

Chapter 10

Triumphant Geopolitics? Making Space of and for Arctic Geopolitics in the Arctic Ocean



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Abstract This chapter contends that the 2007 Russian flag-planting incident in the North Pole has ushered in a form of triumphant geopolitics insofar as it enabled the renewing of the imaginative and material grip of the five Arctic coastal states (Russia, United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway, A5) on the maritime Arctic. Triumphant geopolitics, in our conceptualisation, is anchored on two separate but inter-related registers. On the one hand, it involves the process of reconciliation and reclamation whereby reactions to the 2007 event provoked the A5 to first reconcile their differences over the legal status of the central Arctic Ocean via the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration before reclaiming the inter-governmental forum of the Arctic Council as a space to regulate and manage other players including Permanent Participants and state observers. On the other hand, it is simultaneously underpinned by expressions of alter-geopolitics, with indigenous peoples and extra-territorial parties challenging the Arctic states' framings of the region in order to posit alternative geopolitical imaginaries and relationships. Explicating these dimensions thus foreground triumphant geopolitics as a useful optic to pursue the contested imaginaries, materialities and practices at play in the (re)making of Arctic geopolitics at different geographical scales.

Keywords Triumphant geopolitics · Arctic Council · Reconciliation · Reclamation · Alter-geopolitics

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10.1 Introduction

In 2001, Felix Driver published his masterly overview of what he termed ‘Geography Militant’, an interrogation of cultures of exploration and empire (Driver 2001). Taking the period between the eighteenth and twentieth century as his time frame, Driver’s scholarly meanderings contemplated the role and scope of British geography as an imperial discipline/science par excellence. The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London is integral to this geographical audit – acting as archive, debating chamber and academic bazaar for a medley of armchair geographers, military surveyors, publishers and travellers. The RGS and its learned journal, the *Geographical Journal*, was a repository for descriptive accounts and mappings of the world, including the Polar Regions (Bell et al. 1995; see also Carroll 2015).

The inspiration for the title of this paper came from Joseph Conrad’s 1924 *National Geographic* essay ‘Geographers and some explorers’ (Conrad 1924; see also Rothenberg 2007). In the exposition that followed, Conrad outlined a trinity of epochs – the first being ‘Geography fabulous’ a long period of human curiosity about the world often made manifest in extravagant maps and lurid depictions of monstrous beasts lurking in faraway places (at least from the perspective of ancient European map-makers and explorers); what followed was ‘Geography Militant’ a period between the voyages of discovery involving Captain James Cook in the eighteenth century culminating in the so-called ‘scramble for Africa’ in the nineteenth century; finally giving away to ‘Geography Triumphant’ in the twentieth century. In the case of the latter, modern tourism for Conrad at least replaced earlier eras of speculation, exploration and discovery. Travellers were, thus, condemned to follow in the tracks of earlier explorers. Conrad did not necessarily welcome the consolidation of ‘Geography Triumphant’, arguing in the essay that there was something melancholy-like about this phenomenon (Driver 1995).

The British geographer, Halford Mackinder, writing some 20 years earlier than Conrad’s essay, was rather more circumspect (Mackinder 1904). In his reading of global history and geography, Mackinder warned that there would be ramifications and reverberations for empires and states such as Britain, France and Germany because there would be far fewer territories to explore, colonise and exploit (Kearns 2009). This led him to caution that the potential of conflict to radiate across the world was now that much greater because of higher levels of interconnection and mobility across the earth. While Mackinder and Conrad’s schemas vary, both men are guarded about what the future might hold in the light of humanity’s exploration, colonisation, occupation and administration of the earth’s land surface.

As the twentieth century demonstrated, however, exploration did not disappear from the portfolio of human activities. Geography militant continued in the form of underwater, aerial and polar exploration in particular, supported by a military-academic-industrial complex which in turn provided specialist technology, logistical support and geoscientific expertise (Naylor and Ryan 2009; Turchetti and

Roberts 2014). Oceans were explored and mapped, Antarctica's ice cap probed and rockets and satellites also circulated around and beyond the earth's atmosphere. If there was a high point of geography militant, then we might point to the 1957–8 International Geophysical Year (Belanger 2010). A veritable 'scientific Olympics', the polar regions were integral to a worldwide collection of scientific information and processing (Collis and Dodds 2008). Research stations were established on drifting icebergs, mechanised vehicles crossed the polar continent and scientists interrogated the land, sea, air and ice of remote environments.

Some 90 years later, Conrad's reading of global militant geography appeared to be resuscitated when a titanium Russian flag was gently deposited on the bottom of the central Arctic Ocean in August 2007. Mirroring British and American flags being planted on mountain tops, polar plateaus and the moon, the cadence of the flag was much remarked upon. Was the flag indicative of a geography militant? Was it a form of triumphant geography in the sense that one of the occupants of the submersible was a high net worth tourist (Dr. Frederick Paulsen) following in the footsteps of military submariners (CNN 2007)? The images that did circulate after the flag-planting incident offered a vista into a mysterious submarine world that had once been the purview only of American and Soviet naval submarines during the Cold War.

