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Continental divide: Shifting Canadian and Russian Arcticness

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Introduction

People are often defined by the locations in which they are born, in which they live or to which they are culturally and historically tied. Geography is one of the many factors that plays a role in shaping culture, politics and society. Yet, societies are tied to more than one defined geography which can have implications on their development. The Arctic is but one example. Generally perceived as one region – and in many cases, with having one identity – the Arctic holds eight countries and several indigenous nations with distinct cultures. Sometimes, Arctic provinces seem to have more in common with each other than with other areas of their countries; however, it is misleading to assume that these commonalities mean that the Arctic is changing uniformly. It should be clarified that the authors believe that there are no absolute differences or similarities between geographical regions considered in their socio-political representation and this chapter only seeks to outline and propose the instrumental benefits of such a theorisation.

The future of the Arctic is fundamentally important to the future of the world, not only due to the fact that a changing climate means a changing world, but also because the north teaches the world about resilience and the importance of working together. The peoples who have been living in the Arctic know that it is not only beneficial to work together and protect the environment, but it is part of the very core of life. Without this, there would be no ability to live successfully in the Arctic.

Speaking of the future of the Arctic can conjure many different aspects, including the changing climate, the impacts of tourism, potential new shipping routes, extractive natural resource development
and developing infrastructure needs. Each of these aspects plays out on the international stage in a plethora of ways, but the string that ties these pieces together is the people who live there, those who are being directly impacted by the issues. Although the region is changing dramatically, in some ways universally, the reaction to and the implications of these changes are different. Across the entire region, the climate is changing and ice is melting, which means the opening of shipping routes and a potential increase in both long-term and short-term populations. Nevertheless, how countries react to this, how their politics and society are shaped by these changes, is different and dramatically so in some cases.

This chapter will analyse the two countries with the largest geographical space in the region and assess the shifting political and societal changes in both Canada and Russia, providing a window into how two countries are reinterpreting their relations with the north. Canada and Russia have historically-rooted differences that have led to the creation of two Arctics: culturally, socially and politically. Furthermore, the core political and social values of these countries will be assessed through the lens of their Arcticness, generally defined as a perceived right of a state to the Arctic territory, while also evaluating north–south relations within the countries. It is clear that ‘discussion on the changing Arctic environment, as well as on the impacts of such change on the cultures and livelihoods of indigenous and local communities, plays out against the backdrop of the shifting views on the concept of sovereignty in international relations and international law’.

The role that sovereignty and the view of self plays in how countries and Arctic territories develop should not be negated. This is why, throughout each section of this chapter, three areas will be expanded on to highlight the present and future trajectories of Arctic development in the context of a narrowing international gaze on this part of the world. The political and social dimension of north–south relations will be analysed from the perspective of historically defined relations between the colonisers and the colonised. Particular attention will be paid to the different meanings these relations have produced, which appear idiosyncratic to each continent.

**Canadian Arctic**

Canada’s north has played an important role in the creation of Canadian national identity. The region is still vaguely defined in three main
ways: as north of the Arctic Circle, north of the 60th parallel, or north of the 60th parallel and the Inuit homeland, Inuit Nunangat. For the purpose of this analysis, the definition of Canada’s Arctic will be the political definition of the term and, therefore, it will include not only the geographical region above the Arctic Circle, but also the entirety of the three northern territories and the Inuit territories in Québec and Newfoundland/Labrador (Nunavik and Nunatsiavut respectively). This distinction is important to note, due to the fact that although parts of Canada’s north are not geographically in the Arctic, the culture and society found in these regions are intrinsically tied to the Arctic and, therefore, are integral in any analysis seeking the implications of change in the region.

The political rhetoric and culture in Canada’s Arctic has undergone dramatic shifts over the last 50 years. This, in turn, has had implications for both those who have lived in the region for millennia as well as newer transplants. This changing society is still deeply rooted in the historical bearings of the region, which creates a dichotomy of old and new, of indigenous and settler, and of sovereignty and multinationalism. Some of the Canadian north’s most fundamental changes in the last few years have been political, demographic and a shift in the state of knowledge and its intergenerational transition.

