The Amplification of Polar Diplomacy: A Textual Analysis of Arctic Council Declarations

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Climate change discourses loom large over the Arctic even as the growth of energy, mining, and transportation opportunities align with growing demand for global commodities. A prominent forum for mediating these conversations to stakeholders and publics has been the Arctic Council. This article examines the emergence of Arctic Council dialogue as a global intergovernmental forum in the Arctic and a conduit for economic-ecological communication. A textual analysis of the forum's declarations over two decades analyzes the relationships between stakeholders in the Arctic and emergent discourse frameworks. As a vehicle for analysis, it helps to identify the embedded or proclaimed interests of government and markets—and the relationship between climate change with political, social, and cultural forms. Analyzing Arctic Council Declarations from annual meetings also highlights the mediatization of political action and the trajectory of the organization's environmental mandate over the past quarter-century.

The evolution of Arctic Council discourses over the past two decades provides insight into how polar nations collectively grapple with tensions between economic and environmental interests. This paper explores such intergovernmental communication through the public artifact that is the Arctic Council Declaration. A textual analysis of the forum's declarations over more than two decades analyzes the relationships between stakeholders in the Arctic and emergent discourse frameworks.

The issuance of the first-year report of Iceland's chairing of the Arctic Council in June of 2020 provided an ongoing reminder that sustainable development drives the mandate of the Arctic Council. Einar Gunnarsson, Chair of the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Officials, noted in his editorial update that Iceland's chairmanship was focused on four pressing issues: the Arctic's people and communities; the region's marine environment; climate and energy issues; and strengthening of the Arctic Council itself (Gunnarsson, 2020). Over the past 25 years, these themes of resources, ecology, and community have permeated Arctic Council deliberations.

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In many ways this emphasis mirrors the region it serves. The Arctic has emerged as one of the planet's symbolic environmental battlegrounds and a flashpoint of global ecology, pitting proponents of resource extraction and economic growth against green activists and conservationists. This tension has helped elevate the region's prominence in the global community and has captured growing attention from world leaders. For example, at the end of his second term in office, former U.S. president Barack Obama declared the entire U.S. portion of the Chukchi Sea and the majority of the Beaufort Sea, both situated within the circumpolar Arctic Ocean, as off limits to offshore drilling—citing protections for Indigenous communities, wildlife, and natural resources (Liptak, 2016). His vow was echoed by neighboring Canada, which promised to protect its Arctic waters from oil and gas exploration. Such official pronouncements have not only elevated the role of global diplomacy and communication in shaping policy for the region. They have also placed the spotlight on the Arctic Council as the Arctic's leading facilitator in furthering this polar regional dialogue.

Established in 1996 as a result of the Ottawa Declaration, the Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum promoting "cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection" (Arctic-Council.org, 2011). This study examines the emergence of the Arctic Council at its 25th year as the preeminent forum serving the region—examining how it grapples with environmental, economic, and social themes. This research seeks to assess what nation-state interests are communicated by the organization, and how these interests interface with the region's ecology and local communities. A textual analysis of digitally archived governance documents analyzes the relationships between national, corporate, environmental and Indigenous/community stakeholders in the Arctic, assessing the emerging discourse frameworks promoted by the council.

The growth of the Arctic Council has occurred during a transformative era for the Arctic region as a whole. The confluence of geo-political, economic, and environmental variables within the Arctic over the past three decades has intensified the global focus on the region, an area comprised of vast ocean and the most northerly land masses of the Arctic nations. Climate change has been a felt presence—not only altering ecosystems and wildlife habitat, but also opening up possibilities for new marine shipping lanes and sites for mineral and resource extraction. The emergence of these energy, mining, and transportation opportunities and subsequent corporate investments has coincided with an overall rising of market demand for major global commodities such as petroleum and precious metals. A 2012 report, referencing the Arctic's holding of 30% of global undiscovered natural gas and 13% of global undiscovered oil, estimated exploration and drilling investment to reach $100 billion (Lloyds.com, 2012). More recently, the Russian government passed legislation that would create $300 billion in financial incentives for Arctic oil infrastructure (Last, 2020). Thus, even against the backdrop of diminished returns for the petroleum industry due to a downturn in global demand and oil prices, national and corporate interests globally continue to pursue such opportunities through exploration, environmental assessments, land purchases, and diplomatic endeavors. In the realm of minerals and precious metals, the Arctic is home to reserves of diamonds, coal, gold, iron ore, phosphate, copper, bauxite, and nickel. Maritime shipping is also enjoying growth and increased interest, thanks to a combination of melting ice and global demand. The Northern Sea Route, which offers a faster route for some cargo shipments between Europe

