

## **Human Security and the Canadian Arctic: Governmentality, Biopolitics and the turn of the 1970s<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

*Most of the studies related to human security in the Canadian Arctic are focusing on the evolution of the concept of security in the official discourse of Canadian foreign policy. Others will focus on how non-governmental organizations (the Inuit Circumpolar Council for example) were inserted in the official international negotiations process to take into account the interests of these groups. With this starting point, these analyses turn their attention to structural changes in world politics occurring in the 1990s such as the end of the Cold War and the quest to cash on the peace dividend perceived to have emerged at that time.*

*We argue that we need to focus on more important social changes that occurred in the 1970s in the Nordic communities in Canada. Equipped with a Foucauldian perspective, we can understand more clearly the impacts of a transition that witnessed relations of power going from discipline to governmentality with Aboriginal communities in the North. We can then understand this practice of consultation in Canadian foreign policy not as a form of inclusion, but rather as another form of control, a way to orient the conduct of these communities toward more “productive” ends.*

The circumpolar world has received a great deal of attention for quite a while in Canada. This fact is important to keep in mind given that the region has been the object of heightened interest (mainly due to the geopolitical impacts brought by global warming) over the last 10 years. This increased popularity/concern could shelter us from the fact that the Arctic has been a zone of intense interventions where diverse actors were quite active to shape the contour of this space for decades. Furthermore, the Arctic is part of broader discursive practices which construct Canadian nordicity and focus more on an empty space imaginary with a focalization on location rather than people (Arnold, 2010). However, numerous representations, practices, discourses and narratives have acted to manage and control the Arctic environment and people. Powerful forces have impacted the region: modernization, national building, colonialism, militarization, and securitization are just a handful of such an example. In addition, different actors intervened with a diversity of practices: missionaries, explorers, natural resources extraction companies, scientific experts, etc.

For our purpose, we will focus our attention on one form of discursive practices, namely foreign policy. State discourse regarding the Arctic has gone from predominance on strategic and military concerns to a discourse privileging development and environmental protection questions (and often balancing military and environmental concerns on questions like Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic). Many commentators have credited structural changes such as the end of the Cold War for this change in practices.

We want to postulate that the end of the Cold War doesn't represent the only or even the best explanation to understand the discursive reformulation observed in relation to the Arctic and Canadian foreign policy. We will argue that we need to offer a thorough description of the evolution of power relations in Canada's north in order to be able to focus on the conditions allowing the emergence of discursive practices tied to human and environmental security. To do so, we will turn our attention on the 1970s given that new power relations and methods seem to have emerged at that time in the Canadian Arctic. These new power relations and methods are

centred on biopolitics and governmentality rather than the disciplinary practices and sovereignty regime that were imposed in previous decades.

The objectives behind this perspective are three-fold. Firstly, this focus challenges the study of internal determinants as practice in traditional accounts of Canadian foreign policy. In these accounts, internal determinants are equated with provinces, bureaucracy and civil society for the most part. Following Samantha Arnold's critical perspective, we see as paramount to widen this narrow vision to incorporate internal power relations and the construction of an identity and Self as valid internal determinants in foreign policy practices. Secondly, the Canadian anguish related to Arctic sovereignty is relegated to another era from this standpoint. A quest for sovereignty is no longer the dominant consideration in the region: seen with a *longue durée* view, governmentality and biopolitical control are now the name of the game. Finally, human and environmental security practices can only be seen as possible with a change in power relations where governmentality is predominant.

### **Power relations evolution: Sovereignty, discipline, governmentality**

The sovereignty-discipline-governmentality triad conceptualized by Michel Foucault will guide our analysis of power relations in the Arctic. Sovereignty refers to the exercise of sovereign power, a sovereign power which works out of deductive logics. This type of power imposes its will on its subjects and says "no", negates; it is the juridical link between authority and subjects. The second term, discipline, relates to a type of power that acts on and through people, as well as bodies, using specific forms of knowledge and techniques. Its ultimate objective is to create docile individuals who can be used and transformed (Dean, 1999, p.19). The last term of the triad, governmentality, tries to recode the first two elements by optimizing resources and a population composed of subjects having rights. It represents a balancing effort to take into consideration subjects. The latter is animated by dynamics and rationalities specific to political economy. With governmentality, the individuals are now part of the normalizing force where internalization of norms becomes a surveillance and reinforcement mechanism<sup>ii</sup>.

