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From states to polities: Reconceptualizing sovereignty through Inuit governance

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Abstract
This article engages the ongoing theoretical debates in IR through a re-examination of sovereignty as traditionally understood. Despite a growing theoretical turn in IR towards more general investigations of institutions, much uncertainty and ambiguity as to how to best incorporate new issues and actors which transcend traditional state-centred politics remains. How can IR theory sufficiently take into account 'other' political actors which are neither NGOs nor states and cannot easily be categorized according to traditional dichotomies? Rather than concluding that sovereignty is in a state of demise, this political inquiry deconstructs and abstracts sovereignty from its Westphalian limitations. Instead, sovereignty is relocated from bounded state territories to the process of collective political identity and institution construction. Throughout this process, the power or importance of physical territory does not disappear but rather becomes subsumed under ongoing political contestation over the symbolic meanings of physical space more generally.

In June 2005, the downtown New York City Hyatt hosted the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) executive meeting.[1] Outside in the corridor, awaiting an interview with this Arctic indigenous group — comprising Inuit living across the span of the circumpolar Arctic — were two science writers for the *New York Times*. The *Times* reporters were there to report on the group's announced plan to take the United States to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights over violations of the right to Inuit health. The ICC, just prior to the meeting completed submission of a petition calling on the Organization of American Studies (OAS) Commission to declare the United States in violation of rights as affirmed in the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (Goldberg and Wagner, 2002).

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During a break Duane Smith, executive council member and co-chair of the World
Conservation Union (IUCN) Arctic group, was questioned as to whether the ICC believes
that the United Nations is a way forward for indigenous groups — through their NGO
status — to secure the right to self-determination and as such if the UN Permanent Forum
is institutionalizing new forms of indigenous sovereignty. He responded by stating that
at the outset 'a problem that the ICC has is often times we are misunderstood or misrep-
resented [by the international community] as an NGO. The ICC is not only an NGO. It is
also local governments and political representatives.'[2]

The following day, during the Second Annual UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues, one committee member asked the United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization (UNESCO) what the organization was doing to change its poli-
cies. Unlike initiatives by the World Bank, which deals directly with indigenous groups,
UNESCO policy remains such that all projects engaging with indigenous peoples must
go through their member states. Indigenous peoples and UNESCO do not have any
means for direct communication.

These instances pose several important questions concerning the traditional role of
the state and assumptions of sovereignty in IR theory. While IR theory has taken a theo-
retical turn towards more general investigations of institutions (in which states are
viewed as only one of many legitimate actors in global politics) and the analytical scope
of analysis has increased, there remains much uncertainty and ambiguity as to how IR
theory can best incorporate new issues and actors, which transcend traditional state-
centred politics. How can IR theory sufficiently take into account these 'other' political
actors, which are neither NGOs nor states and cannot so easily be categorized according
to traditional dichotomies?

The ICC is a case in point of a political actor that fails to identify with traditional
institutional categorizations. It is an organization which, in and of itself, contains varying
elements of a traditional state (rights to territory and resources — through local land
claims rather than ownership — and a shared history[3]). However, as an organization, the
ICC is not seeking statehood nor is it bound within the traditional territorial limitations
of a state operating in the international system. The ICC has a politics directly attached
to states through interdependent yet autonomous governments. The ICC also acts as an
NGO in certain contexts (e.g. NGO status under the Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC) in the UN) and carries a political message with certain authority in interna-
tional relations that parallels that of many international NGOs (e.g. World Wildlife Fund
or Amnesty International). Yet, the ICC is not only an NGO. It also has its own collective
history (a people who have lived in the Arctic since time immemorial) and economic
ventures which varyingly exist among the different Arctic states (e.g. Inuit corporations
including Air Inuit and Makivik Corporation). The historical narrative of this collective
transnational identity is exported into the global arena with aspirations of changing polit-
ical ideology and policy at the domestic, regional and international levels (Holder and
Corntassel, 2002: 142).[4] Combined, the varying parts of this Inuit polity[5] — either
through the ICC or through local governance arrangements — create something greater
than their separate pieces may afford for analytical purposes.

This article engages in the ongoing theoretical debates in IR through a re-examination
of Inuit sovereignty as traditionally understood. However, to reconceptualize political

sovereignty, existing assumptions must first be brought to light. Therefore, the first section of this article begins by pointing out some of the dominant themes of traditional state sovereignty. Through a brief engagement with the literature which helps unbundle and problematize these aspects of sovereignty, the second section then relocates sovereignty and begins to illustrate what post-Westphalian sovereignty implies and how it operates. This includes a focus on the role of the indigeneity literature in shifting the political boundaries of IR. Indigeneity literature, rather than providing a counter-narrative, has in certain contexts reconfigured the political spaces of global politics.

Rather than concluding that sovereignty is withering, this political inquiry problematizes and abstracts sovereignty from its Westphalian limitations. It suggests ways to conceive of sovereignty as a constitutive process of power construction. Sovereignty as a process of power is abstracted from traditional, static and *a*historical physical features and is relocated in the constitutive process of collective political identity construction and institution building.

The third section revisits ongoing theoretical discussions of collective political identity construction. Throughout the classic Westphalian period, collective identity was discussed in terms of *nationalism*. The goal of nationalism was self-determination, realized through independent statehood. This section engages with the nationalism literature and appropriates certain elements as steps towards a post-Westphalian conceptualization of collective political identity or the *political myth*. In short, the political myth is used here as the ongoing construction of national identity.[6]

The notion of the political myth, however, is also constitutive of the structures upon which political myths must be carried out and is addressed in the subsequent section. Together, the myth and the structures make up not only polities with authority and legitimacy to act, but they also reconceptualize the meaning and role of sovereignty in global politics. Throughout this process, the power or importance of physical territory does not disappear but rather becomes a part of ongoing political contestation over the symbolic meanings of physical space more generally. The concluding section of this article looks at the larger implications of the ICC case for reconceptualizing sovereignty in the realm of IR theory.

Who are the Arctic Inuit?

> People know nothing about the North but every third year we can make something out of the Inuit. People are inquisitive, and most think its curious when all the Eskimos hold a meeting. (Interview with Mark Gordon, first vice-president of Makivik Corporation, as cited in Lauritzen, 1983)

In June 1977, a group of indigenous Inuit spanning three Arctic countries (the United States, Canada and Greenland/Denmark, saving an empty seat for the Soviet Inuit) came together for the first Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC).[7] The mission of the ICC at that time — to 'preserve the Arctic environment' and create an international Arctic policy — formally inaugurated the beginning of a pan-Inuit political organization. Moreover, the ICC was one of the first Arctic-wide, regional, political-cooperative regimes,[8] until the founding of the Arctic Council (AC) 20 years later in 1996. The AC is an intergovernmental regime comprised of the eight Arctic states, with a mandate 'to enhance Arctic

environmental protection while promoting sustainable economic development, to further empower Arctic aboriginal peoples at the domestic and international levels, and promote regional security' (Archer and Scrivener, 2000: 613–4). By the time the AC was founded, the ICC had not only successfully created a contemporary Inuit political platform reconceptualized from the colonial legacies of indigenous political displacement, but, further, the ICC had to a great extent become considered political partners (most notably by maintaining a seat at the negotiating table in the AC) in Arctic governance including an inherent feature of the very definition of the *Arctic* as determined by the eight Arctic states.

