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Comparing Governance and Security in Inuit Nunaat: Preliminary Observations

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This *NAADSN Strategic Perspectives* offers a preliminary comparative analysis of security governance across Inuit Nunaat, the transnational Inuit homeland. First, it frames aspects of colonialism and governance across the region (which relates to political security) before surveying the relationship between Inuit and conventional military security issues in the Arctic. It then discusses Inuit conceptions of security, and outlines the evidence for a holistic, comprehensive understanding of security which emphasizes protection of Inuit culture, political autonomy, and the Arctic environment. The final section then compares the contemporary governance systems across three regions of Inuit Nunaat – Greenland/Kalaallit Nunaat, northern Canada/Inuit Nunangat, and Alaska – to identify a multi-level security gap with respect to specific issues that Inuit identify as most vital to their survival and wellbeing. We argue that this multi-level security gap stems from the lack of jurisdiction or governing capacity over those areas most critical for Inuit security, and reflects the broader limitations for multi-level security governance across the broader circumpolar Arctic.

Introduction

Inuit Nunaat, the transnational Inuit homeland, is a complex place.[1] Located across the territory of four states – Denmark/Greenland, Canada, the United States, and Russia – its contemporary governance reflects decades of effort by Inuit to establishing self-governing political institutions in order to overcome the historical processes of colonialism and territorial acquisition that have divided Inuit among themselves and subjected them to outside rule. A dense web of institutions including Inuit-led governments, land claim corporations, and representative non-governmental organizations such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has emerged to constitute a unique, non-sovereign Inuit polity stretching across the circumpolar region.[2] The ability for Inuit to exercise greater levels of autonomy is generally regarded as a vital step towards enacting self-determination, and is directly linked to the reassertion of Inuit control over matters that affect their daily lives as Indigenous people.[3] At the same time, the confluence of forces related to globalization, geopolitics, ongoing colonial imposition, and human-caused climate change present serious challenges for all levels of governance in the Arctic, and require resources and capabilities that are often limited or lacking. In their most extreme form, these challenges may threaten the current configuration of Arctic politics and governance, and the very resilience of Arctic societies. In this context, the rise of devolved and autonomous Inuit governments raises significant questions about the governance of *security* issues in the circumpolar regions which comprise the Inuit homeland.

More than thirty years ago Inuit were arguing that states' approach to Arctic issues "on the basis of defence and military considerations […] too often serve[s] to promote our *insecurity*."[4] More recently, the Inuit Circumpolar Council's 2010 *Arctic Policy* states that military activities in the Arctic Ocean pose unacceptable

environmental and other security risks, and reiterates Cold War era calls for the creation of an Arctic zone of peace.[5] The ICC states the location and operation of military bases must go through an assessment process in order to prevent adverse environmental impacts, and insists that "safeguarding of the Arctic environment must take precedence over military exercises and activities."[6] These developments reflect the greater politicization of Arctic military activities in Inuit Nunaat, as the actions taken by Arctic states in the name of security were challenged due to harmful effects on Inuit and other peoples. This has fueled an ongoing debate over the appropriate meaning and methods of implementing security in the Arctic and for Inuit.

Even across Inuit polities, there are differences in terms of prioritizing insecurities related to environmental change, given many regional actors' continued focus on Arctic resource extraction. However, the *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles* stipulates that all actors "have a shared responsibility to evaluate the risks and benefits of their actions through the prism of global environmental security", and that "resource development in *Inuit Nunaat* must contribute to, and not detract from, global, national and regional efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and should always be seen through the reality of climate change […] To minimize the risk to global environmental security, the pace of resource development in the Arctic must be carefully considered."[7] The Declaration indicates that revenues from resource development must go towards "providing security against unplanned or unintended environmental consequences," and links threats to Arctic wildlife, food security, and Inuit culture with "the scope and depth of climate change and other environmental pressures and challenges facing the Arctic."[8] According to one elder: "The greatest risk to our security is these companies that operate offshore could do major damage to our marine biology."[9] For Inuit, environmental changes are depicted as the context within which decisions about resource extraction must be made, emphasizing both global and local dimensions of risk due to extractive activities and climate disruption. Foregrounding environmental security, however, may conflict with the desire for economic security pursued by some Inuit actors and Arctic states.

This report provides a preliminary comparative analysis of governance and security across Greenland/Kalaallit Nunaat, northern Canada/Inuit Nunangat, and Alaska. In these regions, Inuit have developed distinct governing structures and relationships to sovereign states, nesting their sovereignty and sovereign rights within and across levels of governance. Following the general framework of Barry Buzan's sectors of security, we examine how, in the context of devolution and their emerging political autonomy, Inuit actors engaged in considerable security discourse in the late 20th and early 21st centuries which emphasized threats to the natural environment, Inuit culture, and their political autonomy within the context of settler-colonial states.[10] While others such as Olav Schram Stokke have examined the supranational dimensions of multilevel security governance in the Arctic, we look to the subnational dimensions related to devolved and self-governing Inuit polities.[11]

We focus first on the military sector. During the 1980s, Inuit challenged the militarized nature of Cold War constructions of security that were used to legitimate the damage to human and animal life from chemical pollutants and contamination, low flying military aircraft, and construction of military facilities such as airbases and radar stations in ecologically sensitive environments, as well as other government intrusions into Inuit lives and communities.[12] Their critique of Cold War security policies in the NATO allied Arctic states of the United States, Canada, and Greenland/Denmark generally involved calls for an end to military activities in the region, including the deployment of nuclear weapons, and shift towards "redefin[ing] the notion of security in broad terms of collective security for all peoples and states."[13]