The sovereignty-discipline-governmentality triad ought to be perceived as a triangle, not as a chronological sequence where at any given time, one variable masks the two others. This is especially important to keep in mind given that it is easy to see the era of sovereignty as a power modality of the past, especially in Western democracies like Canada, given that we approached these different terms as a complex ensemble formed of different layers of power relations and techniques, one level reinforcing the two others. We will also argue that one side of the triangle is more dominant at any given time than the two others; it is a representation of the driving rationality applied at that point in time. Hence, political rationalities will be considered central in our analysis. These political rationalities could be described as collective mentalities which attempt to mobilize and channel social forces (Douglas, 1997, p.169). As a consequence, liberalism will not be conceptualized as an ideal to achieve but rather as a set of practices and norms trying to regulate partially-free individuals (Miller and Rose, 2008)<sup>iii</sup> with liberal but also illiberal practices.

### **Sovereignty**

It will take some time before the Canadian sovereign power is implemented in the circumpolar region. A formal transfer of sovereignty was made in 1870, the United Kingdom transferring their rights to Northern territories to the newly formed Canadian government. This event does not count as a sovereignty practice in Foucault's sense. Indeed, sovereign power which denies and imposes its decisions on its subjects will take some time before being effectively deployed in the Arctic. We can pinpoint the 1920s to locate the beginning of sovereign power practices in

this region, with the intensification of police posts in the West and East Arctic (Grant, 2000, p.172).

The 1923 trial of the Inuit guide Nuqallaq for the murder of the fur trader Robert Janes is insightful on this matter. Janes was a dynamic man who tried different doubtful expeditions and enterprises (fur trade, trading post, gold prospector) in the Arctic, near Pond Inlet. Described as a quarrelsome braggart and an abusive bully by trading agents (Grant, 2000, p.173), Janes threatens an Inuit group to kill their sled dogs (which equates for them as threatening the very survival given the incredible distance separating them from their communities) if they did not agree to give him the furs he desired. Following Inuit traditions, one Inuit in the group, Nuqallaq, decided to kill Janes since the group was scared for their lives. This tradition is rooted in the collective defence where the survival of the community is paramount and leads legitimately to a violent act to prevent social destabilisation.

The assertion of sovereign power seems to be the top priority if we look at the testimonies of governmental officials. For example, for Assistant RCMP Commissioner Starnes, “the holding of a Court in Pond Inlet would have a deterrent effect on the Eskimos... in my opinion, some such steps appear to be necessary in order to impress upon the natives that their disregard for human life will not be tolerated” (Cited in Grant, 2000, p.176). The same sovereign power approach was used to convict Alikomiak of the murders of RCMP Corporal William Doak and fur trader Otto Binder in 1922. On this occasion, sovereign practices used public trials and death by the gallows to display sovereign power. As Shelagh Grant points out, there were no reports after that time of any Inuit murdering a white man but many Inuit were killed without any prosecutions against anyone (Grant, 2000, p.182). Sovereign power practices were established mainly by legal proceedings and public display of sovereign violence. We argue that this will be the stepping stone for more advanced techniques of power.

### **Discipline**

For the first period studied, we refer to the Arctic and Inuit populations as victims of sovereign power practices set in a colonialist environment which excluded colonized people from the civilizing project ran by southern populations and government. The next period is more intriguing and richer in power practices since it constitutes a transition period which witness the emergence of disciplinary practices coupled with sovereign power practices. The disciplinary reflex alternated between an imposition of ideas and a more voluntary approach, based on governmentality (orienting the conducts, behaviours with norms): a mixture of coercion and consent, of illiberal and liberal practices.

The establishment of the welfare state in Canada in the 1940s and 1950s was also a defining characteristic of that period that would come to illustrate this transition into disciplinary and governmentality modes. The welfare state in the Arctic context would mean social reengineering based on Eurocentric principles, standards and ways of living (meaning mainstream Canadian society) coupled with a modernist outlook that would leave diversity concerns to the background. As far as illiberal practices are concerned, many disciplinary practices had the effect of breaking traditions and rendering these aboriginal communities living in the circumpolar region docile and dependent. These communities were on the receiving end of specific power techniques. The example of residential schools is now well known. These institutions were run by governments and religious communities. Close to 3500 Inuit were taken from their families and sent in these schools to receive what was considered a proper education and to learn values, language and lifestyles defended mainly by southern Canadian communities.