At the international level, the ICC has UN membership as an NGO in ECOSOC providing participation in various UN negotiations, most notably the 2001 Stockholm Agreement on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). The ICC, through political persistence and a savvy media campaign, became an influential political actor throughout the discussions. At the final POPs convention in May 2001, ICC President Sheila Watt-Cloutier joined the Honourable David Anderson, Minister of the Environment for Canada and Chair of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council, in Canada's signing of the POPs Convention. Klaus Topfer, executive director of UNEP, pointed out in an impromptu speech during a final negotiation that '[i]ndigenous peoples were the "conscience" of the negotiations and that the world was obliged to take their concerns seriously' (Downie and Fenge, 2003: 204).

The activities of the ICC extend beyond participation in intergovernmental processes. The ICC also cooperates with other non-state organizations from NGOs (see later) to interest groups and private industry (e.g. Nunavut Eastern Arctic shipping and Arctic oil and gas services). Most recently, however, the Inuit have been brought to the forefront of Arctic and international politics as the Arctic more generally has come into global focus. On 2 August 2007, the renowned Russian explorer, Arthur Chilingarov, staged a global media event by planting a Russian flag under the North Pole. The event followed on an earlier Russian United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) submission claiming that Russia's outer continental shelf reaches the North Pole.[9] This manoeuvre was a reawakening for the eight AC countries of the global geostrategic importance of the Arctic. The flag ceremony has since initiated an international debate over the future course of Arctic development including who owns the Arctic and who should decide (e.g. Borgerson, 2008; Shadian, 2009).

Initial analyses and reaction to this event were in many instances driven by traditional state power politics and often failed to include and account for the political realities of Inuit autonomy (see Commission of the European Communities, 2008; Correll, 2008). Yet, as the international community soon learned, the Arctic like any other region has an extremely complex history and its legacies are found in numerous Inuit governance arrangements all of which fall outside the theoretical boundaries of traditional IR. Subsequently, many international policy-makers including EU leaders continue to struggle to comprehend where and how to incorporate the Inuit in these ongoing policy discussions. For instance, Inuit politics within Canada, the US and Greenland (through Denmark) reach back well before the founding of the ICC. By the early 1970s, Inuit throughout North America acquired many new land and resource rights through various land claims settlements. Inuit sovereignty (self-determination) was not pursued through

statehood. Rather, the land claims agreements established a form of Inuit sovereignty defined through political rights to territory and resource development, cultural autonomy as well as the continuation of Inuit being citizens of Canada, the United States and Denmark. Natalia Loukacheva refers to the particular cases of Nunavut, Canada and Greenland as 'constitutional hybrids' (Loukacheva, 2007: 5).

For instance through the Alaska Native Claims Agreement, the Inuit in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska have royalty rights over the largest petroleum deposit in North America. Greenland likewise, while possessing many characteristics of a sovereign state, is an autonomous region of Denmark. Greenland Home Rule, established in 1979, gave veto power to the Greenlandic (Inuit) government, thus preventing the Danish government from enacting any new legislation without the consent of Home Rule Authorities. Shortly thereafter, a successful Greenlandic referendum in 1985 prompted Denmark to grant Greenland the status of 'Overseas Countries and Territories', thereby severing Greenland's ties with the European Union. In June 2009, the Danish Government passed the Act on Greenland Self-Government which gave total control to Greenland over both its renewable and non-renewable resources (surface and sub-surface) while continuing to remain part of the Danish state.

Likewise, the Canadian Inuit in Nunavut, while giving up land ownership through land claims agreements, gained, among other rights, autonomy over all marine areas adjacent to coastlines along the islands in the Arctic Archipelago and mineral rights to an area covering one-fifth of Canada. Currently Nunavut is the fifth largest producer of diamonds in the world. When the Prime Minister of Canada visited Iqaluit in 2006 to initiate 'Operation Lancaster' (and deploy Canadian armed forces in the Canadian Eastern Arctic to reinforce Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage), the Canadian ICC President Duane Smith 'applauded' the Prime Minister for his actions and commended his commitment to expand the Inuit Rangers which the ICC considers 'Canada's eyes and ears in the Arctic'. While the Inuit in Canada may have political and economic control, this independence is subject to Canada being able to maintain control over its own Arctic coasts, namely the North West Passage (a sentiment which is equally shared by both parties; Shadian, 2007).

These domestic-level examples shed light on not only the regional legitimacy of the Inuit but also that Inuit rights are in fact embedded in the overall fabric of Arctic politics. Countering some of the initial remarks following the Russian flag planting the 8th Annual Inuvik Petroleum Show in June 2008 in the Northwest Territories focused on the Arctic sovereignty debates and the growing Arctic petroleum industry (a dominate undercurrent of the recent debates over the Arctic seabed). At the ICC meeting Duane Smith made clear the insufficiencies of sovereignty as traditionally defined as 'supreme power or authority':

> In the territory where Inuit live, this definition could not be further from the truth. For example, Greenland and Denmark share power and authority over petroleum policy. Neither side has supreme power. Canadian land claims settlement agreements call for meaningful involvement into what happens in the Arctic Ocean and land. Those wanting to exploit the resources and use the land will have most success when they come to us as partners. (Smith, 2008)

Following this meeting, the ICC launched an Inuit Declaration on Arctic sovereignty which was released at the April 2009 AC Ministerial meeting. According to the ICC:

'Sovereignty' is a term that has often been used to refer to the absolute and independent authority of a community or nation both internally and externally. Sovereignty is a contested concept, however, and does not have a fixed meaning. Old ideas of sovereignty are breaking down as different governance models, such as the European Union, evolve. Sovereignties overlap and are frequently divided within federations in creative ways to recognize the right of peoples. For Inuit living within the states of Russia, Canada, the USA and Denmark/Greenland, issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights must be examined and assessed in the context of our long history of struggle to gain recognition and respect as an Arctic indigenous people having the right to exercise self-determination of over our lives, territories, cultures and languages. (Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2009)

As evidenced, the recent sovereignty debates over the Arctic are as much an Inuit concern as a concern for the Arctic states. Yet, traditional conceptions of sovereignty in IR theory lack the analytical competence to address these issues effectively. Moreover, these snapshots of domestic Inuit political autonomy, and through the ICC as a transnational institution, draw out the constitutive relationship between domestic, Arctic and international development. The ICC, as such, is not merely a contemporary NGO attempting to influence international politics but rather an Inuit polity seeking to attain a degree of sovereignty as a political collectivity, able to endure within, through and interdependent of four state borders. Through its overlapping authority and non-conventional means, the ICC has garnered a modest to robust sense of political sovereignty (though not in its traditional sense, so to speak) which cannot be adequately identified or understood according to traditional state-centred IR theory and is the focus of this article.

