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How 'Green' is Canada's Arctic Policy?

The Role of the Environment and Environmental Security in the Arctic

Abstract

This paper examines Canada's Arctic policy in order to assess in how far it addresses environmental issues or is informed by environmental perspectives. For many non-Canadians climate change is intricately linked to the Arctic assuming that environmental matters play the dominant role. However, as will be argued this is not the case with respect to federal Canadian policy. Instead Arctic policy has been securitized prioritizing matters of sovereignty and security. Discussing the concept of security, which may also include environmental security, it will be shown that Canada's response to security and environmental challenges in the Arctic is based on a traditional and conservationist understanding. However, such a reading needs to be put into perspective. Firstly, this verdict may only hold for recent governments and arguably there may have been past developments that contributed to a more environmentalist approach towards the Arctic. Secondly, there are policies introduced that do address environmental security, however these are initiated on the bureaucratic level and they remain difficult to disentangle from the traditional security discourse.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag geht es um die Untersuchung der Frage, inwieweit Umweltfragen und umweltpolitische Perspektiven eine Rolle in Kanadas Arktispolitik spielen. Ausgehend von der Feststellung, dass außerhalb Kanadas viele Beobachter die Arktis eng mit den heutigen Umweltproblemen, allen voran dem Klimawandel, verbinden, soll gezeigt werden, inwiefern diese Sichtweise eher zweitrangig in der kanadischen Politik ist. Die kanadische Regierung hat den Diskurs um die Herausforderungen in der Arktis erfolgreich einem Sicherheitsprimat unterworfen – Sicherheit und territoriale Souveränität bestimmen die Bundespolitik in der Arktis. Vor dem Hintergrund aktueller Diskussionen über die Bedeutung von Sicherheit, in der auch innovative Konzepte von Umweltsicherheit bedeutender werden, wird gezeigt, dass die kanadische Regierung einem eher traditionellen, auf klassischem Umweltschutz basierenden Verständnis von Umweltsicherheit verhaftet ist. Allerdings muss diese Einschätzung ein wenig relativiert werden, denn auch in der Vergangenheit konnte man Kanada sehr wohl als

Vorreiter im Umgang mit Umweltproblemen in der Arktis bezeichnen. Und auch heute werden einzelne Entscheidungen getroffen, die gezielt Umweltprobleme angehen; allerdings gehen diese Initiativen zumeist von der bürokratischen Ebene aus, und sie bleiben schwer trennbar vom traditionellen Sicherheitsdiskurs.

Résumé

Cet article examine la politique canadienne de l'Arctique afin d'évaluer le rôle qu'y joue l'environnement. A l'extérieur du Canada, le changement climatique est perçu comme étant étroitement lié à l'Arctique ce qui sous-entend que l'environnement est au centre des enjeux de cette région. Cependant, cet article va illustrer que ce point de vue n'est pas partagé par la politique canadienne car celle-ci accorde plutôt la priorité à la sécurité et la souveraineté du pays. En revoyant le concept de sécurité, qui peut aussi comprendre le concept de sécurité environnemental, l'article va démontrer que la réponse Canadienne aux enjeux sécuritaires et environnementaux dans l'Arctique est basée sur une conception traditionnelle et protectrice. Toutefois, il faut mettre cette conclusion en perspective. Premièrement, il se peut que cette conclusion s'applique seulement à des gouvernements récents et qu'il y a possiblement eu des dynamiques dans le passé qui auraient contribuées à une approche plus écologique face à l'Arctique. Deuxièmement, il y a bel et bien des politiques qui veillent à résoudre des questions de sécurité environnementale, cependant elles ont été introduites au niveau bureaucratique et sont difficiles à séparer du discours traditionnel de la sécurité.

Introduction

For some years now, popular depictions of the impact of climate change have resorted to iconic images of a changing Arctic. Polar bears stranded on floating ice, melting icebergs and glaciers have become a familiar sight for an environmentally conscious global audience. A photo shoot in the Arctic is an opportunity most politicians and celebrities, who claim to care for the environment, would hardly refuse. The Arctic has not only become "a climate change barometer" (Sheila Watt-Cloutier 2005) and "an early indicator of climate change for the rest of the world" (UN Economic and Social Council 2008, 20) but a powerful image and symbol of climate change itself. This is especially the case in Europe but Canadian audiences generally share this view of the Arctic (Paehlke 2008, 21). However, it is complemented by a distinctly national construction of the Arctic that makes environmental concerns less of a priority. The Canadian government has skillfully combined environmental rationale and territorial questions to securitize Arctic politics and successfully inscribed a meaning into the Arctic that is indebted to traditional understandings of security and sovereignty.

