

Incompatible futures: Frontier nostalgia and southern discourses of the Arctic

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It is tempting for southern actors to imagine an Arctic that is separate from the challenges that define the rest of the world. From geopolitics to pollution, militarization to a loss of biodiversity, the complex events that span the globe highlight the desirability of identifying a region isolated from broader struggles. However, the very concept of an isolated or untouched region is a production, one of multiple human imaginaries of the region. While the Far North was, for long chapters in history, largely inaccessible to the majority of humanity, it has never fully been isolated or protected from the events and processes happening to its south. Arctic images created by and for southerners fundamentally shaped early—and inaccurate—imaginaries of the North. As societies and states move forward from 1909 to 2007 (both symbolic years in encountering the North Pole) and beyond, we find that social attitudes toward the Arctic are shaped by nostalgia. However, actors hold different nostalgia narratives which have been shaped by timelines emphasizing different key social, technological, and geophysical events. Three groups of Arctic actors are identified (policymakers, researchers, and extractionists) whose understandings and nostalgia of the Arctic are shaped by emphasis on different events within these timelines. Each category of actor utilizes their varying timelines in their policy rhetoric; however, each discourse has origins in the settler-colonialism frontiersmanship of the 19th and 20th centuries. Ultimately, divergent temporalities and imaginaries mobilize actors to pursue different socio-economic policies in the North.

Introduction

The Arctic elicits a pristine imagery in the global imagination; it is separate from the geopolitical and human struggles that define the remainder of the globe. The region has previously proved treacherous to interlopers: tumultuous oceans, poor weather, and unfamiliar environmental conditions made exploration by southern individuals dangerous and success unpredictable. This closed-off portrayal made surmounting the elements and gaining (and surviving) access to the North points of national pride for states (Bravo, 2019). Accessing the North required technological innovation and adaptability. Notwithstanding the Indigenous peoples of the North, who factored

into Western thoughts only so far as they were sociocultural curiosities (and later, in the era of Social Darwinism, racial ‘objects’) and enablers of explorers and settler colonialism, in the Western imaginary, the Far North was untouched. Even in the mid-20th century, Western militarism in the Arctic was conducted under the assumption that an Arctic presence would not necessarily lead to an environmental or social impact (an assumption since proven thoroughly incorrect, see Herzberg, Kehrt, & Torma, 2018). Yet since the 1990s, southern political-economic intrigue sharply rose with increased access to the region brought about by environmental changes and technological developments. States and industries now look to the Far North with anticipation for its potential resources and opening waterways.

Contributing to the romantic appeal to the North during the 19th and 20th centuries was the sense of separateness that the Arctic held for southern societies whose political and social identities aligned more with Western Europe. This separateness was furthered by the total disconnect from southern societies that interlopers experienced when traversing the North (Nurminen & Lainema, 2010), the relatively small spatial impact of pre-industrial human activities, and the largely uncharted Arctic Ocean (Marshall, 2016). Today, the tenants that developed this romanticism no longer hold; however, the cognitive and socially constitutive effects of the romanticism persist and colour political and economic behavior of actors in the 21st century. It is a romanticism of the North that has shaped a contemporary reluctance to address its geophysical reality: it is experiencing irreversible changes. Nevertheless, Arctic politics are heavily influenced by nostalgia, the content of which varies based on historical timelines recognized by varying groups of actors originating from the South. Notably, while actors may vary in their state of origin and industry-academic backgrounds, they share commonalities in the way they view the Arctic largely based on their fit within different actor categories.

Three groups of southern Arctic actors—policymakers, researchers, and extractionists—reference divergent Arctic timelines, each differing in their recognition of human activity in the north, resource availability, and geophysical changes resulting from human activity. Nostalgia manifests in varied senses of urgency in each timeline, shaping Arctic futures. These categories are not comprehensive or fully inclusive of all Arctic actors; however, they do encompass vocal groups appearing in Arctic scholarship, policy, and economics which have colonial roots. Most noticeably, Indigenous communities and political actors do not fit neatly into these categories. The three categories that constitute the focus of this article are groups whose nostalgias and imaginaries of the Arctic are fundamentally shaped by their position as southern residents and organizations: those who fall on the ‘here’ in the dichotomy between the ‘*here versus up there*’ that has historically dominated southern conversations about the Arctic. From a discussion of the pristine imaginaries and eco-philosophies that shape contemporary nostalgia, I move into a discussion on three dominant categories of southern Arctic actors, then into a presentation of their Arctic timelines, which provide reference points for their behavior in, images of, and perceived spatial footprints of the Far North. This transitions into a discussion of how timeline variations and their nostalgia roots result in different senses and understandings of ‘urgency’ among the actors. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of imaginaries, nostalgia, and Arctic timelines on Arctic politics and security, and how an understanding of these classes of actors can help us resist the further domination of inherently colonial Western southern narratives in conversations on the Arctic.

