more optimistic few anticipate there will be far less severe consequences and perhaps even some positive ones. Though evidence of climate change has tipped from speculative to possible to probable, a debate on winners and losers of Arctic climate change is still worth having. Indeed, rather than focus on whether the Earth is warming or not; or whether the warming is anthropogenic or not, the fundamental question of whether climate change is *ipso facto* a crisis or merely one more challenge to adapt to is a question worthy of debate. Such a debate long seemed futile, given the degree to which the climate crisis camp had come to dominate the scientific and policy agendas, but just because there is a convergence of political correctness and political power does not mean such a debate should not be held. Political action has always been a Newtonian phenomenon, with the individual unit being us, people, whether individual actors or various aggregations into groups such as clans, tribes, sects, nations, states, corporations, and multilateral alliances and coalitions. But scientific knowledge, with all its complexity, from the macro to the micro, from the cosmic to the quantum, has been forced to recognize less black-and-white truths, such as those unveiled by the imaginative leaps of Einstein and Heisenberg, among others, who found that, at the quantum level, the world is riddled with ambiguity. And when scaled up to global systems, these ambiguities do not disappear but instead cast a long shadow of paradox, uncertainty, and nonlinearity.

Climate change is thus more complex (and inherently uncertain) than the elegant simplicity that is generally required for effective political mobilization for action – particularly at the planetary scale, which requires compelling moral argumentation to alter the trajectories of nations and thus change the very destiny of humankind. The underlying reality of climate change is thus as fertile a ground for complexity and uncertainty as the riddles of chaos theory, and the dualistic ambiguities of quantum theory. And yet the climate activists keep warning us in no uncertain terms that the sky is falling, as Vice President Al Gore told us when he accepted his Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 – though his words were more modest and less reified when he accepted his Oscar in Hollywood earlier in the year. But what if reality was less simple, and the future far from the predicted clarity presented in *An Inconvenient Truth*? It seems as if the climate-crisis movement has taken a page from the



anti-nuclear movement of an earlier generation, which argued passionately that there cannot be any winners in nuclear war, and, as a consequence, we must bottle up the atomic genie that we had unleashed to defend our very freedom and step away from the nuclear chasm before we fall into its abyss and self-destruct – the theme echoed in the 1983 film *War Games* when the WOPR computer simulating atomic war, nicknamed Joshua, came to realize that in nuclear war there could be no winners. Like Joshua, the anti-nuclear activists had their cherished faith that we would all be losers in nuclear war, that the only solution was to step back from the brink and seek nuclear abolition.

But theirs was not the only point of view: closer to the strategic nerve-centers of the nuclear states emerged a diverse ecosystem of nuclear thinkers, strategists, and planners whose jobs involved figuring out how to do what the anti-nuclearists said was impossible: fighting and winning a nuclear war. Men like Herman Kahn dared to “think about the unthinkable,” coming up with various proposals and ideas to mitigate the risks and dangers of nuclear war, from civil defense preparations to detailed war plans in case deterrence failed. The Cold War ended quickly, and with a whimper, before there was a strategic nuclear show-down, a climactic big bang to end the era – so we’ll never know who was right or wrong. When it comes to climate change, its risks and dangers, and its opportunities as well, it is time again to “think about the unthinkable.” We must confront once more the self-same duality, the persistent ambiguity, that reluctant riddle that remains unanswered: can there be both winners and losers of climate change? And in the case of the Arctic, still locked in an Ice Age that never truly ended, might the impacts of climate change in fact be positive? Indeed, what if trying to slow, stop, or reverse global warming prevented the Arctic’s full integration into the world economy, its transformation from a frozen, under-populated desert region into a veritable oasis of life, ending the region’s long isolation with its transformation from the very “ends of the Earth” to tomorrow’s most central strategic crossroads? Indeed, what if life itself, an oasis of green, proliferated across the Arctic as it became increasingly habitable, its own indigenous peoples lifted out of the poverty borne of their isolation as they became reunited with mankind?