The relocation by the federal government of 22 families in Resolute Bay in the High Arctic could also be classified in this regime of power. The killing of thousands of Inuit sled dogs in the Baffin Island region, led by governmental officials, are also an indicator of sovereign power to manage (brutally) and harness mobility in order to render Inuit communities docile, their behaviour more predictable. The conduct of conducts takes a practical meaning in this context to sedentarize Inuit communities and to orient them towards “productive” means. It will also serve the purpose of limiting the field of possible solutions in the future, acting as structural power. The sled dog killing will be especially effective and powerful later on, morphing into governmentality discursive practices postulating that a return to traditional or past living arrangements/Inuit social practices is neither possible, nor desirable.

A more subtle disciplinary practice with enduring consequences is related to the management of the caribou population. Governmental concerns about the caribou population in Northern Canada can be traced back to the 1920s. The general perception at the time was that the number of caribous experienced a downward trend, becoming rarer in many northern areas of Canada. These estimates came essentially from observations made by missionaries, fur traders, police officers and Indian agents (Usher, 2004, p.174). The main governmental objective was to avoid a caribou shortage since this would have created a situation where Inuit would have become dependent on public assistance. However, with the advent of the Canadian welfare state, direct intervention was not considered a privileged option, equipped with what was deemed for the time advanced and reliable scientific techniques.

Aerial observations were implemented in the 1950s in order to gather more information on the number of caribous present in the circumpolar region. The data collected pointed to lower estimates than what was previously thought, leading to restrictive measures for Inuit hunters. The rationale used by conservation officials was that they were restricting Inuit hunters for their own good, meaning that the stock would not regenerate themselves without these measures (Usher, 2004, p.192).

Much like the previous disciplinary practices, this one has a direct impact and attempts to manage the mobility of Aboriginal communities. As a consequence, it contributed to a sedentary lifestyle, the relocation of many communities in order to find a livelihood as well as a clear establishment of what is considered a legitimate practice to deal with nature and the environment. This Caribou program was mainly framed as a useful way to supervise Aboriginal peoples and to instruct them in a technocratic language on resources use and best conservation practices (Usher, 2004, p.194).

The reorientation of mobility was also a central aim behind liberal practices in this disciplinary-dominated regime. The establishment of the Canadian Rangers in 1947 is a prime example of such harnessing. The Canadian Rangers are composed of a group of volunteers whose task is to ensure surveillance of the Canadian Arctic and to act as a presence in this region. Canadian sovereignty claims in international law are partially based on the concept of Inuit historic and contemporary use of the land and sea (Lackenbauer, 2005). The presence of these Rangers works as reinforcement for sovereign power in Canada. This reassertion is framed as compatible with Inuit historic ties to the territory and social rules even though, as witnessed in the 1923 Janes trial, Inuit traditions did not conform to British legalistic heritage.

All of these practices share a focus on the management and control of Northern mobility with different degrees of direct imposition. The turn to governmentality will be a necessary condition for an attempt at integrating a specific form of Northern identity to the Canadian identity and at developing an approach based on concepts such as human security and environmental security.

We will argue that these two concepts are not free of power relations and naturally emancipatory but rather represent a product of the evolution of power relations in Canada.

### **Governmentality**

The 1950s and 1960s will establish a central objective of disciplinary practices: creating docile individuals in order to transform and optimize them through the diffusion and promotion of social norms. Thus, sovereign power and disciplinary practices fostered a sedentary lifestyle for northern populations and reduced the importance of traditions and traditional social organisations for Northern aboriginal peoples. If we take the example of Innu located in Northern Quebec, this transformation meant a complete remodelling of the very notion of property, culture and relation with the territory. According to their testimonies, they are stuck in an uneasy in-between, with a limited place in the old order (a return to the old social order is nearly impossible, unfeasible and unrealistic) which they only know through storytelling and no place in the new order (Lacasse, 1996, p.198).