Shaping reality: Why imaginaries matter

In stark opposition to 19th century European static, unyielding visions of the Arctic, is a social ecology approach, which examines how natural and cultural histories are objectively entangled. Unique experiences and ideas surrounding the Far North became incorporated into social relations in southern societies, contributing to the regional flavours of Arctic imaginaries and social relations. In other words, by co-constructing social and physical environments, natural environments shape the attitudes, discourses, and practices of people who live in a region as well as those who live outside the region and “look in” (Berkes, 2017; Cruikshank, 2005). Imaginaries have a long history of describing a group’s collective understanding of how the world works (Cidell, 2017). Imaginaries emerge when societies project their own needs and desires onto a landscape. They are a characterization of a geographical, ecological, and racial region. Imaginaries need not represent the real world, though they may influence discussions, problem-solving, and behavior in a way that is, for all intents and purposes, just as real as geophysical materialities. How a society understands the causes and fuel of forest fires (irresponsibility, climate change, or a consequence of complex social factors and management) will cause actors to respond with different emotion-driven reactions, policy suggestions and behavioral modifications (Jasanoff, 2009).

Imaginaries are more than narratives of what is or what should be; they are sources of and for framings, problems, identities, affects and emotional regimes, and solutions. Solutions are created based on what is believed, felt and known. When the Arctic is imagined as an isolated wilderness, policies that govern human behavior in the region will be structured based in this assumption, regardless of the reality. *Wilderness* derives from the notion of wildness, that which is not controlled by humans (though in an interconnected world, can anything truly be wilderness?) This challenges the nature of the pristine wildness imaginary, which carries with it two philosophical assumptions:

- 1) Earth landscapes are divided into a binary: separate from human actions or integrated and influenced with and by human activities (Nash, 2001). This binary is rooted in baselines that compare a *before* state of nature to an *after*. This comparison is moral in nature, not scientific.
- 2) Untouched nature is superior to human-shaped landscapes. Eco-philosophers critique this “romantic notion of untrammelled wilderness” as failing to recognize the more nuanced notion of ecosystems. This argument maintains that there is little scientific support for the ideology that pristine nature is “better” than alternatives (Marris, 2013).

Each assumption imagines ‘good’ nature as requiring separation from humans. Yet this implication disregards humankind-nature relationships and feedbacks. While Western political and philosophical thought often situates humans as superior to the natural world, humans, as living beings intertwined in Earth and its systems, cannot be separated from the natural order. Additionally, these assumptions marginalize the experiences and ontologies of Indigenous peoples, who historically have had more responsible, holistic relationships with their ecological communities (Whyte, 2017). Eco-philosophical underpinnings of regional imaginaries thus color discussions on the construction of pristine imaginaries.

The myth of an untouched Arctic

The most historically dominant imaginary of the Arctic among settler colonial communities is that it is a pristine and untouched land. This image has evolved over time through its encounters in art, exploration, and environmental policy spaces. Arctic imaginaries have an established presence in the images of Northern explorers and residents, writers, and artists, which prompted myth building and nostalgia-forming images. Early attempts to map the Arctic relied just as much on stories as fact to chart the Far North. The Mercator map envisioned a giant, magnetic pole, four land segments of the Arctic stretching out, and a land of pygmies.



Figure 1. Mercator Map of the Arctic, *Septentrionalium Terrarum*, 1595

As naval technology and cartography developed over the next three centuries, explorers also sought to document their expeditions and experiences. As a result, explorers chronicled the sights they saw, thought they saw, or fictions they sought to convince others of from their journeys.



