

## **The environment and emancipation in critical security studies: the case of the Canadian Arctic**

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### ABSTRACT:

The traditionally dominant discourse of "The Great White North" views Canada as a land of vast wilderness and abundant resources. However, this discourse excludes growing environmental risk and prevalent insecurity felt by vulnerable populations in Canadian society, namely indigenous groups whose livelihoods are deeply dependent upon their relationship with their environments. The effect of the relationship between the physical environment and conceptions of security can contribute to a deeper understanding of traditional and critical accounts of security. This article investigates traditional Canadian environmental security discourses and alternative environmental security discourses promoted by Arctic Inuit groups. It examines how these discourses impact the analytic and normative goals of critical security studies and interprets the way in which they affect the concept of emancipation. It argues that Canadian security is co-constituted with its understanding of the environment, and that the Canadian case compels an expansion of the notion of the referent object of security to include the environment - a change which throws it into contrast with other schools of critical security, whose visions of emancipation might not, as currently theorised, be equipped to overcome this phenomena.

**KEY WORDS:** Arctic, Canada, critical security studies, discourse, emancipation, environmental security, indigenous security.

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## INTRODUCTION

Canadian security has often been shaped and defined by its relationship with the natural environment. While most studies examining Canadian security identity focus on the country's relationship with its powerful neighbour to the south, the United States (Byers 2002; Carment, Hampson, and Hillmer 2003; Barry 2007; Barry and Bratt 2008; Granatstein 2002), its historical relationship with the United Kingdom (Brebner 1945; Holmes 1966; Buckner 2005), or its position as a member of NATO (Haglund 2000; Avis 2003; Haglund 2011) this article focuses on the role that the natural environment plays in Canadian security. Little has been written to date that assesses the ideational effects that perceptions of remoteness and abundance have had on Canadian national security.

Indeed, the size and scope of the country and its natural resource base are a crucial component for how Canada is constructed, represented, and how its security is comprehended. One might even look at the first arrival of the European powers to Canada's shores as an early illustration of the attempts to control the fertile land, rich fisheries, and valuable fur (Brown, Crawford, and Campeau 2008, 9). Today, Canada's natural resources contribute significantly not only to the country's economic well-being but also the formation and perpetuation of its national identity. Canada is the world's second largest country in total area, it holds the world's third largest supply of renewable freshwater (FAO 2003), and it derives 11.5% of its GDP from its natural resources (Natural Resources Canada 2011, 1). The area north of the Arctic Circle is said to contain about 30% of the world's undiscovered gas and 13% of the world's undiscovered oil (Gautier, Bird, Charpentier, Grantz, Houseknecht, Klett, Moore et al 2009). The enormity of the country and the richness of its resource base are consistently invoked as

emblematic of Canada's past and undoubtedly its future.

The effects of the environment upon conceptions of Canadian security are illustrative of the ways in which security becomes constructed. These constructions range from traditional, statist approaches that highlight national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and instrumental control of the environment, particularly in the Arctic region,<sup>1</sup> to non-statist approaches from varied indigenous groups that promote well-being, holistic integration of the human and non-human, and the protection of culture, community and history. All told, examining the construction of environmental security in Canada can advance our understanding of the ways in which the natural environment works as a crucial component of security.

Understanding the role of the environment in constructing security can impact the analytic and normative goals of critical security studies. This article draws from the paradigmatic approach to the study of security developed by scholars at the University of Wales – Aberystwyth. The “Welsh School” of security offers one of the most prominent critiques of traditional security and offers a noble call for the re-ordering of security along progressive, ethical lines. It rejects state-centrism in international security, arguing instead that the individual should be the referent object to be secured. These scholars, most notably Ken Booth (2007) and Richard Wyn Jones (1999) offer a vision of security as emancipation that “*seeks the securing of people from those oppressions that stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do, compatible with the freedom of others.* [Emphasis in original]” (Booth 2007, 110) This article utilizes many of the central components of the Welsh School, most notably its commitment to critiquing traditional analytical allegiances to state-centrism, and its normative pursuit of emancipation as a

guide in security theory and practice. The concept of emancipation is able to contribute substantially to understandings of environmental security because it is based upon a self-conscious critique of existing social paradigms (the human, social, economic, and political institutional arrangements) that contribute to human and ecological suffering (Shepherd 2012, 203). This approach is helpful when thinking about and dealing with integrated and expanding environmental hazards that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations. Conversely, focusing on the environment can contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the concept of emancipation in critical security studies. That said, we come to question whether the anthropocentric and individualistic focus of emancipation is suitable in an age of global environmental change.