In this chapter, we consider whether the flag-planting incident of August 2007 might be usefully thought of as a form of Triumphant rather than Militant Geopolitics. And we do so, knowingly, in the sense that there has been considerable commentary on the incident itself (e.g. Emmerson 2011). While we use Conrad's term 'militant' to highlight the manner in which the titanium flag rekindled earlier episodes of colonial appropriation in the Arctic, we posit that the incident might be productively read as something different. If interpreted as a form of 'triumphant' geopolitics, we read the flag planting incident as renewing the imaginative and material grip of the five Arctic coastal states (Russia, United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway, A5) on the maritime Arctic. We argue that there are two sides to this 'triumphant geopolitics', which we don't posit as fixed and stable: on the one hand we have reconciliation and reclamation and conversely we have alter-geopolitics accompanied by what we term 'possession anxieties'.

As political geographers such as Phil Steinberg and colleagues note, the A5, in May 2008, affirmed their collective commitment to the Law of the Sea regime, and their role as 'environmental stewards' for the Arctic Ocean (Steinberg et al. 2015). Reconciliation was followed by the reclamation of the intergovernmental forum of the Arctic Council and its management of others including Permanent Participants and state observers (especially new observers from Asia such as China and Singapore). Finally, conversely, we explore how articulations of what Sara Koopman (2011) terms alter-geopolitics help us better understand the role of indigenous peoples (Permanent Participants in Arctic Council) and Arctic observer states and non-state actors in positing different visions of and for the Arctic.

10.2 Institutionalising Triumphant Geopolitics

When national flags were and are planted in apparently remote areas of the earth (mountain top, ocean floor, deserts, polar region or moon), the act itself is not politically innocent, as best exemplified in imperial songs dealing with flag planting (Richards 2001; see also Morrison 1995). As countless indigenous peoples discovered to their considerable cost, the flag was integral to what Patricia Seed (1995) described as ‘ceremonies of possession’. Using examples from Spanish, English and French encounters with the New World, Seed interrogates how flags, guns, plaques, proclamations and acts of settlement were endemic to European colonialism. They helped to constitute, perform and circulate acts of white European possession of the non-European world. From the Arctic to Australia, indigenous peoples were dispossessed and European forms of law, culture and politics introduced. Indigenous sovereignty was disavowed in favour of the white property owning subject (Miller 2012).

In the time period described by Conrad as Geography Militant (c.1760s–1880s), European explorers, scientists and administrators were active in claiming, possessing and occupying non-European lands. While Britain and France expanded their empires across Africa, Asia and the Americas, Russians were consolidating their grip on the vast hinterland to the east of cities such as St Petersburg and Moscow. As historical and political geographers such as Mark Bassin and Derek Gregory remind us, geographical knowledge was essential to the colonisation and occupation of the non-European world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards (Bassin 2008; Gregory 2004). Mapping, surveying and resource evaluation were integral to the European including the Russian colonial project. Flagging, mapping and charting were just three activities which went hand in hand with the development of imperial trading networks, administrative apparatuses, and legal regime development. At its most egregious, the European coloniser such as the British in Australia took resources and land from a *terra nullius* (subsequently sanctioned by an imported legal/property owning system) while indigenous peoples were conceived as property-less and living in a state of nature (Moreton-Robinson 2015).

At the end point of Conrad’s geography militant, the term geopolitics is first used and begins to circulate in European academic exchanges (Dodds and Atkinson 2000). Formally coined in the 1890s, geopolitics acts as a signifier of interest in the intersection of resources, territory, knowledge and imperial power. Put simply, geopolitical conversations pivot around four threads: the role of geographical factors in shaping national and imperial power; the relationship between a country’s population size (people power or in the original form ‘man-power’) and state territorial power; the role of resources in shaping patterns of state competition and conflict; and finally, if less developed in earliest iterations of geopolitics, examples and incidents of resistance to dominant forms of geopolitical thinking and practice. More recent scholars such as Paul Routledge and Sara Koopman have used the terms anti-geopolitics and alter-geopolitics respectively to acknowledge and investigate

expressions of dissent and alternative geopolitical strategies and imaginaries (Koopman 2011; Routledge 2017).

