A "Profound Change of Direction?" Canada's Northern Strategy and the Co-Development of a "New" Arctic and Northern Policy Framework

P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert

Introduction

It came with a whimper, not a bang. After four years of development, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government released Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF) with little fanfare in September 2019. It appeared on the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) website with no photos, maps, or even a downloadable pdf—just a wave of words, over 17,000 in the main chapter alone. The single infographic that accompanied the framework captured its main "highlights:" that a "whole-of-government,

P. W. Lackenbauer (✉)
Trent University, Peterborough, ON, Canada
e-mail: whitney.lackenbauer@uwaterloo.ca

P. Kikkert
Brian Mulroney Institute of Government, St. Francis Xavier University (StFX), Antigonish, NS, Canada
e-mail: pkikkert@stfx.ca

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co-development" process had involved the three territorial governments, over 25 Indigenous organizations, as well as three provincial governments.[1]Please check and confirm if the authors and their respective affiliations have been correctly identified. Amend if necessary.YES. Please confirm if the corresponding author is correctly identified. Amend if necessary.Yes, the corresponding author is correctly identified.

Despite grant proclamations from Ottawa, the policy itself does not represent the "profound change of direction" that the Trudeau government suggests. Instead, Canada's 2019 policy framework highlights well-known issues that Northern Canadians have identified for years, including climate change, food insecurity, poverty, health inequalities, and housing shortages. The collaborative process itself offers the most compelling justification for the Government of Canada's claim to a "profound change of direction" in the opening sentence of the ANPF (Government of Canada, 2019).

This chapter analyzes the benefits and limitations of the co-development approach that produced the ANPF, the expectations that it has set, and the persistent obstacles, competing ideas, and lingering questions that are likely to inhibit the enactment of this "shared vision." The government's emphasis on collaborative governance recognizes that when Ottawa has defined problems facing the North incorrectly or has set the wrong priorities, with little consultation from Northerners, policy responses have been short-sighted and ineffective. While critics lauded the process involved in co-developing the "new" framework, they ultimately questioned the hasty release of what seems to be an unperfected document, coming just a day before the federal government announced Canada's 2019 federal election. The ANPF appeared with no budget, timelines, or clear plan to address the wide array of challenges and issues identified. Critics quickly labelled the framework a "half-baked" and "chaotic mess" (Exner-Pirot, 2019) that simply lists well-known issues and gives "lip service to addressing the problems" (Greer, 2019) while providing no "concrete" plan for action (Weber, 2019).

The conspicuous lack of action on a strategic policy agenda since the release of the ANPF reveals a persistent Canadian challenge in setting practical priorities for federal policy implementation, particularly in the

[1] See CIRNAC (n.d.).

areas of economic development (given varied economies across the Canadian Arctic), promised investments in "transformative infrastructure," and addressing gaps in "access to the same services, opportunities, and standards of living as those enjoyed by other Canadians." In contrast to Russia, which released a series of Arctic strategies in 2020 and a transparent implementation plan in 2021, Canada has adopted a general Arctic policy and an ad hoc approach to prospective implementation. The Canadian approach avoids the stigma of centralized federal direction and empowers Northerners to discern policy priorities (at least in theory) by connecting their proposals to general policy framework language, guided by "principles of partnership" that emphasize community-based solutions and "flexible and adaptive policy." The challenge remains to achieve action on and coherence and synergy across programmes under this formula—with little indication that Canada has broken from its long-standing record of making strategic promises across the Arctic policy landscape and failing to enact them in practice.

More Continuity Than Change: Canada's Northern Strategy Since 1970

When Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal government released its policy statement *Northern Canada in the 70's* in 1970, it marked a strong change in tone and emphasis from the federal Northern strategies that had preceded it. John Diefenbaker's famous "Northern Vision" unveiled in 1958 had offered a bold vision that sought to extend Canadian development into the Arctic and develop northern resources for the benefit of all Canadians. This political, ideological, and economic platform focussed on national development goals rather than the people of the North and lost momentum amidst the political turmoil that embroiled the Conservative government in the early 1960s (Isard, 2010). Twelve years later, Liberal minister of northern affairs Jean Chrétien focussed as much on the people of the North as he did on national economic outcomes. "In recent decades the native northerners have been offered new opportunities and facilities for strengthening their capacity to survive," his strategy explained. "But survival for them must be more than mere subsistence supplemented by Government subsidy. It must above all permit the people themselves to make their own choices as to the place they wish to occupy and the part they wish to play, in the evolving society of Canada, North and South of 60°" (Chrétien, 2020).

This has been a persistent theme ever since. Justice Thomas Berger's inquiry into the socio-economic and environmental impact of a proposed pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley elicited unprecedented public engagement, and its final report, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, highlighted competing visions of Canada's Northern future. "We look upon the North as our last frontier," he noted of the southern Canadian view. "It is natural for us to think of developing it, of subduing the land and extracting its resources to fuel Canada's industry and heat our homes. But the native people say the North is their homeland. They have lived there for thousands of years. They claim it is their land, and they believe they have a right to say what its future ought to be." Berger recommended a ten-year moratorium on any pipeline development so that Aboriginal land claims could be settled and appropriate conservation areas established beforehand (Berger, 1977, p. 1).[2] Thus, internal sovereignty claims by Canadian Indigenous groups changed the political dialogue, and Canada embarked upon a process of settling comprehensive land claims with Northern Indigenous peoples whose land rights had not been dealt with by treaty or other legal means—a process that has dramatically transformed Canada's political landscape and remains ongoing today.[3]

Canada's 1970 policy statement emphasized that "people, resources and environment are the main elements in any strategy for northern development." This trinity has remained remarkably consistent over the past half-century. The Trudeau government also noted that, "in the course of its policy review during the past year, the Government affirmed that the needs of the people in the North are more important than resource development and that the maintenance of ecological balance is essential. In the setting of objectives and priorities in the North, along with national policy goals, the essence of choice for the Government is to maintain an appropriate degree of balance among those three elements" (Chrétien, 2020). Striking the right balance across these three fundamental pillars remains the fundamental challenge of Canadian Arctic policymaking.