Figure 2. *Polar night in the spring*, 1897 by Aleksander Borisov

Art through the 19th and early 20th century tended to focus on the Arctic's vast landscapes and dispersed fauna (Peck, 2012). These images held no pretense of being scientific reference materials or authorities of northern landscapes, yet they equally acted to shape the images of the Arctic held by societies living in the South.

Unable to traverse the seas and ice themselves, laypeople relied on images developed by those who had travelled north to inform their own images of the Arctic. Such images depicted landscapes and excluded Indigenous communities from the works that shaped its era's understandings of the North. Landscapes sans Northern communities were fodder for colonial impulses to settle the supposedly empty lands. Moreover, this created a generation of inaccurate visual reference materials that inform today's ideas of what the Arctic "used to be"—an untouched wilderness rife with first-flag opportunities— shaping nostalgia towards an Arctic that did not exist (McCannon, 2012).

In art and expedition reports, southerners tended towards one of two conclusions that drew from a pristine frontier mentality: some viewed it as a serene, untouched hinterland (Steinberg, Tasch, Gerhardt, Keul, & Nyman, 2015), while others took it to mean the North was a wild region that needed to be tamed (Lewis-Jones, 2013). Both views are volatile and inaccurate imaginaries. The Arctic has become home to some of the harshest climate change and pollution consequences, which affects residents, wildlife, and visitors while also shaping its geophysical features.

Contemporary environmental politics discourse does not maintain that the Arctic is separate and pristine in its current state, but suggests that has been "corrupted" by human activity both injected into the region and originating in the South (Schindler & Smol, 2006). This view is born from the very tenets of an Anthropocentric perspective: the Earth's systems create a complicated system of feedback and growth wherein the consequences of human activity in one area spread and affect areas seemingly remote from the original site of behavior (Slaughter, 2012). One could argue that the only isolation the Arctic experiences today is in the vein of regional exceptionalism's geopolitical assertions: that events in the Arctic are only relatively insulated only from global tensions (and indeed, so long as the Arctic's great powers are dedicated to this separation-- a reasonable assumption in Heininen, 2016; and Melas, 2016).

Political, military, and economic development through the 20th century led to key events that have further demonstrated the Arctic's vulnerability to external events, accidents and trans-national flows of pollutants. In addition to Chernobyl, Russian nuclear submarine sinkings during and after the Cold War illustrated how susceptible the Arctic environment was to human pollution. Building tensions between Canada and Denmark, as well as Norway and Russia, over ownership of seabeds, bodies of water, and land demonstrated that human activity was becoming an undeniable part of the Arctic landscape. As these human-based events entered the body of nostalgia, they maintained varying levels of importance for different categories of actors based on their rhetorical function in maintaining each group's Arctic imaginary (Krebs & Jackson, 2007).

Ideological roles of nostalgia

Nostalgia performs various affective, ideological, and sentimental roles based on the kind experienced. Nostalgia is regularly depicted as an emotional appeal—a flawed political argument—though recent studies have sought to nuance it as a 'normal' political discourse with positive and negative forms (Kenny, 2017). Reactionary nostalgia prompts social distrust and distaste for

political ‘others’ and outgroups in response to perceived challenges or disruptions to a privileged group’s status quo (Cheung, Sedikides, Wildschut, Tausch, & Ayanian, 2017). Such nostalgia rhetoric exacerbates issues of social inequality and epistemological inclusion while catering to social pessimism, disadvantaging ethnic and cultural minorities.

Meanwhile, positive forms of nostalgia include productive (or “mobile”) nostalgia, which uses a ‘continuity through change’ argument to assert that change—rather than staticism—link the past and present, legitimizing newly empowered groups. Such nostalgia for the future has been chronicled among Jewish, Islamic, and Indigenous peoples, as well as labor groups, and is defined by a “positive, spirited, and receptive” nature, rather than negative discourse (Smith & Campbell, 2017: 612). Rather than protesting the present, it calls for returns to cultural or spiritual heydays, which may prompt societies to support particular politics as a progressive force. Such nostalgia draws from the past to mold emotional or moral commitments to such ideals as development or social justice.