This explains why environmental policies in the Arctic are not necessarily a federal political priority in Canada. This is not to say that we have not seen policies decided and implemented that address various environmental issues in the Arctic. However, these are often the result of bureaucratic decisions and not the outcome of a pronounced political agenda of the executive. The current government's political vision for an Arctic policy is predominantly driven by security and not environmental concerns. This vision is not only limited to the party in power but also shared by most other federal parties. It is important to note that the Arctic does not figure prominently in terms of environmental party politics. Those parties who do campaign with a pronounced environmental platform do not link this agenda to Arctic matters. The NDP 2011 platform, which promises to "tackle climate change" and pledges to "play a lead role in achieving a new international agreement to avert catastrophic global warming and ensure that Canada meets its climate change obligations," (NDP 2011) does not mention the Arctic as a political issue once. Nor does the Green Party of Canada (Green Party of Canada, 2011). Only the Liberal Party specifically addresses environmental issues in the Arctic when it calls for a "stewardship for Canada's oceans" and promises to "halt all new leasing and oil exploration activities in Canada's Arctic waters pending an independent examination of the risks" (Liberal Party of Canada 2011, 48, 50). It even includes a separate section on "Canada's North and the international Arctic region", however like the Conservative platform (Conservative Party of Canada 2011, 37) it reiterates the importance of Arctic sovereignty for Canada's policy (Liberal Party of Canada 2011, 79).

This is not surprising. Canadian elections are won on domestic, economic and social issues. Rarely do environmental and foreign policy issues play a role. In addition, the parties merely reflect the general attitude of most Canadians who live far away from the Arctic. Everyone may be touched by images of polar bears stranded on floating ice sheets or starving for lack of food. As much as this may reinforce the resolve to do something about climate change, rarely does it translate into demands for a specific environment-oriented Arctic policy. Finally, as previous elections have illustrated the issue of Arctic sovereignty is not a partisan one, most parties agree on the necessity of protecting Canada's sovereignty in the high North even if they do not know or cannot articulate from what or from whom.

If not a principal one, what kind of role does the environment play in Canada's Arctic policy? Put differently, how "green" is Ottawa's policy toward the Arctic? In answering this question three interlinked arguments will be made. Firstly, since the late 1990s Canada's Arctic policy has predominantly focused on security and sovereignty making it a foreign policy issue. This characterizes policies of both Conservative and Liberal governments. Secondly, in terms of its role in circum-polar politics Canada has moved away from a multilateral approach championing environmental regimes to a more unilateral agenda. Thirdly, Canada's current

international Arctic policy is a foreign policy that is based on the construction of a national interest that has not fully incorporated the global or common interest of mitigating climate change. It reflects a particular threat perception of environmental change which owes to a traditional statist and realist understanding of security.

Different Shades of Green: Environmental Security

In order to understand how the Canadian government constructs environmental problems in the Arctic and how this perception informs policy making and implementation it will be useful to revisit the concept of security and how it relates to the environment. Among the crucial questions to be addressed are whether and how environmental change in the Arctic is incorporated into the construction of threats to Canadian national security and what kind of understanding of environmental security underlies this threat perception. Related to these are the different possible ways of defining what constitutes "environmental change" and what "environmental problems."

In theoretical debates on international relations the concept of "security" has been both widened and deepened to include non-military threats and to focus on those entities affected by insecurity apart from the state (Buzan/Wæver/de Wilde 1998; Collins 2007; Hough 2004; Kolodziej 2005). In particular, environmental security links environmental change with security risks (Ullman 1983; Mathews 1989; Homer-Dixon 1999; Dyer 2000; Barnett 2001b; Dalby 2002). Thus, it adds environmental problems to the list of national security threats affecting the integrity and cohesion of states. International environmental politics date back to the 1960s when events such as the 1967 Torrey Canyon disaster¹ and popular accounts of environmental catastrophes (Carson 1962) led to a growing awareness of environmental problems. As public and scientific debates on pollution, acid rain and oils spills became more pronounced international regimes emerged that vowed to deal with these issues. In 1972 the United National Environment Program was founded and various international conferences followed. Environmental security was first popularized as a political concept in the late 1980s when the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) recognized the significance of environmental security and introduced the idea of sustainable development to combine environmental and developmental issues. Various studies that analyzed the relationship between environmental degradation, resource scarcity and conflict followed (Ullman 1983; Westing 1986; Mathews 1989; Gleik 1991; Homer-Dixon 1991). Acknowledging this trend in security studies, in April 2007 the United Nations Secu-

1 The Torrey Canyon was an oil tanker that was shipwrecked off the British coast in 1967, leading to the world's first coastal oil spill.

ity Council discussed the security implications of climate change and in June 2009 the United Nations General Assembly acknowledged such possible links (Barnett 2003).