[2] See also CBC (n.d.) and O'Malley (1976).

[3] See, for example, Cameron and White (1995), Alcantara (2008), and Poelzer and Coates (2015).

While domestic drivers propelled the Canadian political agenda for most of the 1970s and early 1980s, sovereignty re-emerged as a catalyst for action following the August 1985 voyage of the US Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea* through the Northwest Passage (NWP). In response, the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney announced that Canada was officially drawing straight baselines around its Arctic Archipelago effective 1 January 1986, thus confirming Canada's sovereignty over the NWP as "historic, internal waters." Concurrently, it outlined an aggressive plan to exercise control over its waters and assert its Arctic sovereignty[4] while simultaneously negotiating the 1988 Arctic Cooperation Agreement with the U.S. over icebreaker transits. By "agreeing to disagree" on the legal status of the passage, the two countries reached "a pragmatic solution based on our special bilateral relationship, our common interest in cooperating on Arctic matters, and the flora and fauna of the area"—one that did not prejudice either country's legal position or set a precedent for other areas of the world (Kirkey, 1995). With this understanding in place, Ottawa and Washington also collaborated to modernize North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) assets in the Arctic to meet the common continental defence threat posed by the Soviet Union.[5] This was less about defending the Arctic than the approaches to North America, but affirmed the strategic importance of the region from a homeland security perspective.

After the end of the Cold War, Canada's official discourse on Arctic affairs shifted to emphasize circumpolar cooperation and broad definitions of security that prioritized human and environmental dimensions. Canada was an early champion of the Arctic Council and promoted the inclusion of Indigenous Permanent Participants with a seat at the table.[6] The Liberal government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993–2003) embraced this emphasis on international cooperation, and *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* released in 2000 revealed how environmental and social challenges now predominated:

> Both the tradition of transnational co-operation and the new emphasis on human security are particularly applicable to the shaping of the

[4] See Huebert (2001a).

[5] For a strong overview, see Jockel (1991).

[6] See, for example, House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (1997).

> Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy. The circumpolar world that includes the northern territories and peoples of Canada, Russia, the United States, the Nordic countries plus the vast (and mostly ice-covered) waters in between was long a front line in the Cold War. Now it has become a front line in a different way—facing the challenges and opportunities brought on by new trends and developments. The challenges mostly take the shape of transboundary environmental threats—persistent organic pollutants, climate change, nuclear waste—that are having dangerously increasing impacts on the health and vitality of human beings, northern lands, waters and animal life. The opportunities are driven by increasingly confident northern societies who, drawing on their traditional values, stand poised to take up the challenges presented by globalization. Whereas the politics of the Cold War dictated that the Arctic region be treated as part of a broader strategy of exclusion and confrontation, now the politics of globalization and power diffusion highlight the importance of the circumpolar world as an area for inclusion and co-operation. (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, 2000)

Framed by principles of Canadian leadership, partnership, and ongoing dialogue with Northerners, this new northern foreign policy was rooted in four overarching objectives: to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially Northerners and Aboriginal peoples; to assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North; to establish the Circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and to promote the human security of Northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic.

By the start of the new millennium, improvement in Indigenous self-government and devolution required new economic opportunities that promoted northern interests. "Defending" traditional state sovereignty slipped to the back burner, particularly as the environmental, societal, and economic sectors of security seemed more pressing without a superpower adversary threatening North America from across the pole. Instead, a rising tide of evidence about the pace and impacts of global warming in the Arctic led Canadian journalists and academic commentators to push for a more proactive Arctic strategy that anticipated emerging security challenges associated with climate change, boundary disputes, the contested status of the waters of the Northwest Passage for international transit shipping, resource development, and heightened

international activity in the region more generally (Huebert, 2001b).[7] In December 2004, Paul Martin's Liberal Government announced an integrated Northern Strategy (devised in concert with the premiers of the Northern territories of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) built around seven main goals. First, the strategy promised to strengthen Northern governance, partnerships, and institutions to provide Northerners with greater control over decisions about their future. Second, it committed to establishing robust foundations for "strong, sustainable, diversified economies to allow northerners share in the benefits of northern development." Third, it proposed "to engage all partners in the North in the protection and stewardship of the environment." Fourth, it sought to promote "healthy, safe and sustainable northern communities" that would "promote self-reliance." Fifth, the document committed to ensuring that Canada would continue to play a "leading role" in promoting international cooperation, while taking Northerners' concerns into "consideration in national efforts to reinforce sovereignty, security and circumpolar cooperation." Sixth, the strategy promised to preserve, revitalize, and promote Indigenous cultures, recognizing and encouraging "the importance of language, traditional knowledge and way-of-life." Seventh, the government committed to ensuring that "Canada is a leader in northern science and technology, and to develop expertise in areas of particular importance and relevance to the North."[8] A 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS) also identified the Arctic as a priority area in light of "increased security threats, a changed distribution of global power, challenges to existing international institutions, and transformation of the global economy" that "reinforce the need for Canada to monitor and control events in its sovereign territory, through new funding and new tools."[9] Although the Liberal government fell before it could implement its vision, it had intertwined sovereignty and security in political rhetoric and strategic documents.

Stephen Harper's Conservatives embraced this agenda and made the Canadian North a key component of its 2005 election platform, accusing

[7] See, in particular, AMAP (2004).

[8] See Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (2006).