Canada’s Arctic has always been felt as an important region in the psyche of the Canadian people. From the role of the polar bear to the northern lights, from the use of the Inukshuk to the international role that Canada plays as a ‘Northern’ nation, the Arctic is inherently important to the people who live there and important to how Canada sees itself on the international scale. This claim to ‘Northerness’ could be construed as disingenuous, as the vast majority of Canadians do not live in the Arctic, and most have never visited. In fact, of the approximately 33 million people who call Canada home, only approximately 104,000 of them live above the 60th parallel. Even with so few people living in these northern regions, often in very challenging conditions that differ from much of the rest of Canada and with different issues than the rest of Canada, the dramatic changes that are happening there cannot simply be shrugged off as regionally ‘Arctic’ issues, but must be recognised in their intrinsic Canadian and Arctic nature. The three major shifts – political, demographic and knowledge-based – that will be analysed in this chapter tell a story of a region that is simultaneously Canadian and Arctic, yet neither at the same time. It is a region that can be defined neither by the country of which it is a part, nor the geographic space to which it belongs.
Political change

Changes in the discourse of Canadian politics are one of the key issues surrounding the north. Previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper created a specific political rhetoric when it came to the region, which focused on sovereignty and militarisation. ‘From attempting to replace the beaver with the polar bear to substituting human rights leaders with ice-breakers on the fifty-dollar bill, Harper has used his time in office to determinedly shift Canada’s national identity from a “peacekeeping nation” to one focused on security and strength’, with the north playing a crucial role.³

With the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, there was an expected change to a more Canadian view on collaborative multinationalism. The new politics ‘mark a return to Canada’s historic emphasis on multilateralism and careful diplomacy. Indicative of as much, the relationship with Russia has stabilised after Trudeau’s government took over in November of 2015’.⁴ However, the Prime Minister has yet to make known his specific politics in the Arctic, and there is much uncertainty as to the long-term implications of a Trudeau government. The difficult relationship between the indigenous peoples in the north and the federal government, located far to the south, has led many to question the policies implemented by Ottawa. This is unsurprising given the colonial history marred by discrimination, institutionalised abuse and forced assimilation. Experiences such as these were not uncommon: ‘Nomadic hunters were forced off the land into settlements. Children were sent to residential schools in the south. Tongue-twisting names in native languages were discarded in favour of numbers. Social problems, such as rampant alcoholism and drug use and a high suicide rate, were rife in the settlements. When Canada felt the need to assert its sovereignty in the 1950s, Inuit families from northern Québec were relocated to unfamiliar terrain in the high Arctic. Many of these “human flagpoles” grew sick and died’.⁵

This history informs the politics of today and the mistrust that is often still prevalent. It also ensures that many stay sceptical about the political promises that are being made, leading people to ask: will policy shift as well as rhetoric? Prime Minister Trudeau’s rhetoric is focusing on nation-to-nation relations with the indigenous peoples in Canada, which can in part be seen by the appointment of Mary Simon as the Minister of Indigenous Affairs’ Special Representative on the Arctic and the official adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).⁶ However, people are still waiting for the
real policy applications of this changing rhetoric: UNDRIP has yet to be incorporated into Canadian law and discussions are ongoing. Canada is currently at a crossroads in its political relationship with its northern half. Only time will tell how the real day-to-day international and domestic policy will shift in the coming years.

Changing demography

Canada’s Arctic has always been vast, but remote from the south. Although the percentage of indigenous peoples is particularly high in the north, especially in the Inuit territories of Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit, this is not true for the whole region. Yukon, for instance, is predominantly non-indigenous with only about 20 per cent of the population being First Nations.⁷ This highlights the problems of making generalisations even within Canada’s north, let alone across the entire Arctic region.