Some authors also used the conceptual debate on environment and security in order to deepen the meaning of "security", contesting that national security and the state are the only spheres affected.² In this regard, environmental security focuses on risks that originate in environmental change and widens the array of current threats to security to include environmental degradation while contesting that the entity that needs to be protected is only and exclusively the nation-state. Environmental problems such as acid rain, air pollution or mercury contamination already illustrated the trans-border and transnational nature of these threats. However, climate change, green house gases and ozone depletion have made environmental security truly global. These are "threats without enemies" (Prins 202, 107), their effects more indirect and long-term. They are global and "seen as an externality to the international system, rather than an internal variable" (Dyer 2000, 139). As a consequence there are calls for a new kind of environmentalism "to reorient environmentalism away from its traditional focus on resource conservation, wilderness preservation, and pollution prevention and cleanup" (Ziser/Sze 2007, 384; cf. Shellenberger/Nordhaus 2004). The argument is that global problems demand global solutions. At the same time the local is also incorporated as global environmental security is closely linked to human security (Barnett 2007, 189; Hough 2004, 145). As a result environmental security does not only deal with threats to the global security or the security of any one of its subsystems, be they national or regional such as the Arctic, but also with threats to social systems, communities and individuals. Some theorists go even further. Transcending the dichotomy of environmental change as security threat and society as referent object they call for treating all transformations as ecological change (Dalby 2002, 106).

This theoretical expansion of the security concept has been challenged by critics, who argue that environmental problems do not necessarily translate into security risks. They warn that the inclusion of environmental problems into the security debate only weakens the analytical coherence of the concept as well as the effective response to these problems (Deudney 1990). However, applying the various understandings of environmental security to the analysis of Canada's Arctic policy helps uncover the specific interpretation of environmental risks and the security referent that underlie current political decisions.

If Canada's Arctic policy is constructed by Ottawa as security policy this raises questions about what constitutes a threat in the Arctic and, equally important, what is to be secured: Canada's territorial integrity, Canada's identity as a Northern nation, the Arctic region as a national or international ecological space and finally

2 The following discussion is based on Hough 2004, 133-52.

the Arctic as home to Northern and indigenous communities? As outlined above each of these referent objects represents a different approach to environmental security. While the first two refer to a traditional understanding of national security, where the major source of risk is environmental change and the major unit of concern the nation, the third suggests both ecological security and common security where environmental change impacts both the social and ecosystem and extends to global as well as regional spaces. The fourth refers to human security and specifically focuses on the implications of environmental change on local communities and individuals.

No Room for Green: The Securitization of Canadian Arctic Policy

In Canada, the most prominent and official understanding of the current situation in the Arctic is based on the first, more orthodox reading of security, focusing on national security, which needs to be defended militarily (Byers 2009; Coates, Lackenbauer/Poelzer 2008; Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2010a; Griffiths 2004; Huebert 2006a, 2006b; Lackenbauer/Farish 2007). In this discourse, environmental change is only the prologue to or facilitator of security threats that have emerged because of the increasing accessibility of the Arctic, which is a result of the melting of the ice. Increasing shipping and resource extraction are seen as potential threats to national security as they contest Canada's sovereign role in the area. This illustrates how the Arctic space is defined as a northern approach that allows foreign state and non-state actors to encroach upon Canadian territory. It focuses on the Arctic as a territorial and political entity defined by boundaries. Arctic policy is about reinforcing these territorial delimitations and showing the outside world that Canada owns and controls this space. Such a geopolitical reading of the security situation supports the idea that in times of increasing resource scarcity the Arctic is likely to witness future conflict (Anderson 2009; Emmerson 2010; Fairhall 2010; Osherenko/Young 1989; Young 2008) and reinforces alarmist accounts likening current developments in the area to a new Cold War, the next great game (Killaby 2005/2006), a race to the North Pole (Yasmann 2007), the Arctic gold rush (Howard 2009) or a scramble for the Arctic (Sale/Potapov 2010). These images, which also tap into a traditional Cold War reading of events, have been very popular in international news coverage on the region. Even the call for an international treaty along the lines of the Antarctic Treaty to ensure peaceful cooperation in the Arctic (Koivurova 2008) underlines an international public discourse that sees a causal link between scarcity of resources and future conflict. An Arctic policy informed by this geopolitical and realist perspective is in stark contrast to focusing on the Arctic as a Northern ecological space that is affected by changes in the international environment. It has also led to what Barry Buzan,

Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde have described as securitization (Buzan/Wæver/de Wilde 1998) of Arctic policy in the last decade.

