

## **An Insecure North? The Absence of Inuit Voices in Canadian Defence Policy**

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### **Abstract**

State actors are becoming increasingly interested in the economic potential and security dynamics of the Arctic space as the effects of global climate change rapidly shape the world's polar spaces. National governments have responded to these changing dynamics by tailoring their defence policies to reflect what they believe to be the most pressing challenges to their presence in the region. This article asks; how is the North framed and whose voices are reflected in Canadian defence policy? It concludes that the conventional framing of Canada's North remains deeply influenced by the idealized and imagined narratives of Canadian governance with little inclusion of disparate voices.

By examining the defence white papers of prime ministers Chrétien, Martin, Harper, and Trudeau, this article determines that Canadian Arctic security discourse has increased significantly in the post-Cold War era while the region's Inuit population remains external to its dialogue. This absence of an Indigenous voice in Canadian defence policy suggests the continuation of an unsustainable

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Biographie: Julian Mattachione est un étudiant diplômé en sciences politiques à l'Université Carleton qui s'intéresse aux questions de sécurité et de gouvernance émergentes dans l'Arctique mondial, ainsi qu'aux études comparatives de l'Antarctique. Sa recherche actuelle explore la reconnaissance tacite par le Canada du transit naval étranger dans l'Arctique et ses implications pour les revendications de souveraineté nationale en vertu du droit international. La passion de Julian pour la sécurité polaire est alimentée par son rôle en tant que membre des Forces armées canadiennes et il espère poursuivre ses recherches sur les cadres de sécurité du Nord dans la politique de défense canadienne.

Eurocentric view of the North that cannot adequately address the region's changing dynamics. As such, Canada's future defence policy must acknowledge the distinct and transnational value of Inuit traditional knowledge to overcome the limitations of conventional trans-Atlantic policy frameworks.

Keywords: Arctic, defence policy, Canada, Inuit, sovereignty, indigenous, colonialism, North, climate change, nationalism, white paper

### **Résumé**

Les acteurs étatiques s'intéressent de plus en plus au potentiel économique et à la dynamique sécuritaire de l'Arctique, alors que les effets des changements climatiques façonnent rapidement les espaces polaires de la planète. Les gouvernements nationaux ont répondu à ces dynamiques changeantes en adaptant leurs politiques de défense pour refléter ce qu'ils croient être les défis les plus pressants pour leur présence dans la région. Cet article pose la question suivante : comment le Nord est-il encadré et quelles voix sont reflétées dans la politique de défense canadienne ? Il conclut que le cadrage conventionnel du Nord canadien reste profondément influencé par les récits idéalisés et imaginés de la gouvernance canadienne, avec peu d'inclusion de voix disparates.

En examinant les livres blancs sur la défense des premiers ministres Chrétien, Martin, Harper et Trudeau, cet article détermine que le discours sur la sécurité de l'Arctique canadien a augmenté de manière significative dans l'ère de l'après-guerre froide, alors que la population Inuit de la région reste à l'écart de ce dialogue. L'absence d'une voix autochtone dans la politique de défense canadienne suggère la poursuite d'une vision eurocentrique insoutenable du Nord qui ne peut pas répondre adéquatement aux dynamiques changeantes de la région. À ce titre, la future politique de défense du Canada doit reconnaître la valeur distincte et transnationale du savoir traditionnel Inuit afin de surmonter les limites des cadres politiques transatlantiques conventionnels.

Mots clés : arctique, politique de défense, Canada, Inuit, souveraineté, autochtone, colonialisme, Nord, changements climatiques, nationalisme, livre blanc

## **Introduction**

Global climatic change has impacted the world's polar spaces. For the state actors who claim "legitimate" territorial presence in the Arctic space, the region's increasing accessibility is conventionally believed to present a myriad of economic development potential and security concerns. National governments have responded to these changing dynamics by tailoring their defence policies to reflect the dominant perceptions and trends of Northern security in the international space. Canada, a country in which the North has long been a subject of fascination and national mythology, has increasingly sought to develop its own defence policy to better address what it perceives as threatening to its sovereignty in the North. As such, this article will address how the North is framed and whose voices are reflected in Canadian defence policy.