There is now a shift in the demography of the north, not only in the nationalities of people living there, but also in the average age of the people living there. The latter change will be fleshed out in the following section. According to the 2011 Canadian Census, there are approximately 2,900 Canadian immigrants living in the Northwest Territories, with a large swathe coming from the Philippines, the UK, Vietnam and the United States.⁸ The population of the territory, which is an area of approximately 1 million km², is approximately 43,500 people. That means that approximately 6.7 per cent of people living in the territory are immigrants. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 11.3 per cent of the population of Yukon were foreign-born or immigrants, with the largest percentages coming from similar countries as the Northwest Territories.⁹ Nunavut was the territory with the lowest proportion of immigrants at only approximately 2 per cent of the population.¹⁰

These numbers show a changing landscape in the north. With more international immigrants, and some refugees, heading to the north, some of the societies in these regions are also in flux. This is part of a larger trend in Canada which is attempting to successfully create a multi-national, multi-cultural society. Although the numbers of immigrants are not extremely large in the north at the moment, with the changing climate and the potential for milder weather, the Canadian north may have to prepare for a large shift in the demographic which will have lasting impacts on its societies. The Northwest Territories, for
example, recognises the benefit that immigrants can play in boosting the economy and building on the society in the region. The Nominee Program, which is one example of a government policy attempting to achieve this boost, is designed to ensure high-skilled individuals, including immigrants, are living and working in the Northwest Territories.11 As Jackson Lafferty, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, said in a speech, ‘[The Nominee Program] initiative is a key component of our Growth Strategy, aimed at attracting 2,000 new residents to the NWT over the next 5 years’.12

A large population of indigenous peoples still live in the north. From the four Inuit territories, to the Dene people in the Northwest Territories, to the Gwich’in in the Yukon, there are many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples living above the 60th parallel. This does not mean that the region is not diverse: according to the Northwest Territories Language Commission, for example, the Government of the Northwest Territories recognises 11 languages as official, including English, French, Cree, Inuktitut and Gwich’in.13 As shown by the differences in language, the differences among indigenous peoples in the north should not be negated. Indigenous peoples in Canada include a vast array of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, each with their own history, culture and traditions. Although there will likely be an increase in the immigrants moving to the northern region of Canada, the society there is already varied in many ways.

The changing state of knowledge

The way knowledge is passed down from generation to generation was almost entirely disrupted in the twentieth century due to the horrors of residential school. The experiences in the north were somewhat different to the rest of Canada partly because of the remoteness and the lack of economic development in the region at the time. In fact, there were only six residential schools in the three northern territories by 1950. This demonstrates that speaking of such an issue on a country-wide basis can be misleading, so much so that the Truth and Reconciliation Council (TRC) wrote a separate report on ‘The Inuit and Northern Experience’.14 This Commission was designed as a response to the residential schooling and the healing that was needed. The report that came out of the TRC was not only an analysis of the legacy of residential schooling, but also an indication of how Canada could work toward a healthier and stronger future together.
There were significant differences between the residential schools of the south and those of the north, notwithstanding the distances involved, but also the fact that the schools were administered (after the 1970s) by the northern governments themselves, as opposed to Indian Affairs, which was the case for the southern schools. These schools, even though they were not segregated, ‘disrupted the intergenerational transmission of values and skills and imparted few if any of the skills needed for employment’. Not only was there a dramatic impact on the skills transmitted, but ‘when [the students] returned to their communities, they were estranged from their parents, their language, and their culture’. This left a gap in communities that passed information in a way that was different to the ‘Western’ system; for the northern communities it was one based on the importance of the land and learning from previous generations. The loss of culture and language, and the estrangement from families, had an impact on education and subsequently the lifestyles of those living in the north.