Inuit leaders and organizations argued in favour of a human and environment-focused conception of security "understood in a broad sense. Just as health is more than the absence of disease, so, too, security is more than the absence of military conflict."[14] Reflecting the natural and human-made challenges to survival and human flourishing in the Arctic, Inuit articulations of security stress the basic necessities of life: "Security to Inuit was, and is, having food, clothing and shelter,"[15] To another Inuit official: "Security from our societal perspective comes from access to the basic essentials of life – food, shelter and water."[16] While Inuit leaders acknowledge military activity is a prerogative of Arctic states and a valid component of Arctic security, they are united in the view it is insufficient for a full understanding of what Inuit require to be secure. Thus, for Inuit "Arctic security includes environmental, economic and cultural, as well as defence, aspects."[17]

Accordingly, we also explore multi-level security governance with respect to the environment and economic development, particularly through natural resource extraction. In turn, both environmental and economic security are inextricably linked to societal security, because they affect relationships with land and cultural practices that are fundamental to Inuit collective identity as Indigenous people. We argue the limited ability of Inuit governments and quasi-governing institutions to effectively respond to those policy areas that Inuit identify as most threatening their wellbeing and survival represents a crucial gap in security governance in Inuit Nunaat and the broader circumpolar Arctic.

Colonialism and Governance in Inuit Nunaat

Indigenous, devolved, and multi-level forms of governance in the Arctic have attracted scholarly attention, particularly given the growth of de jure and de facto Inuit governments in Greenland, northern Canada, and Alaska.[18] Defined as "a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers" (supranational, national, regional and local),[19] multi-level governance has become the preferred form of managing the overlapping jurisdictional and rights claims of Arctic stakeholders ranging across local, regional, and national levels.

Some scholars note that "the rights granted to indigenous peoples can roughly be divided into two categories: partial territorial sovereignty rights and property, ownership and use rights."[20] In the Arctic, both categories of legal rights have emerged from negotiations between Inuit and their respective states, then enacted through domestic legislation. In this respect, while the scope of political autonomy granted to Indigenous peoples varies widely across jurisdictions, these legal regimes all reflect the underlying assertion of colonial state sovereignty. Specific to Inuit, two types of agreements exist: land claims agreements with local and regional structures to administrate the settlement (Alaska, Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavik), and self-government agreements (Greenland, Nunavut, Nunatsiavut).[21] However, all such multilevel governance arrangements stem from the fundamental reality that Inuit experienced dispossession of authority over their traditional territories, alongside numerous other forms of colonial imposition.[22]

The Inuit Circumpolar Council's *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*, released in 2009, 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." Foregrounding the document in Inuit rights as, respectively, residents of the Arctic since time immemorial, as an Indigenous people, and as citizens of Arctic states and political subunits therein, the ICC's articulation of sovereignty encompasses both vertical and horizontal forms of multilevel governance –

that is, between governments above and below the level of sovereign states as well as between non-state or quasi-state actors located within and across sovereign boundaries. Accordingly, Inuit governance also incorporates both public governments representing majority Inuit populations (e.g. Greenland, Nunavut) and ethnic governments representing *only* Inuit within particular regions (e.g. Nunatsiavut, Nunavik).[23] Whether taking the form of devolved or autonomous regional governments, Indigenous self-governments, or hybrid forms of government 'nested' within existing federal systems, multi-level governance is ubiquitous, albeit uneven and distinct, across Inuit Nunaat. In turn, the "inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights" make Inuit essential "partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic." This partnership extends to all international issues, from global environmental security to "militarization" to shipping to economic and social development.[24]

For Inuit, political autonomy as a self-determining Indigenous people is typically seen as vital *to* their security and to ensuring the means to provide *for* their security, including defending against social change, economic modernization, and cultural assimilation imposed from the south. Today, Inuit leaders and scholars typically characterize the colonial history of Inuit Nunaat as one of harm to Inuit wellbeing and security because the state prioritized its interests, and particularly national security during the mid-20th century, which simultaneously dispossessed them of control over territories and marginalized their roles in defending their homelands. Accordingly, Inuit insist that they must be partners in addressing all security issues in Inuit Nunaat – which is itself an expression of political security.

The Military Sector and Inuit Nunaat

The term 'sectors' of security is drawn from Barry Buzan, who outlined five categories for organizing an increasingly diffuse array of international security issues: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental.[25] Of these, threats in the military sector have typically been considered the most important because organized military violence has demonstrated the greatest historical capacity to harm human life and wellbeing, and because military threats are most readily able to undermine security across the other sectors. Inuit and their homelands have been profoundly affected by militarized conceptions of national security and strategic practices since the mid-20th century. Following the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands in 1942, an American military presence was established in traditional Inuit territories such as Labrador, Baffin Island, and Greenland.[26] During the Second World War and Cold War, geostrategic competition between Arctic states rendered Inuit unable to determine the conditions of their own security.