Sovereign assumptions: Revisiting traditional IR

Full national sovereignty for Greenland is one option, but not *necessarily* the option that will serve Greenland best in the future. [The w]orld around us is changing, because [the] classical system with independent and sovereign states is being gradually replaced by a new system with *interest based* confederations across the national borders. In other words, the *concept of sovereignty* is itself changing, and in the future states will hardly play the role they played [for the] last 200 years. (Olsen, 2002; emphasis added)

Emerging institutions such as the ICC have initiated a move to revisit our theoretical assumptions about the status and relevance of sovereignty and the state (Albert and Brock, 2001; Archibugi et al., 1999; Bartleson, 1995; Biersteker and Weber, 1996; Habermas, 2001; Hewson and Sinclair, 1999; Krasner, 1999; Sassen, 2002). This literature even goes so far as to suggest that the Westphalian ideology was a fallacy all along (Agnew, 2005; Ruggie, 1986). Central to this discussion has been the desire to better understand shifting meanings and conceptions of sovereignty within the larger processes of change in the international system (Alonso, 1995; Hall, 1999; Ruggie, 1986). These discussions range from a slight refitting of the conventional definition to just short of a complete ontological shift in the assumed institutional stability and independence of sovereignty as traditionally defined.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the onset of globalization have become symbolic and constitutive of the end of one ideology while simultaneously heralding the beginning of a new one. In the wake of burgeoning transnational circumstances beyond the control of any one state (from climate change to labour migration), theorists such as Stephen Krasner and John Agnew have turned attention to a condition in which states are increasingly willing to share authority (Agnew, 2005: 441). Krasner, for instance, argues that the definition of sovereignty implies not only the right to self-control but also the right to enter into international agreements with other governments and international actors (Krasner, 1995–6: 119).

Accompanying this sentiment (state interdependence) has been a surge of academic debate ranging from the belief that sovereignty was never 'insular' (and thus present circumstances are the norm rather than an anomaly of Westphalia; Jackson, 1990; Osiander, 2001) to the assertion that the nation-state itself is in steep decline and within this is the withering of sovereignty (i.e. Appaduri, 1996; Rosenau, 1990). Some further argue that sovereignty is no longer a necessary prerogative of the state (Ruggie, 1993), while others assume at the outset that sovereignty is a function of the state and it is the state itself which is growing increasingly interdependent on both other state and non-state entities (Ansell and Weber, 1999). If the global political system is indeed in the midst of fundamental change (we can no longer assume the state to be the bull in the China shop) then a new analytical framework is necessary to more effectively conceptualize sovereignty in an encroaching post-Westphalian system (Lapid, 2001).

Before embarking on a new framework, several issues should be addressed. What needs reformulating? What remains relevant? What is the traditional basis from which sovereignty is now changing? To begin, Agnew argues that the very idea of sovereignty was founded on false assumptions (Agnew, 2005). Sovereignty, according to Agnew, was never an inherently bounded entity. It has, however, grown to be a central strand of realist and idealist theory of the state and global politics and it is the increasing participation of new non-state polities that brings this assumption back into the theoretical debate (Brenner, 2004: 40).

Krasner also challenges the traditional conception of sovereignty by bringing to light its context-dependent variances. Krasner asserts that while present circumstances might challenge the Westphalian idea of sovereignty there was, in fact, never a 'golden age' of the Westphalian state in which sovereignty reigned unchallenged (Krasner, 1995–6: 115). States may or may not have unrestrained ability to formulate policy, and in other contexts compromising sovereignty is perhaps the best way to achieve peace and stability (1995–6: 118). Once these limitations of sovereignty are exposed, the relationships among states and even interdependence between them come into focus.

Focusing on state relationships with non-state actors, Keck and Sikkink (1998) analyse the rise of new non-state actors (TANs) that traverse national boundaries with the aim of influencing the behaviour of states and international organizations. Likewise, Franke Wilmer (1993) examines the ways in which indigenous activists engage with and affect international discourse.

This growing influence of non-state actors as well as instances of sharing state power among other states, according to Krasner, is testimony that 'sovereignty's resilience, is if nothing else, a reflection of its tolerance for alternatives' (Krasner, 2001: 248). Ultimately,

sovereignty and the nation-state will persist as long as no alternative which 'supersede[s] sovereign statehood' seems apparent (2001: 248). While Krasner fruitfully exposes a more complex foundation upon which the notion of Westphalian sovereignty has always existed, there is no reason to preclude alternative ideas of sovereignty. Keck and Sikkink, likewise, while exposing the emergence and importance of non-state actors, similarly maintain the assumption that TANs only aim to affect state and international policy in a world where inter-state relations remains a given priority in politics.

While finding an 'alternative set of institutional arrangements … [to supplant] the rules associated with sovereign statehood' (Krasner, 2001: 248, 239) may not, according to Krasner, be on the horizon, why should it equally be assumed that sovereignty is only for states? Given the realities on the ground (historically and in contemporary circumstances), rather than focusing on the demise or resilience of sovereignty from a state-centred perspective, another way of questioning the role of sovereignty is to ask whether or not the nation-state has to remain its sole proprietor. Rosenau begins to ask this very question by approaching sovereignty from the perspective of non-state forms of autonomy (Rosenau, 1990: 40). Rosenau not only acknowledges but further gives credence to non-state actors as possessors of both power and autonomy in their own right (not merely as means to engage with states). However, rather than acknowledging a shift in the meaning of sovereignty, Rosenau perceives authority separate from sovereignty and sovereignty itself remains the *a*historical domain of the state. While Rosenau re-centres the focus to all polities, the distinction between the authority of non-state actors (possessing no sovereignty, since they are sovereignty-free) and the sovereignty of states (which is determined along a sliding scale) continues to reproduce the idea that sovereignty is a function of states. As such, we find ourselves back to the limitations of Westphalian sovereignty and a lingering question unaddressed.[10]

Is there any analytical leverage in distinguishing a state that bargains away (wilfully or not) substantial portions of sovereignty (or virtually lacking the domestic or international sovereignty to act) from a sovereignty-free actor which has garnered a robust locus of sovereignty (perhaps even more so than some states)? In fact, what provides some entities with a degree of sovereign authority is exactly the desire not to become 'formal' state sovereign participants in the existing architecture.

In a similar fashion, Dianne Otto focuses on indigenous sovereignty, arguing that indigenous self-determination cannot be abstracted from the idea of 'indigenous sovereignty' and that international law needs to be reconceptualized to accommodate 'indigenous sovereignty' (Otto, in Keal, 2003: 146).[11] In response to Otto, Keal asserts that indigenous sovereignty would take place within traditional state sovereignty; the result being multiple sovereignties. 'Indigenous sovereignty means thinking in terms of sovereignty of individuals and groups contained within the overarching sovereignty of the state. The state retains control over external affairs and those matters that affect all groups within it' (Keal, 2003: 153).