The decade of the 1970s will mark an important transition in the power techniques and their implementation. We will witness a reduction in the level of imposition to go towards the promotion of dominant political rationalities in the Arctic. This more relaxed posture does not represent the beginning of an unprecedented era of cooperation and partnership, but rather a reorientation in the power and control mechanisms. No different techniques are used given that the disciplinary practices have structured what is now possible and feasible, especially for communities that rooted their diplomacy and interactions with others groups based on pragmatism and contextual analysis of possibilities (Abele and Rodon, 2007).

The analysis of these new techniques cannot omit the inclusion of these diverse groups in Canadian society. The transition from a political rationality that saw aboriginal people as marginalized or as needing to be civilized to a collective mentality in which aboriginal identity is part of the Canadian identity is fundamental on this regard. The promotion of human and environmental security in Canadian foreign policy in the 1990s represents an illustration of this change towards a governmentality regime.

In fact, the changes that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s proved to be pivotal in this evolution to governmentality. The damages and destruction caused during this time can now be rebuilt under the guise of a renewed cooperation and partnership effort (on the social, environmental, health fronts), while a return to an undesirable and unbridled mobility is seen as unfeasible and impossible, hence discarded. The transition from a pre-capitalist society to a liberal capitalist one has been imposed in one generation when this change took many centuries in other parts of the world before proving to be successful.

The activism of the welfare state has created a situation of dependency where communities needed to catch up and rearticulate their social organisations. This necessary realignment changed these groups' perspective, centred on a East-West focus towards other Northern communities living in the circumpolar world, to a North-South axis, where the Canadian government and its agents are the central focus of interest (Abele and Rodin, 2007). Hence, the subsequent actions of Inuit to mobilize are centred on an effort to reclaim this East-West perspective and to re-establish it as meaningful. The creation of a transnational mobilisation movement has been one defining characteristics of Inuit activism in recent years. It is important to observe that this transnational mobilisation does not challenge existing national communities, although many identify themselves as Inuit first before identifying themselves as national citizen of their respective countries (Abele and Rodon, 2007, p.56).

This mobilization has been inserted in the general reorientation of security practices in the Canadian foreign and security policies, starting in the 1990s. Human and environmental security concerns were common in Inuit as well as the Canadian government discourses. The widening of the concept of security has been framed in a certain way in the Canadian Arctic. Environmental concerns were amalgamated by security specialists and the federal government in an analysis looking at the increased mobility rendered possible by global warming and the increased challenge leveraged at Canadian sovereignty and security as a cause of global warming. A new discourse presenting the Arctic as under siege and vulnerable to a new cocktail of unprecedented security threats has been under construction, starting roughly in 2000 (Roussel, 2010).

The militarizing dynamics are not new to the Arctic region, but militarization evolved in the 1990s and 2000s to answer to human and environmental security concerns. Their actions were now framed in an optic of protection against a dangerous but multiform external enemy. Futuristic planning in recent years is pointing in this direction. For example, in 2007, a governmental report looked at 4 possible scenarios: an emergency aircraft landing carrying pathogens, an accidental explosion of a terrorist dirty bomb as part of an attempt to introduce the device from Russia to the United States, the unannounced transit of a French nuclear submarine and the sabotage of oil infrastructure by a terrorist aboriginal organisation (Emmerson, 2010, p.124). Operation Nanook, a military exercise conducted annually since 2007 in the Canadian Arctic, are using these same practice; downed aircraft, hunt for submarines, explosion of infrastructures, etc.

We contend that these practices act as means of surveillance and control but also to actively construct the nature of the threats present in the Arctic. We also think it solidifies the claims of protection defended by the Canadian government; it does not only describe an objective threat out there but actively define the contours of danger in the Arctic region and the way to answer to these perceived dangers.

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<sup>i</sup> This paper cannot be cited until a final version is uploaded.

<sup>ii</sup> For an overview on this matter, see Iver B. Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending. *The International » as Governmentality*, *Millenium – Journal of International Studies*, volume 35, issue 3, 2007, p.691-694.

<sup>iii</sup> See also Michel Foucault. *Histoire de la sexualité I – La volonté de savoir*, Gallimard, 1976, p.189 for an analysis of the emergence of a normalising society.

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