Because the changing situation in the Arctic has been addressed by applying traditional conceptions of territory and ownership Canada's policy response to these developments was characterized by an emphasis on sovereignty and a framing of problems in terms of national security. The challenges in the Arctic were not simply seen as political problems but as existential since they threatened the territorial and national integrity of Canada. Accordingly, the Canadian government declared the protection of security and sovereignty its top priority. Its rhetoric reinforced this securitized Arctic policy. It was accompanied by an assertive and determined posture by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who in July 2007 voiced Canada's uncompromising stance when he introduced the "use it or lose it" dictum: "Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it. And make no mistake, this Government intends to use it" (Canada 2007). The constant reference to "Arctic Sovereignty" successfully alluded to the potential loss of territorial jurisdiction if not territory and it allowed the government to announce a number of military and defence initiatives. This posture has been reinforced in the 2010 Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy, which promises Canadians that "[e]xercising sovereignty over Canada's North, as over the rest of Canada, is our number one Arctic foreign policy priority" (Canada 2010c).

Since the 2005/2006 Conservative Party election campaign the commitment to a robust defence of Arctic sovereignty has characterized all major policy documents and initiatives. The October 2007 Throne Speech and the 2008 Budget reiterated the importance of an assertive posture including military buildup in the Arctic. This was supported by the May 2008 Canada First Defence Strategy. In July 2009, the first comprehensive Arctic policy was announced reinforcing the security and sovereignty discourse. A prominent objective of Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future is "to vigorously demonstrate [Canada's] Arctic sovereignty as international interest in the region increases." Two additional objectives focus on resource development and aboriginal "economic and political destiny." A fourth objective introduces environmental protection, "to respond to the challenges of climate change in the North and make sure that its countless ecological wonders are protected for future generations" (Canada 2009). However, this does not constitute a very strong commitment to environmental protection. So far, most of the rhetoric and budget announcement have focused on strengthening the military and defence capabilities in the region. Military exercises have been stepped up. Promises to construct offshore patrol ships and a new icebreaker as well as building a deep-water harbor (Canada 2010b) have demonstrated to the Canadian public both the grave importance of the threats as well as the resolve of the government to deal with them. In August 2010 another official document was issued, the Statement on Canada's Arctic Policy. Referring to Canada as

“an Arctic power” it reiterated Canada’s “robust leadership role in shaping the stewardship, sustainable development and environmental protection of this strategic Arctic region, and engaging with others to advance our interests” (Canada 2010c).

This quotation illustrates how environmental protection is used as an argument to justify a foreign policy that insist on the primacy of the state, ownership of the Arctic and territorial claims. While it pledges to engage with others this represents a stark shift away from a former multilateralist agenda that incorporated non-state and transnational circumpolar actors alike. This position manifested itself in the meeting of the five Arctic coastal states (Canada, the United States, the Russian Federation, Norway and Denmark) in Ilulissat in 2008 at which a declaration was issued that pledged that the five sovereign states would cooperate and adhere to existing international regimes (Declaration of Ilulissat 2008).

It Used to Be Green: Arctic Policy Past and Present

Historically, one could argue that Canada was a good steward for the Arctic and a norm entrepreneur in terms of addressing environmental challenges as part of its Arctic foreign policy. When in 1969/1970 the petroleum company Humble Oil sent an oil tanker through the Northwest Passage to test the feasibility of transporting oil from the new-found oil fields in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, the Canadian government unilaterally imposed an Arctic protection legislation which prohibited the deposit of waste in Arctic waters from either ship or land source within a 100-mile zone (Pharand 1973). Only recently this Arctic zone has been expanded to 200 miles. This was later incorporated into the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the Arctic clause (UNCLOS Article 234). The Canadian government based its unilateral decision on environmental arguments, reasoning that existing international regimes provided insufficient protection of the Arctic environment. In the late 1960s, several major oil spill incidents had sensitized decision-makers to the potential environmental threats of such commercial transits. In addition, negotiations of the Convention on the Law of the Sea were already in full swing. Hence, the Canadian government insisted that “a danger to the environment of a state constitutes a threat to its security” (quoted in Henkin 1971, 133). Some authors agree with Andrew Cooper’s verdict that the 1970 legislation “was particularly avant-garde in its custodianship concept” (Cooper 1997) others are more cautious (Hellmann/ Herborth 2008; Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2010b). However, what complicates an evaluation of the decision as environmental legislation is the fact that questions of environmental protection intersect with those of territorial jurisdiction. After all, this was also to signal to others – specifically the United States, that Canada has jurisdiction over the Arctic (Elliot-Meisel 1999). The legislation must be understood as a response to the public outcry in Canada fol-