The shape of education in the north is changing, although the underlying principles are not: ‘schools are relatively new to many indigenous communities, but community responsibility for the education of the young is not’. And the impacts of a Western-based education system has left questions and problems surrounding the way that children are being taught. Zebedee Nungak, who was President of the Makivik Corporation in the 1990s as well as an important negotiator in the James Bay and North Québec Agreement (a land claims agreement signed in 1975 spanning much of northern Québec), speaks to this, comparing the current Nunavik education system to the failure of the Franklin expedition. He also emphasises the societal turmoil that came from such a dramatic shift in education from one generation to the next, asking the reader to ‘consider that our grandparents, the first generation of Inuit to observe their grandchildren (us) being herded into uni-lingually English federal schools, were the last of countless previous generations to leave the nomadic lifestyle’. Education in the north was, in many cases, information passed down through generations, not something that was taught in a school: ‘Inuit education did not traditionally comprise a separate set of practices, supervised and documented by an administrative body, this topic necessitated input from Elders who were raised and educated by their parents on the land’.

With a shifting age demographic, as well as the boom of technology, the way that knowledge is being transmitted has also been impacted – not only the passing of knowledge, but also the culture and
the society that depend on these relationships. Technology has a large role to play in how new generations are learning, and although the technology in the north may be slower than some southerners are used to, it still has an important role in the lives of newer generations. In today’s society, the young can turn to Google instead of their elders and parents to learn the answers to some of the questions they have, and this will likely have a lasting impact on historical relationships built on learning and sharing of knowledge. The exact nature and magnitude of the impact this will have on communities in the north has yet to be determined, but one can be sure that it will shape the society of the next generations of Northerners, much as it will those living in the rest of Canada.

**Russian Arctic**

The place of the Arctic, and the north in general, in Russian history and national identity is punctuated with periods of heightened political interest and exploratory ventures. The populating of the Russian north began in earnest in the nineteenth century, while industrial development began in the 1930s–1940s and continued with the discovery of oil and gas in the 1960s–1980s. Seen from the south as a northern frontier, a resource bed of hydrocarbons and marine resources, a curse for convicts and a source of pride in the popular imaginary, the Russian Arctic defies a single definition. The Russian Arctic is also referred to by southerners in more abstract terms as ‘a condition’ of Northernness, a geocultural non-place expressed linguistically through the concept of Russkiy Sever (the Russian North), or a socio-cultural entity defined as a vernacular mental cultural region. The ambiguous attitude of the Russians to their northern region is captured to an extent in the poll results of the Fond Obychestvennoye Mnenie (2015) which found that two-thirds of Russians support the state’s policy of exploration in the Arctic; yet, the majority of the respondents to the poll expressed no desire to go there themselves.

The politically-defined Russian Arctic, known as the ‘Russian Arctic Zone’, is generally described as a macroregion (which is defined in Federal Law on State Strategic Planning of 28 June 2014) that is, a special area of state governance implying similarity of economic and political interests (and naturally that of geographical conditions). Little affinity and lateral economic or political interactions between Arctic territorial units have been identified, while most of the resources
required for regional development are being outsourced (from workforce to technologies to energy to food).\textsuperscript{27}

The ‘Russian Arctic’ is often used, especially in International Relations studies, interchangeably with ‘Russia’ or ‘Moscow’ to indicate the Russian government.\textsuperscript{28} This implies subjugation and inseparability of the region from its metropole. While the term Russian Arctic Zone, used extensively in domestic political documents, is itself indicative of such centre–periphery relations and the supremacy of the government in representing and managing the Russian Arctic as a border region, there are indisputably more layers to the Russian Arctic (or any political region) that are often ignored ‘to accommodate the story’.\textsuperscript{29}

**Political change**

After the Arctic Strategy (Foundations in 2008 and Strategy in 2013)\textsuperscript{30} was issued, the heuristic parallels with the Soviet Union’s industrialisation efforts were inevitable.\textsuperscript{31} Russian academics (e.g. A. Granberg, A. Tatarkin, A. Chilingarov) en masse supported Putin’s undertakings, and some even insisted that there cannot be continuity between the Soviet Union and Russia, for the former’s aggressive approach and reliance on convict labour is incompatible with the apparently liberal and democratic conditions of present-day Russia.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, the institutional model of hypercentralisation adopted by the Soviet state and enacted through Glavsevmorput (semi-militarised ‘fiefdom’) and Dalstroi (industrial complex heavily reliant on convict labour)\textsuperscript{33} have been ‘succeeded’ in 2015 by a mere coordinating committee with no budget of its own, located in Moscow and headed by Dmitry Rogozin.