Instead, decisions were made in state capitals on national security and strategic grounds with only secondary or tertiary concern for consequences on Arctic peoples. For example, US expansion of its weather station in the Greenlandic village of Pituffik into Thule Air Base in 1952 led to the forced relocation of Inuit from the area. The relocation remains controversial, as does the stationing of American nuclear weapons in Greenland and environmental damage related to the Thule base, such as radioactive contamination caused by the nearby crash of a nuclear-armed B-52 bomber in 1968.[27] To this day, Thule essentially operates as a U.S. enclave, and provides an important source of local employment and service-provision. Because the government of Greenland lacks control over foreign and defence policy, decisions with respect to the American base are not within their purview. Most Greenlandic politicians thus express a "pragmatic" attitude toward American military installations, which they argued also defend their security interests – and which is compatible with their interests as citizens who look to their state for military security against foreign adversaries.[28]

In Inuit Nunangat and Alaska, the installation of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) radar line during the 1950s also had a transformative effect. As the boldest megaproject in Arctic history to that point, the construction and operation of this string of 63 stations across the North American Arctic (two-thirds of them in northern Canada) to detect Soviet bombers dramatically altered the military, logistical, and demographic characteristics of the Canadian Arctic. According to the 1955 Canada-US DEW Line agreement assessment: "The Eskimos of Canada are in a primitive state of social development. It is important that these people be not subjected unduly to disruption of their hunting economy, exposure to diseases against which their immunity is often low, or other effects of the presence of white men which might be injurious to them."[29] In retrospect, the thought that Inuit could be insulated from military megaprojects appears both absurd and naïve. Defence activities created or exacerbated dependencies on wage employment and Western goods, encouraged the concentration of Inuit in permanent settlements, and set up unsustainable expectations given the "boom-and-bust" cycles associated with construction work. By drawing Inuit and other Northern peoples into the web of modern life, the military's expanding postwar footprint changed socio-economic and cultural geographies.[30] In addition to the social and economic upheaval caused by their construction, localized environmental contaminants from DEW Line stations such as asbestos and PCBs have been found throughout soil, water, air, and animals.[31]

Although Canadian commentators typically associate military practices, and those of the state more generally, with physical dislocation, environmental degradation, political disruption, and culture shock for Northern Indigenous peoples,[32] the interconnectedness between the military, remote communities, and Canadian society is respected as a constructive force in the case of the Canadian Rangers. The vast majority of Rangers in the Canadian Arctic north of the treeline are Inuit, and their command structure – wherein community-based patrols vote in their own leadership – reflects the grassroots nature of the organization. As the "eyes, ears, and voice" of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in the North, southern military units rely on and learn from the experience and knowledge of the Rangers to survive and operate effectively in Arctic environments. Furthermore, studies emphasize how the Canadian Rangers not only benefit their communities in a direct social and economic sense, they also empower Northern Canadians who mentor and educate other members of the CAF on how to manage, respect, and ultimately, care for their homeland.

The Canadian military created the Canadian Rangers in 1947 "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces." By design, they are intended to serve in their home communities and apply their existing local knowledge as guides and scouts and to report suspicious activities. The actual tasks that they perform in support of their mission have become more complex and nuanced over time. Their initial focus was national *security* – protecting their communities from enemy attack in the early Cold War. During the 1970s, their responsibilities became directly linked to the armed forces' role in support of Canada's *sovereignty* in the Arctic. Changes to the structure of the Ranger organization embraced a community-based focus, with the military empowering community members to vote in their own patrol leaders rather than appointing them according to "military" criteria. While unorthodox from an army standpoint, this practice proved "highly popular in small Arctic communities"[33] and continues to ensure that Ranger leadership is reflective of local cultural and political norms. Since the 1990s, the Rangers have also played a more visible nation-building and *stewardship* role in remote regions across Canada. They represent an important success story as a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of having military "boots on the ground" exercising Canadian sovereignty and conducting or supporting domestic operations.[34]

By the twenty-first century, Canadian Ranger patrols were found in nearly every Inuit community. Popular descriptions of the Rangers typically equate Rangers with Inuit defending their homeland, and their established record of operations, extending back more than seven decades, affirms the interconnectedness between Indigenous and local knowledge, identities, and practices, on the one hand, and the nation's interest in exercising its sovereignty on a continuous basis, on the other. Because individual patrols are generally representative of their communities' ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity, they are a material example of the Government of Canada's strong focus on Northern Indigenous leadership and its statement that "Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada's North" and that the military commits "to expand and deepen […] particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers."[35]

Lackenbauer has argued that the Rangers have proven their value in recent decades by striking an appropriate balance between their military and community contributions.[36] The combat role originally assigned to Rangers in 1947 has been removed from their official task list because they are neither trained nor equipped for this role, leading some commentators to declare that they are not a "real military force" and using this as a prime example that the CAF is unprepared to defend Canada's Arctic from foreign adversaries.[37] This logic is problematic on several levels, revealing both a profound misunderstanding of the Rangers and how they fit within the defence team: conducting and supporting surveillance and presence patrols; conducting and assisting with domestic military operations; and maintaining a Canadian Armed Forces presence in local communities. This includes reporting unusual activities or sightings; land-based and maritime patrolling; assisting in search and rescue efforts and in local emergencies; and assisting with natural disasters such as forest fires and floods.[38] The Army considers the Rangers "a mature capability" and "the foundation of the CF's [sic] operational capability across the North for a range of domestic missions."[39] In emphasizing their myriad contributions, the Canadian Army notes that the "Rangers will remain a critical and enduring presence on the ground, valuable in many roles, including amongst others, the CAF's eyes and ears for routine surveillance purposes, its guides, local cultural advisors, interpreters, and the core of our liaison capacity in many locations, while remaining immediately available to support local government or other agencies."[40]

The trajectory of Inupiat and Yupik involvement in Alaskan defence ultimately followed a very different course. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, army officers and territorial officials in Alaska organized Inupiaq and Yup'ik along the northern coastline into militia units to free regular forces from civil defence obligations. The zealous leadership of Major Marvin "Muktuk" Marston won broad community support for the guard, and by the end of 1944 ten instructors (seven of whom were Inuit) trained Inuit companies. At war's end, Marston boasted that the "Tundra Army" had shot down and recovered Japanese balloons, built hundreds of miles of new trails, repaired sixty shelter cabins, put out tundra fires, and erected eighteen armouries -- all on a shoestring budget. Although regular officers in Alaska and Washington viewed the units as superfluous in the postwar world, the Alaskan governor secured them permanent status as a National Guard organization.[41]