and Asia, saw 1.35 million tons of goods pass through in 2013—with over half of the voyages involving oil products (Dawson, 2014).

At the same time, governments have requested billions of dollars of new equipment such as ice-breaking ships, satellite services, fiber-optic networks, and other facets of maritime infrastructure to facilitate the influx of interests from energy, mining and shipping sectors (Reuters, 2014). Tourism, including eco-tourism, has also been a source of interest and investment. Such a focus affirms the primacy of commodities and natural resources in the development of the Arctic to date, but also the growing confluence of national security and resource extraction.

Given the competing visions for the Arctic, the Arctic Council's importance lies not only in deploying dialogue and policy, but also in symbolically articulating the role of national and global governance in this region. This formalization of message amplification can juxtapose international cooperation against nation-specific narratives. For example, Keskitalo's (2004) exploration of Arctic discourses found North American networks of knowledge-producers playing an outsized role in facilitating communication about the region, particular Canadian networks that conceptualize the Arctic as a northern frontier.

The Arctic Council: Polar diplomacy and intergovernmental policy

Since the end of the Cold War, the Arctic has become what is described as "a locus of energetic and often innovative initiatives relating to the governance of human-environment relations"—which in turn has shifted the nature of the demand for governance in the region (Young, 2009). Since its establishment in 1996, the nature of the Arctic Council has often mirrored this description. With its eight Arctic nation-states, the Arctic Council carries out two major objectives: the promotion of environmental protection (an outgrowth of its former work with the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy), and sustainable economic development (Bloom, 1999). The organization's origins lie with both the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (which the council absorbed in 1996), and Russia's desire for an "Arctic zone of peace" in the late 1980s (Dodds, 2013: 4).

It is at this intersection of environmental protection, economic development, and nation-state interests where the Arctic Council has channeled its energies, but also where member nations have forged their own approaches borne of national agenda-setting. The Council's rotating two-year chairmanship gives lead nations an ability to set the agenda for the council, and therefore for the Arctic as a whole. Canada, for example, was described as having "sought to use its chair to refocus the Arctic Council on the 'other' pillar of the council: sustainable development, emphasis on development" (Exner-Pirot, 2014).

However, the 2015 federal election defeat of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, an avowed proponent of Canadian engagement with the Arctic, raised the possibility of the country recalibrating its Arctic priorities. Harper's successor, Justin Trudeau, has taken greener positions on climate change mitigation and environmental protections, and more conciliatory positions on foreign policy. That relationship between national politics and Arctic Council chairmanship also extends to the United States. The U.S. held the chair role between 2015 and 2017, having taken over from Canada. The contemporary Arctic era of the past decade has been marked in part by a growing awareness of the United States' Arctic stake. As Admiral Robert Papp, U.S. Special Representative for the Arctic, pointed out in the official White House blog, "There are only eight

countries in the world whose territory above the Arctic Circle grants them the honored title of 'Arctic Nation.' The United States is one" (Papp, 2014). This was highlighted both by Barack Obama's 2015 Alaskan Arctic visit and subsequent Arctic policy directions set by U.S. President Donald Trump. During its tenure in the chair role, U.S. focus areas were articulated as economic and living conditions for Arctic communities, ocean security and safety, and climate change.