As this article will show, the environment is itself a crucial component of security identity. In this interpretation, an understanding of the environment both constructs, and is constructed by, ideas about security. In other words, Canadian security is co-constituted with its understanding of the environment. This compels an expansion of the notion of the referent object of security to include the environment - a change which throws it into contrast with the Welsh School, whose vision of emancipation might not, as currently theorised, be equipped to overcome this phenomena.

This article proceeds in three sections. The first section highlights the traditional ways that environmental discourses have been appropriated and articulated by dominant actors in Canada.<sup>2</sup> It focuses on the familiar trope of Canada as the “Great White North,” as perpetuated in official government discourse, to argue that the environment conditions Canadian national security, and vice-versa: specific security appellations condition

understandings of the Canadian environment, specifically in the Arctic region.

The second section highlights alternative security discourses, perpetuated by Arctic indigenous groups that challenge the naturalization of Canada as the “Great White North.” These discourses, articulated by a plurality of indigenous voices, highlight the destructive implications of this narrative by drawing attention to marginalized groups and security narratives excluded by the hegemonic discourse. In this paper, a focus on one alternative strand of voices - the Inuit peoples of Arctic Canada - is chosen from this wider conversation. The Inuit peoples are the focus not only due to their Arctic geography, but also for the “united voice” with which these diverse groups and peoples speak, as permanent participants on the Arctic Council through the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Arctic Council, 2013). Of course, as indigenous scholars often emphasize, it is crucial to recognize the constructed nature of the term ‘indigenous,’ and note that the peoples within this category are often more different from one another than similar (Smith 1999, 7). That said, the case of the Inuit peoples, unified under an institutional banner and concentrated within the Arctic geographic space, is a rare chance to better understand a common expression of Arctic security wholly dissimilar to that of the “Great White North.”

The third and final section assesses the role of the environment in understanding security. The Canadian context can offer a vivid demonstration of the multiple ways in which the environment helps construct security and strengthens the analytic and normative project of critical security studies. In particular, the avowed normative goal of emancipation inherent within the Welsh School will be better positioned if it more thoroughly incorporates ecological awareness into its rubric. It is at the intersection of the

environment, security, and emancipation where Canadian critical security approaches are well positioned to advance the field analytically and normatively.

### **Traditional Security and The “Great White North”**

This section overviews the ways in which traditional security interpretations in Canada have been shaped through a specific interpretation of the environment, focusing on the Arctic region. In particular, the enduring narrative of the “Great White North” has been utilized both to promote Canadian strength as well as to highlight vulnerabilities and threats. These interpretations clearly link the natural environment with survival and stability, two core concerns of traditional security studies. As subsequent sections will show however, such visions often obscure and marginalize alternative security discourses that might provide different understandings of the ways in which the environment can impact the study of security.

Traditional approaches to security generally focus on protection from perceived threats through the use of power. This translates to the belief that studies of security should conform to the “real side of politics;” that is, as policy action in an unchanging international sphere, where states are the only significant actors and their relations are naturalized because they are structurally pre-determined (Hutchings 1999, 28). As Sinclair (1996, 6) points out, traditional theory “assumes the functional coherence of existing phenomena,” meaning that there is little interest on the part of analysts and practitioners to excavate the meanings and assumptions of discourse or practice. Instead, problems are seen to be emblematic of various deficiencies between actors, usually a result of misunderstanding, power disparities, or clashing interests.