[9] The IPS focused on surveillance, such as infrared sensors for patrol aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and satellites (Canada, 2005).

his Liberal predecessors of swinging the pendulum too far towards diplomacy and human development in the face of an alleged Arctic sovereignty "crisis." Harper asserted that "the single most important duty of the federal government is to protect our national sovereignty," requiring "forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance. And that will be the conservative approach" (Harper, 2005). His government's "use it or lose it" approach to Arctic policy dominated the agenda from 2006 to 2009, featuring a spate of commitments to invest in military capabilities to defend Canada's rights for the region.[10] This rhetoric frustrated and even offended Northerners, particularly Indigenous peoples who had lived in the region since "time immemorial" (and thus resented any intimation that it was not sufficiently "used") and continued to express concerns about their lack of substantive involvement in national and international decision-making. Inuit leaders insisted that "sovereignty begins at home" and that the primary challenges were domestic human security issues, requiring investments in infrastructure, education, and health care.[11] Furthermore, the Inuit Circumpolar Council's transnational *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2009) emphasized that "the inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic." The declaration envisions Inuit playing an active role in all deliberations on environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, shipping, and socio-economic development (ICC, 2009).[12]

The 2007 Speech from the Throne indicated that the Harper Government's broader vision for the Arctic went beyond traditional sovereignty and security frames. Arguing that "the North needs new attention," and

[10] See, for example, Harris (2007). On Harper's early vision, see Dodds (2011).

[11] See, for example, Kaludjak (2007) and Simon (2008); and the perspectives in Inuit Kanatami (2013).

[12] Inuit representatives have opposed state actions that they feel violate their interests, such as Canada's decision to host a meeting for the five Arctic coastal states in March 2010 without inviting Inuit and First Nations to the discussions, and even critiqued a bilateral Canada-Denmark Arctic defence and security cooperation agreement because they were not involved in negotiating it. As such, indigenous voices add to the complexity (and richness) of the Canadian message projected to the rest of the world.

that "new opportunities are emerging across the Arctic," the Conservatives promised to "bring forward an integrated northern strategy focussed on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and evolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies." This four-pillar strategy would be expanded to "improve living conditions in the North for First Nations and Inuit through better housing," as well as a pledge to "build a world-class arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues, including environmental science and resource development." While the government would proceed with its election promises to bolster Canada's security presence in the Arctic, its sovereignty assertion would include "complete comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed." The following year, Prime Minister Harper reiterated his government's commitment to the "New North" during his fifth Northern tour, insisting that the four pillars constituted "a comprehensive vision for a new North, a Northern Strategy that will turn potential into prosperity for the benefit of all Northerners and all Canadians" (Government of Canada, 2008).

Northern leaders perceived the throne speech with a split feeling. On the one hand, Northerners applauded their inclusion in the Harper Government's expanded conceptualization of Arctic sovereignty. Similarly, territorial premiers were positive about the intentions for Northerners to have more control over their resource wealth, and their economies developed. Criticisms surrounding the Northern strategy generally fell into two categories. Mary Simon, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (the national Inuit political organization), offered a common criticism of the strategy when she said that she wished "there would be a bit more detail" (Weber, 2007). Northwest Territories Premier Floyd Roland echoed Simon a couple of years later, expressing his hope that Conservatives would be "ready to release" a more substantive strategy document soon. "There are resources at stake here," he noted. "We need to have our policy or programme in place" (Weber, 2009). Another debate over the Northern Strategy orbited around the centrality of Inuit. Critics suggested that the strategy was too focussed on military dimensions of sovereignty and on foreign policy, and not sufficiently domestic-focussed on improving the lives of Northerners, particularly Inuit (Byers & Layton, 2007). "The bedrock of Canada's status as an Arctic nation is the history of use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters by Inuit for thousands of years," Simon explained. "This is helpful

for Canada while defending claims of sovereignty against other nations" (Simon, 2007). Simon argued that any Canadian Northern strategy should be built on the twin pillars of "asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic [by] establishing constructive partnerships with Inuit," and "urgent action by our government to get serious on a climate change strategy" (Simon, 2009).

When the Harper government unveiled its Northern Strategy in July 2009, it offered a message of partnership: between the federal government and Northern Canadians, and between Canada and its circumpolar neighbours. Critics suggested that the strategy simply reiterated previous government commitments, while supporters suggested that the official document outlined a more coherent framework that moved away from the sovereignty-obsessed "use it or lose it" message of previous years. The Conservatives now cast the United States as an "exceptionally valuable partner in the Arctic," noted opportunities for cooperation with Russia and "common interests" with European Arctic states, and emphasized domestic imperatives to improve the quality of life of Northerners. Filled with references to the central place of Northerners in decision-making related to the Arctic, the government's domestic emphasis shifted substantively after 2009 to emphasize economic development. By 2013 Rob Huebert asked: "when's the last time you hear anyone use the 'use it or lose it' analogy? … It's very much focussed on improving the North for northerners now, rather than building up the security side."[13] Territorial premiers welcomed this change, but they also expressed concerns about what they saw as the Harper Government's "one-size-fits-all" policy of promoting private investment (Berthiaume, 2013).[14] "Mr. Harper's government obviously embraces a development model rooted in the idea that improved social indicators will follow economic development, particularly in sectors such as oil, gas and mining," Lackenbauer argued in August 2013. "Nevertheless, critics insist that the overall emphasis is

[13] Quoted in Wingrove (2013). As the documents in this volume show, however, the Harper Government continued to highlight military operations and training exercises—particularly the N-series (Nanook, Nunalivut, and Nunakput)—throughout its tenure in office.

[14] Internationally, the Harper Government also championed the creation of the Arctic Economic Council, "an independent organization that facilitates Arctic business-to-business activities and responsible economic development through the sharing of best practices, technological solutions, standards and other information" (Arctic Economic Council, 2015). For critiques, see Axworthy and Simon (2015) and Quinn (2016).

misplaced. Canadians should invest more in Northerners to improve social conditions and create healthier communities before priming the pump for resource developers" (Lackenbauer, 2013).