lowing the 1969/70 passage of the SS Manhattan for Humble Oil. Canadians vocally criticized the United States for disrespecting Canadian sovereignty in Arctic waters. In addition, even if environmental security informed the government's decision, enacting the legislation still remains a unilateral undertaking.

A better and less contentious example for Canada's environmental entrepreneurship is its involvement in circumpolar environmental governance. Since the late 1980s, Ottawa was instrumental in initiating cooperation between the Arctic states and addressing environmental problems in a transnational manner. It supported the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), an agreement between Arctic states, which was officially adopted in 1991 (Huebert 1998, 40-44), and it championed the founding of the circumpolar Arctic Council, which was created in 1996 (Koivurova/Vanderzwaag 2007). These regimes were specifically engaged in addressing environmental issues such as climate change and transboundary pollution. More importantly, they also bestowed agency on non-state indigenous actors, both regional and transnational, by making indigenous groups Permanent Members of the Arctic Council (Wilson 2007, 70; Huebert 1998). The Canadian government had officially acknowledged indigenous agency by creating the post of ambassador for circumpolar affairs in 1994.

In fact, these non-state actors are important if one applies a human environmental security perspective. Northerners and specifically indigenous communities are directly affected by environmental change in the Arctic and they have designed their specific response to the threats that pollution and other environmental problems posed. Besides adaptation their strategy included political participation. Both the AEPS and Arctic Council owe their existence to intensified cooperation between local Arctic groups across national boundaries. One of the most important transnational institutions in this respect is the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC, now the Inuit Circumpolar Council), which has been meeting and coordinating a circumpolar Inuit agenda since 1977 (Wilson 2007).

Furthermore, it should be noted that in climate change matters Canada's past record was also characterized by a multilateral approach and the inclusion of non-state actors, both in terms of science and diplomacy. The Canadian government was supportive of scientific and political conferences that addressed the relationship between global environmental change and global security. Yet, as Bernstein argues, after 1992 Canada became a laggard in international environmental policy due to a confluence of various domestic developments. He specifically detects a discrepancy between supporting the emergence of international climate agreements and domestic follow-up or implementation. He and others conclude that the "debate in Canada over Kyoto has led to an inward-looking policy, which abandons Canada's long tradition of internationalism in its environmental policy and foreign policy more generally" (Bernstein et al. 2008, 14). Instead the Harper government follows a "made-in-Canada approach," which means that Canada did not enforce the Kyoto Protocol targets before completely withdrawing from the

Protocol in late 2011. This posture also affected the way in which environmental problems are conceptualized in the Arctic. While the recent securitization of Arctic policy led to a reversal of past policies that championed circumpolar, multilateralist approaches as well as the inclusion of non-state actors it did not go so far as to securitize environmental degradation and more specifically climate change. Thus, neither does Canada have “a globally integrated climate policy” (Bernstein et al. 2008) nor does its securitized Arctic policy prioritize environmental challenges.

What Kind of Green? Conservationism, Adaptation and Mitigation

Depending on the different understandings of environmental security what constitutes a threat may also vary. The source of insecurity can be quite different things: human intrusion, air and water pollution, oil spills, waste water, mercury contamination, environmental degradation, and climate change, to name but a few. In a 2008 report the Canadian Senate singled out ballast water, which introduces invasive species, and oil spills as the main threats for the Arctic maritime environment (Senate 2008, 29). Duane Smith, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada), explained during the hearings for that same report that coastal erosion was a pressing issue for Northerner as it forces Inuit communities to relocate (Senate 2008, 7).