For all member countries, the intensifying focus on both climate and site-specific environmental impacts of industrialization have added to the complexity of the Arctic Council's mandate. In order to effectively foster dialogue and advance policy implementation or agreements, senior officials from Arctic countries meet at least twice a year, while all partners convene at the ministerial meetings held usually every two years in the country holding the chairmanship. All decisions must be accepted by a consensus of all eight Arctic states, offering a check on the influence of the chair state. Partners of the forum, who do not have voting privileges, include Permanent Participants, working groups, and observers. "Permanent Participants" are Indigenous peoples from six councils or associations from across the Arctic. Observers include non-Arctic states, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, and non-government organizations. Outside of this official governance framework, many global and regional non-governmental organizations, particularly those focused on the environmental and wildlife protection, lobby the Arctic Council and attempt to influence its policy direction through official channels and unofficial public communication activities.

As an entity for dialogue and policy facilitation, the Arctic Council has received some past criticism, however, in terms of both function and form. A previous critique of the Arctic Council is that its political leaders have lacked the necessary urgency and sense of crisis to strengthen or expedite regional legal arrangements, thus relegating it to more of a discussional rather than regulatory or decision-making entity (Koivurova & VanderZwaag, 2007). However, the past decade has seen the Arctic Council produce several legally-binding treaties: the 2011 Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement, the 2013 Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Agreement, and the 2017 Arctic Scientific Cooperation Agreement.

The Council's continued growth is historically another concern. For the Indigenous nations who have Permanent Participant status in the Arctic Council, the growing influx of observers such as the European Union is argued to have had a destabilizing effect as it reinforces outside understandings and relationships (Dodds, 2013). Another past critique was the forum's lack of formalized strategic communication to stakeholders, resulting in messaging that was either misaligned or non-existent—with public relations efforts mostly directed to branding activities such as the production of websites and brochures (Breum, 2012). Recent years, however, have seen the Arctic Council make significant investments in public relations and engagement, including communication personnel. Furthermore, the Arctic Council has become an important subject, and source, for journalists covering the region (Chater & Landriault, 2016). In some cases, however, media gravitate to what *is not* communicated by the Arctic Council. For example, the absence of a joint declaration from the 2019 ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland—due in part to U.S. opposition to climate change language (Breum, 2019)—was widely reported by international news outlets, including *Xinhua*, *Reuters*, and the *New York Times*.

What these media discussions highlight in part is the growing interest in understanding both the aims and production of Arctic Council communication, including public dialogue, press relations,

and official pronouncements. The council's official declarations—joint statements describing the outcomes of the organization's political meetings—become what are described as the *mediatization* of political action: They become "a ritualized communicative event, with the objective of projecting a united front on crucial global political issues" (Bhatia, 2006: 176). Arctic Council declarations serve an international media function, as they extend across time and geography to proclaim evolving Arctic Council priorities. This confluence of nation state interests, economic activity, and resource extraction potential—and its relationship to political dialogue—points to the importance of formal communication artifacts as vehicles for deliberation, amplification, and persuasion.

Analysis of Arctic Council declarations

This study utilizes a qualitative textual analysis to understand the governance messaging of the Arctic Council to its immediate and global stakeholders as a form of political discourse. As a vehicle for political economic analysis, it helps to identify the relationship between the economy and political, social, and cultural forms. Examining the political economy of texts also illustrates the ways in which mediated representations are related to material realities and conditions (Golding & Murdock, 1991).

As an interpretive method, textual analysis allows the researcher to digest all forms of content dissemination: "every significant stylistic, visual, linguistic, presentational and rhetorical feature" (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999). Such a qualitative analysis of content allows for the subjective interpretation of text through the identification of themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Texts will sometimes systematically prop up dominant discourses while excluding certain kinds of representations. The producers of texts may indeed be careful to not draw attention to such absences. To this end, qualitative textual analysis allows the researcher to identify what elements of a text might be important (McKee, 2003).