Cartography has long been interpreted as an associate of power and domination.\textsuperscript{34} In this respect, the new Russian Arctic map presents an interesting case study. The geographic delimitation of the so-called Russian Arctic Zone (Presidential Decree of 2014) was not based on ethnic distribution borders, nor administrative borders of subregions, nor even on the Arctic Circle of latitude, leading to the reduction of the overall area compared to the previous delimitation document of 1989. Geographic determinism of economic and political priorities of the state hit the predominantly indigenous Sakha Republic especially hard as it saw eight of its districts (\textit{ulus}) dropped from the list of the Arctic land territories and denied investment privileges as a result.
Development and demography

Whether continuous or divergent, Russian Arctic development brings to light similarities in the challenges faced by the Kremlin before and after the regime change and the north–south dynamics created to solve them. It seems likely that in Russia as it is today, neither development nor governance of the Russian Arctic region can be fully self-sourced, that is, based on its indigenous populations and local resources. In terms of administration, in Russia, most of the Arctic provinces are governed by either first generation locals of non-native descent or southern-born and educated migrants (Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Norilsk, Arkhangelsk); only one self-proclaimed ethnic native (evenk) is heading a Sakha Arctic district. Since most of the indigenous peoples have adopted traditional Russian names and speak the Russian language, it becomes nearly impossible to determine the ethnic association of a person living in the Arctic without overt self-identification or direct inquiry. It is further complicated by the fact that only about 25 per cent of the total Russian Arctic population is made up of ethnic natives, with Russians representing the unrivalled majority.

Yet it is often overlooked that ‘colonisation’ of the Arctic is not a one-way street: the non-indigenous settlers and their descendants have in the past undergone so-called ‘indigenisation’ (in Russian, korenizatsiia), whether through intermarriages or by self-identification. At the same time, some natives abandoned traditional lifestyles or migrated to cities, other parts of Russia or abroad. Marina Kovtun, the Murmansk-born governor, noted that being a Murmansk citizen is a ‘trait of character, of the soul’, pointing at multi-culturalism, on the one hand, and the values of national unity, on the other.

The workforce required to effectuate any industrial project and the fluxes of migration from such industrialisation have already incited several discussions on the complex socio-economic development of the region, the future of Siberian monotowns and workforce supply strategies. The total deficit of skilled workers in the Russian Arctic, according to official sources, amounts to 25,000 people a year. This number obviously does not cover the available migrant workforce or factor in infrastructure and auxiliary personnel as well as unemployed family members that breadwinners bring with them. The general migration trend, however, remains negative with the Russian north and east losing population to the western and southern regions with some exceptions (e.g. Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug).
Shift work and the expedition method of exploration in the Arctic have gained ground as strategies for cutting infrastructure costs in the most recent remote north Siberian projects (e.g. ‘Yamal LNG’, liquefied natural gas). They have made it more difficult to assess the size of the external element of the population and to evaluate the extent and type of social impact this has on indigenous communities and the natural environment.

The changing state of knowledge

The northern ethnic groups are divided into large indigenous groups (i.e., over 50,000 people) and small-numbered peoples of the north, of which there are 17 in the Russian Arctic as per the Law of 2015 on the Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples, although only the latter have a special protected status. Assimilation of the indigenous population was a result of extensive economic migration to the north in the twentieth century and aggressive interference by the Soviet government in the economic, political and cultural practices (e.g. Resolution of the RSFSR Ministers’ Council of 1960 on ‘Additional assistance in economic and cultural development of the peoples of the North’). Nonetheless, the Soviet experience was not all negative: ABC-books in local languages were first published in the 1930s; the teachers that taught in indigenous communities were recruited from the indigenous peoples; and nomadic schools, too, first appeared in the 1920s. Today, the nomadic form of education is being tested in Yamal and Yakutia, but special boarding schools still remain the most widespread form of primary and secondary education in the remote parts of the north.