Of course, all of these are environmental problems, however some can be easier traced back to originators than others, some are more immediate and shorter-term in their impact. In addition, some of these threats can be externalized. They can be constructed as outside threats excluding Canadian complicity and responsibility. For example, pollution in the Arctic has often been constructed as a threat emanating from outside Canada. The discourse on transboundary pollution and black carbon in the Arctic sees the sources of environmental degradation thousands of miles away. It is something done by foreigners, by others. As Barnett has argued for the United States, constructing environmental problems as emanating outside the nation state obscures the nation state's own role in creating these very problems (Barnett 2001a). Not surprisingly then, in cases where it is the “inside” which is responsible for pollution or contamination the debate is rather muted, as we have seen with the cleaning of Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line installations, which pose a major environmental hazard because of PCB contamination in the Far North (Canada DND 2009; Sistili et al. 2005; Tsuji et al. 2006). Admittedly, this might not be as clear a case, as some commentators point toward the fact that technically it was the United States who constructed the radar facilities in the 1950s, thus the threat did indeed originate outside Canada. However, Canada helped construct these installations and jointly managed them. In any case, it is very important to note here that the current official discourse places

more emphasis on pollution, which can be constructed as originating outside, than on climate change, in which Canada plays a role as "originator".

Despite the fact that as early as 1970 the Canadian government argued that environmental challenges pose a direct threat to national security recent discourses on environmental problems in the Arctic make no such clear connections. Climate change in particular is not addressed as a direct threat to Canada's security. Following the orthodox understanding of security Canada's Arctic policy constructs climate change as an external threat originating outside Canada and defines the "environmental commons as an economic and political externality" (Ziser/Sze 2007, 394). Climate policy remains unrelated to Arctic policy, it is marginalized in the discourse and remains almost "unseen" (Smith 2010, 936-8). There is no holistic approach integrating both the national and international dimensions as well as the many issue areas involved. Those strategies that are integrated into Canada's Northern Strategy are very specific adaptation strategies. The Canadian government focuses on conservation through expanding and establishing national parks and creating protected areas in the far north (Canada 2010b). This example shows that even in those cases where environmental security is included in the official discourse on Arctic policy it is based on a traditional understanding of environmental challenges (conservation) and exclusively focuses on adaptation strategies. Climate change and mitigation strategies have not entered the official debate yet. Including them would have to address Canada's complicity in creating the very security threats that the Arctic is facing. Equally important is the fact that establishing national parks is yet another attempt at showing government presence in the Arctic. Arctic spaces are officially occupied and governed by a federal institution.

Green As Rhetoric? The Case of NORDREG

The securitization of Arctic policy has turned the protection of Canada's northern territory into a foreign policy concern of highest urgency and gravity. Because decisions on how to deal with challenges in the Arctic have been elevated to the highest possible executive level, more incremental and small-scale public policy decisions that equally aim to address various related problems do not enter the political and public discourse. Thus, there have been a number of initiatives and regulations that intend to provide environmental protection and deal with the Arctic as an environmental space first. Yet, these hardly constitute a comprehensive Arctic policy and the way the government talks about them does not reflect this environmental approach. A good example to illustrate this ambivalence is the so-called Northern Canada Vessel Traffic Services (NORDREG).

In 2010, Canada implemented a mandatory ship reporting system for large cruise or cargo vessels (300 gross tonnage or more) in the Arctic region, the

Northern Canada Vessel Traffic Services (Canada 2010a). NORDREG aims to ensure environmental protection through checking that vessels travelling in the Arctic are suitably equipped for ice conditions, through monitoring ships in order to respond in cases of emergency and through offering expert support including reports on ice conditions and advice on routes. NORDREG had already existed as a voluntary reporting system since 1977 and according to Canadian authorities' estimates was used by 98 per cent of ships (Senate 2008, 32). Its zone is almost congruent with the AWPPA 200-mile zone. The two main objectives of NORDREG are safety and environmental protection. However, a look at how the system became obligatory reveals the politics behind the policy, which was in fact more inspired by questions of national sovereignty. It was a response by the Canadian government to the recommendations spelled out by the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in their June 2008 report entitled "The Coast Guard in Canada's Arctic: Interim Report" (Senate 2008).