Pursuant to its third pillar, "Protecting the Arctic Environment," Canada committed to taking tangible action to protect and manage the unique and fragile ecosystems and wildlife of the Arctic which are being affected by global forces. Its "comprehensive approach" to environmental protection, built around the idea of sustainability, sought to balance the longstanding frontier-homeland equation, "ensuring [that] conservation keeps pace with development and that development decisions are based on sound science and careful assessment" (Government of Canada, 2009). In contrast to the positive image of support for science and environmental action promoted by official statements, critics chastised the Harper Government for its retreat from meaningful commitments to climate change mitigation efforts, reduced funding for climate research, "muzzling" of government scientists, and their prioritization of economic growth over environmental protection.[15]

The fourth pillar of the Northern Strategy committed to "Improving and Devolving Governance and Empowering the Peoples of the North." Domestically, this involved the ongoing negotiation and implementation of land claim and self-government agreements with Northern Indigenous peoples, as well as the negotiation of devolution agreements of federal responsibilities to the territorial governments. Successes included the 2014 devolution agreement with NWT, a land claim agreement with Inuit of Nunavik, and the start of land claim negotiations with the Acho Dene Koe First Nation and self-government discussions with the Inuvialuit, and preliminary steps to initiate devotion talks with Nunavut.[16] In its international dimension, improved governance initiatives included ongoing support for the Indigenous Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council and ensuring that the Northern governments and Indigenous organizations in Canada had opportunities to actively participate in shaping Canadian policy on Arctic issues.

The official *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, released in August 2010, reiterated the importance of the Arctic in Canada's

[15] See, for example, Liberal Party of Canada (2015), Klinkenborg (2013), Gatehouse (2013), Munro (2015), and Hume (2015).

[16] See, for example, Alcantara (2013), Cameron and Campbell (2009), Rennie (2015), and INAC (2020).

national identity and its role as an "Arctic power." Its bottom-line message mirrored the Northern Strategy, outlining a vision for the Arctic as "a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems." These themes bore striking resemblance to *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* released by the Liberals in 2000. The first and foremost pillar of Canada's foreign policy remained "the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North," but the "hard security" message of the 2006–2008 period was supplemented (if not supplanted) by the amplification in the tone of cooperation with circumpolar neighbours and Northerners. Reaffirming that Canada's Arctic sovereignty is longstanding, well-established and based on historic title (rooted, in part, on the presence of Canadian Inuit and other Indigenous peoples in the region since time immemorial), the statement projected a stable, secure circumpolar world—but one in which Canada would continue to uphold its rights as a sovereign, coastal state.[17]

Prime Minister Harper insisted that his nation-building efforts in the Arctic—one of his main legacy projects—were successful. "I think the overwhelming general perception in the North is that—and it is a fact—that no government has paid more attention and actually delivered more in the North than this government," Harper asserted in January 2014. "I mean, it isn't even a contest. We have done more and delivered more than several previous governments combined" (Chase, 2014). No federal government had invested more effort in raising the public profile of the Arctic in Canada since John Diefenbaker in the late 1950s; but the Conservatives' track record in implementing the Northern Strategy was spottier. This verdict fits with a general sense of academic frustration towards the Harper Government which, in terms of its Northern Strategy, tended to criticize its resource development and military focus at the expense of other socio-economic priorities.[18]

[17] Leading Canadian academic experts seemed to have reached a similar consensus around 2009, with the most strident proponents of the "sovereignty on thinning ice" school largely abandoning their earlier arguments that Canadian sovereignty will be a casualty of climate change and concomitant foreign challenges. Since then, academic narratives anticipating potential conflict tend to emphasize how other international events (such as Russian aggression in the Ukraine) could "spillover" into the Arctic or how new non-Arctic state and non-state actors might challenge or undermine Canadian sovereignty and security.

[18] See Griffiths et al. (2011), Lackenbauer, (2021) and Exner-Pirot (2016).

"Consultation Was Not Enough"

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau spent little time talking about the Arctic during the 2015 federal election campaign. His emphasis on the environment and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, however, indicated how his government would approach northern issues. "No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples," Trudeau highlighted in his mandate letter to each of his Cabinet ministers in November 2015. "It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership" (Prime Minister of Canada, n.d.). In May 2016, the Government of Canada announced its unqualified support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), stressing that "meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples aims to secure their free, prior and informed consent when Canada proposes to take actions which impact them and their rights" (Coates & Favel, 2016).

Trudeau's focus on reconciliation framed the Joint Statement on Environment, Climate Change, and Arctic Leadership that he and President Obama released in March 2016. The two leaders articulated a shared vision for the Arctic that included close bilateral cooperation, working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Northerners, and science-based decision-making in conservation and economic development (Prime Minister of Canada, 2016a). Indigenous and environmental organizations in Canada applauded the statement, with national Inuit leader Natan Obed stating that "the final language in this document really spoke to Inuit" and heralding it "a tremendous breakthrough for Indigenous people who live in the Arctic" (Zerehi, 2016).

Trudeau and Obama followed up with a Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement on 20 December 2016 that sought to advance the objectives that they had outlined the previous March. This follow-up announcement launched concrete actions "ensuring a strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem, with low-impact shipping, science based management of marine resources, and free from the risks of offshore oil and gas activity," that would "set the stage for deeper partnerships with other Arctic nations, including through the Arctic Council" (Prime Minister of Canada, 2016b). While framed in a bilateral and international context, the statement again provided strong insight into Canada's domestic Arctic policy goals. "The overall objective is to

support Canada's commitments to reconciliation and renewed partnerships, strong Arctic communities, sustainable Arctic economies, acting within the realities of climate change, and ensuring a healthy Arctic environment," supplemental information from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada explained (INAC, 2016).

The United States–Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement prioritized "soft security" and safety issues, environmental protection and conservation, the incorporation of Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making, supporting strong communities, and building a sustainable Arctic economy. The leaders also announced a moratorium on Arctic offshore oil and gas activity (The Liberal government failed to consult with the territorial governments or Northern Indigenous organizations about the moratorium, causing much indignation, particularly in the Northwest Territories) (Rogers, 2016; Van Dusen, 2016).

