



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

Module 7

Modern State–Building and Indigenous Peoples

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Key Terms and Concepts

- assimilation
- bureaucracy
- Finnefondent
- Indian Act of 1876
- Lappby
- modern state
- nationalization
- Norwegianization

Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Upon completion of this module you should be able to

1. discuss the similarities and differences between traditional and modern states.
2. describe the main features of state building.
3. list the common effects of state building on indigenous peoples in the circumpolar North.
4. discuss the similarities and differences of the consequences of government and administration among federal (Canada and Russia), unitary (Sweden, Finland, and Norway), and modern colonial settings (Greenland and the eastern Arctic of Canada).



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Reading Assignments

The course instructor will assign readings from the required textbook by Freeman (2000), *Endangered Peoples of the Arctic*.

Overview

This module will provide an overview of the process of modern state-building in the circumpolar North, focusing on government and administration, and discussing the consequences for indigenous peoples today. First, the module outlines the dynamics of modern state-building, which originated in Europe and repeated itself globally. Second, the module makes an important distinction between traditional states and modern states. Third, the module traces the impact of state building and the consequences of governance and administration for indigenous peoples under traditional states. Finally, the module outlines the consequences of the different paths of modern state-building—federal, unitary, and modern colonial—for the governance and administration of indigenous peoples, focusing on Canada, Russia, Scandinavia, Greenland, and Alaska.

Lecture

Modern state-building irrevocably changed Aboriginal political life. Under absolutist and colonial regimes, indigenous peoples could coexist as autonomous, political communities. In modern states, this was no longer the case. The modern states that emerged in Canada after Confederation in 1867, in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and in Scandinavia after the union of Sweden and Norway in 1814 possessed a universalizing political logic that compelled the state to pursue assimilationist policies concerning the indigenous peoples living in its domain that had not previously been seen. Among other measures, the state in all countries banned Aboriginal spiritual practices and the use of the indigenous mother tongue in school systems. The aim of these policies was to eliminate Aboriginal ways of life and to incorporate indigenous people into the fabric of the dominant state and society. The particular path of modern state-building in Canada and Russia, namely the creation of federal states, led to contradictory segregationist policies, notably state-created territorial-administrative units for indigenous peoples in the form of reserves and Aboriginal soviets. The course of Aboriginal political development resulting from these contradictory policies created the foundations of contemporary struggles for Aboriginal self-government.



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In Scandinavia, modern state-building led to the development of unitary states. This type of state held little regard for diversity in culture; there, indigenous peoples were either legislated out of existence or ignored altogether.

The Modern State

The sixteenth century witnessed the rise of capitalism; the nineteenth century, the rise of the modern state. While the effects of capitalism were felt globally by the nineteenth century, capitalism had yet to become universally rooted as the dominant form of economic organization. In Russia, for example, where serfs were not emancipated by law until 1861—and, in practice, arguably, not ever—the roots of capitalism were very tender indeed. The modern state emerged much later than capitalism; however, its impact was felt in all countries, regardless of whether they pursued capitalist or non-capitalist paths of economic development. To be sure, important differences existed between the polities of socialist and capitalist countries; the observance of political rights is an excellent example. But regardless of their form of economic organization, modern states were remarkably similar in a number of other important ways. As Samuel Huntington declared,

The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government. The differences between democracy and dictatorship are less than the differences between those countries whose politics embodies consensus, community, legitimacy, organization, effectiveness, [and] stability, and those countries whose politics is deficient in these qualities. Communist totalitarian states and Western liberal states both belong generally in the category of effective rather than debile political systems. (Huntington 1968, 1)

Defining Elements

At the end of the eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, the modern state was created primarily for the purpose of successfully waging war. Charles Tilly argues that states carry out the following activities: (a) war making: eliminating or neutralizing external enemies; (b) state making: eliminating or neutralizing internal enemies; (c) protection: eliminating or neutralizing enemies of friends; and, (d) extraction: acquiring the means to carry out the first three activities (Tilly 1985, 181). The modern state is unparalleled in its capacities to pursue these activities. Whereas traditional states laid claim to a monopoly on violence within their territories, only modern states could successfully carry out these claims.

The modern state can be characterized by the following elements: sovereignty, borders, bureaucracy, universal citizenship, nationalism, centralization, internal



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pacification, and a universalizing ideology. While the origins of some of these elements can be found in absolutist states, together they are found only in the modern state.