During the early Cold War, the Eskimo Scout Battalions of the Alaskan National Guard dotted Alaska's coastline from Bristol Bay to Point Barrow and islands in the Bering Sea, representing the only military presence in most of the region. Better trained, equipped, and organized than the Canadian Rangers, they received the same duty pay as National Guardsmen of similar rank, carried the same infantry rifle used by the regular army, and were equipped with snowshoes, skis, mountain tents, binoculars, telescopes, and modern radio equipment.[42] American officers noted how Alaskan Natives were very enthusiastic about their service, and

noted a typical Inuk's "keen ability to traverse Alaskan regions better than other people, his keen eyesight, hearing and powers of observation, his extremely keen memory, and his ability to sketch what he has seen in relation to his location." In turn, military training and service helped "to develop qualities of citizenship, loyalty and patriotism among the Alaskan natives."[43] An article on the Tundra Army, published in late 1952, emphasized that Inuit loyalty was unimpeachable and that "the arming of these people paid intrinsic dividends in basic Americanism."[44]

By the 1970s, a Canadian observer highlighted "that the Eskimo members of the Guard are treated as normal American soldiers. He receives no special treatment other than he is allowed to wear his mukluks (which he prefers) rather than the Vapour Barrier […] boots." Inuit servicemen qualified to Regular Force standards and were expected to perform, in their particular environment, like every other state National Guard.[45] While this more standardized form of service showed a propensity to treat all Alaskans alike in training them up to a national standard, it ultimately moved away from a distinctive approach to Native Alaskan members who might have preferred to focus on domestic roles in their particular homeland.[46] The number of National Guard recruits in the state plummeted after the end of the Cold War, most notably in isolated Indigenous communities. Another Canadian observer commented that while the Alaska Scouts had resembled the Canadian Rangers, American military authorities' decision to convert them into a national guard "destroyed them because all they had time for was polishing boots and sending memos."[47] He highlighted the key difference between the Rangers, who were intended to serve in their home communities, with Alaska National Guardsmen who were no longer exempt from overseas deployments (as they had been during the Cold War, when they were considered forward-deployed against the Soviet Union) and instead were trained for deployment overseas.[48] Furthermore, what one 3rd Scout Battalion training officer described as an "almost colonial system of outsiders leading native Eskimo troops" owing to stringent education requirements for officers that seriously limited opportunities for Indigenous leadership roles caused resentment in some units and a decline in participation.[49]

Although the Alaska National Guard has Indigenous members from across the state, participation rates are modest outside of the major population centres and units are subject to conventional U.S. military command and control systems and are not community-led and -focused like the Rangers. Accordingly, in 2015, the Governor of Alaska announced plans to re-establish scout battalions in remote communities across Alaska comprised of "local people with local knowledge on the ground, ready and trained to respond to natural and human-caused disasters." His vision for this Alaska State Defense Force would resuscitate the spirit of Alaska Territorial Guard during the Second World War and the Cold War model of local volunteers scouting for enemy threats rather that the National Guard framework rooted in U.S.-wide training standards and an expeditionary-oriented mission.[50] Unsurprisingly, Alaskan officials have reached out to their Canadian counterparts for insights into how the Canadian Ranger organization might serve as a potential model.

The Kingdom of Denmark's approach to asserting sovereignty over Greenland and defending the island stands in sharp contrast to the Canadian and Alaskan models. Soldiers were initially stationed on Greenland in the early 18th century to protect what was then a Danish colony from looting, primarily by foreign whalers.[51] A minimal state presence in much of the Arctic island, however, left lingering questions about Danish sovereignty. In 1933, the League of Nations' Permanent Court of International Justice decided in Denmark's favour in the *East Greenland* case, finding that the requirements for state control were much less in sparsely-populated remote areas that in more temperate parts of the world – but requiring that Denmark maintain some form of ongoing presence in Northeast Greenland from that point onward. Rather than turning to Kalaallit

(Greenlanders) to perform this role, the Danes set up two police stations and turned to the Danish Navy and Navy Flyvevæsen (Naval Air Force) for surveying and cartography activities. When Nazi Germany occupied Denmark in 1940, Copenhagen signed an agreement granting the US military authority over the defence of Greenland (while Denmark retained *de jure* sovereignty). Greenlanders had no say in the decision, but the military footprint in their homeland grew as harbours and airfields on the island played a significant geostrategic role in bolstering transatlantic connections between the U.S., Canada, and their European allies.[52]

While Allied naval and air forces defended the approaches to Greenland (as the Kingdom of Denmark and its NATO allies do today), the Danes activated a North-East Greenland Sledge Patrol in 1941 to conduct long-range reconnaissance patrols along the northeast coast using dog teams to deny the Germans access to meteorological information gleaned from secret weather stations that they had set up in the area. After a series of dramatic offensive operations that defeated German weather patrols in 1943 and 1944, the Sledge Patrol was disbanded at the end of the war.[53] The Danish military reinvigorated the practice in 1953, however, when it created *Slædepatruljen Sirius* (named after Sirius, or "dog star") – commonly known as the Sirius Patrol. Today, the Sirius Patrol consists of six two-man patrols responsible for reconnoitering 16,000 km of Greenland coastline using dog teams. These Danish men (as no women have yet served in this capacity) must have completed compulsory service in the Danish Defense and endured a grueling six-month training regime in order to be selected for this elite 26-month-long mission in Greenland.[54] Ironically, only a couple of Greenlanders have served on this operation – or in most Forsvaret (Danish Defence) activities in their home territory.