Prime Minister Trudeau also used the Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement to announce his plan to "co-develop a new Arctic Policy Framework, with Northerners, Territorial and Provincial governments, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People" that would replace his Conservative predecessor Stephen Harper's Northern Strategy. The Liberal government promised that a collaborative approach would ensure that the views and priorities of Arctic residents and governments would be at the "forefront of policy decisions affecting the future of the Canadian Arctic and Canada's role in the circumpolar Arctic." Through the framework's co-development process Ottawa promised that it would "reorganize and reprioritize federal activities in the Arctic" and "link existing federal government initiatives" (CIRNAC, 2019a).

Trudeau announced that his new framework would include an "Inuit-specific component, created in partnership with Inuit, as Inuit Nunangat [the Inuit homeland comprised of the Inuvialuit settlement region in the Northwest Territories, the entirety of Nunavut, the Nunavik region of Quebec, and the Nunatsiavut region of Newfoundland and Labrador] comprises over a third of Canada's land mass and over half of Canada's coast line, and as Inuit modern treaties govern the entirety of this jurisdictional space" (Prime Minister of Canada, 2016b). The government's focus on Inuit Nunangat throughout the process represented a significant departure from the approach utilized in Harper's Northern Strategy, which did not view the Inuit homeland as a cohesive space for policy-making and tended to examine priorities and interventions through the lens of Canada's three northern territories. The new process reflected

the Trudeau government's distinctions-based approach that "respects the unique rights, interests and circumstances of Inuit, First Nations and Métis peoples" as well as the Inuit Nunangat Declaration on Inuit-Crown Partnership—a "bilateral partnership" to act on shared priorities (Prime Minister of Canada, 2017; CIRNAC, 2018). The adoption of Inuit Nunangat as a central policy framework also reflects the vision articulated a half-century ago by Inuit leaders at the July 1970 Coppermine Conference and by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) when it was created in 1971 (Bonesteel, 2008).

The appointment of Inuit leader Mary Simon as special representative to Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett in July 2016 reflects the Trudeau's government's commitment to co-develop its Northern policy with Indigenous leaders. A longstanding champion of Inuit rights, Simon's formal role was to seek out the views of Northerners and provide advice to the federal government on future conservation and sustainable development goals that would support efforts to devise a new Shared Arctic Leadership Model. Given her mandate, as well as her previous critiques of "militaristic" Arctic strategies,[19] it is no surprise that her efforts emphasized environmental and human security considerations. Her *Interim Report on the Shared Arctic Leadership Model*, released in October 2016, identified marine conservation opportunities—and revealed how broadly she interpreted her mandate to tackle Northern (and particularly Inuit) cultural, socio-economic, and political challenges. "While conservation concerns inform many aspects of northern land claims agreements, Arctic peoples and their representative organizations and governments are far more preoccupied with issues related to supporting strong families, communities and building robust economies," Simon explained in her report. "Closing [the basic gaps between what exists in the Arctic and what other Canadians take for granted] is what northerners, across the Arctic, wanted to speak to me about as an urgent priority. Reconciliation is inextricably tied to this reality" (Simon, 2016). The *Pan-Territorial Vision*, released by the territorial governments in 2017, reiterated these governments' priorities and stressed the importance of resource development, economic diversification, innovation, and infrastructure to build stronger regional

[19] See, for example, Simon (1992, 2008).

economies (Governments of Northwest Territories, Nunavut & Yukon, 2017) (Fig. 1).

Simon's 2016 report highlighted that a "long history of visions, action plans, strategies and initiatives being devised 'for the North' and not 'with the North'" (Simon, 2017). The Liberal government sought to correct this tendency through extensive expert and public consultations with Indigenous people in Northern Canada. While Simon's Northern consultations focussed almost entirely on Inuit, the long co-development phase of the ANPF reflected a whole-of-government approach involving a wide range of departments and agencies in the region, the territorial governments, Quebec, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Regional roundtables, public submissions, and other face-to-face engagement initiatives solicited the input of Indigenous groups and other

1. Understanding and honouring the intent of Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of 1982:* All partners should understand and honour Canada's commitment to upholding Section 35 of the *Constitution* and strive to achieve forward momentum in defining how Section 35 can be applied to evolving policy and program initiatives.
2. Reconciliation: Reconciliation in partnerships and policy-making involves, at a minimum, a commitment to restoring relationships, seeing things differently than before, and making changes in power relationships.
3. Equality, trust, and mutual respect: A true partnership has to be built on equality, trust, transparency and respectful disagreement.
4. Flexible and adaptive policy: Nation-building in the Arctic will not be found in one-size-fits-all policy solutions. Policies need to adjust and adapt to circumstances.
5. Arctic leaders know their needs: Recognize that Arctic leaders know their priorities and what is required to achieve success.
6. Community-based solutions: Local leadership must be recognized and enabled to ensure community-based and community-driven solutions.
7. Confidence in capacity: An effective partnership has confidence in, and builds on, the capacities that are brought into the partnership, but also recognizes when capacity gaps need addressing.
8. Understanding and honouring agreements: The signing of an agreement is only the beginning of a partnership. Signatories need to routinely inform themselves of agreements, act on the spirit and intent, recognize capacity needs, respect their obligations, ensure substantive progress is made on implementation, expedite the resolution of disputes, and involve partners in any discussions that would lead to changes in agreements.
9. Respecting Indigenous knowledge: Indigenous and local knowledge must be valued and promoted equally to western science, in research, planning and decision-making.

Fig. 1 Mary Simon's principles of partnership (*Source* Simon, 2017)

stakeholders. This new approach to policymaking stressed that "consultation was not enough" and strived to involve stakeholders "in the drafting of the document" to place "the future into the hands of the people who live there" (CIRNAC, 2009).

A "Profound Change of Direction" or Incomplete Roadmap?