Defence policy is understood to be a form of public policy that addresses the security and strategic goals of a national government. It predominantly comprises the military community's measures and initiatives, such as how, when, and to what capacity the national armed forces are employed. National governments deliver this policy in an accessible format to inform their citizenry and the broader international community of the state's publicly acknowledged intentions and defence priorities. Canadian defence policy has taken a "white paper" format since the 1960s and its publication generally coincides with the taking of office by a new prime minister. The resulting publications reflect the political leanings of the incumbent prime minister and the minister of national defence. This is while dually maintaining a consistency between governments that rarely deviates from the conventional language of sovereignty and security.

Canadian defence policy reflects the foundational viewings of southern Canadian governance towards the North; an expansive space of hostile landscapes and untapped resources, besieged by external pressures aiming to expand into and develop the global Arctic. This framing reflects but one singular understanding of the North. It is unnuanced in its non-incorporation of disparate viewings of the Arctic and its peoples. The absence of Indigenous voices in Canadian defence policy, particularly those of Inuit, suggests the continuance of settler colonial practices in the structures of Canadian

governance and perpetuates an unsustainable viewing of the North that is unable to address the region's changing dynamics adequately.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed by this article examines Canada's defence white papers of the modern security era (post-Cold War) to understand how the North is perceived, who is mentioned in relation to the North, and topics central to the key discourse. The metric used is simple and looks at the number of times key concepts/peoples are mentioned to indicate their prominence within the policy itself and broader trends within conventional discourse. Language and the context of its use continues to shape perceptions of a real vs. imagined North, influencing the social, cultural, and political landscape of Canada in a way that obscures the North's objective reality and instead perpetuates a perception based on centuries of constructed narratives (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 1). As such, the presence of the following words and terms in the policies were noted and examined: Inuit, Indigenous, Canadian Rangers, Arctic, and climate change.

The selection of these metrics and particular timeframe for analysis is not intended to discount the historical relationship between the Inuit and the southern Canadian government prior to 1991. Rather, the shorter frame of analysis within a period determined by conventional Western security highlights the recent and increasing fixation of Canada's security community on the North. It dually sustains the historical indifference of Canada's government to the traditional peoples of the North. Inuit have long been discounted in the policies of the southern Canadian government, particularly those related to questions of Northern sovereignty and security where they are often used as "flagpoles" within a western dominated framework. The 1923 murder trial of two Inuit men exemplifies an example of southern Canadian power. This case saw their execution following a show trial and media circus and was conducted as an unjust public demonstration of federal authority and national sovereignty over the Arctic and its peoples (Komar, 2019). The 1953 and 1955 decisions by the Canadian Government to relocate seventeen Inuit families from Inukjuak in Northern Quebec to remote High Arctic settlements were made without regard for the imminent hardships faced by ninety-two

Inuit. Instead, it was advanced to establish national sovereignty against possible Danish and American claims and provide cheap labour to develop RCMP and RCAF establishments in the region (Byers, 2009, p. 109). The 1985 sovereignty dispute between Canada and the United States over the USCGC Polar Sea's transit between Alaska and Greenland via the Northwest Passage came to political prominence due to pressure from Canada's southern populous with little regard for the initial pressures placed by the Inuit hunters dependent on the passage's marine life (Briggs, 1990, p. 440). These represent but a few of many historic instances of Inuit presence being minimized, ignored, or outright exploited by the Government of Canada in its ongoing pursuit to project national sovereignty into the polar space. As described in Samantha Arnold's (2010) analysis of nordicity in Canadian national identity, "it was not until Canada began to be concerned about its sovereignty in the high North that attention was paid to the people living there, and to how they might be drawn into the service of national unity" (p. 456). This legacy has continued into the modern security era and is evident within the recent defence policies put forward by the Canadian government.