We contend that this creates a security gap in Kallalit Nunaat in which military security is treated as something provided *to* Greenland rather than provided *by* Greenlanders. The issue was brought to the forefront when President Donald Trump tweeted an offer in 2019 to purchase Greenland in light of Chinese and Russian interest and influence in the Arctic. While eliciting a strong reaction from both Nuuk and Copenhagen that Greenland was not for sale, it has also led to a $12 million US aid package for economic development[55] and an official statement from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcoming the US Department of Defense's "Statement of Intent on Defense Investments in Greenland" and prospects of future cooperation. "Through the years, the Kingdom of Denmark, including Greenland, has contributed to the protection of mutual security interests and shared the associated risks and responsibilities," the Danish statement emphasized. "The Kingdom's contributions have been based on a mutual understanding that the United States' military presence in Greenland should benefit Greenland and the Greenlandic society to the maximum extent possible."[56]

Inuit in Greenland are increasingly interested in providing for or contributing to their own defence and security. Scholar Rasmus Rasmussen notes that Greenlandic politicians have traditionally expressed little interest in defence and military spending, given that military security falls outside of the Greenland self-government's constitutional authority. While it is assuming a higher place on the political agenda in light of Greenlandic aspirations for independence from Denmark, Rasmussen finds a tendency towards desecuritization in which officials in Nuuk "rhetorically downplay security aspects of defense and foreign policy by referring to either economic self-sufficiency or identity politics of the Inuit."[57] This appears to have changed. In August 2020, the Danish defence minister opened a Nuuk liaison office connected with his military's intent to establish a reserve force in Greenland that will assist with non-combat operations akin to the Canadian Rangers. The Danish Arctic Command in Nuuk told reporters that, once established, the 120-unit Greenlandic force will be funded by the Danish home guard.[58] Discussions towards this end remain ongoing. In the meantime, Arctic Command and the Danish Defence, in close collaboration with the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut) and local

authorities, establishment have developed and offered an educational program for Greenlanders called Arctic Basic Training (ABU) in Kangerlussuaq. Aimed at youth, the program is designed to build local competencies to carry out rescue and emergency response tasks in Greenland.[59] The first cohort began training in May 2024, and the program has proven immensely popular, with applications far exceeding available spots.

Environmental and Economic Security

While Inuit leaders certainly express opinions on military security, their articulations of security more generally position the inter-related issues of the Arctic environment and management of natural resource extraction as the most important to the survival and wellbeing of Inuit in their homelands. Although there are substantive differences in how Inuit governments across Inuit Nunaat pursue securitization as a strategy to achieve their political priorities (with securitization being particularly more common in Canada than Greenland),[60] there are also strong common themes in the transnational Inuit identification of Arctic security issues and the security implications of environmental change.

Today, most Inuit view security in a holistic sense which connects individuals, communities, and the land, and is clearly tied with the legacies of colonialism across Inuit Nunaat.[61] Inuit leaders frequently emphasize how past state policies have been detrimental to their security, particularly the acute colonial interventions of the 1940s and 1950s which produced chronic poor housing, malnutrition, ill health, higher rates of suicide and substance abuse, and decline in land-based cultural and subsistence activities resulted produced an overall "decimation of Inuit security."[62] In turn, (re)gaining the political autonomy necessary to rectify and address these human security challenges has been a principal objective of the movements towards Inuit devolution and self-governance. Indeed, some advocates continue to link the incomplete implementation of Inuit land claim agreements with violations of their rights and security.[63]

Inuit leaders (particularly in Canada) have identified their security as particularly linked to human-caused environmental change.[64] Mary Simon – the former president of the ICC and of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national Inuit organization in Canada – identifies issues such as education, political engagement, and benefit-sharing from natural resource development as crucial for the future of Inuit, but reserves securitizing language for climate change: "The urgency surrounding mitigating the impact of climate change grows with the almost daily news […] Arctic ice is melting three times faster than models had earlier predicted – and the earlier predictions were alarming."[65] Terry Audla, Simon's successor at ITK, explains how "climate change at a rate and of an intensity that appears unprecedented, and well outside Inuit cultural memory, creates insecurities of an entirely new nature, generating concerns about the sustainability of large aspects of our inherited and acquired patterns of life […] our very sense of who and what we are as Inuit."[66] Sheila Watt-Cloutier, another former president of the ICC, concurs that "human-induced climate change is undermining the ecosystem upon which Inuit depend for their cultural survival […] threaten[ing] our ability far to the North to live as we have always done in harmony with a fragile, vulnerable, and sensitive environment," and notes "changes to our climate and our environment will bring about the end of the Inuit culture."[67] In no uncertain terms, she asserts: "climate change is threatening the lives, health, culture and livelihoods of the Inuit."[68]

The urgent view of climate change and the environment is not limited to political leaders and other elite actors. While specific public opinion data for Inuit alone is rare, available evidence suggests strong popular support among Inuit for a holistic conception of security that foregrounds threats to the natural environment.