Using this process, Arctic Council Declaration documents were read and reread as a singular entity. The author noted any visual or stylistic features (such as images, photos, logos) as well as physical attributes of the documents (such as length or the usage of color). Individual declarations were also examined for recurring patterns, proclamations, warnings, and omissions. Analysis of these texts may indicate a form of structured discourse defining the material more broadly (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 1999). To this end, a third step involved the interpretation of the evidence acquired in the first two steps. In the discussion and conclusion, textual evidence is linked with the larger Arctic Council narrative.

In order to cast a wide net in terms of the scope of the Arctic Council's interests and objectives, the council declarations from the ministerial meetings between 1996 and 2020 were examined. This timeframe is chosen because it reflects both the duration of Arctic Council summits, and tracks closely to the prominence of global economic and environmental issues that have become manifest in the Arctic, including climate change. These digitally archived declarations, published on the Arctic Council's website, represent the agreed-upon language of the government leaders (usually comprised of ministers of foreign affairs or secretaries of state) assigned to the council and representing the eight Arctic states, joined by the representatives of the six Permanent Participant organizations of the Arctic Council. These are the Fairbanks Declaration (2017), Iqaluit Declaration (2015), Kiruna Declaration (2013), the Nuuk Declaration (2011), the Tromsø Declaration (2009), the Salekhard Declaration (2006), the Reykjavik Declaration (2004), the Inari Declaration (2002), the Barrow Declaration (2000), the Iqualuit Declaration (1998), and the Ottawa

Declaration (1996). Notably, a declaration from the 2019 ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland is not included here. This is because a joint declaration could not be achieved due to U.S. opposition to climate change language in the document (Breum, 2019).

Readings of the texts lead to the identification of three organizing strategies on the part of the Arctic Council: (1) the dichotomy of environmental sustainability versus economic growth; (2) human development programs for Indigenous communities; and (3) spatial governance. This conclusion is based on systematic readings and re-readings and provides a foundation upon which to present my findings. Here, declaration documents establish discourses that adjoin the natural world and Arctic communities to themes of economy, human development, and spatialization.

(1) The sustainability/economy paradox

Previous scholarship has situated sustainable development as an oxymoron, to the extent that underlying assumptions of such development and its social consequences are ignored by the market consensus (Redclift, 2005). This sustainability paradox is embedded in Arctic Council declaration discourses. From its inception, the Arctic Council has integrated a message of sustainable development and environmental protection for the region. The 1996 Ottawa Declaration, the first such proclamation, declares that the goal of the council is to provide a forum for interaction and cooperation in both realms, encouraging a growing role for Arctic nation-states and their governments in the future of the region. As a collective, however, declarations between 1996 and 2017 toggle between the aspirations of environmental sustainability and the pursuit of economic growth, increasingly integrating the latter into policy statements. The growing emphasis on economic growth over the period studied is facilitated by environmental projects, sustainable business initiatives and infrastructure, and large-scale resource extraction operations. Yet the urgency of climate change is also communicated: the 2017 Fairbanks document notes that the region "is warming at more than twice the rate of the global average" and reiterates "the importance of global action to reduce both greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants" and the Arctic Council's further engagement with the reporting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

While climate change, air and water pollution, protection of the marine environment, and biodiversity conservation merit individual attention outside of the relationship between the economy and natural resources, policy statements over time champion the integration of environmental pursuits with commercial enterprise and commodity export. Acknowledging its roles in environmental protection and development, the 2000 Barrow Declaration promises an Arctic Council committed to promoting sustainable development as a first priority. This mandate continues with Iceland's chairmanship in 2019-2021.

The 2009 Tromsø Declaration provides an overarching perspective of Arctic nations' prerogatives during a critical juncture for global climate change awareness and environmentalism: "Reconfirming the commitment of the Arctic Council to promote environmental protection"—in areas such as ocean acidification and the environmental risks of major environmental projects. However, this prioritization of the Arctic Ocean co-exists with that declaration's embedded communication missives, such as the *Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines,* providing a reminder that polar geographies must contend with industrial incursions fostered in part by the Arctic Council's economic mandate.