Each form of nostalgia serves a different social function and has different ideological and real-life implications for policies (particularly the framing and implication of ‘progressive’ policies). Yet regardless of form, nostalgia remains a highly specific form of political-social discourse that emerges from—and appeals to—specific cultural-ethnic contexts. As such, sociologists and political scientists have found themselves increasingly concerned with the power of nostalgia (Wheeler, 2017) as well as other politico-emotive forces like historical trauma and inherited memories (Turbine, 2018) despite the challenges they pose for conceptualization and generalization. The nostalgia that European populations experience as southern Arctic communities are formed, experienced, and transferred in ways that are inattentive to the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and other northern residents.

Arctic nostalgia: Creating points of reference

Arctic nostalgia, developed through art and exploration and refined through the eras, has shaped contemporary understandings and imaginaries of the Arctic, affecting narratives that guide Arctic policy and images of desirable futures. Based on the way actors view the significance of particular historical events and processes, they will utilize specific Arctic timelines in their policy and development rhetoric. Three dominant groups of narratives are proposed based on a survey of Arctic politics literature offering scholar-driven classifications of Arctic actors (2010 to 2018). These works are largely informed by 21st century Nordic Arctic scholarship and propose a variety of classification frameworks by which Arctic actors and discourses may be grouped. These three timelines build upon influential categories across Arctic typology scholarship to propose another frame by which we may better understand the rhetoric and motivations of these groups. Each timeline examines the historical events that comprise and maintain group nostalgia. Combined, these timelines shape how actors create and use historical reference points, with security implications.

The three categories of focus from Arctic typology scholarship are policymakers, researchers, and extractionists. These are not exhaustive, but are representative of overarching conversations in deliberative spaces. Their discourses and rhetoric can be identified explicitly and implicitly (Ahlness, 2018; Wang & Overland, 2009). These titles, drawn from the survey, describe the Arctic imagination dominant in each body of narratives. It is important to note that the three groups of actors are heavily influenced by Western political philosophy and terminology. By proposing

timelines of pivotal processes, we gain a greater understanding of the formulative events each group references to develop their narratives on the Arctic. Consequently, while the timelines are not comprehensive of all events formulative to understandings of the Arctic today, they do reference defining, pivotal, and rhetorically referenced events in focused scholarship and political-organizational rhetoric.

Timelines, spatial co-ordinates, and discussions

Each group's timeline is presented with brief discussions on framing efforts surrounding specific events and the following questions within the context of the reference timelines: 1) how do the timelines characterize the temporal and spatial scope of human activity, and 2) how do the timelines understand resource availability and claims legitimacy? Is human activity in the Arctic understood as events unto themselves, or is there a feedback process between humans and nature?

Policymaker Narratives

| Year | Event |
|------|---|
| 1982 | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Conference (UNCLOS) held |
| 1988 | Agreement on Arctic Cooperation between Canada and United States signed |
| 1994 | UNCLOS enters into force after its sixtieth signature |
| 1996 | The Arctic Council is formed from the Ottawa Declaration |
| 2000 | United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues forms |
| 2002 | Russia submits a proposal to CLCS claiming that the Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of its continental shelf |
| 2007 | Russia plants flag in the North pole Seabed |
| 2009 | The Ilulissat Declaration is signed, affirming Arctic state cooperation to the existing legal framework in addressing regional problems |
| 2009 | Norway receives recommendations from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) |
| 2011 | Norway and Russia ratify the Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean |
| 2013 | Putin orders the Russian military to bolster its Arctic military presence |

Table 1. Policymaker timeline of formulative events

The policymaker timeline is dominated by the passing of—and compliance to—frameworks that set behavioral standards and norms among state actors. These frameworks take for granted a Westphalian structure, embracing a state-centric paradigm and applying it to a changing Arctic with vocal non-state actors. Landmark events reference state-centric paradigms either through setting up organizational structures that have states submit to the ruling of other states (e.g. CLCS, Ottawa Declaration), or through internalizing challenges to the order (Russia's symbolic North Pole seabed flag). The timeline notes the foundry of agreements that respect behavioral baselines, internal waters versus international waters, and procedure ratification.