This line of reasoning assumes that indigenous sovereignty would have certain limits and beyond such traditional sovereignty, state sovereignty (e.g. foreign policy) would reign. Yet, these distinctions are parsimonious as certain realities prove more complex. In the case of Canada for instance, it is argued that Canadian foreign policy is constitutive of Canada's relationship to the Inuit land claims settlements as grounds for use and occupancy over the

North and the North West Passage in particular (Shadian, 2007). Similar to Rosenau's arguments, these distinctions between multiple sovereignties are predicated on the idea that state sovereignty remains unaffected by the addendum of new sovereignties. Separating indigenous sovereignty from state sovereignty also fails to take into account and provide a space to understand all sovereignty whether state or otherwise as dynamic and historically contingent processes. Moreover, Otto's conception assumes that all indigenous peoples have the same understandings of self-determination. Yet, as there are many other instances of non-state national identity (e.g. the Roma or Al-Qaeda), singling out 'indigenous sovereignty' begs the question as to whether or not we need to create new categorizations of sovereignty for every case which deviates from the state. And if so, what is the analytical leverage of creating such a list? While Rosenau and Otto make a significant move beyond the traditional boundaries of sovereignty in IR, instances such as the transnational nature of the ICC lead us to think that perhaps it is time to shift the conceptual boundaries upon which sovereignty as a concept in and of itself has come to (temporarily) rest (Ansell and Weber, 1999: 73, 80–1; also see Held, 1996; Young, 2000).

Shifting spaces: Indigeneity[12] in making a post-Westphalian world

Whereas the above authors bring to light various shortcomings regarding traditional assumptions of sovereignty, indigeneity literature — through an ontological move — not only addresses indigenous political participation but moreover challenges the very bedrock on which Westphalian sovereignty as a concept has been built. The political agency of the ICC as well as its particular political manifestation as a non-state indigenous political actor has been part of a broader surge. In transnational political participation, this proliferation, while shifting the Westphalian political boundaries on the one hand, cannot be abstracted from the Westphalian narrative itself. While some indigeneity literature views indigenous movements as inherently counter-Western, others such as Karena Shaw (2002) make clear that while the traditional discipline of International Relations lacks a legitimate expression of indigenous politics, and given the historical context of its practice, traditional IR is nonetheless not an 'inaccurate or inappropriate' expression of world politics more generally (e.g. see Cleveland and Murray, 1997; Niezen, 2000; Watts, 1999, for a case on Ogani, Nigeria). Rather than being either motivated by aspirations for statehood or considered as a counter-nationalism (Niezen, 2000: 144), many instances of indigenous politics (including the ICC) entail emerging forms of nationalism which seek collective autonomy and individual state membership concurrently.[13] Castree, for instance, looks at indigeneity as 'both a reaction to and an embrace of translocal connectivity ... or [*globalization*]' (Castree, 2004: 156). The concrete measures upon which indigenous groups seek control — not through state secession — include initiatives associated with place (including its symbolism) rather than merely physical territory. This includes resource rights, cultural integrity and control over indigenous knowledge and ideas.

Some authors such as Jean-Jacques Simard, however, contend that the amalgamation of indigenous culture and ideas such as traditional knowledge, subsistence hunting and wildlife resources are merely reifications of the colonial White–Native dichotomy,

re-politicizing many of the traditional assumptions which lay at the heart of the Westphalian system itself (i.e. sovereignty, territory, state economics). Yet, whether the Inuit can entirely transcend the Westphalian system — as Simard deems a necessity — is failing to acknowledge a larger shift. The invented stereotypes, both the 'modern man' and the 'Native', are processes that are in a continuous state of reinvention as well as transcendence. '[B]eing indigenous itself', according to Niezan, 'is a product of only the last several decades' (Niezen, 2000: 120). As such, the point of indigenous politics is not 'strategic versus authentic … both are part of the same practice' (Speed, 2002, in Castree, 2004: 155).

The ability to articulate many indigenous claims to self-determination including control over territory, culture and knowledge have played out through the effective use of the international system alongside transnational discourses (Castree, 2004: 159). Many indigenous political groups simultaneously traverse both inside and outside the traditional boundaries of IR.[14] While states may remain a dominant political reality, examples of indigenous agency, such as the ICC, highlight the need to abstract, relocate and reconceptualize sovereignty altogether. The field of political geography, and Kevin Cox in particular, offers an effective framework for relocating sovereignty beyond the state (Cox, 1997; also see Newman, 2001). Rather than through a lens of state interaction, Cox analyses political relationships through what he terms *spaces of dependence* and *spaces of engagement*. For Cox, spaces of dependence are defined by 'localized social relations' whose localities are space-specific and depend on their ability to exercise territorial power and resources. Essentially, spaces of dependence are 'the means of control over a geographic area' (Cox, 1997: 7). While spaces of dependence often entail significant attachment to physical territory, recognizing the significance of territory does not always equate to a state or even land 'ownership'.

Cox further argues that local social relations most often participate in a much more extensive set of interactions which broaden beyond the local space-dependent location — what he terms spaces of engagement. In other words, spaces of engagement are constructions of network associations (Cox, 1997: 2–3) and their relations are perceived as processual rather than bounded, static or necessarily territorially grounded (Jackson and Nexon, 1999; Jacobson, 2001; Laclau and Mouffe, in Torfing, 1999).[15] Spaces of engagement serve as additional spheres of social power that have decision-making capabilities that directly affect local spaces of dependence (also see Castree, 2004). These relations are not constant and through their constitutive relationship both local spaces and spaces of engagement are altered.

Cox's focus on the interaction between local circumstances and spaces of engagement provides a critical space for analysing political interaction beyond the conceptual (and territorial) boundaries of the state. Moreover, it also offers a space for examining political interaction as a process of power construction rather than as an assumed rationale (Ashley, 1996; Doty, 1996; Foucault, 1972; Neumann, 2002; Skinner, 2002; Torfing, 1999; Walker, 1993). Within this new political space, sovereignty can then be abstracted from the state and reconceptualized. As spaces of dependence are constituted by spaces of engagement, sovereignty resides between the spaces of engagement and the spaces of dependence — sovereignty in this sense plays out in the process of political interaction.

Turning to the case of the ICC, Inuit sovereignty is not 'located' in the form of a territorially bound state or even in local Inuit governments (i.e. Nunavut, Canada or the

North Slope Borough, Alaska). Rather, sovereignty is located within the processes — interactions between spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement such as relations between Inuit physical ties to the Arctic land and the role of the ICC in the international community. Therefore, sovereignty becomes a contingent rather than an absolute entity itself.

As such, what *Inuit* governance represents in local contexts such as Nunavut or the North Slope Borough and the authority that these local governing structures provide are always contingent upon ongoing global phenomena. According to Niezen, indigenous people 'who initiated the process of international lobbying … represents a new use of the international bodies of states to overcome the domestic abuses of states themselves, while pursuing development and recognition of international standards concerning the rights of indigenous peoples' (Niezen, 2000: 122).