Such approaches to environmental security are on vivid display in a Canadian context, which holds generalizable assumptions about who is to be secured and from what threats. Evidently, the referent object is the state. The environmental threats that are often highlighted and reinforced in official and academic discourse are varied, containing both domestic and foreign elements. They include the struggle to control shipping routes from a newly opened Northwest Passage (DFAIT 2013b), the need to protect abundant energy supplies (Senate of Canada 2012), and the potential for environmental activists to block and/or sabotage government and corporate interests (Public Safety Canada 2011; Payton 2012; Leahy 2013; Freeze 2013). All told, these traditional interpretations of environmental security in Canada display continued traction within both historical and contemporary official discourse. Crucially, they rely upon an understanding of the natural environment that confirms and abides a homogenous vision of security, whereby the state is the referent object of protection, and the natural environment exists to be managed, controlled, exploited, and preserved at the behest of perceived national interests. The resultant effects are important for not only a deeper understanding of the ways in which hazards are judged, but also the ways in which the Welsh School stands to benefit from incorporating an ecological point of view into its program of emancipatory politics.

There is no greater illustration of the intersubjective construction of Canadian environmental security than in excavating the familiar trope of Canada as “The Great White North.” This narrative is pivotal in the ongoing securitization of the Arctic region in Canada. The region has persistently been treated as a military object, and as a source of both pride and vulnerability. It was largely ignored by defence officials until after the Second World War, when it witnessed a “variety of attempts, some relatively minor,

others extraordinarily ambitious, to overcome what was perceived to be an antagonistic environment.”(Lackenbauer and Farish 2007, 923) During the Cold War, Arctic Canada held important geopolitical significance as a bulwark separating an expansionary Soviet Union from the North American industrial heartland (Lackenbauer and Farish 2007, 923). In 1946 Lester B. Pearson, then Canadian Ambassador to the United States, published an article called "Canada Looks Down North," in *Foreign Affairs*, which outlined a vision of the Canadian north as the strategic heart of the country, and perhaps even the continent. He proclaimed that, “Canada, like Russia, is looking to the North as a land of the future. The reason is obvious. The war and the aeroplane have driven home to Canadians the importance of their Northland, in strategy, in resources, and in communications. We should no longer be deceived by flat maps and ‘frigid wasteland’ tales of our public school geographies.”(Pearson 1946, 638) For Pearson, and for subsequent Canadian governments, the expansion of sovereign control over vast swaths of seemingly uncharted, uninhabited land with abundant resources compelled a heavy emphasis on the ways in which the environment could be harnessed and utilized for national security.

John Diefenbakers’s election victory in 1958 was largely based on his northern vision of development. In one of his most oft-cited speeches he proclaimed:

This national Development Policy will create a new sense of National Purpose and National Destiny. One Canada! One Canada, wherein Canadians will have preserved to them the control of their own economic and political destiny. Sir John A. Macdonald gave his life to this Party. He opened the West. He saw Canada from East to West. I see a new Canada - a Canada of the North (Diefenbaker 1958).



Diefenbaker's northern vision, his 'roads to resources' policy, was instrumental in advancing significant infrastructure projects in the Arctic. Since then, similar sentiments about Canada's destiny to the Arctic have retained a high degree of resonance and power for politicians eager to assert the sovereign duty of Canadian officials to discover, accumulate, and preserve the riches provided by the abundant resource base, lest they be lost to competing interests, or left forever untapped.

In contemporary times, the onset of climate change, shifting geopolitical priorities, and continuing energy needs, has re-activated the security connections with the Arctic. The region is undergoing a series of significant transformations, which have been identified by Prime Minister Stephen Harper as a national priority. In 2008 he invoked the spirit of John Diefenbaker in a major policy address to audiences in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. He proclaimed that

Prime Minister Diefenbaker is no longer with us, but the geopolitical importance of the Arctic and Canada's interests in it have never been greater. This is why our government has launched an ambitious Northern Agenda based on the timeless responsibility imposed by our national anthem, to keep the True North strong and free... We will protect the unique and fragile Arctic ecosystem for the generations yet to come. And of course, we will assert and defend Canada's sovereignty and security in this region (Harper 2008).