Indigenous rights, consultation, and participation gains appear in the timeline; however, the events of the timeline are overwhelmingly state-centric, creating an image of the Arctic as a political stage

just as much as a geophysical domain. Moreover, in this imaginary, non-Arctic states do not feature as actors worthy of garnering much recognition or influence. Ultimately, the policymaker imaginary depicts a short history of the Arctic—while it has been the historical home of northern residents and a realm of exploration for those from the south, it is only since it has become a realm of geopolitical intrigue in the later years of the Cold War that the Arctic has become of serious interest to the states that border it. Therefore, it is only after interest is captured that political frameworks can be imposed to govern the region in progressive (and essential) steps.

Researcher Timeline

| Year | Event |
|------------|--|
| 50,000 BCE | Beginning of the Anthropocene Epoch (date 1) |
| 1760 | Beginning of the Anthropocene Epoch (date 2) |
| 1945 | Beginning of the Anthropocene Epoch (date 3) |
| 1977 | The Inuit Circumpolar Council holds its first meeting |
| 1984 | US Arctic Research Commission established |
| 1988 | Initiation of GISP2 ice core drilling |
| 1996 | The Arctic Council is formed from the Ottawa Declaration |
| 1998 | First non-Arctic state observers to the Arctic Council admitted |
| 2004 | First comprehensive study released confirming the North Pole's ice exponential melt patterns |
| 2007 | International Polar Year |
| 2011 | Arctic Council search and rescue operations agreement signed |
| 2017 | UN World Meteorological Organization releases report announcing highest carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and lowest sea ice levels |
| 2017 | Fairbanks Agreement signed |

Table 2. Researcher timeline of formulative events

The researcher timeline recognizes a long Arctic timeline marked by a valued Indigenous presence and the (continuing) impact by global industrial activity. This imaginary is broadly, yet fundamentally shaped by the Arctic's character as a region far from many human societies, yet inextricably intertwined with these societies through intertwined ecosystems. Therefore, the point at which the Anthropocene starts—when humans become an influencing force on shaping Earth systems—becomes a key part of the researcher's Arctic timeline. Anthropocene scholars argue several periods that define Earth's entrance into the Anthropocene: when humanity shifted from hunting-gathering to a stationary lifestyle, which altered its interactions with other life forms (Chernilo, 2017); in the Industrial Revolution when large-scale coal burning launched a long-term rise in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses (Steffen et al., 2007); or with the nuclear age, where fallout marks the irreversible and definitive shift into an age marked by human activity (Waters et al., 2015). The early Anthropocene dates demonstrate a long Arctic timeline—southern societies have been actively shaping the Arctic even before the first explorers set foot in the region. Similarly, the full scope of consequences from current human activity are yet to be seen. While the date of entry into the Anthropocene is contested, its acknowledgement that fate of the Arctic is interconnected with all southern regions is foundational to the researcher's Arctic narrative.

Meaningful events referenced in the researcher narrative center on acknowledgements or reports on global interconnection, shared responsibility, and scientific documentation of environmental or climate feedback loops. Moreover, it recognizes the increase in non-Arctic and non-state actors claiming stakeholder status in climate consequences, and even upcoming generations from

humanities and natural sciences (highlighted in the International Polar Year 2007). The expansion of interested actors matters in this dialogue, shaping which problems become points of focus, and which solutions decision-makers find most viable (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2017), as well as which new technologies and investigations will be supported.

Extractionist Timeline

| Year | Event |
|------|--|
| 1909 | The Peary and Henson team become the first men to reach the North Pole (disputed) |
| 1957 | <i>Lenin</i> , the first civilian nuclear icebreaker, launched from Russia |
| 1969 | First commercial vessel, the United States's <i>SS Manhattan</i> , crosses the Northwest Passage |
| 1982 | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Conference held |
| 1991 | Russia is the first state to submit a territorial claim to CLCS |
| 1993 | First scientific trip to the Arctic by the nuclear submarine <i>Pargol</i> |
| 2005 | Arctic ice cap shrank to its smallest size in at least a century US Geological Survey released, estimating the amounts of oil, natural gas, and gas liquids present in the Arctic |
| 2008 | |
| 2012 | Shell's oil Conical Drilling Unit runs aground in Ocean Bay and must be towed to shore |
| 2013 | China joins the Arctic Council as an Observer |
| 2016 | US announces 5-year Arctic offshore drilling plan |
| 2050 | Estimated decade beginning ice-free summers in the Arctic |

Table 3. Extractionist timeline of formulative events

The extractionist timeline is tied together by events denoting *access*: the successes of first movers shape the narrative alongside the passage of processes for states to claim ownership over a territory. A 2008 United States Geological Survey estimates that 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids may remain in the Arctic, with up to 84 percent of the resources expected to be located in offshore areas (Bird et al., 2008).