Despite some progress, notably through the ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, permanent Inuit inclusion on the Arctic Council, and the Trudeau government's acknowledgement of certain historical wrongs, Indigenous policy inclusion is limited. Canada's Inuit and broader Arctic Indigenous peoples, as interpreted from a postcolonial lens, remain situated within societies founded on settler-colonial values, institutions, and interests. While Canada's more blatant expressions of colonialism have been discredited, "...untouched are those 'colonial agendas' that have had a controlling (systemic) effect in privileging national (white) interests at the expense of indigenous rights" (Maaka and Fleras, 2005, p. 12). In the case of Canadian defence policy, limited recognition of Indigenous conceptions of Northern security and sovereignty reflects a continuation of this control. As such, Inuit remain limited in their power to defend against the security challenges they identify as threatening to themselves and the collective futures of all Arctic Indigenous peoples (Greaves, 2016, p. 463).

## **Overview of Defence White Papers by Prime Minister**

In response to global de-securitization at the end of the Cold War, the government of Jean Chrétien created the simply named White Paper on Defence in 1994 to update Canada's defence policy to better reflect the realities of modern security. It proclaimed the Cold War's conclusion, noted the rise of ethno-religious and political extremism, and the spread of advanced weapons technology as major security issues to be faced cooperatively between Canada and its allies (Chapman, 2019, p. 17). The Arctic is mentioned five separate times within the paper in the context of increasing maritime surveillance and control over ocean and coastal space. In turn, it suggests enhancing the capabilities of Canadian Rangers and coastal land patrols, while maintaining existing political sovereignty and economic jurisdiction over Arctic maritime claims (National Defence, 1994). Inuit and other Indigenous peoples are not mentioned within the document, nor does the climate appear in any meaningful capacity. While the Northern space is not of major concern in this policy given the lessening of global security tensions at the time, the conversation that does occur revolves exclusively around the conventional western language of surveillance and control for sovereignty projection. No room is made for alternative perceptions. Likewise, the inclusion of the Canadian Rangers, a majority-Inuit patrol group within the Canadian Army, partly exists to promote a militarized presence in the Northern space.

Just over a decade later, following the election of Prime Minister Paul Martin, a new defence policy was created to better align Canada's national strategy with the conventions of post-9/11 western security thought. The 2005 document *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World* had a primary focus on undoing the prior defence cutbacks of the Chrétien-era and called for a re-invigorated international role for Canada's military (National Defence, 2005). The Arctic was once again discussed not as a central point of security concern, but rather as an area of emerging interest. It was referenced six times in the context of increased maritime patrolling, recognizing the region as a fragile environment, and protecting the Northern portion of the continent against sovereignty incursions (National Defence, 2005, p. 19). Inuit and the Canadian Rangers do not appear within this document. At the same time, climate change is referenced five times in the context of

changing regional dynamics and is the first Canadian white paper to do so (National Defence, 2005, p. 17). Martin-era defence publications once again indicate Canadian policy's dominant tendency to conduct itself within the confines of western governance without regard for alternative perceptions of sovereignty and governance beyond the confines of European territoriality.

The election of Stephen Harper as Prime Minister in 2006 resulted in the development of the Canada First Defence Strategy and its publication in 2008. Harper's policy rejected the internationalism of the prior Martin government and focused on domestic defence goals. The new policy continued "the ongoing Canadian rhetorical tradition of vowing to increase Canada's defence capabilities, achieving some success, then failing to follow through on these rhetorical commitments for various reasons [...] The Arctic was an early area of emphasis for the CPC Government" (Chapman, 2019, p. 21). Harper is particularly notable for his nationalistic framing of the Arctic space in his advancement of the rhetoric of Canada as an "Arctic power" and infamously stated 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" (Byers, 2009, p. 109)

Accordingly, his personal Northern fascination is reflected in his government's defence policy which references the Arctic twelve times in the context of monitoring illegal activity against perceived criminal and terrorist threats, the proposed construction of 6—8 Arctic Offshore/Patrol Ships (AOPS) and their associated infrastructure and developing aerial-based surveillance capabilities (National Defence, 2008). Absent from the document is any reference to Inuit, the Canadian Rangers, climate change, or any other Indigenous peoples. The Canada First Defence Strategy reflects the international community's growing interest towards the Arctic and the personal attachment of southern Canadian politicians towards the North based on manufactured cultural narratives.