The three central documents detailing Canada's current Arctic policy are the 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy* (National Defence [Canada], 2008), the 2009 *Northern Strategy* (Indian and Northern Affairs [Canada], 2009), and the 2010 document, *Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* (DFAIT 2010). Together the three documents represent

an aggressive expression of national sovereignty and security in the far North. The *Arctic Foreign Policy* proclaims “the first and most important pillar towards recognizing the potential of Canada’s Arctic is the exercise of our sovereignty over the far north.”(DFAIT 2010, 5) Indeed, Prime Minister Harper declared the protection and promotion of Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic “a non-negotiable priority.”(CBC News 2010) All three documents illustrate the government’s priorities of “exercising sovereignty; promoting economic and social development; protecting [our] environmental heritage; and improving and devolving Northern governance.”(Indian and Northern Affairs [Canada]) These priorities have been reinforced by ongoing security maneuvers that increase state control over the farthest reaches of its territory. In the form of material expression, security is being claimed via the utilization of military ice-breakers; patrol ships; the creation of a new deep water port in Nanisivik, Nunavut; (Harper 2007) the deployment of military personnel including the Northern Rangers; (Lackenbauer 2004-2005) and the undertaking of joint military operations with other Arctic countries under Operation Cold Response and Operation Nanook. As Wilfrid Greaves writes, “Canada’s approach to Arctic security remains preoccupied with traditional, state-centric military threats, despite the fact that all three documents explicitly specify that no such military threats exist.” (Greaves 2011, 230)

Adding complexity is the fact that, in May 2013, Canada assumed the two-year Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the leading intergovernmental body of Arctic nations. The government’s highlighted priorities include “responsible resource development,” “safe Arctic shipping,” “sustainable circumpolar communities,” and “strengthening the Arctic Council.”(DFAIT 2013a) These priorities have been identified

as part of a larger strategy to maintain northern control in the face of growing competition for oil and mineral wealth located in the Arctic. The Chairwoman of the Council, Canadian Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq proclaimed, “We must remember that the Arctic Council was formed by Northerners, for Northerners, long before the region was of interest to the rest of the world.”(quoted in Koring 2013)

Effectively, the results are that traditional interpretations of security are being transposed onto the physical geography of the Arctic region through official Canadian discourse. In other words, something labeled ‘security’ is being written on the body of the earth via discursive and material practices. Recent announcements by Harper have described government investments in the region as necessary for unlocking the north’s “potential” and the “national destiny” (Harper 2009), for discovering buried resource “treasures” (Harper 2007), and for managing the vast, seemingly endless “frontier.” (Harper 2012)<sup>3</sup> The result is that the state has been able to assert traditional means of control over the natural environment of the far north. Concurrently, the natural environment conditions Canadian security. Official discourse has frequently incorporated the region’s “remoteness” into a vision of security where physical enemies and logical uncertainties are forever lurking and where unfulfilled opportunities abound. Both the environment and Canadian security itself becomes constructed by mantras of sovereign control, ownership, and exclusion, which in the face of rapidly increasing climate change and resultant environmental changes, provides ample contradiction. Harper proclaimed in 2007 that:

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. Because Canada’s Arctic is central to our national identity as a northern

nation. It is part of our history. And it represents the tremendous potential of our future (Harper, 2007).

Such statements are reflective of the powerful effects that the environment holds in traditional security discourse. Government speeches offer lessons on the ways in which interpretations of the vastness of geography, the spectre of resource abundance, and the preoccupation with control over nature can stimulate security logics. Lawrence Cannon, then minister of foreign affairs, proclaimed to a UK audience in 2010 that Canada was an “Arctic Nation,” an “Arctic power,” and that the “Arctic and the North are part of our national identity.”(Cannon 2010) Such rhetoric effectively demonstrates “the ways in which ‘The North’ is imagined as a space of national pride, belonging, and exploration: a space that is alternately normalized as a fundamental extension of state territory and exoticized as a distant wilderness to be conquered.”(Steinberg 2010, 81)

Visions of the environment continue to be deeply implicated in the writing of Canadian identity and in the operation of Canadian politics. The “Great White North” defines the nation’s security interests—who is to be secured, what way of life protected. The invocation of “The Great White North” denotes the natural environment as an important source of economic value and a salient frame for conceptualizing international geopolitics.