The Government of Canada released the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF) on a website with little fanfare on 10 September 2019. Rushed onto the internet the day before the Trudeau Government called a new federal election and lacking the professional polish and glossy presentation characteristic of other Canadian policy statements, the Framework purported to represent a "profound direction change." Substantively, however, the main chapter of the ANPF lays out well-established issues, challenges, and opportunities facing Canada's Arctic and Northern regions, and indicates the federal government's primary goals and objectives. It details the impacts of climate change, particularly as it affects social and cultural norms, ways of knowing, and on-the-land activities. It also highlights the broad spectrum of socio-economic challenges facing the North, ranging from the lack of economic opportunity, to mental health challenges, to food insecurity, to gaps in infrastructure, health care, education, skills development, and income equality across the region. The framework notes the opportunities and challenges that stem from the North's youthful population, particularly in Nunavut where the median age is just over 26. In its effort to link existing federal initiatives to the ANPF, the government highlights specific examples of how the government is already addressing some of these issues in collaboration with its Indigenous and territorial partners throughout the document.

The ANPF's first and primary goal is to create conditions so that "Canadian Arctic and northern Indigenous peoples are resilient and healthy." This priority animates the entire document. To achieve this, the ANPF pledges to end poverty, eradicate hunger, reduce suicides, close the gap on education outcomes, provide greater access to skills developments, adopt culturally appropriate approaches to justice issues, and eliminate the housing crisis in the North. As examples of action already taken, the document notes the government's ongoing efforts to "support better, more relevant and accessible education," funding and skills

training for community-led food production projects, updates to Nutrition North, and its investment in new addictions treatment facilities in Nunavut and Nunavik. This patchwork of government initiatives has not impressed critics who lamented that the framework failed to elucidate a coherent strategy or to establish clear metrics to address the dismal socio-economic and health indicators related to Canada's North. Despite few details about how the government actually plans to accomplish its overarching goal of "resilient and healthy" northern peoples and communities, this broad vision resonates with its strong commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, captured in the eighth goal: the promise of a future that "supports self-determination and nurtures mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

Between these two pillars are a broad range of challenges, opportunities, and promises that form a tangled web of underdeveloped priorities. The second goal is strengthened infrastructure, including broadband connectivity, multi-modal transportation infrastructure, multi-purpose communications, energy, and transportation corridors, energy security and sustainability at the community-level, and social infrastructure. The ANPF points out that the government has already provided over $190 million in funding for improvements and expansion of existing local air and marine infrastructure. While these community-focussed initiatives are essential to the resilience and well-being of Northerners, the challenge remains how to justify the exorbitant costs associated with much larger "transformative investments in infrastructure." For example, the policy framework cites the federal government's investment of $71.7 million through the National Trade Corridors Fund for four Nunavut transportation projects. This funding included $21.5 million for preparatory work to the $500-million Grays Bay Port and Road Project, which, if completed, would create the first road connecting Nunavut to the rest of Canada. The ANPF mentions the project once and provides no detail on how the government plans to support this massive endeavour moving forward. Furthermore, it is silent on how decision-makers will approach opponents of the project who argue that the road will threaten the Bathurst caribou herd. More generally, how will the government decide which infrastructure projects get what funding when the ANPF and partner documents reiterate that so much investment is required across the North?

The framework highlights the need for "strong, sustainable, diversified, and inclusive local and regional economies," particularly through

increased Indigenous ownership and participation, the reduction of income inequality, the optimization of resource development, economic diversification (including land-based, traditional economic activities), and the enhancement of trade and investment opportunities.[20] The framework also highlights the idea of a "conservation economy" (which makes conservation an important part of local economies) that the federal government is slowly growing in the Arctic in collaboration with northern Indigenous stakeholders. For instance, the creation of Tallurutiup Imanga Marine Conservation Area, co-developed with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, has involved the establishment of the Guardians programme in Arctic Bay and funding to improve small craft harbours in the adjacent communities. Beyond these measures, however, the framework provides no roadmap or economic model for how to grow up and diversify the northern economy. How will the government approach the debate between those who want to heavily regulate resource development and those who believe regulations are strangling the northern economy—a conflict that the framework explicitly acknowledges? The consultations highlighted "co-management of renewable resources … as a venue for collaborative management that can help integrate different viewpoints," but the ANPF does not indicate how this will work in practice.

The framework's fourth goal is to ensure that both Indigenous and scientific knowledge and understanding guide decision-making, and that Arctic and Northern peoples are included in the knowledge-creation process. While the government points to the funding it has already provided for the Polar Continental Shelf Program and the Eureka Weather Station, the framework includes no specifics on how it will support and fund its proposed expansion of domestic and international northern research. The same lack of detail on funding and execution is also reflected in discussion of the government's fifth goal, which focusses on ensuring healthy, resilient Arctic and northern ecosystems and promises action on a wide array of major objectives, ranging from mitigation and adaptation measures to climate change, to sustainable use of the ecosystems and species, and safe and environmentally responsible shipping.

[20] It cites existing federal efforts such as the Jobs and Tourism Initiative and Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency's Inclusive Diversification and Economic Advancement in the North (IDEANorth) programme, which "makes foundational investments in economic infrastructure, sector development and capacity building."

The sixth and seventh goals highlight measures to strengthen the rules-based international order in the Arctic. Emphasizing that the region is "well known for its high level of international cooperation on a broad range of issues," and "despite increased interest in the region from both Arctic and non-Arctic states," the ANPF commits to continued multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the Arctic. It confirms the Arctic Council as the "pre-eminent forum for Arctic cooperation" complemented by the "extensive international legal framework [that] applies to the Arctic Ocean." There is muscular language proclaiming how Canada "is firmly asserting its presence in the North" and pledges to "more clearly define Canada's Arctic boundaries"—a surprising statement given that Canada filed its Arctic continental shelf submission in May 2019, and one that seems to deviate from Canada's longstanding insistence that "Canada's Arctic sovereignty is longstanding, well-established and based on historic title, founded in part on the presence of Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples since time immemorial" (as written in Conservatives' 2009 Northern Strategy). There are also peculiar statements, such as the need to "regularize a bilateral dialogue with the United States on Arctic issues," with no clear explanation of where the bilateral relationship is deficient or what this means (CIRNAC, 2019c; Government of Canada, 2009).