This contingent relationship is illustrated in the particular case of the North Slope Borough. Prompted by a renewed US focus on Alaskan oil, the North Slope Borough was signed by the state of Alaska and the Alaskan Inuit (Inupiat) in 1972. For the Inuit in the North Slope, self-determination was considered as more than mere political autonomy. It also represented a formal contract for maintaining cultural autonomy (cultural rather than territorial integrity). This cultural form of sovereignty included, in theory, the right to maintain a historical relationship to the Arctic land. This included establishing user and 'policy rights', as well as conservation control over the economic development of Inuit-inhabited Alaskan natural resources.

Eben Hopson, the first Mayor of the North Slope Borough, insistently used the discourse of American liberal democratic ideology to make the case that Inuit (referred to as Inupiat in Alaska) self-determination and maintaining a traditional Inuit subsistence-based economy required securing Inuit rights to the North Slope's resources. While the Inupiat, Hopson argued, are indigenous and have the right to self-determination as indigenous stewards, Inuit nonetheless are also American citizens and the North Slope Borough is a natural product of American democratic ideology. As Hopson stated:

> I am not against oil and gas development in the Arctic. We Inupiat have gained great financial and political strength because of [it] … [though] we in the Arctic are not happy about [it] … we understand that this development is necessary, and I, for one, want to cooperate closely to insure that this development is done right. We can all benefit from development as we deliver to America her wealth that lies in our land, and beneath our seas. We are stewards of this wealth, and it is our responsibility to deliver it to all of America's people when they need to draw upon it. (Hopson, 1976)

While this notion of Inuit cultural integrity played out locally in the North Slope Borough it has also been legitimized and maintained by a broader understanding of what it means to be an Alaskan Inuit in the context of global politics.[16] Hopson's early efforts to frame Inuit self-determination in Alaska as a matter both of liberal democratic ideology and indigenous cultural autonomy eventually became much of the symbolic base upon which the ICC political vision of Inuit stewardship rights over the Arctic would emerge, grow and come to intersect with processes of international law and policy.

For instance, local Inuit governance throughout Alaska, Canada and Greenland is reified and bolstered through international human rights norms and legislation (i.e. Inuit

rights to Arctic mineral resources; breast milk free of POPs — international *right* to health; and the exportation of caribou pate — the preservation and/or comodification — of *indigenous* culture). The legitimacy of the ICC as a transnational polity is simultaneously rooted in the space of the Arctic and the international system as Mary Simon and Peter Jull exclaim in reference to Canada:

> A unique amalgam of national and international issues and strategies has shaped Canadian Inuit politics .... These politics have centered on the quest for social justice, cultural autonomy, ecologically sustainable development, and self-government — the package often called 'self-determination' in international indigenous circles, Inuit strategies have been so successful that sometimes it seems as if they have done more to reform Canadian political culture than to fulfil their primary aim of bettering Inuit lives and communities. (Simon and Jull, 1994)

As these examples show, the space of Inuit governance remains wedded to physical land and resources while remaining contingent on regional and global processes.[17] The meaning and significance of Arctic oil, for instance, is a negotiated process which takes place where local spaces of dependence intersect with spaces of engagement in what can be referred to as *intellectual* space.[18]

While Cox offers a fruitful space to analyse polity interactions, another issue remains unaddressed. The very idea of what it means to be Inuit in a political sense, and further what it means to be an indigenous non-state institution in the context of global politics, are based on an ongoing reconstruction of Inuit collective identity or the *Inuit myth*. Thus, the idea of the political myth requires further discussion at this point.

The political myth: Taking the state out of collective identity

> We Inuit are an international community of some 100,000 residing mostly in small villages along the Arctic coasts of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. We are loyal citizens of the United States, Canada, and Greenland, but we are Inuit, or Eskimo, first and foremost. (Hopson, 1978)

Traditionally, discussions concerning the politics of indigenous collective identity fall under larger political theoretical discussions of nationalism. These conventional discussions focus on particular collective identities seeking self-determination (most evidently so during decolonization in Africa and Asia) in the form of nation-state independence or what Giddens terms a 'bordered power-container' (Giddens, 1994). However, the recent resurgence of non-state nationalist collective identities seeking international validation, while most often nationalist conceptions in their own right, are not necessarily based on a myth of a people whose collective past and recent political marginalization requires compensation in the form of a nation-state (territorial integrity). Instead, self-determination is increasingly being realized through other forms of political legitimacy. In the case of the ICC, Inuit self-determination is realized through the right to maintain Inuit cultural existence or *cultural integrity*. This notion of cultural integrity is based on rights which are realized not through attaining ownership over territory, but through realizing the right to participate as a legitimate actor in global politics. Nationalism from the context of the

Inuit has transcended the state and, as such, requires a theory that can similarly transcend these state-centred theoretical legacies.

Historically, the making of Westphalia was the construction of a political system where political identification became subsumed under the jurisdiction of the state and accompanying territorial boundaries. Under this new framework for organizing the social world, national identity and national movements for self-determination were subject to state status for recognition. As such, territorial integrity became the ultimate symbol of self-determination as a people (Hobsbawm, 1994: 178). With the end of the Cold War, the transcendence of this Westphalian system has become marked not by a waning of nationalism or nationalist movements, but rather by what Rosenau originally termed *fragmegration*. Serving as the breakdown of various existing orders and institutions, *fragmegration* acts simultaneously with the rise of new orders and institutions or *integration* (which itself is a process of linking fragmegrating activities) (Rosenau, 1997). These two processes act constitutively, creating new modes of interaction, and while nationalisms may be growing, self-determination via territorial integrity is not necessarily a given. Instead, certain emerging contemporary nationalisms are coalescing around aspirations for cultural integrity. Broderstad and Dahl note that many indigenous groups, in response to past assimilation policies, have reapplied the concept of nation-building in their own indigenous terms. In these cases, nation-building does not equate to state-building, but rather 'refers to the efforts of indigenous peoples to increase their capacities for self-rule and for self-determined sustainable community and economic development. It also involves building institutions of self-government' (Broderstad and Dahl, 2002: 2).

Abstracting the state from nationalism, however, does not require the reinvention of an entirely new theory of nationalist movements. Westphalian nationalism literature effectively embraces both the political and cultural dimensions of collective identity construction. Its shortcomings, however, often lie in ongoing structural assumptions — namely that nationalist aspirations coalesce around and culminate in the state. As emerging realities evidence, the state is not necessarily a fundamental prerequisite for contemporary collective identities to be political. This idea of a non-state nationalism is illustrated by Eben Hopson in an early speech made when campaigning to raise money to establish the ICC:

> We Eskimo people of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and eventually the Soviet Union, can join together to meet common problems posed by industrial society encroaching upon our land, our communities, and our traditions. We … are an international community sharing common language, culture, and a common land along the Arctic coast of Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. Although not a nation-state, as a people, we do constitute a nation. This is important not because nationalism solves our problems, but because our common nationality is the basis of our present attempt to find solutions to our common age old problem of survival. (Hopson, 1975)

The cultural aspects of nationalism are widely discussed (e.g. Hutchinson and Smith, 1994) within conventional accounts of nationalism. This traditional reasoning separates the cultural aspects from the political aspects and the political is realized through the existence of the state (Poole, 1999: 15).