Already, mule and white-tailed deer have migrated north, joining the moose and caribou populations, and barrenground grizzlies have begun to show a liking for the Far North’s warmer climes. While this will naturally

create more competition between newly arrived species and those who have been there since time immemorial, this need not be considered an unnatural or even an unfortunate turn of events. The abundance of deer has not been viewed with alarm by local hunters, who find its meat quite palatable. And while polar bears and grizzlies could become fierce competitors in the battle to survive above the treeline, some forward-thinking members of both sub-species have shown a more collaborative instinct, a go-it-together approach that is yielding a brand new sub-species of hybrid “grolar” or “pizzly” bear. After all, scientists now think the polar bear evolved quite recently, perhaps as recently as 100,000 years ago – a mere blink in geological time, and its evolutionary journey may therefore just be getting under way. And though the great white bear may one day cease to exist in its current pure form, the polar bear’s legacy will surely continue through the genetic mixing of evolution, as more and more hybrid bears emerge better able to survive in the post-Arctic world.

One important story often overlooked by climate change pessimists is that other half of the evolution story; not the extinction of species that did not make the cut, but the creation of those that did – as new genetic traits become strengths and not weaknesses. Life itself is a process of renewal and decay, extinction and species birth. Extinction may seem to be a terrible tragedy, nature’s own version of the human crime of genocide, but the rise of new species better suited to an altered landscape is something altogether different. Mourn we may of those unique species that leave our earthly stage; but not of the process itself, the very competition to survive, for this is the story we must continue to tell, indeed to act out, as players on the earthly stage. As the predominant creature, ruling over most of the Earth’s surface, we naturally want evolution to stand still, our time here to last forever. But this is not necessarily nature’s way. Nor is it nature’s way to pick sides, nor to keep one species alive at the expense of another’s arrival. We all have our time, its beginning and its end. These are issues that we need to keep in mind and explore without passing judgment. So while Al Gore has rightfully earned his Nobel Prize for Peace for his heart-felt and hard-fought effort to stop man’s silent war against the Earth, this does not mean his perspective is the *only* one to consider. From the Arctic perspective, Gore’s logic would mean a perpetuation of an Ice Age that the rest of the world was content to see end. But with climate change also comes the promise that the frozen polar sea, so long a barrier to progress, may now become a channel of commerce, a sea lane of hope, uniting the world at

its top, something many pragmatic Inuit leaders at the local and regional level embrace, knowing it means jobs for their people and growth for their communities. So while national and circumpolar Inuit leaders lobby heads of state and UN officials to stop global warming, and equate the melting ice with an assault on Inuit traditions, their perspective is not the only one: in the isolated Inuit villages where poverty remains persistent, a more pragmatic perspective has taken root, one that looks forward to the increased maritime trade, tourism, and natural resource development expected in a warmer Arctic.

In Greenland, the thawing of the Arctic is widely viewed to be an opportunity for that island-colony to become independent, with the promise of economic self-sufficiency. It is the promise of a post-Arctic world that inspires the people of Greenland, offering them not only a way out of endemic poverty but a path toward true independence; they took their first step along this road two years ago, voting overwhelmingly in favor of increased autonomy in a non-binding but closely watched referendum on November 25, 2008, with a decisive 75 per cent yes vote. By voting yes so decisively, the people of Greenland were casting their vote for hope in a warmer future. As reported in *Nunatsiaq News* on December 14, 2009, “Greenland wants to develop and gain financial independence from Denmark, which would require a doubling of its output of climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions, Greenland’s premier Kuupik Kleist said during a news conference in Copenhagen.”<sup>41</sup> Kleist explained that “Greenland has the right to pursue industrial development and offer its citizens more access to jobs, education, health care and independence – even if that means substantially increasing its production of climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions.”<sup>42</sup> Greenlanders thus view the glacial retreats and earlier spring ice melts as an opportunity for growth and development, a view shared across much of the North.

And so it may be for all of the peoples of the Arctic. A post-Arctic world promises to put the North smack dab in the center of the world of commerce and geopolitics, as elegantly argued by Caitlyn L. Antrim in the summer edition of the *Naval War College Review*. The Far North will no longer be the “last frontier” or the “ends of the Earth.” Some observers, especially Arctic visionaries like the late Walter Hickel, who served twice as governor of Alaska and also as U.S. Secretary of the Interior, believe the coming years promise to bring many positive changes to the Far North. For the polar regions, the warming of the Earth may bring a true Arctic Spring, for its people, indeed for all people – fostering our unity, increasing our security, decreasing the

likelihood of conflict and war over natural resources in persistent trouble-spots like the Persian Gulf, and reducing the risks faced at strategic chokepoints along current international shipping lanes such as the canals of Panama and Suez and the pirate-infested waterways off Somalia and along the Strait of Malacca. As Gorbachev hoped a generation ago, a thawing of long-frozen circumpolar relations could go far to reduce Cold War tensions; in our current era, a geophysical warming could go even further to reduce international tensions as new economic opportunities encourage old adversaries to rethink the nature of their relationships, evident in the recent resolution of long-simmering border tensions between Russia and Norway, and in the renewed collaboration between the Canadian and U.S. coast guards in the High North, not to mention the historic reconciliation of tribe and state in the Far North that began with ANCSA a generation ago and which continues to this day.