The last written and currently active Canadian defence white paper is Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2017 *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Widely considered to be progressive as far as defence policy is concerned, the writing of this document is notable for its employment of a public consultation process via crowdsourcing which received "nearly 20,200 online submissions to the Defence Policy Review [via] an online consultation portal and over 4,700 participants contributed comments or votes using this forum" to reflect the broader concerns of the general Canadian populous (Chapman, 2019, p. 24). Canada's North is particularly emphasized in the publication with the Arctic being referenced a staggering seventy-seven times. This is mainly in the capacity of cooperatively working with regional partners, improving situational awareness via communications infrastructure, and increasing the mobility and reach of the Canadian Armed Forces to project into the region. While Inuit are not directly referenced and Canada's Indigenous peoples are broadly mentioned in the context of increasing their presence within the military, the document notably states that "although Canada's North is sparsely populated, the region is spotted with vibrant communities, many inhabited by Canada's Indigenous populations. These communities form an integral part of Canada's identity, and our history is intimately connected with the imagery and the character of the North. Economically, Northern Canada is also home to considerable natural resources, industries, and growing tourism – with the potential for further exploration, including transit through Canada's Arctic Archipelago" (National Defence, 2017, p. 79). Climate change appeared fourteen times and the Canadian Rangers twelve times within the policy.

*Strong, Secure, Engaged's* recognition of a distinct Northern populous is unique within Canadian defence publications. However, the policy's proclamation of an intrinsic and historic connection between Northern Indigenous and southern Canadians to a shared Northern identity maintains a problematic but not uncommon connotation to earlier Canadian nationalist movements. The idea of a "Great White North" has been utilized since Canada's founding as a nation-building tool to connect Canada's large southern populous to the geographic North and is a "quintessential feature of white settler mythologies" (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 1). Canada's most recent defence policy makes this assertion of a shared cultural identity. Then

it immediately associates it with the economic value of Northern Canada and the Arctic Archipelago, an area of disputed international boundaries. The labelling of Trudeau-era defence policy as "progressive" is questionable. Mainly, this is pertinent when considering its perpetuation of the governmental tendency to exploit Inuit presence for national sovereignty objectives, albeit in a more coded way.

This article has thus far examined four different Canadian defence white papers of the post-Cold War era. Written by the governments of Chrétien, Martin, Harper, and Trudeau, each publication reflects the unique geopolitical realities and the personal political priorities held by the leader at the time of its writing. Each policy is distinct in viewing the North but maintains some commonalities between them; 1) that the Arctic is rising in strategic and economic importance and 2) that Canadian Northern sovereignty is under threat. Additionally, all four defence publications refrain from directly mentioning Inuit who are only included by proxy via the Canadian Rangers or broad discussion of Indigenous membership in the Canadian Armed Forces. These publications view the North through a narrow lens of western security with little space left for the voices of the people who have lived in the region since time immemorial. This continued focus in Canadian security and defence discourse on the narrow terms of credible military threats, limits the conceptual and policy space available for alternative conceptions of security and sovereignty (Greaves, 2016, p. 476).