### **Remapping the Arctic**

Beyond the “Great White North,” however, alternative security logics do exist, and point to important differences in the relationships between security and the environment. Recent popular protests and resistance movements across the country may

challenge the dominant imaginings of Canadian security as the “Great White North” and all its attendant baggage. Inasmuch as the underlying themes of recent movements such as Idle No More (Wilkins, 2013), and against the Keystone XL protests (CBC News, 2013) are the protection of lands, waters and natural resources, one might begin to identify an alternative narrative, imbuing new meaning upon the Canadian environmental space and security understandings. Beyond these high-profile movements, the Inuit peoples of the Arctic region have also frequently expressed security logics that challenge the hegemonic “Great White North” discourse. All told, while tracing the contours of the environment-security relationship is central to recognizing the constructed nature of security, it is also crucial to explore the crags and rifts in the discourse itself as a practice of unearthing what the dominant narrative has obscured.

By providing a critical reading of the national security vocabulary, this section challenges the naturalization of Canadian Arctic security as the “Great White North,” highlighting the discourse's pernicious implications and drawing attention to the peoples and narratives omitted from its gaze. The approach to the Canadian north described in the previous section has two important consequences: first, the exploitative and instrumental thinking engendered by the “Great White North” discourse creates new vulnerabilities for Canadian indigenous peoples. Second, this marginalization is implicated in the silencing of alternative security discourses emanating from the Arctic like, for instance, Canadian Inuit peoples. The “Great White North” discourse effectively writes out the 1,172,790 First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (StatsCan, 2006). By focusing on a subset of voices within this population—the Inuit peoples of Inuit Nunaat, stretching from northern Labrador to the Northwest territories—this section seeks to outline an

alternative Canadian Arctic security. Focusing on the challenges of climate change and resource extraction, the discussion below seeks to highlight how the processes driving these changes are at odds with the understandings of nature among Inuit peoples and how Inuit peoples are struggling to make their particular logic intelligible within the wider Canadian context. In other words, they are striving to make their particular experiences of environmental insecurity understood.

According to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), climate change will acutely affect the Canadian Arctic, with annual mean warming projected to range between 3°C and 9°C in winter months (ACIA, 2005). The myriad consequences of warming in the Arctic are all too familiar: rising sea levels, a multiplication of insect activity, and increased vulnerability to air, water and vector-borne diseases (Furgal & Seguin, 2006). These hazards will be compounded by additional changes in Inuit livelihood. Thinning sea ice in the winter months may jeopardize forms of winter travel and limit access to wildlife resources (Furgal & Seguin, 2006). Moreover, the migratory patterns of food sources like caribou and geese may change. For the many Inuit peoples who engage in subsistence activities, these changes are likely to mean increased food insecurity, and may force these communities to seek inappropriate food substitutions or expensive alternatives: both options may put Inuit peoples' cultural live at risk (Wenzel, 2009). As one report argues, "the contamination of country food (traditional food sources) raises problems that transcend the usual confines of public health, and that cannot be resolved simply by health advisors or food substitutions."(Van Oostam et.al. 1999, 7) Inuit food defines the Inuit way of life and mode of being (Egede 1995). Practices such as hunting and fishing are not merely instrumental nutritional practices,

but are also culturally important traditions to Inuit peoples as sources of "pride, worth, distinctiveness, and identity."(Buell 2006, 26) If identity is a fundamental component of envisioning security—that is, who or what is to be secured—it is clear that Inuit peoples' food insecurity portends a greater cultural and even existential threat (Campbell, 1992).