Two different recognitions make this tension between ecology and economy readily apparent: 1) "Environmentally sound oil and gas activities may contribute to sustainable development of the Arctic region" and 2) The council needs to "strengthen cooperation on prevention of, and response to, accidental spills of oil and hazardous substances in the Arctic" (55). This is a view that served as a precursor to the Arctic Council's 2013 Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Agreement. Short of rejecting the arrival of energy companies, the council communicates a position of management or mitigation, not elimination. The regular usage of terms such as "corporate social responsibility," "sustainable business," and "sustainable Arctic economies" indicates a commitment to the integration of commercial enterprise into the region that is cognizant of the ecological and social risks. The promise of attunement to these matters provides safe framing for the words "business," "corporate," and "economies". Even strictly economic objectives promise the end-goals of Arctic greenification and increased "cooperation and interaction with the business community to advance sustainable development in the Arctic" (71).

Climate change also warrants special attention in the 2013 Kiruna document, which communicates a deep concern for the "escalating rate of warming of the Arctic climate, which will likely also affect the rest of the world" (50). It points to a number of existing initiatives or protocols for guidance—such as the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Arctic Resilience Report*, and *the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic*. The enduring challenge for the Arctic Council is to implement action based on such guidance. After setting out a bold policy framework based on potentially dire environmental prospects, a decision to "continue the work on enhancing the capacity of decision-makers to manage climate risks including through an on-line information portal and through improved predictions of combined effects" (72) feels well-intentioned but bureaucratic.

(2) Indigenous and local communities: Protections and threats

The viability of longstanding Indigenous communities in the Arctic region remains a central consideration in the Arctic Council declarations—in terms of both policy recommendations for nation-states, but also for the composition of the council itself. Simultaneous threads of development, including health and social conditions, with language and culture arguments underscore a duality of remedies for Indigenous communities within Arctic Council communication. Ecological degradation is positioned as a problem to be solved through Indigenous knowledge, yet also a precursor to inevitable challenges.

Along with the ecological, a bid to improve upon a particular set of economic and social conditions for Arctic populations emerges as a key theme. The 2004 Reykjavik Declaration defines human development in the Arctic as "the need for improving living conditions, promoting economic opportunities… and measures such as capacity-building, education and research" (42). This aligns with the view that business development activities help Indigenous communities' improve socioeconomic circumstances while asserting their land rights (Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006). The Salekhard Declaration of 2006 retreats slightly from this position, offering a more reflective perspective by remarking upon the council's existence as "an important forum for increased mutual understanding and cooperation in the circumpolar area and (providing) a major contribution into the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic" (39).

This trajectory is further articulated with the recognition of urgent need for action to protect Indigenous language and culture. The 2009 Tromsø Declaration argues that "education, outreach,

scientific research, traditional knowledge and capacity building are major tools to address challenges in Arctic communities" (55). That some members of the forum—notably Indigenous communities—were encountering difficulties in affording attendance at the Arctic Council's meetings was highlighted near the end of the declaration—noting the importance of financing circumpolar cooperation. This perspective helped lead to the 2017 establishment of the Álgu Fund, a charitable foundation which aimed to raise $30 million to allow the Permanent Participant Indigenous groups to fully participate in Arctic Council activities, but is no longer active.

Impacts on local populations are acknowledged—"Arctic peoples are experiencing challenges associated with rapid socio-economic and environmental changes"—and the 2011 Declaration implores council members to improve mental wellness strategies, recognize the importance of local knowledge and traditions, and promote the traditional ways of life of Indigenous populations to their wider, global constituencies.

(3) Spatial governance

As a collective of nation-states defining objectives for a remote world region, the Arctic Council takes on the characteristics of a spatial medium. Spatialization explains how communication overcomes time and space and facilitates the logistics processes inherent in globalization (Mosco, 2014). It is these time-and-space attributes that extend the Arctic Council's declarations into a form of international mediatization. Arctic Council policies affirm the role of overseeing spatializing activities, notably transportation and communication. Indeed, the declarations along with other communication—speeches, meetings, summits—overcome vast geographies by way of media that overcome the obstacles of time and space.