The absence of Indigenous thought in this policy should not be surprising. According to Anishinaabe academic Hayden King's article *The Erasure of Indigenous Thought in Canadian Foreign Policy*, policy is produced by the national government to promote its own interests (King, 2017, p. 1). Because the government follows a European governance model based on the assumptions that the state itself is the primary actor of foreign policy and that national interest is what policy aims to serve, King (2017) explains that:

By continuing to enforce the view of humanity as a set of political states, with Europe at the centre of the planet...foreign policy actively contributes to the erasure of Indigenous political difference conceptually as well as

Indigenous bodies physically. (Not to mention non-Indigenous but racialized political communities and bodies, too.) Thus, Canadian foreign policy is a foreign policy that normalizes and affirms settler colonialism. This is the primary national interest. And so, foreign policy is itself a manifestation of settler colonialism. (p. 1)

Conventional defence policy's viewings towards the North reflect the Eurocentricity of Canada's political system. Its conceptualizations of security and sovereignty fail to recognize the distinct and historic Indigenous systems that pre-dated the Canadian state and that continue to exist in the present albeit marginalized by settler-colonial dominance. Indigenous political difference cannot fully be realized if constrained by the structures of southern Canadian governance and as noted by King (2017), should nothing change, "the notion of reconciliation increasingly appears as an opportunity for the state to recuperate its image without meaningful change" (p. 1).

Strong, Secure, Engaged's intended shelf life of twenty years will likely exist only until another leader supersedes Prime Minister Trudeau. Then, the creation of a new white paper will reflect the intentions and priorities of their government. For future defence policy to foster legitimate and meaningful change instead of perpetuating historic exploitive viewings of the North it must make space for and understand that its conceptual frameworks reflect fundamentally different worldviews than those held by the Inuit. The Inuit residing within Canada's Northern territory conceptualize security and sovereignty in distinctly different ways from conventional western governance and are of fundamental value to be acknowledged and understood as equal within Northern defence policy.

## **Inuit Perspective**

According to the Inuit Circumpolar Council's (ICC) declaration A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, Indigenous peoples of the global Arctic have a unique relationship that transcends state borders and that,

for Inuit living within the states of Russia, Canada, the USA and Denmark/Greenland, issues of sovereignty and

sovereign rights must be examined and assessed in the context of our long history of struggle to gain recognition and respect as an Arctic indigenous people having the right to exercise self-determination over our lives, territories, cultures and languages. (ICC, 2009, p. 1)

Inuit understanding of sovereignty is distinctly different from that of the international state system which holds state authority within a defined territory as supreme. According to Inuit academic Rachel A. Qitsualik (2013), Inuit have developed an inextricable link to the Nuna (land) that is free from the “possessiveness and minacious defensiveness” of traditional international relations and that sovereignty,

For Inuit, it is the self maintained right to define themselves, mind and soul: by the Water; on the Land; under the Sky. Inuit, who know the Nuna so well, cannot define sovereignty via mastery of their home, but rather of their own hearts. For they never owned the Nuna — not in the sense of apportioning or weighing its utility — but were blessed with enjoyment of it; with wisdom gleaned from it; healthful lives modelled from it. It is tragic that we must now speak in terms of mastery, rather than joy or wisdom or healthful existence. The Nuna is like a patient teacher, voice never heard amid the squabbles of angry children. (p. 30)

Sovereignty as understood from a pre-colonial Inuit perspective does not consider authority over land or territory itself to be a factor within human control. The idea of ownership and governance advanced in Canadian policy continues the systems constructed by colonizing powers during the age of European imperialism and fundamentally opposes the traditional Inuit understanding of holistic interconnectedness between peoples and the environment advanced in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Wenzel, 2004, p. 241). Inuit sovereignty transcends the international boundaries at the core of Canada's defence policy. Instead, it advocates for transnational cooperation between those with whom they share a distinct Northern cultural identity and heritage. As alluded to by Qitsualik (2013), international sovereignty disputes between states are viewed by some to be the “squabbles of angry children” without respect for the land or regard for those who inhabit it (p. 30).