In addition to the challenges created by the spectre of climatic change, the extraction of non-renewable resources in the Arctic adds to the fragility of the social landscape in the Arctic. Resource extraction increases fears of oil spills and contamination, the loss of sacred spaces for hunting, trapping and fishing, and disrupts traditional migratory routes of species such as birds and caribou (Buell 2006). For many Inuit communities, the resource extraction industries as they currently operate are at odds with their cultural practices of sustainable and respectful use of the environment (NAHO 2008). At the Third Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2004, the representative from the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) argued that thus far, development projects have failed to take into account indigenous priorities, but that this conflict was not necessarily predetermined: the ICC representative further noted that "Development projects could either help indigenous peoples survive, or destroy them and their cultural heritage, depending on how they are managed."(United Nations 2004) In other words, a more harmonious way of conceptualizing development that does not come at the expense of indigenous livelihoods is sought. Such conceptualizations are emblematic of indigenous security alternatives that challenge the "Great White North" security discourse.

Inuit leaders and members of the Inuit Circumpolar Council have demonstrated security alternatives with emancipatory potential. It is useful to examine these

alternatives because they may provide critical security scholars with a deeper appreciation of the role of the environment in security and can offer a venue for more constructive thinking about emancipation. In contrast to the “Great White North” narrative demonstrated in the previous section, the discourse of the ICC analyzed below demonstrates a belief that the natural world is intrinsically rather than instrumentally important. This suggests a broader, and more profound idea that the environment is as much a source of identity as it is security. It also demonstrates that the environment is not exogenous to indigenous life, but is rather a condition of possibility for Canadian indigenous identity. It thus reflects many of the assumptions of critical security by collapsing the idea of the security subject as an abstract, detached actor, divorced from the wider social and natural environments.

A principle goal of the ICC is to develop long-term policies that first and foremost safeguard the Arctic environment, and as such, many of the ICC's statements and declarations centre on managing the present and emerging vulnerabilities discussed above. One of the founding documents of the ICC, the 1991 *Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy*, has the themes of stewardship and sustainability woven throughout its text, and this informs the Inuit response to the challenges of both resource extraction and climate change (ICC 1991). These principles emerge from a community-based and human-centred perspective and they force a reconsideration of many of the extractive practices promoted in the vision of the “Great White North.” Noting the profound implications that rapid resource development has for Inuit peoples in the Arctic, the 2012 *ICC Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat* states unequivocally that "resource development proposals for *Inuit Nunaat* must be assessed



holistically, placing human needs at the centre."(ICC 2012) In other words, the Declaration demands a reversal of the logic of resource development, beginning with the health of the community which, as the declaration notes, is predicated upon the health of the environment. Other declarations implore environmental policymakers to follow in the spirit of "inoqatigiinneq," or "sharing life:" the 2010 Nuuk Declaration reaffirms the belief that "the respectful sharing of resources, culture, and life itself with others is a fundamental principle of being Inuit, and is the fabric that holds us together."(ICC 2010, 1) As such, extractive practices that undermine the sustainability of resources detract from this Inuit principle, as they undermine the ability to share resources within and across generations.

Confronting the adverse effects of climate change, the ICC has also worked to gain a voice at the negotiations in the post-Kyoto Protocol era. An overarching goal is to argue for more culturally responsive ways of confronting climate change. The ICC's "Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic" offers an alternative perspective on the nature and importance of sovereignty in an era of global environmental change. It declares, "'Sovereignty' is a term that has often been used to refer to the absolute and independent authority of a community or nation both internally and externally. Sovereignty is a contested concept, however, and does not have a fixed meaning." (ICC 2009) The different identifications experienced by Arctic Inuit peoples – as an indigenous people of the Arctic, as citizens of Arctic states, as indigenous citizens of Arctic states, and as indigenous citizens of each of the major political subunits of Arctic states, suggest a need to critically reflect on singular categorizations of sovereignty, threat, and protection found in the dominant discourses of security such as

the “Great White North.”(Broadhead 2010, 926-927) For Inuit communities struggling to secure a level of self-determination and control over their lives, territories, cultures, and languages, the type of sovereignty proclaimed in the “Great White North” narrative is at odds with a more holistic and integrated vision of human security intimately tied to the security of the natural environment.