We must therefore look beyond the question of whether the Earth is warming or not, or whether this warming is anthropogenic or not: the more salient question is whether Arctic climate change is by definition a crisis as it is so often portrayed far to the south – or if perhaps it may present a new and historic opportunity for the Arctic and its peoples. Indeed, the very real possibility exists that the people of the Arctic, and the Arctic states, could become the Earth's biggest winners of climate change – after they adapt to the new contours of the post-Arctic world and overcome its early challenges. Instead of a future defined by doom and gloom, we may soon witness a coming Arctic *boom*, and perhaps, in time, even a bountiful Arctic *bloom*. And that's change we can all believe in.

Whether we call it the “Day of the Arctic,” as Walter Hickel did forty years ago, the “Age of the Arctic,” as Oran Young, Ed Struzik, and others have done in the decades since, or the “Arctic Spring,” as I do now, the strategic, diplomatic, economic and political opportunities ahead are indeed compelling – for the peoples of the Arctic as well as the states that assert sovereignty up to the North Pole, where all cartographic divisions created by man magically disappear into a single, convergent point.

## Notes

- 1 This paper previously appeared in *Strategic Insights* 9, no. 2 (2010): 54–78; <http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/institutional/newsletters/strategic%20insight/2010/ZellenB10.pdf>.
- 2 Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press Defense Classic, 1996), 199.
- 3 See the Sea Ice News, National Snow and Ice Data Center website; <http://nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/>.
- 4 See: Rob Huebert, “Renaissance in Canadian Arctic Security?” *Canadian Military Journal*, July 14, 2008; <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo6/no4/doc/north-nord-eng.pdf>; Rob Huebert, “Welcome to a new era of Arctic security,” *Globe and Mail*, August 24, 2010; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/welcome-to-a-new-era-of-arctic-security/article1682704/>; Lawson Brigham, “Think Again: The Arctic – Everyone wants a piece of the thawing far north. But that doesn’t mean anarchy will reign at the top of the world,” *Foreign Policy* 181 (September/October 2010): 70–74; [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think\\_again\\_the\\_arctic](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think_again_the_arctic); Scott G. Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 63–77; <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63222/scott-g-borgerson/arctic-meltdown>; Alun Anderson, *After the Ice: Life, Death, and Geopolitics in the New Arctic* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 2009); and Barry S. Zellen, *Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom: The Geopolitics of Climate Change in the Arctic* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009).
- 5 See: Herman Kahn, *Thinking About the Unthinkable* (New York: Avon Library, 1966). Also see Kahn’s *On Escalation* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1965) and *On Thernuclear War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).
- 6 Albert Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming* (New York: Rodale Press, 2006).
- 7 See: Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946). Also see Brodie’s *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973); and “The Development of Nuclear Strategy,” *International Security* 2, no. 4 (1978): 65–83.
- 8 Rob Huebert and Brooks Yeager, *A New Sea: The Need for a Regional Agreement on Management and Conservation of the Arctic Marine Environment* (Oslo: World Wildlife Fund, 2008).
- 9 Ed Struzik, “The End of Arctic,” *Equinox Magazine* 66 (November/December, 1992): 76–92.
- 10 Albert Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming* (New York: Rodale Press, 2006).
- 11 Hannah Devlin, Ben Webster, and Philippe Naughton, “Inconvenient truth for Al Gore as his North Pole sums don’t add up,” *Times Online*, December 15, 2009; <http://felt.d.wordpress.com/2009/12/16/inconvenient-truth-for-al-gore-as-his-north-pole-sums-dont-add-up/>.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
- 14 Walter J. Hickel, “The Day of the Arctic Has Come,” *Reader’s Digest* (June 1973): 133–36.
- 15 William H. Seward, “The destiny of America,” Speech of William H. Seward at the dedication of Capital University, at Columbus, Ohio, September 14, 1853; <http://international.loc.gov/>