Security is the other core goal of Canada's defence policy. In its conventional understanding, like sovereignty, does not reflect Inuit worldview. Former President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) Terry Audla explains that the Inuit have always been concerned about "danger", be it predators, harsh weather, and starvation (Audla, 2013, p. 7). He recognizes that these traditional dangers are now accompanied by newer dangers in a globalized world that are increasingly fixated on the Arctic space. Rather than perceiving security as the protection against external hard-power threats typical to Canadian defence policy, Audla (2013) explains that the Inuit view security as the recognition of and action against all forms of insecurity they face. Modern insecurities that impact the Inuit are products of globalization and settler colonialism and include excessive competitiveness for status and material goods, the rapid transition from traditional to modern living, inadequate food, and poor living conditions (Audla, 2013, p. 8). Most notably, it is climate change, not external aggression, that presents the largest security challenge to the North and its peoples.

In the Arctic, our physical security has already been challenged by such things as changes to wildlife patterns, unreliable wind and temperature patterns and associated thawing and freezing cycles, rising sea levels, and shifting building foundations due to permafrost variation. Nature is never stable, and life close to nature always brings its own insecurities, as well as its benefits. Climate change at a rate and of an intensity that appears unprecedented, and well outside Inuit cultural memory, creates insecurities of an entirely new nature, generating concerns about the sustainability of large aspects of our inherited and acquired patterns of life... our very sense of who and what we are as Inuit. (Audla, 2013, p. 8).

The projection and sustainment of Canadian sovereignty in the North is viewed as secondary to securing a sustainable and quality existence for their current communities and future generations of Inuit. Canada's current Governor General and Inuit diplomat Mary Simon once wrote that the highly complex legal and political issues related to defence in the North require the development of a unique Arctic foreign policy that the Inuit can support and participate in. In addition, Simon (1985) notes

that the recognition of Inuit rights "will help to improve the quality of life in Inuit communities, ensure our survival as a distinct people and enable us to promote the environmental integrity of our homeland" as a means to challenge insecurity (p. 34). The film *Nilliajut: Inuit Voices on Arctic Security*, published on behalf of ITK as part of a dialogue on Inuit presence in security discourse further echoes the sentiments of Audla and Simon. Here, participants explain that Inuit security extends across the Inuit circumpolar world to help improve the conditions of their fellow Inuit and is not limited by the international boundaries that define conventional defence policy (Konek & Mauro, 2013).

Given that defence policy is an ongoing iterative process and that the challenges it addresses are in a state of constant change, new policy will be developed in the future to address the shifting dynamics of security and defence in Canada. The conventional frameworks of Canadian defence policy that have historically marginalized Indigenous presence and continue to exploit Inuit occupation for its core goal of sovereignty projection in the Canadian North must be recognized and acted upon for future policy publications to be more nuanced and less colonial in their understanding of the North. Despite the alienation and exploitation that has been perpetuated in Canada's defence policy, many Inuit scholars and politicians want to participate in policymaking. Many believe their inclusion in future policy is a crucial step towards decolonizing aspects of their relationship with southern Canada and can potentially yield policy outcomes that meet the unique Northern needs of each party.

Inuit writer Rosemarie Kuptana notes that discussions of Arctic sovereignty and security without Inuit consultation could have broad administrative, legal, and political consequences. The lack of dialogue violates the agreements made between the government and Inuit under s. 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 and is instead enabling a more centralized federal government which, according to Kuptana, is an imperial form of governance,

only cloaked in the guise of democracy; it is not democracy in action. This manner of governing Canada is not working for Inuit in Canada, particularly on the issue of arctic sovereignty and security. Hush! Quiet! Canadians are not to be critical of the government of Canada. Alleged threats to funding

agreements often impose the silence of the Inuit accentuating the current deep-freeze of today's political climate. (Kuptana, 2013, p. 11)

Kuptana does not advocate for a complete dismissal of the work conducted by defence institutions. Instead, future policy writing should be a collaborative process that seeks a common understanding of the multi-dimensional and evolving conditions of the North and that recognizes the traditional regional jurisdiction of the Inuit who have been stewards of the land for generations (Kuptana, 2013, p. 12). As noted by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in her writings on indigenist vs. western research methodologies, decolonizing policy "does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our perspectives and for our purposes" (p. 39).