Another of the innovative approaches articulated by the ICC comes from its 2012 *Climate Change Roadmap*, which argues for the integration of "Two Ways of Knowing" in seeking to understand the long-term environmental changes to the Arctic (ICC 2012, 1). These 'Ways of Knowing' consist of conventional scientific modes of understanding as well as traditional Inuit ways of knowing. This idea of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into environmental practices is one of the cornerstones of the ICC's environmental policies, and is a point of considerable value for any critical strategy for Arctic environmental security.

To an extent, the idea of incorporating indigenous knowledge into environmental security approaches is not novel. Canadian environmental researchers have approached the concept of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), with increased alacrity, recognizing its potential contributions to understanding biological phenomena and the practice of protecting ecosystems (Berkes, 1998; Karst, 2010; Paci et.al., 2002). In fact, this narrative is now so pervasive that TEK is now a required part of all impact assessments in Canada (Usher 2000). One definition, given by Berkes et. al (2000) defines TEK as a “cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their

environment.” However, even within this broad definition there exist important variances to different peoples and groups (Huntington and Fox 2004, 64).

There are many who suggest the need for skepticism regarding the inclusion of TEK into modern policy, pointing to the impossibility of "harmonizing the needs of economy and environment within the existing frameworks and institutions"(Escobar 2008, 281). Heather Smith and Karyn Sharp concluded in their study of various international environmental forums that the inclusion of indigenous knowledges has been uneven (Smith and Sharp 2012). However, as Deborah MacGregor argues, TEK is not a body of knowledge, but rather a process of "coming to know," suggesting that the inclusion of TEK into public policy has not been sincere to the epistemological roots of indigenous knowledge (MacGregor 2004, 390). Rather, the TEK-based approach to the environment utilized by the ICC is meant to develop 'ways of knowing' that lead to "freedom of consciousness and to solidarity with the natural world."(Battiste and Henderson 2000, 92). In this way, the discourse utilized by the ICC and the reliance on TEK as a way to understand the world offers an important emancipatory alternative to traditional practices of environmental security.

### **Remapping the Environment: A critical approach in Canada**

The previous two sections combine to offer significantly different interpretations of environmental security in Canada. Unsurprisingly, the Canadian government has consistently employed the language of traditional security to highlight the importance of the environment, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the Arctic. Conversely, alternative constructions of security have been articulated by other non-state actors, specifically Inuit groups who continue to suffer disproportionately than the rest of

Canadian society in terms of health, poverty, and the effects of environmental change.

There are salient conclusions from which to draw in terms of critical approaches to environmental security. First, in a critical capacity, awareness of the ways in which the natural environment can be articulated within security discourses can further emancipatory change, one of the avowed normative goals of the Welsh School of security studies. It offers tangible examples of ways in which security is pronounced in different contexts, by different actors. As Matt McDonald points out, these different articulations reflect specific understandings about “who is in need of being secured, from what threats, by what actors, and through what means.”(McDonald 2013, 49) These basic understandings then are crucial for conditioning the types of responses utilized in the pursuit of alleviating perceived insecurity. For various indigenous groups in Canada, including the Inuit in the Arctic, the environment is a central defining feature of individual security and community identity. This is an entirely different conception of environmental security than the version promoted by traditional security discourses. It is unlikely then that the traditional security practices of resource development, national sovereignty promotion, and increased surveillance will be accepted by Arctic indigenous groups as legitimate, effective, or just.

Second, the fundamental opposition between the aforementioned discourses should compel practitioners to undertake a more profound rethinking of the environment; in other words, one cannot divorce thinking about the environment from the broader ethical environmental frameworks in which this knowledge is produced. TEK and a desire to increase engagement with indigenous knowledges has led to some novel security analyses from academics, but further work is evidently required (Dalby 2002;

Beier 2007).