The council's role as a mediator and facilitator of spatial projects—supply chain and logistics infrastructure, transportation routes, communication technologies—is woven into the fabric of declarations. The council assuages concerns about encroaching industrial activities by presenting its aspirations as adjoined to optimal environmental, social, and technological outcomes. This spatial governance role for the council is articulated through the identification of circumpolar business meetings, as well as the emphasis of transportation infrastructure that complements airports and seaports. The 2011 Agreement on Cooperation in Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, described as the first legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, is emblematic of the council's multi-faceted program to engage with the region's spatial economy. The important role of telecommunication infrastructure to communities, to science, and to navigation and emergency response is also highlighted, paving the way for networking infrastructure expertise.

In communicating these numerous developments, these declarations extend across time and geography. Their evolution as textual but also visual media reflects changing Arctic Council priorities. The cover of the initial Ottawa Declaration features an idealized depiction of the Arctic landscape. The watercolor portrait depicts wildlife and an Inuit village set against a pristine river valley wilderness and snow-capped hills in a scene free of industry or ecological degradation, suggesting a potential rift between visual treatments of Arctic Council declarations and the policy recommendations within forthcoming declaration texts. A later declaration includes the Arctic Council's logo at the beginning of the document, which features the Arctic fox, to convey its evolving brand identity. Starting in 2011, the texts of the declarations become design-heavier, featuring bright colors and photographs of political leaders interacting with the landscape and

working with each other. Such an evolution is indicative of an Arctic Council that sees its declarations serving not only policy positions, but indeed a larger role of global public relations. That council members can view their role as promotional in nature is underscored in the assertion made in 2011 "to raise the profile of the Arctic internationally." This is complemented by the adoption of a new tagline in 2013 to describe the forum's collective mission: "Vision for the Arctic" which connotes a more carefully managed trajectory for the Arctic and regional stakeholders.

Conclusion: A dialectic of ecological crisis and economic intervention

This analysis of the Arctic Council's declarations highlights the council's growing role as a producer of discourses that situate economic development—through sustainable development—as a potential solution for environmental and social issues facing the Arctic region. As an intergovernmental forum addressing the issues facing nation-states and Indigenous peoples of the Arctic (as well as NGOs and other international bodies), the Arctic Council represents a unique and noteworthy forum for discussion and policy articulation, highlighting the key priorities of its full nation-state members and to a lesser extent its stakeholders without full membership. The declaration documents from the 1996 to 2017 ministerial meetings provide an important perspective on how a country's—or countries'—priorities come to be represented, how they are communicated to multiple audiences, and how they are balanced with other interests—international, societal, and environmental. At surface level, the evolution of such declaration documents during these two decades shows that the Arctic Council has become increasingly sophisticated in its outreach and has grown its political, legal, and social mandate alongside its environmental goals.

At the same time, the inevitability of economic development—through resource commodities and their export—becomes apparent as declarations progress from 1996 to their most recent publication. Indeed, the concern for the environment—tied as it is to carbon reduction, mitigation of pollution, and crisis response—ultimately serves as a bridge to sustainable development, including economic growth. Increasingly, the desire on the part of countries for economic expansion and resource extraction is not situated as diametrically opposed to the welfare of traditional communities nor natural environments. Rather, such development is positioned as a potential remedy for socio-economic underdevelopment and ecological crisis—simultaneously serving the aims and trajectories of the Arctic nations and companies whose interests they ostensibly serve. At the same time, readers of the Arctic declarations are reminded that Indigenous cultures and languages need to be protected and respected—even as these documents advocate for industrial investment alongside interventions in environment, education, and health.