The *Arctic Security Public Opinion Survey* (2011) included statistically significant samples of Northern Canadians from the three territories, where Inuit comprise approximately one third of the population. The results found Northerners consider the environment to be the most important issue for Arctic security, followed closely by maintenance of Indigenous cultures. When asked to list the most pressing Arctic issues, 33% listed the environment first and considered it to be the most important Arctic issue by a ratio of more than three to one compared to the next most cited issue. When prompted with a list of various dimensions of security, fully 91% of Northerners considered environmental security to be important to their definition of Arctic security.[69] Likewise, a 2013 survey found a plurality of 30.6% of Alaska Natives identified the environment as the most important issue in the American Arctic, and 46.6% identified protecting the environment or climate change as the most important security issues specifically.[70] These findings are similar to those from across the circumpolar region, where "on average three out of four [Arctic] indigenous people perceive climate change to be a problem in their communities, and more than 50 per cent mention local contaminated sites, pollution of local lakes and streams and pollution from industrial development as problems in the region."[71]

In Greenland, popular concern over climate change is still relatively high but overshadowed by economic and social issues such as employment and cost of living.[72] Like other Arctic states, the Greenlandic government effectively downplays climate change as a security threat,[73] instead emphasizing a right to development and depicting Greenlanders as a less-developed country whose economic growth should not be constrained by climate considerations. Greenlandic policymakers use the island's low overall emissions as justification for carbon-intensive growth within a discourse of sustainable development. Former Greenland Premier Kim Kielsen stated in 2008 interview, when he was environment minister, that Greenland was "not a developed country yet," and that "to be self-sustaining, it is hard not to do something which will emit more CO^2 – then again, it has to be as little as possible."[74] Former Premier Kuupik Kleist noted in 2010 that "we are especially interested in having rights that enable development. You have to clarify which countries can reduce their enormous use of energy and give room to others."[75] The Greenlandic perspective on Arctic economic development illustrates the general point that "far from being mere victims of the impacts of industrial development, Indigenous peoples are participants in, and increasingly beneficiaries of, the development of the Arctic resource frontier."[76] During COP16 in Mexico, Greenland first discussed climate and development issues *as* an Indigenous people, effectively utilizing its heightened autonomy under Self-Government and unique standing as an Indigenous polity to represent Greenlanders, Inuit, and Indigenous peoples generally within multilateral climate negotiations.[77]

This heightened legitimacy has made Greenland increasingly influential in policy and decision-making pertaining to the intersection of Arctic climate change and economic development. Greenland's dominant political class has embraced autonomy from Denmark as a step forward in a national vision to transform a colonial history into a modern collective identity that eschews further victimhood, even that entailed by the threat of climate change.[78] The embrace of development as a means of resisting victimhood is explicit: at the 2014 Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Iqaluit, Greenland's representative stated that "Greenland will benefit from the new economic opportunities which climate change also makes possible […] Greenland will not be a passive victim of climate change" but needs a "building of resilience" to manage the impacts of climate change.[79] To that end, in 2013 the Inatsisartut (Greenlandic parliament) lifted a 25 year ban on uranium mining in Greenland, and in November 2020 the Naalakkersuisut (Greenlandic executive branch) opened new areas off the western coast for oil and gas drilling, despite an earlier halt in new exploration. However, the pro-development consensus within Greenland was dealt a major blow in April 2021 when the long dominant Siumut party was defeated by the pro-environment Inuit Ataqatigiit party in a national election campaign shaped, in

part, by controversy over a new uranium mine.[80]

The decision-making process for matters concerning the environment and natural resources are intertwined in Greenland and are intended to prioritize the voice of Greenlanders. During the transfer of powers under Self-Government in 2009, the former Danish Act on Mineral Resources in Greenland was repealed and replaced by the present Greenland Parliament Act No. 7 of 7 December 2009 (the *Mineral Resources Act*). It regulates the exploration and exploitation of oil, natural gas, and minerals and other related activities. Additional activities outlined in the *Mineral Resources Act* include rules regarding health and the environment, which includes climate matters, and liabilities for environmental pollution. Part 13 of this act presents further comprehensive rules on the protection of the environment (Sections 50-54), including on the protection of the climate (Sections 55-58), and the conservation of nature (Sections 59-62).

Naalakkersuisut and the Greenland Minerals Authority both prioritize the early inclusion of the voices and knowledge of local communities. This is displayed in the citizen-based approach to inclusion that is written into the Greenland *Mineral Resources Act*. Under Part 18a "*Pre-Consultation and Consultation"* sub-section (1) "If a project must be assured to have a potential significant environmental or social impact […] the applicant or licensee must prepare a project description to be reported and submitted to the Naalakkersuisut." Under sub-section (2), the *Act* states, "The project description must go out for public pre-consultation for a 35-day period before the contents of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and the social sustainability assessment (SSA) are determined."[81] The delivery of the EIA and SSA to the public by the Naalakkersuisut commences an eight-week consultation period. During this time, the Naalakkersuisut is responsible for conducting public consultation meetings in towns and villages who are particularly affected by the issues in question. If this deadline cannot be met due to the inability of either the Naalakkersuisut or the public to attend, the consultation period is extended. It is made clear throughout the *Act* that local communities in Greenland are understood to be an integral part of intervention in the mineral industry in Greenland. Once public consultation is accounted for, "decisions on matters that are likely to have significant social or environmental effects are made by the Naalakkersuisut unless the Naalakkersuisut has erected provisions prescribing that specific decisions must be made by the Mineral Licence and Safety Authority or the Environmental Agency."[82] The Naalakkersuisut ultimately lays down the specific functions and powers of the Mineral Licence and Safety Authority and the Environmental Agency, including their jurisdictions.