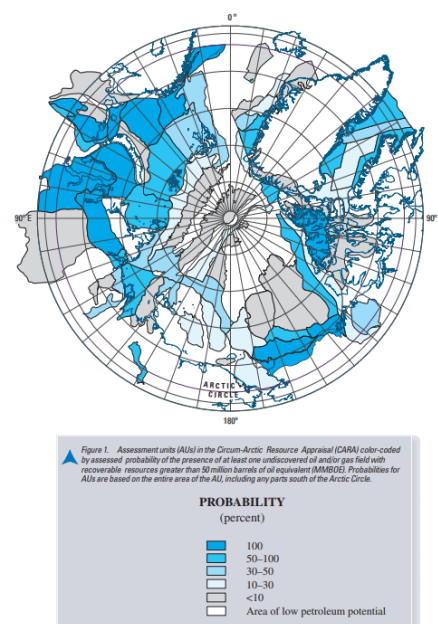


Figure 3. Petroleum Potential of Assessment Units and Provinces in the Circum-Arctic. USGS Face Sheet 2008-3049. U.S. Department of the Interior.

Large-scale capital accumulation for global markets is a relatively recent development in the Arctic. Consequently, extractionists treat the region's economic activity as a phenomenon injected from southern actors, regardless of its long-lived local economies. Because extractionists' narratives heavily reference economic activity, their timeline presents a relatively short Arctic timeline, with developed nations only recently becoming regional actors. Glorified historical exploration of the hinterlands colour contemporary resource extraction; it is the state's prerogative to pursue northern interests.

The entry into force of UNCLOS in 1994 is just as meaningful in the extractionist timeline as it is to policymakers. States and industries are prohibited from exploring or establishing extraction activities in disputed areas. Submitting contested situations to CLCS for recommendations may mean having to follow the guidance of the international community and following less-than-efficient procedures but doing so legitimizes economic activity through a compliance with existing frameworks. Oil and gas titans express faith in geological survey reports of resource availability. While attaining such independence is a fraught process as actors seek to gain first-mover advantages through initiative and legal frameworks, independence is understood as an assurance of fewer future threats. However, such assurance can only be attained by actors who were successful in the first-movers game.

Urgency in the Arctic

With a greater understanding of the how nostalgia and narratives produce 'events', we move forward to ask how these narratives shape actors' senses of urgency. Certainly, it is when actors feel under pressure and time constraints that conflicts become more likely to occur: urgency means less time to deliberate, a failure to critically evaluate options, think through consequences, and communicate between parties (Jervis, 1976; Levy, 2003). All of these high-risk behaviors are antithetical to the transparency and predictability that existing Arctic governance frameworks seek to encourage (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012; Nord, 2015; Stokke & Hønneland, 2007). Combined, actor belief that they must act quickly poses a threat to the security of all Arctic actors. In each narrative body, acting without deliberation has the potential for negative consequences on the Arctic's social and physical environment. Within the context of each narrative, I ask how each timeline imagines a sense of urgency surrounding the Arctic as a viable and engageable region? While the term *urgency* carries its own terminological and emotional connotations, I look at how each narrative construct time frames to achieve its Far North goals.

Policymaker behavior is influenced by environmental changes to the Arctic (positive or negative); however, urgency develops from the perceived need to negotiate understandings, agreements, and standards of conduct to govern behavior between now and "then" (though the environmental state of *then* remains undefined). These actors are primarily concerned about the threats inherent in a free-for-all Arctic where underdeveloped rules to govern passage through internal waters, claim territory, and extract resources can be undermined by unilateral behavior. Knowing that decision-making and implementation can be slow in the time-consuming practices of democratic decision-making, urgency pushes against a geophysical timeline that is constantly shortening (Zahariadis, 2015). If the Arctic ice is on a path to have ice-free summers by 2050 there is a concrete deadline by which states must have a framework for governing and monitoring activity to reduce the likelihood of conflict (Wang & Overland, 2009).