Third, it is also important to note the significant impacts of the environment itself on conceptions of security. For critical security scholars to adequately incorporate visions of the environment into their analyses, they need to take better stock of the ways in which it is central to conceptions of state security on the one hand, and human health and well-being on the other. This implies a deeper interrogation of the concept of emancipation, which has received relatively minor attention despite being a central component of critical security. While critical theory comprises hugely diverse approaches, the linkage between all of them is the emancipatory intent (Bronner 2002). Ken Booth, the most prominent theorist of the Welsh School, has conceived of emancipation as “the philosophy, theory, and politics, of inventing humanity.”(Booth 2007, 12) The practical fulfillment of security as emancipation requires the freeing of individuals from arbitrary structures preventing them from living as they would otherwise wish (Booth 2007). Its principal characteristics are that it is radically cosmopolitan; predicated on the rights and needs of the most vulnerable; and that the means envisaged to achieve or preserve ‘security’ will not deprive others of it (McDonald 2012). This implies a shift of the referent object from the state to the individual. Given that individuals’ experiences of security and insecurity are heavily tied to the overall health of the environment, it is imperative that emancipation be conceived of in more holistic ways — avoiding the production of anthropocentric analyses at the expense of deeper ecological appreciations.

The natural environment is central to human well-being; it is essential to emancipation; and it is a key component of security identities. What this all demonstrates is the potential for a much broader interest in the security of the environment. The

implication for security studies on the whole is the need for a more holistic understanding of the environment as a subject in the construction of security — as demonstrated by the narrative of the “Great White North.” It also is necessary to see it as a referent object for protection not only because of the fundamental role the environment plays in constituting indigenous identity and livelihoods but as an intrinsically valuable entity. In most emancipatory visions of security, the focus has been on leveraging human potential by breaking through structural impediments. There has not been a sustained engagement with the ways in which the environment, central in the construction of security identities, acts as a structural impediment itself, impacting human potential. Emancipation may indeed be the best possible hope for becoming, but it needs to better engage ecological frameworks to fully develop a progressive form of security. There is real danger that by promoting emancipatory agendas that promote the individual as the heart of security, the environment is once again positioned as the canvas upon which the human story is painted. This undermines the inherent value of nature, and replicates the anthropocentrism at the heart of traditional security accounts. Furthermore, the political effects of ignoring the environment as an intrinsic part of security identity are likely to be the continued marginalization of individual actors and communities who cannot be divorced from their reliance upon the environment for the physical, social, and spiritual needs.

## **Conclusion**

Narrative maps can be highly useful in navigating the conceptual terrain of critical security studies (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010). Whether used to navigate the

subject conceptually, temporally, or geographically, maps can be important metaphors for better understanding the nuances of the academic discipline. Maps construct reality in specific ways, rendering some issues visible while leaving others invisible (Nunes 2012). Physical maps of the environment are intrinsically part of the story of security. They reflect the importance of the land upon the formation of identity and thus the ways in which security itself is conceived and operationalised. The Canadian context outlined in this article demonstrates the importance of the natural environment upon security logics - upon both statist and non-statist approaches. Whether placed within dominant representations of the “Great White North,” or in alternative, indigenous representations, like in the ICC or TEK, the environment works to condition the possible. In this sense the Canadian experience demonstrates the importance of incorporating the environment as both a site for security, and as a site that comprises security. Without deeper acknowledgement of the role the environment plays in security, the emancipatory project will remain only partially fulfilled.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Arctic is in fact easier to territorially define than other Arctic regions of the world. The United Nations Arctic Human Development Report adopts 60°N as the general southern boundary of the Canadian Arctic. This allows for the separation of the three northern territories from the southern provinces. The Report also includes northern Quebec and Labrador for reasons relating to the location of jurisdictional or administrative boundaries and the availability of data. (UNDP 2004, 17)

<sup>2</sup> Discourse here refers to textual and social processes that combine to condition the way we think and act in the world. (George 1994) Discourses are able to construct social realities by operationalizing a particular “regime of truth,” while excluding other possible identities and actions. Despite this, dominant discourses may be characterized as “unstable grids,” susceptible to change and demonstrating historical contingency. (Milliken 1999, 229-230)

<sup>3</sup> It is possible to see recent subtle shifts in Canadian government discourse. A more pointed focus on northern development initiatives has been utilized at the expense of former appeals to sovereignty and security. Such shifts though have had little impact on the overall nature of traditional northern narratives, which continue to avoid discussing the environmental impacts of security or development. (Wingrove 2013)