Our interest in triumphant geopolitics is not intended to signal an endorsement of past acts of colonial occupation and violence. Rather we draw attention to those moments when particular geopolitical visions and practices appear to enjoy considerable effectiveness and legitimacy amongst some, if not all, possible audiences (Dijink 1996). To give an example, it is only remarkably recently that settler colonial states such as Australia and Canada have been persuaded/forced/shamed into recognising the ongoing violence of colonial occupation, the imposition of alien cultural, legal and policing systems on indigenous communities, insidious racism and the myth of *terra nullius* (Lowman and Baker 2015). Prior to official apologies and land claims settlements, for example, we could argue that a particular geopolitical imaginary of the settler colonial state endured (triumphantly) in the sense of affirming and valorising particular territorial, state and provincial boundaries and apparatuses of administration. To the point that sovereign states such as Canada are thought of as settled spaces free to conduct foreign and security policies with other recognised state entities – and thus to posit the original peoples, the indigenous, the aboriginal as ‘problem’ rather than the ‘settler’.

Classical geopolitics was triumphant in composition. Imperial states, sovereign ‘man’, white supremacy and colonial occupation and administration are assumed to be the norm (Weber 2016). Geographical factors and physical environments were conceptualised as either constraints and/or opportunities for the national-imperial state. When Halford Mackinder worried about ‘man-power’ in the context of Britain and its empire, he was referring to white European men and their capacity to serve the Empire. Britain’s colonised subjects in Africa, Asia and the Americas were integrated into wider assessments of territory, resources and non-native populations (Mackinder 1905).

The Arctic in triumphant geopolitical calculations was a space for sovereign expansion, resource exploitation and territorial consolidation (Farish 2010). Cold War era political geographers and scholars of International Relations (IR), while largely eschewing the term geopolitics due to its controversial association with Nazism, addressed security and surveillance agendas informed by the need for strategic knowledge on terrestrial and marine environments as well as meteorology and oceanography (e.g. Hamblin 2005). American and Soviet physical and environmental scientists were funded by their respective militaries, and provided logistical support for those wishing to work across and under Arctic environments. The Arctic was measured, information circulated and articulated on the basis of making visible data and information used to classify and evaluate environments, resources and territories (Sörlin 2013).

In the post-Cold War era, a different form of geopolitical theorising began to challenge classical geopolitical writings. A self-consciously critical geopolitics questions the manner in which world politics was discursively underpinned by a set of assumptions about the nation-state, territory and resources and the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. The Cold War era of superpower competition arguably blurred not only persistent colonial legacies regarding the fate of indigenous

and global South peoples but also underplayed expressions of geopolitical dissent, resistance and anti-geopolitics. In Anglophone critical geopolitics, writers such as Paul Routledge articulated an agenda focussing on dissent and resistance in complex post-colonial contexts.

In the Arctic, indigenous activism in the 1970s onwards pointed to challenges to settler colonial states and resistance to marginalisation and discrimination. Across the North American and Nordic Arctic, indigenous peoples challenged Cold War/colonial developmental-geopolitical agendas and the normalisation of categories such as under-development and primitive. The Soviet Arctic was somewhat different due to the marginalisation and discrimination against so-called 'Little Peoples' by successive communist governments. Scholarship and activism by indigenous peoples and settler scholars contributed to a tranche of writing and other creative outputs challenging the triumphant 'sovereign man' and accompanying geopolitics. These critical counter-currents of Arctic geopolitics, however, unfolded at a time when the ending of the Cold War was being heralded as a new opportunity to recast the international rather than intra-national relations of the Arctic. Highlighting, what post-colonial historian Ann Stoler terms as 'duress', moments when the hardened constraints and confinements of colonialism make themselves manifest in considerations of land, territory and human and civil rights (Stoler 2016). Her point is that inequities in the form of racism, violence and dispossession mark fault lines of duress in many countries, including those with Arctic constituencies.

For all the progressive intent of the Arctic Council, established in 1996 following the Finnish-sponsored Arctic Environment Protection Strategy, this post-Cold War intergovernmental forum does not disrupt dominant geopolitical imaginaries and practices (English 2013). Framing themselves as the 'Arctic states' (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States) hardwire a particular meta-geography of the Arctic. As the Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council noted:

[The Arctic Council] provide(s) a means for 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 in the Arctic (Arctic Council 1996, article 1; footnote omitted).

Initially three and now six indigenous organisations were identified as so-called Permanent Participants but do so at the behest of those Arctic states, and everyone else is identified as an 'Observer'. While this state-centric ordering and classifying is not unique to the Arctic Council, we argue it reinforced a particular topographical imagination of the Arctic region, which prioritises not only geographical proximity but also uses the category of 'Arctic states' to position non-Arctic states as 'outsiders' and Permanent Participants as Arctic state-sanctioned (Steinberg and Dodds 2015).