Defence traditionalists would benefit from looking to their counterparts in New Zealand for an example of this decolonizing balance. The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) has sought to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems into its military curricula to enhance the learning experiences of all members, promote the well-being of its Indigenous personnel, and contribute to decolonization efforts in its broader society. Since 1995, Māori knowledge has been formally recognized for its value and importance to NZDF where "a sense of shared identity, based on the fusion of European traditions and the Māori warrior culture...has developed a complementary approach to education by sharing the knowledge systems of two very different societies" (Hohaia, 2016, p. 47). It is important to note that multiculturalist policy is at risk of inadvertent tokenism and essentialism, whereby Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews are treated as objects of study without regard for their true meaning (Smith, 1999). The NZDF navigates this issue by developing curricula and organizational structures through its Rūnanga (Māori advisory group), with kaumātua (elders) guiding Indigenous and non-Indigenous Māori education officers. Likewise, New Zealand's formal inclusion of Indigenous knowledge into its defence apparatus recognizes that a greater understanding of Indigenous methodologies

must occur at all societal levels, beyond the defence community, for decolonization to have true meaning (Hohaia, 2016, p. 54).

The New Zealand example does not suggest a likeness between Inuit and Māori worldviews. Nor does it equate the geopolitical and cultural realities of the High North and South Pacific. Rather, it shows that Canada's allies are comparatively advanced in their efforts to decolonize their own defence community and do so in a way that aims to balance conflicting worldviews. Canadian policymakers should look to this example and consider how diverse knowledge sources can enhance their products. They must recognize that Inuit Qauijimajatuqangit has a place in the creation of Canadian defence policy, especially when policy outcomes have a kinetic impact in traditional Inuit spaces within a heightening Northern security environment.

Respect is an essential element of this inclusion. Respect for Inuit worldviews, history, and needs is crucial to ensuring that common goals are met in a legitimate and sustainable fashion without paying lip service to reconciliation as typical in Canada's foreign policy. Michael Byers' writings on the development of the Nanisivik Naval Facility recalls the Harper government's unwillingness to engage with local Inuit on the development of Northern defence infrastructure, something that could have yielded both regional and national benefits. The government's failure to consult or cooperate with Inuit manifested in choosing the uninhabited Nanisivik over Iqaluit for the port's location despite differing Inuit views on an appropriate site. As explained by Byers (2009),

Insult was added to injury when Harper failed to invite Premier Paul Okalik to the announcement in Resolute Bay, failed to stop in Iqaluit on his way back to Ottawa, and even failed to mention the Inuit in his speech...The Inuit know that the clock cannot be turned back. They want to work with other Canadians to forge a better future. They seek to preserve the Arctic environment, to protect our common sovereignty, and to provide their children with a quality of life equivalent to that in the rest of Canada. But the Inuit also want respect. For a prime minister who really cares about sovereignty,



apologizing to the High Arctic exiles would be an excellent next step. (p. 111)