- cgi-bin/query/h?intldl/mtfront:@OR(@field(NUMBER+@band(mtfgc+1002))).
- 16 Kristian Åtland, "Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the Desecuritization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 3 (2008): 289–311.
  - 17 Lawson Brigham, "Think Again: The Arctic – Everyone wants a piece of the thawing far north. But that doesn't mean anarchy will reign at the top of the world," *Foreign Policy* 181 (September/October 2010): 70–74; [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think\\_again\\_the\\_arctic](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think_again_the_arctic).
  - 18 Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty*, April 28, 2009; see also: Inuit Circumpolar Council Press Release, "Arctic Sovereignty Begins with Inuit: Circumpolar Inuit Commit to Development of 'Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic,'" Ottawa, Ontario, November 10, 2008.
  - 19 Barry S. Zellen, "Cold Front: Hillary, Ottawa, and the Inuit," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 12, no. 3 (2010): 5–11.
  - 20 Barry S. Zellen, *Breaking the Ice: From Land Claims to Tribal Sovereignty in the Arctic* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008) and *On Thin Ice: The Inuit, the State, and the Challenge of Arctic Sovereignty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009). The historical and structural details of Inuit governance and land claims accords presented in the following pages present an overview of the case studies presented in this work. Also see Barry S. Zellen, "The Arctic Land Claims Journey," *Tundra Telegraph*, April 6, 2010; and Richard Condon, "Canadian Inuit Land Claims and Economic Development," *Alaska Native News* 1, no. 10–12 (1983): 37; and *Alaska Native News* 1, no. 12 (1983): 16–18, 40.
  - 21 Sam Hall, *The Fourth World: Heritage of the Arctic and Its Destruction* (London: Bodley Head, 1987).
  - 22 See the website of the Mackenzie Gas Project at <http://www.mackenziegasproject.com/> and the Aboriginal Pipeline Group at <http://www.mvapg.com/>. As described by Aboriginal Pipeline Group chairman Fred Carmichael, "Community consultations on a proposal to bring Mackenzie Delta natural gas to southern markets have begun in the Northwest Territories. As a longtime northerner, it reminds me of the Berger Inquiry. But this time, northern Aboriginal people are at the planning table. In a sense, we are now wearing two hats. One hat we wear identifies our traditional role as guardians and stewards of the land. The other hat represents our emerging role as business opportunity developers."
  - 23 See Thomas R. Berger, *Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985).
  - 24 Martin Fletcher, "Greenland referendum offers break from links to Denmark," *Irish Independent*, November 26, 2008; <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/europe/greenland-referendum-offers-break-from-links-to-denmark-1552692.html>.
  - 25 Barry S. Zellen, "Multilateral Legacy: A Sea Change in America's Arctic Policy," *Tundra Telegraph*, March 22, 2010. The full text of NSPD-66/HSPD-25 can be found at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.htm>. As cited by Andrew C. Revkin in "Ice Retreat Prompts Bush Shift in Arctic Policy," *New York Times*, January 13, 2009; <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/in-parting-move-bush-sets-arctic-priorities/>.
  - 26 As cited by Andrew C. Revkin in "Ice Retreat Prompts Bush Shift in Arctic Policy," *New York Times*, January 13, 2009; <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/in-parting-move-bush-sets-arctic-priorities/>.
  - 27 Ibid.
  - 28 Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty*, April 28, 2009. Discussed in further detail in Barry S. Zellen, "The Inuit, the State, and the Battle for the Arctic," *Georgetown*

- Journal of International Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2010): 57–64.
- 29 Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty*, April 28, 2009, Section 4.1.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Inuit Circumpolar Council press release, “Arctic Sovereignty Begins with Inuit: Circumpolar Inuit Commit to Development of ‘Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic,’” Ottawa, Ontario, November 10, 2008.
- 32 Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty*, Section 1.4.
- 33 Ibid., Section 2.1.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.,
- 36 Ibid., Section 2.2.
- 37 Ibid., Section 2.3.
- 38 Ibid., Section 3.6.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid., Section 3.7.
- 41 Jane George, “Melting ice stats don’t sway Greenland premier,” *Nunatsiaq News*, December 14, 2009; [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/9657\\_melting\\_ice\\_stats\\_dont\\_sway\\_greenland\\_premier/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/9657_melting_ice_stats_dont_sway_greenland_premier/).
- 42 Ibid.