The rules of engagement for the Arctic Council ensure that the Permanent Participants and Observers have to comply with certain restrictions. For example, the Arctic Council's original terms of reference make clear that Permanent

Participants can never exceed the number of members. In other words, it might be possible, if accepted by the eight Arctic states, to increase their number to seven – but no more. Observers, as defined by the Ottawa Declaration notes that the category is open to ‘non-Arctic states’, inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations. As part of the condition for entry, therefore, countries such as the UK, France and the Netherlands were forced to accept a disavowal of their past historical and geographical relationships with Arctic territories and peoples (e.g. Albrethsen 1989; Kraus and Holland 2007).

The Arctic region is never defined in the Declaration. It is simply assumed that the follow national territories are emblematic of it:

THE REPRESENTATIVES of the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America (hereinafter referred to as the Arctic States) [...] (Arctic Council 1996, Preamble).

And thus these terms of reference cemented a particular fixed geographical relationship with the Arctic region, which was paradoxically at odds with the Arctic’s colonial and Cold War experiences. In the case of an original Observer such as the UK, ports and cities such as Aberdeen and Hull were important nodes in trans-Arctic resource extraction, and nuclear submarines leaving from British ports criss-crossed Arctic waters (David 2000). British trading companies for several hundred years developed networks with the North American and Russian Arctic, as well as operated out of islands such as Spitsbergen. Rather than being near-Arctic states, Britain and others such as France and the Netherlands are described as ‘observers’ (Kruse 2013).

By agreeing to be an Observer and Permanent Participant, one arguably participated in what the French political scientist Bernard Badie terms a ‘diplomacy of connivance’ (Badie 2012). According to Badie, the contemporary international system is illustrative of club or connivance diplomacy, whereby an oligarchical assemblage of states (that consider themselves as the most powerful) attempts to divvy up the task of world leadership amongst themselves. This form of diplomatic arrangement, as Badie goes on to qualify, is defensive of its privileges, occupies a partway between competition and cooperation and is mostly precluding in its practices. Indeed, the Arctic Council can be said to be engaging in connivance diplomacy. For all its positive qualities and attributes, the Arctic Council in actual fact consolidated the grip of the eight self-defined Arctic states to define who, what and where was to be associated with the Arctic region (Nord 2015). This intergovernmental forum also decided not to discuss military/security matters (at the behest of the group’s superpower, the United States) and used its structure and composition [two former superpowers with a middle power (Canada) and five Nordic states] to present a vision for a post-Cold War Arctic where environmental protection and sustainable development would be used to ‘cover-up’ the toxic legacies of colonialism and the Cold War (Koivurova 2010).

Footnote two of the Ottawa Declaration also reminds readers that “The use of the term “peoples” in this Declaration shall not be construed as having any implications as regard the rights which may attach to the term under international law”. In other

words, when the Declaration speaks of ‘indigenous peoples’, it does not imply that Arctic states such as Canada and Russia are granting such peoples any additional international legal recognition. It would take Canada until 2016 to embrace the principles embedded in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Short and Lennox 2016). The Declaration was developed initially about the same time as the Arctic Council was established (1996/7) and took 20 years of negotiation to bring to a final agreed draft, and the previous Harper government in Canada described it as ‘aspirational’ and failed to implement its contents (Geise 2015).

The connivance comes, therefore, in parties to the Arctic Council not questioning or challenging what was being presented as past, present and future of and for the Arctic. Triumphant forms of geopolitics do not have to be spectacular in order to be triumphant. It can also be about the ‘little things’ like accepting routinely that there are self-appointed ‘Arctic states’ and that Permanent Participants are treated as respected participants in Arctic Council business, while at the same time concerns continue that indigenous peoples are being enrolled continuously in relationships with settler colonial states, which fail to live up to the expectation of partnership, respect and reconciliation. Canada, for example, has yet to harmonise the provisions of UNDRIP with Canadian law despite adopting its provisions in May 2016 – recognising a nation to nation relationship (Moirin 2017).

10.3 The Return of Militant Geopolitics

In August 2007, a Russian oceanographic expedition was collecting scientific data on the Central Arctic Ocean seabed. The context for the voyage was rooted in an earlier Russian decision to submit materials to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in New York. Under Article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), coastal states such as Russia are entitled to submit scientific materials to the Commission for the purpose of establishing the outer limits of continental shelves appurtenant to relevant coastal baselines. The Commission, after carefully considering such submissions, issues what are termed ‘recommendations’, which are technical assessments rather than legal judgments. The original Russian submission (2001) asked the Commission to consider continental shelves in the Arctic and Pacific Oceans. The Commission was not able to issue a recommendation pertinent to the Arctic Ocean and requested the Russian authorities conduct further oceanographic and geophysical research (Byers 2013).