Despite their voices repeatedly being minimized and ignored in Canada's defence policy, Inuit are continually willing to participate in its creation and recognize the common value which may be gained should the government extend respect to the unique needs and views of those who live in the North. Additionally, this respect must extend across the global Arctic to those Inuit who are not considered to be Canadian by the conventions of western international politics. Qitsualik (2013) explains that "if we are to demonstrate either interest or respect toward a culture that is neither defined nor bound by an [anthropological] standard (e.g., Inuit), we must show regard for that culture's preferred symbols of definition" (p. 28). In this context, the rigid national boundaries of the western hegemonic order must not define the shared cultural and political understandings of global Inuit peoples. Inuit knowledge must be recognized as broader than the constructed borders which define Canada's defence policy in the North.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit's inclusion of all aspects of traditional Inuit culture, including worldview and diplomacy, can be extended beyond matters of regional governance to wider public policy and legislative processes in order to enable the creation of new governance regimes that reflect the true nature of the North and its peoples (Wenzel, 2004, p. 242). Wáhiakatste Diome-Deer (2021) believes that the Arctic is the center of some of the 21st century's most pressing issues and that "the Inuit are facing complex opportunities and challenges, such as self-government movements, participation in international political forums, as well as legal challenges and land-claims. The relevance and importance of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in resolving these issues cannot be overstated" (p. 1). The acceptance of non-conventional viewings for the core concepts of Canada's defence policy and the extension of respect to the presence and knowledge of Inuit peoples can help to develop future policy more suitable to addressing the true issues facing Canada's North, and not just those perceived to be important by the southern populous. As Terry Audla (2013) has succinctly explained, "with that awareness, Inuit are committed to making Inuit Nunangat, all of Canada, and our world, a more secure place for all of us. We seek to work closely and

productively and respectfully with all others who share that goal" (p. 9).

### **Recommendation Moving Forward**

What future Inuit involvement in Canadian defence and wider policy projects might look like is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the absence of Indigenous voice in Canada's defence white papers suggests that a broader acknowledgement of the role and history of Indigenous peoples would be an important step forward. The adoption of a decolonial lens for Canadian defence policy should reconsider its core definitions of security and sovereignty to be more relational in their "thinking about how land and people interrelate and the importance of being heard in deliberations between people" (Gricius, 2021, p. 15). A relational understanding more closely aligns with Inuit worldview than the Westphalian views typical within Canadian defence discourse. Thus, future frameworks for Indigenous involvement in the development of Canadian defence policy would benefit from turning to the ICC's A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic (2009). The document serves as an excellent basis to provide Northern Indigenous peoples with legal sovereignty key to participation in Arctic decision-making. Of note is Article 2.3;

In exercising our right to self-determination in the circumpolar Arctic, we continue to develop innovative and creative jurisdictional arrangements that will appropriately balance our rights and responsibilities as an indigenous people, the rights and responsibilities we share with other peoples who live among us, and the rights and responsibilities of states. In seeking to exercise our rights in the Arctic, we continue to promote compromise and harmony with and among our neighbours. (ICC, 2009, p. 1)

A future decolonizing policy framework should allow greater space for Northern voices, recognize the role and history of Indigenous peoples in Northern security, and utilize new definitions of security and sovereignty based on intercultural understandings.

## Conclusion

As global climatic change continues to shape the world's polar spaces, state actors are becoming increasingly interested in the Arctic's economic potential and security dynamics. National governments have responded to these changing dynamics by tailoring their defence policies to reflect what they believe to be the most pressing challenges to their presence in the region. This article has asked, how is the North framed and whose voices are reflected in Canadian defence policy? It has concluded that the conventional framing of Canada's North remains deeply influenced by the idealized and imagined narratives of earlier Canadian governance; that the North is a "hostile, empty, untamed, and perhaps exotic space..." of untapped resource potential, besieged by external pressures aiming to expand into and develop the global Arctic (Arnold, 2010, p. 453). As such, the views reflected in Canada's defence policy represent those of conventional governance with little inclusion of disparate voices.

In its examination of the defence white papers of prime ministers Chrétien, Martin, Harper, and Trudeau, this article has determined that defence discourse over Canada's Arctic security and sovereignty has increased significantly in the post-Cold War era while the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic remain external to its dialogue. This absence of alternative voices in Canadian defence policy, particularly those of the Inuit, suggests a continuation of settler colonial practices in Canada's governance structures and perpetuates an unsustainable viewing of the North that is unable to adequately address the region's changing dynamics. Thus, Canada's future defence policy must acknowledge the distinct and transnational value of Inuit traditional knowledge. Despite a long history of having their voices minimized and ignored by the Canadian state, Inuit remain committed to addressing defence challenges in the global Arctic and it is up to Canada's policymakers to reciprocate this respect.

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