Sovereignty refers to the exclusive right of command over a territory by a political organization, as well as to the impersonal basis of that authority. The achievement of state sovereignty is very modern. As Gianfranco Poggi notes, “it is a feature of the nineteenth-century state that each operates in its own territory as the sole, exclusive fount of all powers and prerogatives of rule. This attainment of unitary internal sovereignty (in some places achieved under absolutism), after centuries of development in this direction, is an outstanding characteristic of the constitutional state of the nineteenth century” (Poggi 1978, 102). Moreover, for a modern state, the existence of “other,” autonomous political communities is inimical to unitary internal sovereignty.

The notion of borders is linked to the concept of sovereignty: modern states have borders, not frontiers. This distinction is crucial. The boundaries of frontiers can be internal to the state itself, or external vis-à-vis another state. Not only are geographical demarcations of frontiers ill defined, but so, too, are the political and social spheres. Moreover, in frontier areas, the political authority of the centre is diffuse or thinly spread. By contrast, borders are precisely demarcated boundaries—geographical, social, and political—the territory encompassed by which is subject to a high level of surveillance and internal pacification by the political administration. Not surprisingly, the ideal typical modern state is a unitary state, that is, one without internal borders: federal states represent a major deviation from this rule.

The modern state also enjoys a high degree of internal pacification. Internal pacification refers both to the ability to police successfully the activities across the entire territorial expanse of the state so that violence is no longer an ever-present facet of life, as well as to the capacity of the state to maintain surveillance over the totality of the social activities within the state. The ability of the state to accomplish internal pacification is possible because of the rapid advancements in communication and transportation technologies and because of the development of modern bureaucracy. Modern bureaucracy is unprecedented in terms of organizational power and efficiency. The bureaucratic state can maintain almost unlimited information on virtually all relevant social, economic, and political activities; it is manifest in the creation of state departments of statistics. Internal pacification and bureaucracy help create the foundation for the much more centralized, autonomous, modern state.

Unitary States: Norway, Sweden, and Finland

The nineteenth century witnessed radical changes in state and society in Scandinavia. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark lost Norway,



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and Norway was united with Sweden under a single crown. During the union of Sweden and Norway (1814–1905), the two countries remained two distinct polities under the same crown, with different political institutions and independence in home affairs: simply stated, Norway was established as an independent nation in 1814. From this point forward, Norwegian political elites embarked on the task of modern state-building. During the following ninety years, they created the Norwegian constitution of 1814; founded the Storting as the national parliament; established the krone as the national currency; and, eventually, achieved complete independence from Sweden in 1905. Norwegian political elites sought to create a modern, bureaucratic state and to develop an industrial economy, in significant part, to meet the demands of external politico-military competition. This modern state was more centralized, bureaucratic, and autonomously powerful at home and abroad than its traditional predecessors. At the same time, the emergence of Norwegian nationalism helped provide the basis for a universalizing political logic. Given the homogeneity of Norwegian society, it is not surprising that a unitary state was created.

The process of building a modern unitary state had direct consequences for the Sami. No longer to remain on the cultural and territorial frontiers of the state, the Sami and their lands were to be fully incorporated into the Norwegian state and society.

As late as the eighteenth century, the Danish–Norwegian state permitted the Sami considerable cultural autonomy. New in the nineteenth century was a Norwegian policy towards cultural assimilation of the Sami population. Oystein Steinlien dates the period of Norwegianization/assimilation from 1851, with the introduction of the *Finnefondent*—a sort of foundation for the promotion of the Norwegian language in Sami areas—to 1959, with the acceptance of “integrational pluralism” (Steinlien 1989).

For about thirty years after the implementation of the *Finnefondent*, it was still permissible to use the Sami language in religious teachings as well as in school, though the tendency was one of restricting its use. In 1880, however, the “hard” period of Norwegianization began: cultural policy was centralized, and restrictions were put on the use of both the Sami and Finnish languages. The new policy was legislated in 1889 and Norwegian became the only accepted instructional language.

Further directives issued in the Act of 1898—*Wexelsenplakaten*—which confirmed the policy of Norwegianization, a trend that continued, despite changes in European political and social trends in the same period, until 1959.

Norwegianization of the Sami was in part a response to perceived external threats to the integrity of the Norwegian state—particularly the threat of *Finnicization*, as large-scale immigration by Finns to the north of Norway occurred—and in part a strategy to incorporate the frontier regions of Norway



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into the newly independent unitary state. Settlement of the Norwegian North was central to this effort. In 1815, in Finnmark, the most northerly region of Norway and the region with the largest number of Sami, Sami outnumbered Norwegians three to one; by 1900, Norwegians outnumbered Sami two to one. Whereas, in the past, Sami rights to pasture land were acknowledged by the state, the post-1814 Norwegian state declared all lands in Finnmark crown lands. The state also made it difficult for Sami to acquire private land in the region. The State Land Act of 1902 restricted ownership of private land to Norwegians and those could speak, read, and write Norwegian, effectively excluding most Sami. In the education system, Sami was no longer permitted as a language of instruction and students were punished if they spoke Sami. The message was clear: in order to survive in the new political order, one had to assimilate into the dominant culture.