The 2007 expedition itself was, therefore, very much in keeping with Russia simply following a formal recommendation from a UN body. Indeed, Russia was the first to submit materials to the CLCS and until that point very little attention had been paid to coastal states attempting to extend their sovereign rights to exploit resources on and below the seabed. This collective lack of curiosity was surprising given the scale of underwater territory at stake. In essence, Article 76 allows coastal states to expand considerably their sovereign rights over the seabed, subject to guidance from the UN Commission and negotiation with other coastal states which

might be affected. The so-called flag-planting incident in August 2007 transformed global interest in the Arctic, coinciding as it did with new reports of a record low in sea ice extent (Dodds and Nuttall 2016).

After images of the flag planting were released, media organisations such as the BBC in the UK ran articles with ribald phrasing such as ‘scramble for the Arctic’. The framing was not innocent. Echoing previous colonial encounters in the global South, cadence of the Russian flag was difficult to ignore. No longer a superpower in disrepair, Russia under the then leadership of President Putin (2000–2008) was an altogether different proposition. While the flag planting had a whiff of absurdity about it, international reaction ranged from bemusement to the often-cited comments of a former Canadian Foreign Minister who expressed disbelief that such an action was undertaken. Foreign Minister Peter Mackay memorably noted that, “This isn’t the 15th century. You can’t go around the world and just plant flags and say: ‘We’re claiming this territory’” (cited in Hønneland 2017, p. 87).

But flag-planting of the sort referred to by Mackay not only remained endemic in the twentieth century (Moon, Antarctica, Arctic, oceans) but also all too easily overlooks the enduring legacies of European flag planting in the Americas for indigenous peoples. Flag planting is profoundly incantatory and remains so. What the Russian flag, regardless of the financial, political and legal provenance of the submarine voyage, had done was to unleash geopolitical fears that the Arctic was a thinly governed space, available for further territorial and resource colonisation (e.g. Sale and Potapov 2009). While remote, barely visited and of uncertain resource value, the subterranean spaces of the Central Arctic Ocean proved capable of generating new geopolitical imaginaries. Coupled with concerns about diminishing sea ice, the apparent ‘opening up’ of the Arctic unleashed anxieties that other coastal states such as Canada would need to secure its own sovereign rights to Arctic seabed. Perhaps, unwittingly or not, the Canadian Foreign Minister’s reaction pointed to dispossession anxieties – something being taken unexpectedly from a settler colonial state (as opposed to indigenous peoples), which then in turn produced geopolitical disorientation and fear of humiliation (Laidlaw and Lester 2015).

Within a year of the flag-planting episode, the Danish government convened a meeting of the five Arctic Ocean coastal states (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States, A5) in Greenland. What resulted was the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration, which affirmed the role and responsibility of the A5 as environmental stewards for the Arctic Ocean, and publicly committed to resolving any outstanding legal issues through the framework of the ‘Law of the Sea’ (Dodds 2014). Unable to reference UNCLOS because the United States remains a non-signatory, the Declaration was designed as a counter-measure to global speculation about the fate of the Arctic Ocean.

As with the genesis of the Arctic Council, a smaller number of Arctic states take it upon themselves to act in the following way:

By virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean the five coastal states are in a unique position to address these possibilities and challenges. In this regard, we recall that an extensive international legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean as discussed between our representatives at the meeting in Oslo on 15 and

16 October 2007 at the level of senior officials. Notably, the law of the sea provides for important rights and obligations concerning the delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf, the protection of the marine environment, including ice-covered areas, freedom of navigation, marine scientific research, and other uses of the sea. We remain committed to this legal framework and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims (Ilulissat Declaration 2008).

Although mindful that their sovereignty and sovereign rights and jurisdiction applies to 'large areas of the Arctic Ocean', the Declaration recognises in passing that 'large' does not equate to 'entire'. The five coastal states are in an apparently 'unique position' because of the following: a smaller state (Denmark) was eager to position itself as a distinct Arctic/Nordic state from others such as Iceland and Finland; a Russian flag in 2007 unleashed speculation about an ungoverned Arctic; and geophysical state change in the Arctic Ocean was encouraging further speculation that ice was no longer a sufficient barrier to the mobility of other extra-territorial even newer parties such as China.

The militancy of the Declaration, therefore, lies in its prioritisation of the A5 as opposed to the broader community of eight Arctic states and the Permanent Participants. The latter were not consulted about the Declaration and Russia's actions regarding the mapping and surveying of the Arctic seabed, provided further impetus to other A5 members such as Denmark and Norway and later Canada. The Canadian government under then Prime Minister Stephen Harper became particularly belligerent about Canadian Arctic sovereignty (Burke 2017). The United States, as a non-signatory, was also collecting relevant data off the Alaskan continental shelf and accepts as customary international law the relevant provisions of UNCLOS. Geographically, the Arctic Ocean between 2007 and 2015 attracted a surge of investment in mapping and oceanographic/geological analysis for the expressed purpose of making formal submissions to the CLCS (Jensen 2016).