Greenland's climate policy is affected by Greenland's territorial reservation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), meaning it has no international climate targets. The Naalakkersuisut has also not signed the 2015 Paris Agreement, exempting Greenland from the voluntary nationally determined-contributions for greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Although the *Minerals Act* notes, "The Naalakkersuisut may lay down specific provisions on climate protection […] including provisions on the application of national or international rules, agreements or guidelines concerning climate protection,"[83] it defends this position toward the international climate regime by noting that because Greenlanders are acknowledged as Indigenous by the United Nations, committing to the agreement "would be constrained in their right to development according to Article 23 of [*The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*]."[84] Greenland is, however, still subject to the UNFCCC through its relationship with Denmark, which given its responsibility for foreign policy signed and ratified the Convention on behalf of all three parts of the Realm, even though Denmark's *Climate Act* which implements its Paris commitments is *not* applicable in Greenland or the Faroe Islands. The result is to effectively exempt Greenland from domestic greenhouse gas reductions targets on the basis of negligible

historical emissions and low contemporary levels of economic development, though the Naalakkersuisut is empowered to make decisions regarding environmental protection, climate change, and natural resources.

In Nunavut, responsibility over environment and natural resource issues is divided between federal and territorial orders of government, including a role for regional land claim corporations and co-management boards in making land use determinations.[85] Issues regarding environmental conservation are governed in accordance with the Environmental Protection Legislation and Regulations and the NLCA. Under Section 9, Part 3.1 of the NLCA, the Government (of Nunavut, of Canada, or both) is required to conduct a study to determine the need for a new legislation or for amendments to existing legislation to manage and designate conservation areas in Nunavut's terrestrial and marine environment.[86]

The Department of Environment of the GN is responsible for managing environmental protection priorities and actions in Nunavut. The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) delivers a range of regulatory and operational program functions aimed towards protecting and enhancing Nunavut's natural environment. Priorities focusing on the protection of the environment are carried out through the Division's three sections: Land Use Planning and Environmental Assessment; Environmental Sciences; and Environmental Compliance. The EPD's priorities are guided by Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq, the Inuit Quajimajatuqangit principle of Environmental Stewardship, and focus on a responsible use of the natural environment.[87] To effectively achieve these priorities, the EPD sets the strategic direction of the sections to ensure they are aligned with the visions and mandate of the Department of Environment and overall GN priorities.

Nunavut is the sole province or territory in Canada with no significant primary energy production. Rather, it relies heavily on imported fossil fuels, which are purchased and shipped in bulk during the summer and stored in tank facilities in its communities year-round. Electricity in Nunavut is primarily produced through diesel combustion. Because the GN must operate within the framework of the NLCA, the GN must include representatives of the Nunavut Tungavik Inc. (NTI) in its team "to develop and to implement northern energy and mineral accords with the Government of Canada."[88] NTI "coordinates and manages "Inuit responsibilities set out in the Nunavut Agreement" and ensures that the "federal and territorial governments fulfill their obligations."[89] The Qulliq Energy Corporation (QEC) is responsible for the generation of electricity in the territory. It is fully owned by the GN and operates at arm's length from the government, reporting to the according Minister. However, as a public agency of the GN, QEC develops its own policies and procedures. When none are established, QEC follows the GN's policies, strategies, and procedures.

Since its incorporation in 2003, QEC has acted cooperatively to assist in achieving the goals set out in the GN's energy strategies, including in Ikummatit, the GN's energy projected energy strategy for 2007-2020, developed by the Climate Change Secretariat. The Climate Change Secretariat monitors energy-related issues, develops, and delivers energy-related programs, and coordinates action on energy decisions. Concerns over environmental damage and climate change have led to recent Inuit efforts to limit or even block extractive industries in Inuit Nunangat, including a successful campaign to halt seismic testing for oil and gas in the waters off Baffin Island that went before the Supreme Court of Canada, ultimately supporting a 2016 federal government moratorium on new offshore oil and gas leases despite a lack of consultation, and blockading a controversial iron mine expansion on Baffin Island in early 2021. As in Greenland, the tension between Nunavut's dual role as part of a high income society committed to greenhouse gas emission reductions and its own high carbon energy needs for economic development and daily life results in a de facto lack of climate change mitigation within the territory itself.[90] However, Nunavummiut have shown a willingness to prioritize

protection of the natural environment even at the cost of lost opportunities for extractive industrial development and economic growth.

Much like Greenland, the bodies and decision-making process responsible for matters related to the environment and natural resources in Alaska are intertwined. State authorities play a role in passing legislation and approving major land use projects, while the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) is the lead agency for statewide energy policy and programming. Regulatory powers not granted to the state are exercised by a variety of federal agencies and commissions, particularly the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, which is responsible for more than 283,000 km^2 of surface lands amounting to more than 16% of the state's total area. The Native Regional Corporations collectively hold title to another 110,000 km^2 of land. The high proportion of federally-owned lands is a significant factor in the management of environmental issues in Alaska, as it limits the authority of the state government to make major decisions or implement policies statewide.

A key example is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), which was first designated as a protected area in 1960 in order to preserve the region's delicate ecology. The growth of the oil industry on the neighbouring North Slope, however, led ANWR to become subject of significant debate over the merits of environmental protection versus expanded energy extraction. Since the 1970s, ANWR has been politicized as a potential area for domestic fossil fuel extraction, with drilling supported by many state officials and increasingly depicted as essential to U.S. energy security.[91] In 2014, the Obama Administration proposed expanding the amount of land protected from oil drilling, but the Trump Administration ultimately opened ANWR to new oil leases, the first of which were auctioned shortly before Trump left office. In other recent land use decisions, such as approval of a new highway to enable more extractive industry in northern Alaska and the rejection of necessary permits for a controversial new copper and gold mine, federal agencies were also the crucial decision-making actors over whether to proceed.[92]