The language and structure of the report reinforce the sovereignty discourse. Already in the foreword Chair William Rompkey reminds readers that the Coast Guard is "Canada's primary vehicle in demonstrating to the world its sovereignty in the Arctic" (Senate 2008, ii). It begins its concluding section with outlining the future threat scenario for the country: "Canada faces a potential challenge to its sovereign right to control shipping activity in the Northwest Passage" (Senate 2008, 39). Accordingly, the first recommendation asks the Canadian government to reinforce its claim that the Northwest Passage is historic internal waters. Besides security deliberations another rationale given for this foreign policy priority is environmental consideration (Senate 2008, 39). With its sixth recommendation the report explicitly asked for NORDREG to become mandatory (Senate 2008, 40). All these recommendations were reiterated in a later, final report entitled "Rising to the Arctic Challenge: Report on the Canadian Coast Guard" (Senate 2009). While hardly anyone was against this, the move from voluntary to mandatory has merely been a cosmetic one. Most ships had already been using the system on a voluntary basis. In addition, the regulation only applies to very large ships and these are already subject to a reporting system under international law (IMO 2010).³

More important was the fact that this would prove government concern for sovereignty and that it was resolved to act. In essence it gave teeth to the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act and created impetus to extend its limits to 200 miles. The official press release echoed this priority when it announced that "[m]andatory reporting of vessels to Coast Guard strengthens Canada's northern sovereignty." This subheading left no doubt as to what the government meant when talking about taking "action to protect Canadian waters." Only later a quotation by Senator Claude Carignan reminds us that the objective of NORDREG is to

3 SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 19.2 – Carriage requirements for shipborne navigational systems and equipment.

keep "Canada's North clean and green" (Transport Canada 2010). Officials acknowledged that the decision would potentially have international repercussions as they applied to the Northwest Passage, a maritime area that Canada claims to be historic internal waters and the United States and the European Union see as constituting an international strait. Already in 2008 when Prime Minister Harper first contemplated making NORDREG compulsory he was reported to admit that this may upset other countries (Boswell 2010a).

Not surprisingly, the international response was rather critical, not only because the regulation reaffirms Canada's claim on the Northwest Passage as internal waters but also because it was implemented without prior consultation of the International Maritime Organization. One of the biggest shipping organizations criticized that Canada was establishing a 200-mile NORDREG zone when international law (International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea SOLAS) only allowed such regulations to be applied within territorial waters, i.e. within a 12-mile zone. To this Canada replied that it did not need official endorsement by the IMO (Boswell 2010b; Ryan 2010).

The NORDREG case study demonstrates that those decisions that are taken in specialized bureaucracies are only integrated into Canada's overall Arctic policy discourse if the Prime Minister deems them a priority and as contributing to the overall Arctic sovereignty discourse. Thus, there are indeed a number of regulatory activities addressing environmental impacts in the Arctic. However, these are reached within the specialized institutions, including Transport Canada, Department of Ocean and Fisheries, the Canadian Coast Guard, Environment Canada, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In 2003 it was decided that Transport Canada would deal with pollution prevention in the Arctic. That means that Environment Canada is not the leading bureaucracy in dealing with environmental protection in the Arctic. In addition, it is the Coast Guard (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) that is the operational agency in any oil spill or pollution case. Hence, most decisions that could be classified as environmental protection fall into the policy area of shipping. They constitute low-key, highly specialized approaches to dealing with potential oils spills, water and air pollution. Institutionally they find their home at the Department of Transport with the Coast Guard playing a central role in providing support to these activities. Yet, even with this specialized agency it becomes clear that the environmental priority is only one of four. The departmental mandate is "[t]o manage Canada's oceans and major waterways so that they are clean, safe, productive and accessible, to ensure sustainable use of fisheries resources and to facilitate marine trade and commerce" (Canadian Coast Guard 2010). On the other hand there are some international initiatives for environmental protection that are spearheaded by these specialized bureaucracies. For example, when Arctic coast guards met in 2007 to coordinate their work in the Arctic a working group was established that would particularly look into environmental

issues. This group was chaired by Canada. Yet the problem remains, this dimension of international Arctic policy is not seen as a political priority. In addition, even Search and Rescue (SAR) is perceived as “an important means for Canada to demonstrate its commitment to sovereignty in the vast and sparsely populated region that is the Canadian Arctic” (Senate 2008, 34).

NORDREG was not only criticized internationally but nationally. Inuit spokesperson Mary Simon lauded the mandatory system as an important regime “to ensure safe shipping” in the Arctic but demanded that Inuit communities become part of the system through regular consultation (Boswell 2010c). Generally, the problem of Canada’s environmental agenda in the Arctic is the non-consultation of those affected directly through coastal erosion, pollution and contamination. Hardly any effort is made to integrate indigenous knowledge (IK) when designing policy responses.