More than ever, the Arctic Ocean was actively imagined in the 2008 Declaration as a volumetric space. With distinct opportunities for the A5 to steward and securitise its surface, columnar and subterranean dimensions:

The Arctic Ocean is a unique ecosystem, which the five coastal states have a stewardship role in protecting. Experience has shown how shipping disasters and subsequent pollution of the marine environment may cause irreversible disturbance of the ecological balance and major harm to the livelihoods of local inhabitants and indigenous communities (Ilulissat Declaration 2008).

The reference to 'indigenous communities' appears opportunistic given that PPs were not formally represented at the meeting in May 2008. The Declaration in effect takes for granted existing legal and geopolitical structures, while extending the role of the A5 to manage water, fauna, and indigenous communities potentially affected by adverse developments in the Arctic marine environment. The livelihoods of indigenous peoples are to be protected and assimilated into the national security/stewardship concerns of the A5.

The Declaration did provoke immediate upset within the three uninvited Arctic states (Finland, Iceland and Sweden). This schism was reinforced further by a fol-

low up A5 meeting in Canada in 2010. Iceland, in particular, was reported to have been the most upset at this particular expression of militant geopolitics – eager itself to assert its credentials as an Arctic Ocean coastal state because of geographical proximity (Dodds and Ingimundarson 2013). Intriguingly, the 2010 A5 meeting was revealed as a divisive affair because the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton criticised Canadian hosts for failing to invite representatives from indigenous organisations to the meeting in Chelsea, Quebec. The meeting also highlighted the very different qualities of the A5 itself – the United States as the least engaged ‘Arctic nation’, Canada and Russia as the most enthusiastic Arctic Ocean coastal state representatives, Norway’s presence largely due to its sovereignty over Svalbard (with disputes ongoing about how far Norway’s sovereign rights extend from the coastline as noted in the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty) and Denmark representing the interests of Greenland (which had recently secured further autonomy over sub-surface resources from Denmark in 2009) (Gad 2014).

The division between A5 and A8 was arguably a crisis for the Arctic Council and it is perhaps not coincidental that the inter-governmental forum sought to reconcile and consolidate the role of ‘Arctic states’ in the aftermath of the 2008 Declaration. Understanding (or perhaps connivance) was secured in two areas: the future management of observers and the development of agreements designed to consolidate Arctic state co-operation. At the 2011 Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Greenland, the Arctic states agreed to produce an Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies (which was updated subsequently in 2013, 2015, 2016) and sign through the auspices of the Arctic Council an Agreement on Co-operation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (Knecht 2016). Both legally-binding agreements reaffirm the collective role of the Arctic states and their shared role in the Arctic region. It also insists that observers to the Arctic Council, both established and new candidates, reaffirm their public commitment to respect the collective sovereignty and sovereign rights of the eight Arctic states, regardless of whether they are Arctic Ocean coastal states or not. This once again, demonstrates how the Arctic Council embodies the tenets of connivance diplomacy – the powerful Arctic states setting the rules of the game to ensure that their individual vested interests can be collectively managed amidst broader (‘external’) calls for inclusivity and involvement into the region’s affairs.

The modifications to the rules and expectations of observers to the Arctic Council proved crucial to the admissions of the five Asian states (China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea) in May 2013. After a great deal of feverish speculation, China and the four others were admitted alongside one other applicant state, Italy. In so doing, the composition of state observers to the Arctic Council shifted away from its overwhelming European focus to embrace Asian states. Arguably, it consolidated this particular form of what we term triumphant geopolitics – as new observers actively acclaimed and recognised the sovereign rights of those Arctic states and Permanent Participants. It also acted to reaffirm the consensual qualities of the Arctic Council, as Arctic states agreed (despite opposition from Finland in particular) not to consider the contentious application of the European Union for observer status (Knecht 2017).

10.4 Challenging Militant and Triumphant Geopolitics

The preceding sections have highlighted how the Arctic Council's subscription to connivance diplomacy has ushered in a new form of triumphant geopolitics which has allowed for the reconciliation and reclamation of Arctic space and relations. But as Bernard Badie pointedly argues, the concentration of power within connivance diplomatic routes does not help necessarily produce international solidarity; rather, there are possibilities that feelings of humiliation and resentment and even violent politics may ensue, which in turn reduces the chances of existing problems/challenges being resolved (Badie 2017). However, drawing on Sara Koopman's idea of 'alter-geopolitics', we argue that such debilitating emotions and conflictual relations may not necessarily emerge out of interactions within the Arctic region (Koopman 2011). Indeed, in focusing on new proposals that challenge hegemonic geopolitics and create new geopolitics, alter-geopolitics helps to document already existing geopolitical practices that foster solidarity between peoples in different places for (peaceful) interventions against dominant power structures. The emphasis here then is on tracing and investigating the critical processes, actors and potentialities at a variety of scales. Hence, in what follows, we will highlight some of the ways in which existing militant and triumphant geopolitical practices and arrangements in the Arctic region are being contested and resisted by a variety of seemingly 'marginalised' groups and polities.