Across different jurisdictions of Inuit Nunaat, authority over environment and economic development-qua-natural resource extraction is not principally vested in Inuit governing institutions. Rather, it exists in a complex patchwork of multi-level governance that varies across Greenland, Inuit Nunangat, and Alaska. Reflecting the legacies of colonialism and continued Inuit incorporation into settler colonial state frameworks, diffuse, multilevel governance of these issues produces significant challenges for the effective management of these issues within Inuit homelands. Notwithstanding the substantial governing powers now exercised by Inuit governments, they lack the authority to effectively govern the issues which Inuit identify as security issues, and thus as most important to their survival and wellbeing. A result of multilevel governance across Inuit Nunaat may thus be a multilevel security gap, whereby Inuit governments cannot secure Inuit against particular types of threats, even when distant governments in Copenhagen, Ottawa, and Washington, for various reasons, also do not. Reproducing the 20th century pattern of Inuit security being subordinated to state interests and priorities, security for Inuit in the 21st century remains elusive in the face of the interrelated threats of environmental change, economic modernization, and chronic social challenges.

Conclusion

In this working paper, we have explored several intersecting security issues related to Inuit across jurisdictions, time periods, and institutional arrangements. After situating the colonial and postcolonial nature of multilevel governance in Inuit Nunaat, we outlined a holistic conception of security expressed by Inuit

organizations, representatives, and survey data. We then examined the governance of security issues related to Inuit across multiple sectors of analysis, and in distinct ways. First, the nature of Second World War and Cold War security practice in the Arctic subjected Inuit to external, militarized, and state-centric securitizations. Inuit responded in various ways to the militarization of their homeland, including their different forms of military involvement in Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. The differing institutional arrangements of military units in which Inuit served (and, in the case of Canada, continue to serve) contribute to variation in the militarization of security issues in different Inuit communities. Whereas the Canadian Rangers provides the most community-based unit model in Inuit Nunaat, with significant benefits for members, communities, and the state, the Sirius Patrol by Danish soldiers - without Greenlandic Inuit participation - perpetuates a military relationship resemblant of the colonial era. The Alaskan Eskimo Scouts' assimilation into the National Guard, which lost resonance at the community level, ultimately led to reduced Inuit involvement in the military dimension of security in the Alaska.

Second, we examined prominent expressions of security related to inter-related issues across the environmental, economic, societal, and political sectors of analysis. Using Buzan's sectoral approach to analyzing security, we outline the holistic conceptions of security articulated by and for Inuit related to protection of the Arctic environment, Inuit culture and identity, and their self-governing political autonomy. Views on security issues vary across different regions of Inuit Nunaat, demonstrating that there is no single meaning or definition of security for Inuit, nor consensus on the merits of securitization as a strategy to mobilize political success. Despite the extraordinary expansion of Inuit self-government, a range of governance challenges identified as security issues by Inuit, notably climate change and environmental protection, and natural resources and economic development, remain beyond the decision-making authority of Inuit governments or quasi-government institutions.

We argue that Inuit continue to experience a multi-level security gap in the relationship between their governing institutions and the authority and capability to respond to security issues, even as the nature of these issues changes over time. From the onset of colonialism when Inuit were subject to external decision-making and painful disruptions to their autonomy and ways of life, through the Second World War and Cold War eras when a state-centric, military conception of security was overwhelmingly dominant, Inuit life, culture, and wellbeing were harmed by and in favour of Arctic states. Even in the post-Cold War period – during which Inuit self-government and devolved political autonomy expanded substantially across Inuit Nunaat, particularly in Greenland and Nunavut – Inuit governments, claim organizations, and other institutions still lack the ability to effectively respond to the preeminent threats to Inuit health, safety, and wellbeing. The inability of federal and national governments to respond or effectively securitize issues that Inuit identify as most important, coupled with Inuit governance institutions' limited jurisdiction and capacity to protect Inuit from them, demonstrate the multi-level security gap that persists in Inuit Nunaat.

Notes

[1] We use the terms *Inuit Nunaat, Inuit Nunangat* and *Kalaallit Nunaat* in the following ways: Inuit Nunaat refers to the transnational Inuit homeland encompassing territory in Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia; Inuit Nunangat refers to the Inuit homeland in Canada, comprising four self-governing Inuit regions; and Kalaallit Nunaat refers to the territory of Greenland in the Kalaallisut (Greenlandic) language. When discussing Kalaallit Nunaat in historical or colonial context, I may refer to it as Greenland (Grønland), as employed by Danish-Norwegian authorities. Inuit Nunaat also includes territory in Chukotka in the Russian Federation, but due to the small number of Inuit residing there, the lack of self-governing institutions, and the methodological challenges of gathering Russian language data, Chukotka has been omitted from this analysis.

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[4] M. Simon, "Security, Peace and the Native Peoples of the Arctic," in *The Arctic: Choices for Peace and Security*, ed. T.R. Berger (Vancouver: Gordon Soules, 1989), 36, 67. Emphasis in original.

[5] In 1987, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev outlined a vision for Arctic cooperation which famously called for the Arctic to be transformed into a zone of peace, which many scholars believe was a turning point in US-Soviet relations that aided in the normalization of Arctic relations and helped end the Cold War. See K. Åtland, "Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk initiative, and the desecuritization of interstate relations in the Arctic," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43/3 (2008): 289-311.

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[9] William Barbour interviewed in *Nilliajut: Inuit Voices on Security,* dir. J. Konek, C. Konek, and I. Mauro (Ottawa: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2013), accessed at http://www.inuitknowledge.ca/content/nilliajut-inuit-perspectives-arctic-security-1.

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[16] U. Hanson, "Foreword," in *Nilliajut,* 2.

[17] Simon, "Security, Peace and the Native Peoples," 36, 67. Emphasis in original

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