Conclusion: Not Visibly Green and only of a Particular Shade of Green

In answering the original question of how green Canada’s Arctic policy is one may offer two responses: not visibly green and only of a particular shade of green. Environmental considerations do of course play a role in Canada’s Arctic policy, however that role seems to be consistently trumped by the Arctic sovereignty discourse. Because Arctic policy has been securitized it is the executive who dictates the public and official discourse. The political leadership and not specialized bureaucracies defines what constitutes environmental problems in the Arctic and how these threaten the nation’s security. Environmental arguments (protection) and regulations (NORDREG, AWPPA) are used to justify a securitized Arctic policy but they are not at the centre of that policy. At the same time, different levels of governance are involved in Arctic policy, but the federal state claims to be the most important actor. This is partly a result of the fact that constitutionally a number of powers still reside with Ottawa, especially in the case of Arctic resources, both offshore and subsurface.

Arguably, in the past, Canada’s Arctic policy might have been green. However, even though one of the earliest responses to intrusions into the pristine polar ecological space was the imposition of an environmental law and despite Canada’s instrumental role in the founding of the Arctic Council, whose mandate includes the protection of the Arctic environment, Canada’s Arctic policy predominantly revolved around issues of national or North American security and sovereignty. This has not changed, despite the fact that today’s globalized and interdependent world facilitates the complex interweaving of foreign and domestic policy areas. The current Arctic policy pays only lip service to the call for a comprehensive Arctic policy integrating issues of good governance (meaning social pro-

grams and economic development), environmental stewardship, national security and sovereignty. Instead current Arctic policy exhibits a rather traditional and orthodox concept of environmental security. The way that environmental challenges are portrayed and discussed in Canada points toward a very specific understanding of environmental security, a particular shade of green. It is a reading of events that defines environmental problems in terms of pollution and intrusion from outside and mainly sees the state as a legitimate provider of security. Thus, environmental challenges are simply added to the traditional external threats to national security. Climate change plays a minor role in this threat construction.

However, for Canadian Arctic policy to be "green" it should be based on a more critical concept of environmental security. Climate change should be addressed as a direct threat to Canada's security, especially but not exclusively in the Arctic. The global public good of mitigating climate change should equally be seen as a national good (cf. Nye 2002, 236). In effect, it may not even make sense to differentiate between national, circumpolar and global security. The question is whether that particular shade of green is creating problems for international environmental governance. The case of the 1970 AWPPA has raised a crucial dilemma: Is environmental unilateralism – even if implemented for a "green" cause – really helpful in addressing current environmental issues in the Arctic? Even if retrospectively adopted as international norm can it really contribute to multilateral cooperation in the long run and should Canada follow such a foreign-policy approach? Will it not compromise its reputation as champion of multilateralism?

In addition, should Canada not rather define its environmental stewardship in terms of finding adaptation and mitigation strategies for those challenges posed by climate change? Any kind of environmental stewardship in the Arctic should be conceptualized as meaning both global and northern governance. Such local governance practices would also tap into indigenous knowledge (Dolata-Kreutzkamp 2011). However, this will only happen if indigenous agency is acknowledged in this area and if Arctic policy is linked to climate change policies. For indigenous groups and actors to bring in their ideas of environmental stewardship there needs to be a "window of opportunity," in this case a general realization that Arctic policy needs to address both environmental human security and global environmental security. One way of facilitating that ideational shift would be the inclusion of the concept of climate change. As long as this does not happen, indigenous actors will look for alternative ways of bringing their ideas to the table. The best example for this is the April 2009 "Circumpolar Inuit Declaration of Sovereignty in the Arctic" – a response to the 2008 Declaration of Ilulissat – which explicitly refers to the concept of global environmental security and emphasizes the "unique Inuit knowledge of Arctic ecosystems" and the "need for appropriate emphasis on sustainability in the weighing of resource development proposals." Of course, this also means that territories such as Nunavut claim offshore and subsurface resource rights, rights that currently reside with Ottawa.

Another reason why a “greening” of Arctic policy is rather unlikely is the fact that the Canadian government likes to play the energy card in foreign policy. Stephen Harper’s mantra of Canada being an “energy superpower” (PM Harper, July 2007) sees a very different role for Canada in the world than the internationalist one it could play in terms of climate change policy. Combined with the fact that sovereignty and thus traditional perceptions of national security play such an important role in Arctic policy and Arctic politics, there is currently no room for new concepts of global environmental security or local responses to those threats. However, Canadian citizens may be complicit in this. While they may see combating climate change as a worthy cause they do not link Arctic policies to climate change policies. Most agree that Arctic policy should be about defending Canada’s sovereignty, its national interest, its identity and its values. But – what if one of these values were global or common environmental security? This is what Canadians and the Canadian government need to ask themselves.

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