Despite this state-centred approach, what can effectively be abstracted from this theoretical approach is Poole's definition of the 'nation', for example, as a cultural object in a continual state of transformation. It is the political nature of nationalism itself, Poole contends, that provides 'every nation … its own story of triumphs and tragedies, victories and betrayals' (1999: 17). Poole's definition is relevant for deriving a broader conception of nationalism beyond the state in a global political context where political myths constitute all nationalisms, state and non-state alike.

Similarly, highlighting this relationship between culture and the political, Stephen Kemper focuses on the 'residuals of the past', which endure in the present as a means to analyse national movements. Kemper uses many of Benedict Anderson's and Ernest Gellner's conceptualizations of the origins of nationalism as a point of departure for his own account of nationalism (Kemper, 1991: 7). The failure to identify the significance of the political rather than only the legal aspect of nationalism, Kemper asserts, is to neglect both culture and consciousness (Kemper, 1991: 7). Nationalism essentially is 'a conversation that the present holds with the past' (1991: 7).

Equally as significant as culture and politics to nationalism — and as Kemper alludes to — is the Westphalian system of legal sovereignty, which also conceives of the state as a very particular 'nation' with a relationship to *territory* (territorial integrity). The national homeland 'of each nation … provides — or promises — members of the nation a special place of belonging' (Poole, 1999: 12). The traditional liberal account of land as something *owned* and regarded as an object of use and exchange turns the nation into a legal aspiration — territorial integrity (Poole, 1999: 127). This relationship between land ownership and nationalism precludes alternatives outside the traditional legalities of the state.

On the contrary, the Inuit national narrative in particular seeks a form of political sovereignty through the right to participate in politics (rather than territorial integrity). This includes local self-government within states, participation in the international system as a transnational political actor as well as its direct engagement with non-state institutions such as private industry regarding resource exploration and development.

Inuit participation in the international system, for instance, is exemplified through both political and economic aspects of the ICC. In the political context, at the Arctic and international levels, international human rights legislation is increasingly defined to incorporate 'indigenous rights'. This is most evident in the regional policies of the Arctic Council and in international environmental law where the discourse of sustainable development has in many instances become an amalgamation of indigenous rights and environmental sustainability. The link between indigenous rights and environmental sustainability is the acknowledgement and legitimacy of *traditional indigenous stewardship* approaches towards the environment as a means for achieving sustainable development. Examples where indigenous stewardship has been written into legislation include the Brundtland Report, Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, ILO 169, the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues and the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

What it means to be indigenous not only carries political weight, it also has ramifications for Inuit development.[19] For example, in the Arctic, sustainable development is about finding a balance between the need to pursue resource extraction and exploitation and preserving the Arctic environment for the future (see Arctic Council mission statement).

Revenues from Arctic development in Inuit land claims territories, for instance, are facilitated through Inuit corporations (i.e. the Makivik Corporation) and have become examples of sustainable development in practice. Likewise this Inuit development model has become a tangible commodity to export to the global community (reifying the legitimacy of the Inuit as experts of sustainable development practice). The Inuit development model is exemplified in the following excerpt from a speech given by a former ICC President, Shelia Watt-Cloutier:

> Countries and people all over the world are looking for ways and means of making economic development environmentally and socially sustainable. This is a debate in which Inuit can enlighten the world. Sustainable development requires holistic thinking and acting. This is not something that is new to us. Sustainability has three pillars: economy, health and environment. We can see each of these pillars through our relationship with the animal .… The spirit of the hunters and the skilled crafts workers is essentially the same as the spirit of the entrepreneur. (Watt-Cloutier, 2002)

Inuit development in this example is embedded in a discourse of rights, in the language of global business and in more metaphysical terms (what it means to be indigenous). The definition of subsistence, for instance, as a means for preserving Inuit culture (through a combination of wage economy and continued subsistence fishing or hunting) was initially used as the justification for the North Slope Borough. Much of the impetus behind the creation of the North Slope followed by subsequent Inuit land claims settlements throughout Canada and Greenland Home Rule was aimed at both attaining local resource control and at protecting and ensuring the continuance of a subsistence-based economy. Rather than seeking territorial integrity as a means of resource ownership, Inuit nationalism was argued on the basis of the right to a subsistence economy and as a means of ensuring cultural integrity as argued here:

> It is important to recognize that the incomes of the people of the North Slope are supplemented by subsistence activities … this is not essential from the perspective of obtaining sufficient nutrition … subsistence is essential if this Inupiat culture is to survive … Inupiat culture which prizes the abilities of people to survive in the Arctic. (Brower and Stotts, 1984: 325)

The amalgamation of cultural integrity and economics is further demonstrated where the ICC has transferred the idea of subsistence economics into a marketable sustainable development programme for export to the global economy. The Inuit experience has been packed into a complete programme guide called the *Northern Training Programme* and has been exported to other indigenous communities as a means to learn how to embark on their own sustainable economies.

Indigenous nationalism viewed from these instances directly correlates to Kemper's argumentation that nationalism is the compilation of the past, which is contested and negotiated. The 'local is never purely local but … created in part by extralocal linkages and practices over time' (Watts, 1999, in Castree, 2004: 142). Through this process a distinctive nationalist discourse emerges incorporating 'Western as well as local' attributes (though unfortunately Kemper assumes that the local constitutes non-Western). Nationalism, essentially, is 'an expression not of a cultural "ontology" but of the way

human beings use cultural forms to respond to circumstances' (Kemper, 1991:11. Also see Castree, 2004; Baerenholdt, 2000: 81; Shaw, 2002: 59; Howarth et al., 2000: xi).

All nationalisms, therefore, state and non-state, are ongoing processes of polity construction. In the case of the Inuit, political agency has been argued in the name of preserving pieces of the Inuit past rewritten for its contemporary context. Sovereignty is based on ascertaining cultural integrity rather than merely territorial integrity. Focusing on the constitutive relationship between culture and politics as central to national identity, construction complements Cox's framework as nationalism takes place within the political space between the local spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement. These authors in combination offer significant leverage for analysing nationalisms abstracted from the confines of the state.

The other half: Structuring the polity[20]

> Too often, international or foreign policy is perceived as the sole and sacred domain of national governments. (Simon, 1985: 69)

> We are sovereign. (Theme of the 1988 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives)

How, then, do we identify a post-Westphalian nationalism? R.B.J. Walker argues that the biggest challenges to the nation-state and to state sovereignty are not assertions of traditional connotations of pluralism, but rather the continuing persistence of nationalism and self-determination which do not inherently require the state (Walker, 1993: 77). An appropriate response can begin with Hall's analysis of institutions. For Hall, 'institutional forms are not fundamental. They are not theoretically or ontologically primitive. They are not enduring. These forms change with the prevailing conceptions of legitimate social order' (Hall, 1999: 44). The challenge that remains for Walker is to find an alternative account of collective identity which at the same time does not diminish the importance of the state. The ICC represents one such instance. Rather than analysing the ICC in the context of an NGO, for instance, it is more adequately understood historically as an ongoing narrative of Inuit politics existing prior to and through the emergence of the state system. In this light, the relationship between sovereignty and the literal importance of territory as a state as previously conceived under Westphalia has diminished or, better stated, is increasingly being shared with new forms of political space. As this new political architecture needs more than a myth in order to be political, institutions — the constitutive counterpart (and buttress for any conception of sovereignty) — become conceived as multifaceted and contested rather than rational and static.