The overall tenor, however, is generally optimistic. Canada's domestic priorities are being projected unabashedly into the international sphere, emphasizing the desire for regional peace and stability so that "Arctic and northern peoples thrive economically, socially and environmentally." Innovative elements include promises to "champion the integration of diversity and gender considerations into projects and initiatives, guided by Canada's feminist foreign policy," and increasing youth engagement in the circumpolar dialogue. Unfortunately, concrete examples of opportunities or new mechanisms to do so are not provided. Similarly, promises to help Arctic and northern businesses to pursue international opportunities "that are aligned with local interests and values" are welcome but vague, and the Trudeau government's vision for the Arctic Economic Council (AEC) is unclear. Well-established priorities, such as food security, improving health care services, and suicide prevention, are presented with no reference whatsoever to what has been done to forward these agendas internationally. There are some discernable policy changes, however. NATO is presented as a "key multilateral forum" in the Arctic—a clear shift from the reticence of previous governments who

feared unnecessarily antagonizing Russia by having the alliance articulate an Arctic focus. Concurrently, the policy commits to "restart a regular bilateral dialogue on Arctic issues with Russia in key areas related to Indigenous issues, scientific cooperation, environmental protection, shipping and search and rescue"—a welcome acknowledgement that, despite resurgent strategic competition and divergent interests elsewhere in the world, both countries have many common interests in the Arctic. Furthermore, Canada commits to "enhance the reputation and participation of Arctic and northern Canadians, especially Indigenous peoples, in relevant international forums and negotiations," and to promote the "full inclusion of Indigenous knowledge" in polar research and decision-making. Specific examples relating to the marine environment, particularly the visionary work of the Pikialasorsuaq Commission, point to the benefits of this approach.

The priorities in the standalone "Safety, Security, and Defence" chapter (CIRNAC, 2019b) include Canada's continued demonstration of sovereignty, the strengthening of the military presence in the region, the defence of North America, improved domain awareness, reinforced whole-of-society emergency management, and continued engagement with local communities, Indigenous groups, and international partners. Much of the discussion reiterates policy elements in Canada's 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Department of National Defence of Canada, 2017). "While Canada sees no immediate threat in the Arctic and the North, as the region's physical environment changes, the circumpolar North is becoming an area of strategic international importance, with both Arctic and non-Arctic states expressing a variety of economic and military interests in the region," the policy framework emphasizes. "As the Arctic becomes more accessible, these states are poised to conduct research, transit through, and engage in more trade in the region. Given the growing international interest and competition in the Arctic, continued security and defence of Canada's Arctic requires effective safety and security frameworks, national defence, and deterrence." Priorities identified in the chapter include Canada's continued demonstration of sovereignty, the enhancement of the military presence in the region, the defence of North America, improved domain awareness, strengthened whole-of-society emergency management, and continued engagement with local communities, Indigenous groups, and international partners. It also points to the work around marine safety already accomplished by the *Oceans Protection Plan* (*OPP*) (Kikkert & Lackenbauer, 2021; Transport

Canada, 2020). Given the governmental action already taken through *SSE* and the *OPP*, this section of the ANPF provides the most detail on how the government aims to accomplish its objectives. It is also telling that this chapter was written with the least direct consultation and input from Northerners, thus offering the clearest vision of the federal government's priorities.

The Government of Canada has maintained that the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework represents a "profound change of direction." The seemingly random assortment of ongoing initiatives scattered throughout the framework's goals, however, highlight the lack of coherence in the federal government's approach to policy and programming in the North. While purporting to offer a "roadmap" to achieve a "shared vision" that identifies hazards, problems, and opportunities, the Government of Canada has not provided clear policy direction that sets a predictable route or establishes milestones to gauge progress. In tangible policy terms, the framework reflects and formalizes an ongoing process in which well-known policy challenges are addressed through ad hoc implementation by the federal government when its priorities align with those of key stakeholder partners at the territorial/provincial and Indigenous government/representative organization levels.

"A Shared Vision" or Muddling Through?

The partner chapters of the ANPG represent one of the most confusing parts of the entire framework and raise an important question: what happens when priorities do not align between key stakeholders? The Inuit Nunangat, NWT, Nunavut, and Pan-Territorial chapters that are included as appendices to the framework represent "the visions, aspirations and priorities of our co-development partners"—but they also highlight inability to reach "unanimous agreement" on key issues. At the beginning of the document, the government asserts that these partner chapters were "crucial" to the co-development process, that they "map out areas of present and future" collaboration between the Government of Canada and its partners, and that they will "provide guidance" on its implementation. At the tail end of the document, however, a caveat notes that these perspectives "do not necessarily reflect the views of either the federal government, or of the other partners." There is little indication throughout the framework on how exactly these chapters will inform federal policymaking, particularly in areas of disagreement. How will the

framework reconcile some of the key differences in the partner chapters, particularly the NWT's call for a "lifting of the Beaufort Sea Moratorium" and the creation of a co-management agreement for the "responsible and sustainable development" of the region's offshore resources? (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019). In April 2019, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed shed some light on the government's continued struggle to truly co-develop policies with Northerners. "After four years, this government is still not necessarily understanding how to transform the working relationship," he told a reporter. "… How the public service acts and the advice that it gives to any particular minister of the day has been entrenched for so long that we end up fighting that more than we fight the good intentions of ministers" (Wells, 2019).