Specifically, it is our contention that Arctic states' connivance and their diplomatic characterisations of the Arctic (Council) as occupying a multiplicity of in-between positions enables other actors to carefully negotiate (and even exploit) these ambivalent spaces. The Arctic Council is inclusive yet exclusive, cooperative yet competitive and this works arguably to advance their own geopolitical agendas and projects in the region.

In April 2009, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) issued an Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty. Created in 1979, the ICC is one of the permanent participants to the Arctic Council. ICC chair, Patricia Cochran was quoted as saying at the time that:

Our declaration addresses some of these questions from the position of a people who know the Arctic intimately. We have lived here for thousands and thousands of years and by making this declaration, we are saying to those who want to use Inuit Nunaat for their own purposes, you must talk to us and respect our rights (ICC 2009).

The Declaration explicitly challenges and questions the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration by the A5 in Greenland. The ICC choose the Norwegian northern city of Tromsø to publicise the Inuit Declaration because Arctic Council foreign ministers were meeting at the same time – and thus they wanted to disrupt prior expressions of connivance.

Echoing Sara Koopman's 'alter-geopolitics', the 2009 Declaration – which was followed by a second in 2011 on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat (ICC 2011) – actively disrupts hegemonic meta-geographies of the Arctic. By reg-

istering their Declaration in not only other forms of international law (UNDRIP not UNCLOS) but also making explicit the ongoing negotiations at a nation to nation level, the ICC also offered a provocation to Arctic states in particular to engage in different forms of geopolitics, which are more attentive to memory, indigenous rights, and consultation. As the follow-up 2011 Declaration noted:

3.1 Resource development in *Inuit Nunaat* must be grounded in *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*, adopted by the Inuit Circumpolar Council in April 2009.

3.2 *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* identified many principles that are relevant to the governance and carrying out of resource development in *Inuit Nunaat*, including the importance of the rule of law and recognition of the rights of Inuit as an Arctic indigenous people under both international and domestic law (ICC 2011, 3.1 and 3.2).

The declarations, on sovereignty and resource development, identify only too clearly the challenge facing indigenous peoples in the Arctic. As Gary Anderson noted in his book, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian*, the ideology of settler colonialism is rooted in the practice of removal (Anderson 2014). Indigenous peoples are well aware of how ‘invaders’ appropriate, remove and then justify their presence through ideologies of ‘improvement’ and ‘stewardship’.

For over 500 years, white settlers have extracted Arctic resources from animal skins and pelts to timber and mineral-bearing rocks such as copper and uranium. When Arctic Ocean coastal states such as Canada and Denmark claim to act as environmental stewards, they do on the back of several centuries’ worth of mapping and surveying, extraction and administrative policing of indigenous territories. In 2008, Prime Minister Harper even claimed that Canada had “no history of colonialism” (cited in Wherry 2009, no pagination). Extending their sovereign rights offshore, at the same time as promoting ‘reconciliation’ with indigenous peoples and First Nations, Arctic states such as Canada have been at the forefront of cementing a triumphant geopolitics – where indigenous peoples and their unresolved land claims and self-government agreements do not interfere with European settler sovereignty onshore and offshore. Reconciliation, therefore, gets rendered as indigenous peoples being told to reconcile themselves to the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Canada (Kaye 2016). But the Inuit Declarations remind Canada and other Arctic states that reconciliation can mean something different altogether. Under land claims agreements, Inuit in northern Canada have rights to be consulted over offshore matters. In other words, Arctic states need to reconcile themselves to being partners and not sovereign agents in the maritime Arctic (Huebert 2017).

On a rather different register, the admittance of the five Asian states into the Arctic Council in 2013 has provoked some unexpected developments. While the Arctic states were able to come up with a shared list of rules for the Asian states to comply with in the Arctic Council through the Nuuk Criteria and the observer manual, they were not in full agreement about how the ‘conduct of conduct’ should develop in the region more broadly. For instance, there is no consensus around the often-discussed idea of the Arctic Council growing from its current ‘decision-

shaping' status to a 'decision-making' body. On one hand, the US is committed to the Council remaining a 'forum' for coordination and has thus expressed little concerns about the composition of the observer membership. Canada and Russia, on the other hand, are worried that a greater number of Arctic Council participants, even in the capacity of observers, could make arriving at agreements more difficult and time-consuming, particularly if the desired goal of a strengthened mandate for the Council was to be achieved. Part of the problem here lies in the widespread scepticism imbued in the Arctic states' reception towards their Asian counterparts' forays into the region (Solli et al. 2013). Indeed, there are almost hints of 'Polar Orientalism' at work here whereby the 'true' intentions of Asian interventions in the Arctic are being questioned incessantly (Dodds and Nuttall 2016). This is most evident in the case of China whereby its 'rising' status has fuelled intense speculations about its hegemonic ambitions in the Arctic (Woon 2014). As one China Task Force report notes, "Unfavorable factors include the restrictions of the Arctic governance mechanisms on China's participation" (Zhang et al. 2015, p. 7).