Researchers, whether natural scientists, social scientists, or Anthropocentrists, recognize a timeline set by the geophysical qualities of the Arctic, with a focus on sea ice levels and common pollutant levels (Braune et al., 2005). Of the three narrative groups, the researcher imaginary puts the greatest emphasis on the need to stem warming-contributive behavior in the immediate future. With a timeline riddled with geophysical points of no return, the concept of time and temporality is most severely felt in this imaginary. In Western and colonial narratives, the concept of deadlines and ‘points of no return’ most often emerge in relation to war, and the points in which conflict becomes inevitable (e.g. Cold War’s MAD). Consequently, the element of time, while not new to politics, has received scarce and selective attention (Pollitt, 2008). Researchers take the concepts of timeliness and urgency and apply them in an era of climate change, where they have real and unprecedented meaning for human activity. Urgency is not limited only to Arctic actors, as the activity of all southern societies have implications for the Far North. Urgency is thus felt more severely and is universal in its compellation. If one does not act in time, the past that is so keenly desired becomes no longer attainable.



Figure 4. Arctic Ocean Map. Uwe Dederig, 2010

Contrasting with the previous narratives, extractionists look with anticipation to geophysical changes that allow for greater access (Borgerson, 2013; Ho, 2010). Material and environmental barriers that previously proved treacherous are disappearing, allowing greater access to seabeds and waterways. Both sectors have tremendous economic potential; surveys estimate that 22% of the world’s oil and natural gas could be located beneath the Arctic, and the opening of northern sea routes could cut transit distances in half (“Strategic Importance of the Arctic in U.S. Policy,” 2009). Nostalgia that prompts assertions of normative claims, first-mover economic behavior, and opportunistic policies serve as a critical resource. Extractionists aim to be the most prepared so that they can be a first mover in oil, gas, shipping, and other resource industries and gain the resulting economic advantages (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Urgency is a matter of encountering what was only previously imagined. With an Arctic nostalgia colored with the glory of first movers (adventurers and technological marvels alike), changes that create possibilities of further interaction with the Far North are a source of eagerness rather than wariness.

Implications for Arctic politics

In international relations, knowledge groups and deliberation forums serve several vital functions. They provide spaces for parties with similar interests to gather together, affirm mutual

commitments, and create a common body of knowledge upon which they can draw as they problem-solve (Davis Cross, 2013). The lattermost function is affected by the narratives, discourse, and imaginaries of members. Imaginaries and nostalgia shape what actors believe is the history, reality, and desired makeup of a space, consequently shaping problem solving by influencing what actors prioritize, what they identify as threats, and what actions they deem feasible to address challenges (Druckman, 2004). This poses a challenge to deliberations on security issues. Variations in the reference points groups use to understand what constitutes a threat results in different prioritizations, resulting in inefficiencies and conflict among problem-solving bodies.

A divergence in threat prioritization can be seen in Western responses to Russia's amphibious assault trainings in late 2018. In September 2018, Russian military forces conducted the first amphibious assault training in the Arctic. This activity is part of a longer trend of Russian militarization and constitutes a threat in each group; however, the nature of this threat depends on how it is contextualized by their timelines. Policymakers reference Russia's past bolstering in the Arctic (e.g. the titanium flag in the North Pole seabed). While remaining committed to the existing governance framework, Russia's actions reinforce the framework's inability to address noncompliance from great states (Escudé, 2016; Lasserre & Têtu, 2016). For researchers, a history of military waste, pollution, and sunk vessels define the threat. Not only does militarization require the further development of Northern infrastructure, but it creates barriers for international research teams to access sites of interest in conducting research in the Russian Arctic (Ananyeva, 2019; Hunter, 2018). Extractionists view Russia's actions through their implications: expanding its sphere of influence to secure spaces for its own oil and gas industries. Russia has the grounds for vast territory claims that would limit the seabed available to its liberal competitors. The role of state is then to protect economic interests against others, and threats manifest when state impede the ability of competitors to gain first-mover advantages, rather than through environmental-feedback loops (Bouffard, 2017). Failures in inter-state diplomacy are seen as threats, but not for the same reasons policymakers view the complications; an agreement failure or noncompliance may set back trust or cooperation between states, but also discourages the safe spread of non-state industries into the Northern theater.