The institutional artefacts for sovereignty in the case of a post-Westphalian Inuit myth include symbolic power of which territory is only one aspect. As sovereignty is embedded *in* the process of polity construction — the co-constitution of myth and institution — this includes enduring and emerging policies, legal instruments and regimes such as the role of international human rights law and sustainable development policies as discussed earlier. In these cases Inuit *stewardship* approaches to land have been legally codified through Inuit land claims agreements and international policies for sustainable development, and are accounted for through the realization of Inuit cultural integrity as a legal concept.

Throughout colonization, the Inuit *stewardship* approach towards Arctic land and resources functioned as the basic justification for European expansion, undermining existing Inuit self-determination. Since this time, the long-trumped Inuit principle of stewardship has resurfaced within Arctic and international policy discourse. Rather than stewardship serving as the means by which political leaders ignore or override Inuit autonomy, stewardship has become the means by which Inuit leaders have justified their institutional claims for self-determination. Self-determination is regarded as the 'right' to participate in the processes of development. This conception of stewardship, according to Hopson, derives from the prospect that '[w]e Alaskans are the trustees of our land. We have special responsibilities of stewardship over our nation's wealth here. We stand to lose our stewardship to others' (Hopson, 1976). Gary Yabsley from the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), the Canadian organization representing Canada's Inuit, affirms that Inuit rights to stewardship over land are defined according to the premise that:

> Inuit have always lived on that land and used it. Inuit have a right to the land because of their heritage. This is the foundation for the legal concept, or meaning of 'aboriginal rights' …. Aboriginal rights, in theory, are property rights, that is the recognition of ownership of land and the people who have lived on and used that land from the beginning of time. Native people are to be guaranteed the right to use that land. (Yabsley, 1976: 22, 50)

This relationship between the Inuit conception of stewardship and policy has been formally realized through the North Slope Borough signed in the early 1970s followed by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) passed in 1975; Greenland Home Rule in 1979; the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Northwest Territories in 1984; the Nunavut Agreement in 1993 (put into effect in 1999); and the Inuit agreement in Labrador in 2005 (Fox, 2002: 4). These domestic institutions of Inuit autonomy are linked to Arctic regional and international institutions through international understandings of indigenous rights to cultural integrity (stewardship rights) and emerging sustainable development legislation.

This correlation between Inuit sovereignty (through the ICC) and sustainable development has played out in various international institutions. In 1988, for instance, UNEP honoured the ICC with the Global 500 award for its 'successes on the front lines of the global cause of protecting and improving the environment' (ICC, 1988: 2). The IUCN similarly acknowledged its support of indigenous rights through the creation, in 1991, of an indigenous councillor position to provide indigenous organizations with the ability to serve as permanent official board members (Sambo, 1991: 2). By the time the World Conservation Strategy II (WCS) entitled 'Caring for the Earth' was published in 1991, it addressed indigenous peoples' right to subsistence wildlife harvesting, including direct references to Inuit sealing and whaling (Simon, 1986: 3).

The relationship between the Inuit and sustainable development policy, however, is most compelling in Arctic policy. When the Arctic Council came to fruition in 1996 its very mission was focused on a combination of the Arctic environment and its indigenous peoples. The overarching objective of the Arctic Council is 'to unite all the circumpolar nations in a partnership with Arctic aboriginal people's organizations around a common vision' (Arctic Council Home page).[21] These institutional instances of Inuit

sovereignty through the ICC is best summarized by Peter Stenlund, the former Finnish Chair of the Artic Council, who, in his address to the 9th ICC General Assembly, stated:

> During my two years term as the Chair of the Artic Council I have learnt to know the Inuit Circumpolar Council as a professional, convincing and alert international actor, as Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council, and as an effective NGO at the United Nations. The Arctic Council is a unique partnership between government representatives and indigenous peoples … sitting at the same table .… We all contribute to the work on a de facto equal footing. (Stenlund, 2002)

Inuit institutional sovereignty in this sense is brought to fruition through local, regional and international institutions and economic ventures (i.e. trade agreements among Greenlandic, Canadian and Alaskan Inuit). In all, the myth and structure combined comprise the Inuit *polity* — a post-Westphalian contemporary representation of political organization — and, equally so, it is polities which engage in politics. Sovereignty as a concept, therefore, does not diminish nor does the state disappear. Instead, sovereignty exists as the process by which being political is possible. As Rosenau affirms:

> to the extent that people have a need to community and a sense of independence, then to that extent the achievement and maintenance of sovereignty for their nation [serves] important longings. (Rosenau, 1997: 220)

In this post-Westphalian context, the structures that provide legitimacy have expanded as legal and political institutions emerge and transform by changing international norms and evolving context-dependent ideologies. Through the incorporation of new non-state political entities, the traditional political architecture upon which international politics has played out is being remade. Within this structure the boundaries determining who governs and how governance proceeds is in a process of redefinition in which non-state political myths are creatively attaining new ways to attain institutional sovereignty.

Reconceptualizing Inuit sovereignty in a post-Westphalian world: Implications for IR theory

> A sovereign people, with a shared culture, environment and spirit, we unite as one, under God. (ICC Alaska home page)

> The dominant Westphalian model of state sovereignty in political geography and international relations theory, deficient as it has long been for understanding the realities of world politics, is even more inadequate today, not only for its ignoring the hierarchy of states and sources of authority other than states, but also because of its mistaken emphasis on the geographical expression of authority (particularly under the ambiguous sign of 'sovereignty') as invariably and inevitably territorial. (Agnew, 2005: 437)

The Westphalian system — both an imagined ideal and a political reality — constructed an international system where power became vested in the bounded territory of states. The state emerged as the essential and assumed aspect for legitimizing sovereignty. The national narrative became a narrative about the making of a people in a delineated space (Rudolph, 2005). The evolving narrative of the Inuit as a polity extends back prior to the European discovery of the Arctic. Colonization and early Inuit agency largely existed within local spaces and culminated with modern Inuit land claims agreements. While the land claims are a symbolic reification of the importance of territory (though devoid of land ownership), they are embedded in international human rights discourse which gave legitimacy to specific Inuit territories at the outset. As such, the power embedded in local Inuit politics is equally constitutive of the emergence of an Arctic regional political space as well as changing global politics and norms.