Although the aforementioned account appears to suggest that Asian states' participation in Arctic affairs has reached an impasse, it must be pointed out that the actual situation on the ground provides a much more dynamic and complex picture. As alluded to earlier, the initiation of triumphant geopolitics in the Arctic is closely intertwined with a set of governing rules, regimes and boundaries. All of the Asian observers have underlined very explicitly that they respect the sovereignty of Arctic states and accepted the premises of international law in governing the region, particularly the UNCLOS (Jakobson and Lee 2013). And to further allay suspicions of their involvement in the Arctic, the Asian states have downplayed the geopolitical dimensions of their initiatives, whilst emphasising, in line with the Nuuk criteria, their capacity to contribute to scientific and environmental research in the region. This deference to the authority and priorities of the Arctic states does not mean that these Asian actors are passively accepting the dominant dictates of what they can or cannot do in the Arctic. Rather, in actively mobilising the tenets of recognised legal regimes in the Arctic region to pursue their ends, extra-territorial states such as China, Korea (and others such as the EU) have insisted that there are areas of the Arctic Ocean that are international waters and seabed likely to be classified as 'The Area' under UNCLOS and are thus of concern to the wider international community. Notably, from 2014 onwards, the A5 have had to embrace 5 extra-territorial parties in discussions about the future management of the central Arctic Ocean. Fishing negotiations (and in the future biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction) reveal another group of actors demanding that they should be consulted over future developments in the maritime Arctic. In this sense, the A5 are arguably paying the price for their triumphant form of Arctic geopolitics.

Additionally, some of the existing challenges that confront the Asian states within the Arctic Council forum have not stopped them from exploring their interests and options 'elsewhere'. Referring back to Koopman's radical concept of altergeopolitics (Koopman 2011), new formations and solidarities can emerge to engage in new form of geopolitics that cannot be neatly captured and circumscribed by existing (dominant) institutional frameworks and structures. For example, Bennett

has usefully underscored how some Asian states namely Singapore and South Korea have been forging new alliances with Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council due to dissatisfaction with current structural arrangements (Bennett 2017). To finance these new partnerships to look into issues pertaining to the preservation of indigenous peoples' traditions, cultures and interests, a new Álgu Fund has been established since 2017, which aims to raise \$30 million to support the Permanent Participants' involvement in Arctic Council activities. Crucially, this fund lies outside the purview of the Arctic Council and it gets away from the perennial challenge on relying on the individual discretion of Arctic states in providing monetary support for these indigenous groups (and their partners) to carry out various programs. Alternatively, the Asian observers have also begun more formally to discuss their Arctic interests amongst themselves. In April 2016, South Korea, China, and Japan participated in the First Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic in Seoul (a similar dialogue session took place again in Tokyo in June 2017 and Shanghai in June 2018). During this momentous event, "The three HoDs [Heads of Delegations] discussed the guiding principles of the trilateral Arctic cooperation and shared the view that the three countries should continue their commitments of contribution to the Arctic Council and enhance their cooperation within various international fora. The three HoDs also explored the possibilities to cooperate in such areas as scientific research" (South Korea 2016). They made this commitment outside the auspices of the Arctic Council. One could imagine the discomfiture among the Arctic Council Member States if the Trilateral High-Level Dialogue were to invite the Permanent Participants. Hence, it can be argued that such an arrangement signifies the workings of a different kind of geopolitical project, a governance mechanism that bypasses and excludes the Arctic sovereign states altogether.

10.5 Conclusion

Triumphant geopolitics in the Arctic, we argue in this paper, pivots around *reconciliation* and *reclamation* on the one hand and on the other hand, *alter-geopolitics*. Reaction to the 2007 event provoked the five Arctic Ocean coastal states (A5) to reconcile their differences over the legal status of the central Arctic Ocean via the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration. As part of their reconciliation process the Arctic states more generally invested considerably in consolidating the Arctic Council as a site of intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation – legally binding agreements were signed and a secretariat established. Finally, we note expressions of alter-geopolitics, epitomised through statements such as the 2009 Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, and ongoing negotiations involving extra-territorial parties over the central Arctic Ocean. In their different ways, indigenous peoples and extra-territorial parties have challenged the Arctic states' framings of the Arctic and posited alternative geopolitical imaginaries and relationships. While some have declared it to be indicative of a 'global Arctic', we offer a different optic to pursue the contested imaginaries, materialities and practices at play.

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