Conclusion

Art and inaccurate depictions of the North were fodder for settler-colonial discourses among southern societies: frontier nostalgia was the bedrock upon which late 20th and 21st century Arctic frames developed, whether they went on to perpetuate the notion of southern society-injected value or critique its colonial underpinnings. The futures imagined by various bodies in the Arctic are predated by the same historical events, however, each group varies in the significance they place on given events and processes.

Nostalgia is a powerful force that colors the ongoing processes of imaginary-building. Its context-specificity means that southern societies develop varied Arctic imaginaries to fit their cultural needs and desires. Such space-making processes are emotionally and socially charged. Nostalgia plays affective and sentimental roles in prompting social behavior. Simultaneously, imaginaries are more than narratives of what is. They are sources of framings developed from emotional regimes. The result is policy action towards desired futures that are not so much logically constructed as negotiated across repeated interpretations. As a result of their context-specific origins, these suggested futures proceed to emphasize various historical events in their own timelines as they

continue to add to their nostalgia narratives. This prompts further competition between increasingly disparate—yet all southern-in-origin—futures.

The imaginaries that guide actors shape their rhetoric as they interact with other Arctic actors and negotiate futures. The imaginaries developed and held by southern Arctic actors are inextricably shaped through their historical encounters with the Arctic, even as the tenants upon which they are founded cease to match contemporary realities. The persistence of nostalgia in this Far North rhetoric continues to engineer the marginalization of vulnerable, northern, and Indigenous voices. Frontier nostalgia is in itself a perpetuated form of settler-colonialism. If we as scholars are to legitimize through discussion any of the Arctic futures suggested by southern actors, we must challenge nostalgia's passage from Arctic imaginaries to reality.

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Appendix 1: Notes on literature survey and proposed actor typologies

Scholar-proposed category classifications of Arctic actors included in the following table capture only proposed groupings for non-Indigenous, non-northern resident actors. Many works (Krayazhkov 2013, Graczyk & Koivurova 2014, and Lackenbauer 2014, among others) contained classifications specific to Indigenous and northern resident groups. These were not included in the survey or coding given their non-applicability to southern actors and southern-originating organizations.

| Code | Sub-Code (proposed narratives and actor classifications) | Scholarship |
|----------------|---|---|
| Policymakers | Arctic States | Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013 Borgerson 2013 Charter 2016 Ford et al. 2016 Ingimundarson 2014 Gample 2015 Graczyk & Koivurova 2014 Kryazhkov 2013 Kuersten 2016 Molenaar 2012 Nord 2010 Ronson 2011 Sorensen 2013 Wilson 2016 Young 2012 |
| | “Deep South” (non-Arctic) States | Burke, Teale & Bondaroff 2018 Charter 2016 Graczyk & Koivurova 2014 Knecht 2017 Kuersten 2016 Lackenbauer 2014 Ronson 2011 Sorensen 2013 |
| Extractionists | Maritime-based Oil and Gas Industries | Bouffard 2017 Chater 2016 Huebert 2011 Ingimundarson 2014 Knecht 2017 Lackenbauer 2014 Molenaar 2012 Shindler & Smol 2006 Sorensen 2013 Wilson 2016 |
| | Land-based Industries | Dodds 2013 Huebert 2011 Knecht 2017 |

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Fishers and Fisheries | Ronson 2011 Molenaar 2012 Sorensen 2013 Wilson 2016 |
| Researchers | Natural Scientists | Dodds 2013 Ford et al. 2016 Ronson 2011 Smith & Sharp 2012 Young 2012 |
| | Social Scientists | Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013 Dodds 2013 Ingimundarson 2014 Koivurova 2010 Smith & Sharp 2012 Young 2012 |
| | Environmentalists | Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013 Gamble 2015 Griffiths 2012 Huebert 2011 Nord 2010 Shindler & Smol 2006 Smith & Sharp 2012 |
| | Anthropocenists | Griffiths 2012 Gamble 2015 Huebert 2011 Nord 2010 |

Table 1. Author-proposed Arctic actor classification categories

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