The Inuit myth has been an ongoing process reifying the collective history of the Inuit. Its discourse is not based on a national movement aiming for statehood under the traditional state-centred framework nor can it be considered a post-Westphalian state in Linklater's sense.[22] Instead, Inuit political aspirations for self-determination have encompassed a stewardship approach or rights over their historically claimed Arctic territories and the resources which accompany the region.[23]

Local spaces of dependence extend beyond their local territorial-dependent locations. While ongoing local Inuit politics may remain attached to land (the Arctic), the significance of the Arctic as a space is constitutive of a shifting regional and international political discourse of what it means to be *indigenous* and *Inuit*. Subsequently, territory is not only a physical issue but rather more a symbolic piece of a larger narrative about the historical collective identity of the Inuit. These ongoing interactions are the essence of the Inuit polity; a polity based on a contemporary political myth of a people that have existed as part of the Arctic since time immemorial. The Inuit as a collectivity have — in certain policy spheres — garnered authority as the official stewards over the Arctic. This symbolism, buttressed by local land claims agreements as well as Arctic institutions and international legislation, provides the ICC with power and authority (sovereignty); or the right to participate in politics. The ICC symbolizes 'good governance' rather than a colonial past. International organizations and state governments praise 'indigenous participation' and granting institutions encourage projects which bring in traditionally marginalized and diverse sets of political actors (which in the case of the Arctic refers to indigenous peoples). Further, the same 'colonial' past underpins indigenous political legitimacy today. Inuit political history like all nationalisms is a discourse continuously reified through an ongoing historical narrative of its myth.

Economically, through Inuit corporations, the Inuit have, to varying degrees, a right to local control. These economic rights are predicated on the belief that sustainable development is essential for maintaining a way of life thousands of years old. Likewise, Inuit culture has found its place in the global economy. International economic policies of sustainable development, the commercial sales of Inuit kamiks (Inuit boots), Inuit art and indigenous training programmes connect local traditional Inuit culture to the world at large. Beyond these symbolic commodities, economic ventures such as Air Inuit bring the Inuit directly into the global economy.

The ICC, as such, serves as an example of a contemporary collective polity — neither left outside the state system nor possessing a state of their own. Rather, the sovereignty of the ICC depends on its ability to maintain the legitimacy of its myth, which over time has evolved, adapted and changed. The Inuit have transcended their historical role as the outside 'other' throughout colonization and have become part of a larger ongoing re-construction of the inside. By turning 'symbolic' policy (i.e. the creation of ILO 169 or the Rio Declaration) into more formal forms of governance (i.e. the land claims agreements and the Arctic Coucil), the ICC has not only entered the global political mainstream, but it has also been central in helping reshape the inside–outside boundaries which have con-stituted the global political system throughout Westphalia.[24] After all, the aim of the ICC from its inception according to one ICC member was not for 'a new country, but a new consciousness' (Stenbaek, 1985: 9).

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Notes

1. Duane Smith, interview by Jessica Shadian, June 2005, ICC executive meeting.
2. The term *shared history* refers to nationalism as a social construct, see, for example, Hobsbawm, in Hutchinson and Smith (1994: 76), Anderson (1991) and Kymlicka (1995) for a Canadian liberal-multicultural perspective.
3. The ICC is a unique case. The majority of the world's indigenous population do not share the same type of gains (including the Inuit which live in Russia) which the Inuit in Canada, Alaska and Greenland have achieved. Likewise, the ICC is a transnational organization and while often speaking *of* domestic Inuit circumstances it does not represent Inuit at the domes-tic level. Sub-state Inuit politics and individual Inuit identity issues are separate levels of analysis and beyond the scope of this article. Domestic circumstances vary significantly as they are subject to the particularities of the states in which Inuit reside.
4. 'Polity' is defined here according to Ferguson and Mansbach (1996) and Jackson (2004). Also see Albert and Brock's (2001: 32) use of community as 'the cultured conviction of living together as a nation'.
5. The *political myth* is defined here according to Bottici and Challand as 'a continual process of work on a common narrative by which the members of a social group can provide significance to their political conditions and experience' (Bottici and Challand, 2006: 315; also see Barth, 1993; Bottici, 2007; Day, 1975: 52; Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 123; Spich, 1995: 11).
6. Changed in 2005 to the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

7. Following the Nordic Council founded in 1952 and the Sámi Council in 1953.

8. The flag planting itself was a private and not a state-funded expedition. The first Russian submission to UNLCOS was in 2001. The commission called for further evidence and Russia continues to map its sea bed floor at the time of publication.

9. For example, see Dowd's (2007) Opinion-Editorial: 'Al Qaeda has exploded into a worldwide state of mind'.

10. Otto is making a normative argument for the way it should be rather than what she sees as actually taking place. Keal (2003), driven by similar motivations, looks at the role of indigenous peoples in the history of international society. Keal provides a normative account of the ways in which indigenous peoples were brought into international society (a system of states) by liberal guilt rather than indigenous agency. Instead of regarding indigenous and non-indigenous relations as a historically contingent and continuously negotiated process of identity construction, Keal considers that '[t]he expansion of international society is another story of moral failure with respect to indigenous peoples of the world, many of whom had to struggle to be members of international society, and even of the human race' (2003: 31). Karena Shaw, instead, contends that the modern idea of sovereignty reveals the constitutive nature of 'our' identity and the situations with which indigenous communities are faced. Indigenous struggles are our problems, not merely in that it is all 'our' fault, but rather because of the implications it has for understanding 'our' own identities (Shaw, 2002: 59). For Shaw, if we want to understand world politics, and so 'shift [our] exploration of the diverse special, temporal, and discursive conditions under which forms of authority are being constituted, enabled and authorised today', then we need to move the centre of our analysis from ontologically given assumptions about authority to the ontological conditions of possibility (2002: 59).

11. Indigeneity is consciously political and not a noun to describe a group of people.

12. For an example of Inuit autonomy and the case of Canada see Shadian (2007).

13. For example, see Keale (2003: 146).

14. Jacobson analyses the deterritorialization of society and argues that while the expansion of human rights legislation diminishes the privilege of the state, the state remains a critical facet in securing human rights (2001: 174).

15. For more on the Inuit polity building see Shadian (2006).

16. Andolina et al. (2005) refer to this as the transnational constitution of place and identity. This move, the authors argue, allows for the examination of the 'flows and networks that transcend scales and borders — "*boundary crossing*" (2005: 680). Hall (1999) argues that this relationship between polities and global political processes eventually leads to epochal change. Rather than mutually constitutive, however, changes in actor interests and identities often propel a transformation of global systemic properties. For Hall, actor agency depends on the specific actor rather than an inherent co-constitution between structure and agency (1999: 47).

17. Intellectual space is where the construction of knowledge takes place.

18. On economics and denationalization of territory, see Sassen (2006).

19. Hall (1999: 39).

20. The power and mandate of the Arctic Council is being revisited. Actors such as the EU aim for an increased mandate — reifying the political agency of the ICC.

21. Nunavut in Canada may be closer to Linklater's concept (Linklater, 1998: 197–198).

22. The extent of Inuit autonomy is exemplified in the case of Greenland Self-Rule.

23. For a process-based post-Westphalian analysis of non-state democracy, see Wiener (2001: 188).

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