Throughout the co-development of the ANPF, Trudeau emphasized its "Inuit-specific component, created in partnership with Inuit" that would take Inuit Nunangat as the primary lens through which to view policies focussed on Inuit. This represented a significant departure from previous governments in adopting an ethnic-based approach that seemed to place a higher political priority on relations with an Inuit advocacy organization rather than the territorial governments (including the Government of Nunavut responsible for a territory comprised of 85% Inuit). When asked whether the long-term goal for Inuit Nunangat was "a contiguous political space with similar jurisdiction to the provinces in the south," Obed replied: "Well, we'll see where our self-determination takes us" (Wells, 2019). By extension, the policy framework opened space to deliver services to Inuit through mechanisms parallel to (and in competition with) established Canadian federal-provincial/territorial channels. The Inuit Nunangat chapter, authored by ITK and included as an appendix to the ANPF, may or may not reflect the views of the federal government given its status as a "partner chapter," thus leaving lingering questions. How will Ottawa operationalize its focus on Inuit Nunangat moving forward? Will it support the re-drawing of Canada's political boundaries if self-determining Inuit decide that this is what they want? How will Inuit Nunangat, as a political jurisdiction, interact with the current roles and responsibilities of public territorial and provincial governments? The Trudeau government has offered little to no clarity on these fundamental questions with implications not only for the Arctic but for Canadian governance more generally.

The Government of Canada's emphasis on collaborative governance recognizes that where, in the past, Ottawa defined problems facing the

North incorrectly because of little consultation with Northerners, it set the wrong priorities and produced ineffective or unpopular policies. While many stakeholders have lauded the highly democratic consultative process involved in developing the ANPF, the actual product—with its comprehensive but thin main chapter published by the federal government and series of "partner chapters" offering distinct ideas—also speaks to the inability to achieve consensus and a retreat to general ideas rather than concrete implementation plans.

The ANPF concludes with a promise that the government will have ten years to "bring its goals and objectives into reality" and advises that federal-territorial-provincial and Indigenous partners will co-develop solutions and new governance mechanisms. As Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett noted after the ANPF's release, "you begin with the policy and then you work toward implementation … It's a matter of us now, as we move through each budget cycle of each government, having a road map for closing these gaps." Actual implementation of the ANPF remains opaque nearly two years later, with the minister's emphasis on "each budget cycle of each government" speaking to the absence of a long-term, publicly disclosed plan. A November 2020 press release, following a virtual meeting on ANPF implementation (the only one held as of June 2021), is a case in point. "Through the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework Canada will continue to work with our territorial, provincial and Indigenous partners to Build Back Better in a way that supports northern economies, as well as the social and political self-determination that underpins successful and long-lasting regional development," a cryptic press release offers. "These and other initiatives will continue to roll out in support of key priorities across Arctic and Northern regions thanks to collaboration with partners to the Framework and through the national and regional governance mechanisms discussed today" (CIRNAC, 2020).

In short, while Canada's "new" Arctic and Northern Policy Framework reiterates many complex challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic, and setting laudable goals such as ending poverty, eradicating hunger, and eliminating the housing crisis in the North, it offers few substantive approaches or mechanisms to meet them. With no budget, prioritization of investment plans, benchmarks, or consolidated plan to address the myriad challenges and issues identified in the ANPF, the Canadian framework stands in sharp control to the Russian strategic documents

and implementation plans released in 2020 and 2021 that reflect a clear centralized plan, budgets, timelines, and measurable outcomes.[21]

The absence of a coherent strategy embedded in the ANPF speaks to the complicated process of co-developing policies across Canada's wide and disparate Arctic and Northern regions. Many different voices need to be taken into account, and the framework admits that the federal government and its partners could not reach a consensus on various issues. Rather than seeking to sell a particular vision, the Trudeau Government has instead offered general support for the broad spectrum of well-established Northern priorities without committing to specific objectives—and suggesting that this proves it is more responsive to Northerners' needs than preceding governments. This is revelatory of a policymaking ethos that avoids setting key immediate priorities and instead prefers to "discuss national and regional governance approaches going forward" (CIRNAC, 2020). Accordingly, over the past two year, there are little indications that the ANPF vision has secured widespread policy traction. While COVID-19-related travel restrictions and competitive policy priority associated with the pandemic partially explain limited progress, and various federal departments pursue ANPF investments identified in budget lines, actions to date show little evidence of a profoundly "new" direction.

When the ANPF was released publicly, Iqaluit Mayor Madeleine Redfern noted how "the framework speaks to the fact that we need to be more inclusive, more strategic. It's not a strategy per se, other than to say we need to actually be working together." Along similar lines, Nunavut Premier Joe Savikataaq called the policy a good beginning but noted, "We will be a lot happier when there is more tangible stuff that comes out" (Tømmerbakke, 2019). Will the Canadian federal government be able to co-develop initiatives in the face of differing opinions and priorities, especially around controversial issues such as resource and infrastructure development? More generally, it is unclear how the federal government intends to steer an increasingly expansive network of stakeholders as it works toward implementing a ten-year plan. Can it overcome disagreements and navigate the lack of consensus to move forward on the ANPF's strategic objectives? A clear and coherent governmental roadmap for action remains conspicuously absent so far. Instead, the framework

[21] On Russian strategies, see, for example: Sergunin and Konyshev (2019), Lagutina (2021), and Sukhankin et al. (2021).

continues to perpetuate a long history of ad hoc, reactive Arctic policymaking[22] that promotes incremental progress across a broad front of known issues. While delivering on Mary Simon's call for a "flexible and adaptive policy" that can "adjust and adapt to circumstances," it reiterates and consolidates longstanding needs without articulating a transparent action plan. Instead, in the Canadian policy space, "co-development" and "co-implementation" place the onus on Northerners to devise the practical strategies to close "gaps for the people of the North" and create "a lasting legacy of sustainable economic development." Whether this can produce material results that reduce "the basic gaps between what exists in the Arctic and what other Canadians take for granted"[23] remains to be seen.

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[22] See, for example, Huebert (1995), Coates et al. (2008), Griffiths et al. (2011), and Lackenbauer (2016, 2019).

[23] Simon quoted in CIRNAC (n.d.).

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