The approach to ethnic policy-making in present-day Russia changed, but some of the problems (e.g. maintaining the balance between traditional culture preservation and culture-sensitive modernisation) still remain. In 2016, the Government of Russia signed a plan of action for the third and final stage of the Concept of Sustainable Development of Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (2009) for 2016–2025. The Concept of Sustainable Development (2009) foresees a list of loosely-defined measures intended to improve the standards of living and update regulations related to state support of indigenous peoples (e.g. fishing and hunting rights, internet, ethnic tourism, transport services, power supply, employment stimulation, alcohol restriction and distance learning).
Quintessentially, the contemporary ethos of indigenous population development can be found in the words of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug Education Department Director on nomadic schools: ‘We must give parents and children a right of choice’ to stay in the community and live a traditional nomadic life or seek a modern life. This choice depends not only on the schooling system, but also on the state of the natural environment, limitations of industrial development, and inclusion in the decision-making process and profit-sharing from the industrial use of land. The plan under the 2009 Concept is to be realised before 2025; however, a large amount of industrial construction is already under way.

Siberian (including Arctic) autonomous okrugs have been granted to the indigenous peoples since the 1930s to accommodate their right to self-determination; the irony is that the okrugs located within the oil, gas and other natural resource regions have attracted external economic actors and political leadership that co-opted cultural identification for the purposes of gaining political weight.

Differences and similarities between the Canadian and Russian Arctic regions

Canada’s and Russia’s northern frontiers both experienced a period of southern discovery, geographic exploration, colonisation, resource boom and migration. Now, both face many of the same environmental crises and some of the same political questions that arise as a result. The ideology that accompanied these endeavours often differed, yet both countries had dialogues with indigenous cultures and were transformed by them. Similarly, the mentality towards and the relationship with the environment came full circle, starting from a perceived emptiness to the current recognition of the complexity that is essential for survival of not only the indigenous peoples but also for the entire human race.

Both Russia and Canada seem to have a vague definition of what the ‘North’ truly means to their country, geographically, politically and culturally. This stems not only from an historical distancing of the region and a preference for southern views, but from a more current recognition of the overarching impact that the ‘North’ can have in defining the country’s self. Both Canada and Russia are internationally recognised as being Arctic countries, often with the perception of them being countries of the ice and snow. This recognition and the assumptions of what
the Arctic is in the perceptions of others shapes the role of self that these countries have created.

Russia’s multi-ethnicity never experienced colonialism *sui generis* and, therefore, never had an emergence of the post-colonial discourse that has been seen in Canada.⁴⁷ Although Canada’s north is also multi-ethnic, the settler identity struggle is still seen in modern day discussions, both politically and culturally. Canada continues to strive for a ‘North’ that manages to overcome the dichotomies that have presented themselves openly and often. The shifting political rhetoric in Canada, as well as the further inclusion of indigenous peoples on the territorial and also national scale should not be ignored. Russia, on the other hand, does not have open political confrontations between the centre and the north. But this does not mean that there is no problem of cultural domination – the fact that post-Soviet democratisation was insufficient for indigenous peoples to fully reclaim their traditional names is a telling example of the pressures that Russian society inflicts on its mostly small-numbered indigenous communities. Similar to the Soviet period, in contemporary Putin’s Russia, clandestine ‘grey’ politics – such as threats, bribery of tribe leaders, ambiguous laws, whistleblowing, nepotism and more – is still practised in every sector where there is a conflict of interests, including indigenous rights to territories and natural resources, at least according to the indigenous leaders themselves.⁴⁸

What is especially striking is that both countries seek national unity, through a strengthening of the vertical relations in Russia and the new federalism in Canada. For the latter, it means empowering the Arctic peoples, while fostering an openness for dialogue and multi-nationalism. For the former, it means tightening ties between the south and the Arctic through migration, development and government.