These potentially contradictory themes are emblematic of a longstanding challenge for the Arctic Council. Arctic nations have a vested interest in the extraction and transportation of commodities, including petroleum and precious metals. Climate change furthers the ability of countries to engage in both activities, as energy deposits and shipping lanes become more accessible with the gradual melting of the polar ice cap. This is a catalyst of ongoing tension within Arctic Council declarations. That the council recognizes the disruptions being imposed upon Arctic communities, including traditional communities, as a result of such economic change echoes the staples trap articulated by Harold Innis (1999): Societies eventually become an outgrowth of the market-based commodity they exist upon. Even as the Arctic Council works to curtail the impacts of climate change through

local intervention and global engagement, it is simultaneously suggesting their inevitability.

Throughout these declarations, the role of economic intervention in the Arctic is paramount—from the cultivation of resource exploration, to new logistics developments emanating from aviation and shipping, to maritime emergency preparedness. This aligns with the view of Arctic economic development espoused by some political leaders, including Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Republican Senator from Alaska:

> A focus on climate change and its impact on the Arctic is certainly warranted, but it cannot be our sole focus and it should not prevent those who live in the Arctic from developing the resources that are available within their region in order to create a better standard of living (Juneau Empire, 2014).

The council offers cautious support for these economic developments. It rarely supports their eviction from the Arctic.

Key to the dissemination of these discourses is their distribution network. As a form of global communication, Arctic Council declarations travel across contemporary global media systems through a network of wire services, press releases, digital media such as blogs and websites, and finally mainstream, regional, national, and international media outlets, including influential newspapers. Such a trajectory denotes the importance of organizational public communication artifacts such as joint declarations in refining messages and intergovernmental policy aspirations for public audiences. Further studies devoted to the communication of Arctic policy are wise to investigate the production and content of designated media and public relations artifacts, but also the broader framework of public relations processes—including consultancies, publications, and wire services—that make such a trajectory possible. Additionally, these processes set the boundaries for negotiation between the narratives of economic development and ecological sustainability that play out within and between the media. Finally, further examination of such discourses might look to how they align with the notion of ecological modernism, highlighting the economic and market benefits arising from pro-environmental activities, including green technologies and clean energy production.

There continues to be much speculation about the future of the Arctic as a polar crossroads of globalization, commodity extraction, and environmental protection/degradation. This has been buoyed in part by news stories about the economic potential of the region (Chater & Landriault, 2013) even though the global economic slowdown of 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has lessened expectations for the future (McGwin, 2020). To this end, Arctic nations are publicly accounting for mineral deposits, potential energy reserves, and future navigable waterways through strategic communication and public diplomacy channels including governmental white papers (Moscato, 2018). Such narratives also travel through channels of popular culture. Reality television programs focused on the polar north such as Discovery's *Deadliest Catch* and History's *Ice Road Truckers* further articulate for mass audiences discourses of commodities acquisition and transport—oscillating between themes of resources extraction, market forces, and ecological impacts (Moscato, 2017). Furthermore, news media events make audiences aware of the region's geopolitical developments, including the growing boundary disputes that have both economic and military implications. The example of Russia planting its flag in the central Arctic Ocean to position the Arctic as a "last frontier" for investors provides a case in point (Dodds, 2013). The Arctic Council's Declarations in their own way reinforce these understandings by introducing to

policymakers and publics a range of catalysts for development; from search and rescue protocols to environmental emergency response measures to maritime infrastructure.

Given their collective intergovernmental voice, there are limitations to the Arctic Council declarations as a site for analysis. Strategic communication has been an underplayed element within the Arctic Council historically. Within these declarations "members of the Council currently share an implicit desire to communicate their own perception of the Council's stewardship of the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic environment in general" (Breum, 2012: 118). However, as snapshots of an intergovernmental organization's communicated purpose occurring throughout its existence, they provide a useful perspective of a cumulative vision and projected governance framework—and a vehicle for connecting national interests to economic enterprise. The influx of human population and capital into the Arctic will both accelerate the evolution of such governance developments and exacerbate tensions amid simultaneous discourses of political uncertainty, economic opportunity, and the ongoing climate crisis.

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