Different structures of the population between Canada’s and Russia’s Arctic raise issues of differentiated regional governance and direct versus remote influences of the south on the day-to-day life, identity and inter-ethnic relations. Arctic units in Russia are not monoethnic in the sense that several Arctic peoples can share the same region with sub-Arctic or non-Arctic settlers. Canada’s Arctic is difficult to define in a similar way due to the vast differences in the regions, both physically and culturally. While some regions may be predominantly Inuit or First Nations, many of the regions in the north have a wide range of Inuit, Métis, First Nations, non-indigenous, immigrant and other Canadian within them. This brings a host of problems and opportunities within it vis-à-vis the governance structures of the regions, for which solutions are being sought at the local, territorial and national level. For example,
Deline, a community in the Northwest Territories, has recently created the first combined indigenous/non-indigenous government in the territory, which is designed to ensure that all people, those who are and are not Deline First Nations, are equally represented. There are similarities in historical approaches to education as a means of accelerated modernisation, which are not unique to the Arctic region, but the old habits in this area prove to be surprisingly tenacious. This can have lasting implications for the cultures that depend heavily on the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another as a means of developing bonds and constituting an integral part of the society. Furthermore, modern technologies, such as mobile phones, computers and snowmobiles, now widely used by the indigenous communities across the two hemispheres, create a demand for new skill sets. Additionally, industrial development in the Siberian north may create other kinds of economic and cultural pressures on the local indigenous peoples.

The Arctic in the modern world often seems inseparable from its ruling state not only politically, but technologically too. For many, it may feel as though it is locked in the path-dependent trajectory of state–Arctic relations. In that sense, circumpolar fora that bring together Arctic states paradoxically recreate the same pattern. Thus, the concept of a single Arcticness, attractive as it is, is closer to the terra nullius (as the British saw Australia and Canada) than to the multitude of ‘Arctics’ created and re-created through continuous south–north interactions.

**Learning from the continent-bound Arcticness**

The Arctic has always been described latitudinally but rarely longitudinally; yet, the places within it are often defined and shaped by their vertical, north–south connections. The complexities of relations between the immigrants and the indigenous peoples in Russia and Canada – shown through policy documents, national rhetoric and identity narratives, among other media – tell a story of alternative Arctic futures.

The Canadian and Russian northern frontiers have gone through immense and drastic socio-political changes in the last 50 years, albeit for different reasons. In both cases, these changes impacted the society and politics of the circumpolar region on local, regional and global scales. In more recent years, environmental changes, which span across the region, have led to very different social and political outcomes. Not all of the changes have been mentioned here, but books could be and are
written on the ever-shifting landscape that is politics and society in the American and Eurasian North, including territorial politics, devolution and the implications of colonisation and rapid modernisation on the psyche and lifestyle of the people.

Moreover, each subregion of the Canadian and Russian north has its own set of challenges, changes, opportunities and options, which are not always scalable. Some of these changes are more national in nature, while others are more global and ‘pan-Arctic’ in scope. Viewing the region in its north–south dialogue can uncover hidden tensions and path-dependent trajectories that cannot be addressed and resolved through a circumpolar Arctic paradigm alone. Viewing the region from a pan-Arctic lens also allows for the uncovering of commonalities, thereby reinforcing the challenges and opportunities that these Arctic territories face, in being influenced by different geographical locations and in being distinct in their identity from the rest of their nations and the Arctic at large.

In the context of the growing importance of Arcticness, there should be an awareness that persistent issues of continental divide and north–south arrangements can become more acute and yet are dismissed as a momentary obstacle in the global effort to ‘save the Arctic’. Although there are changes within the Arctic that are being felt across the entire region, this does not mean that the politics, societies and cultures within each continent are dealing with it in similar ways. It is therefore important that the Arctic itself does not become merely collateral in the new political exchange between southern-based governments of the Arctic and non-Arctic states.