The case in Sweden was somewhat different. In Sweden, while early legislation sought to ensure the even distribution and efficiency of tax-producing operations, subsequent policy looked to smooth reindeer herder-settler relations. Attempts to avoid conflict were made by geographically separating herders and farmers as much as possible. The Swedes established *Lappbys*, or grazing areas, through the introduction of the Swedish Reindeer Act of 1886. Similar herding zones were established in Finland (*paliskuntas*) and Norway (*districts*). The development of these zones had the ancillary effect of producing territorial and social units of the Sami people who herded in these zones.

As Samuel Beach describes, this Swedish case illustrates a common Scandinavian pattern: the transformation of Sami *rights* into Sami *privileges* (Beach 1994). By extending rights to Sami people registered to a Lappby (herders only), the new law simultaneously denied privileges to Sami hunters and fishers who did not herd.

In Finland, policy regarding the Sami was mostly one of disregard. No government bill on Sami rights has been introduced to the Finnish Parliament since Russia conquered Finland in 1808. Even after its renewed independence in 1917, Finland's only Sami-related act was to repeal Sami land taxes altogether in 1924, after years of decline in hunting success, owing to a lack of game.

In spite of some differences in the policies of the Scandinavian states, the outcome has always been the same. The period of development into modern states saw the Sami people of Scandinavian legislated into irrelevance, as governments sought to impose bureaucratic control and homogeneity.

Federal States: Canada and Russia

The creation of modern states in Canada and Russia occurred under very different circumstances from each other and took very different forms. In



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Russia, a totalitarian Soviet state was created in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. In Canada, a liberal-democratic state emerged from an evolutionary process, but its origins can be marked by Confederation of 1867. Moreover, in both countries, despite the creation of modern states, many of the cultural, economic, and political features of the “old” regimes persisted. For instance, Russia remained a non-capitalist country after the revolution; and Canada remained a capitalist country after Confederation. As well, Russia, before and after the revolution, was non-democratic, whereas Canada continued its democratic traditions.

Nevertheless, in spite of the stark and well-known differences between the two socio-political systems, both countries adopted the essential characteristics of the modern state. The modern states that emerged in Canada and Russia were more centralized, bureaucratic, and autonomously powerful than their colonial and absolutist predecessors. These newly created capacities were evident, for example, in the state’s “extraction” activities. The Soviet Russian state succeeded at great human cost in pursuing a strategy of rapid industrial development in the 1930s, squeezing the countryside in the process in order to meet the external demands of politico-military competition. The Canadian state also exerted its power in the economy through concerted efforts, initiated by the creation of the Canadian National Railways, to develop public enterprise in a capitalist economy.

Finally, modern state-building meant transforming frontiers into borders. This undertaking required establishing effective surveillance and internal pacification strategies over the entire territorial expanse of the state, including its most remote regions and populations. In this respect, both Canada and Soviet Russia faced formidable tasks. At the end of the nineteenth century, after three hundred years of Russian colonization, that state’s official resettlement department defined nine-tenths of Siberia as “completely uninhabited and badly explored.” When Rupert’s Land and the North-Western Territory were transferred to the Canadian state in 1870, there were fewer than two thousand non-indigenous people and as many as 150 thousand indigenous people living in the 2.5 million square miles of newly acquired territory. In the process of transforming frontiers into borders, indigenous peoples represented an exceptional challenge. The nomadism of many indigenous peoples, for instance, made surveillance and internal pacification difficult, if not impossible. In addition, the perceived “backwardness” of indigenous peoples precluded their immediate incorporation as equal members of the body politic. Exceptional challenges demanded exceptional measures; through the eyes of the state, indigenous ways of life had to be eliminated.

State Building and Aboriginal Political Development

Modern state-building forever changed Aboriginal-state relations and, as a consequence, the course of Aboriginal political development. The change in



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Aboriginal–state relations reveals as much about the nature of modern states as it does about Aboriginal political life. Colonial and absolutist regimes tolerated the coexistence of “other” political communities within the boundaries of the territories over which these political orders claimed domination. Under colonial British North America and absolutist Tsarist Russia, indigenous peoples could exist on the political, cultural, and geographical frontiers of the state. From the perspective of the peoples of European descent, indigenous peoples were always the “others.” However, the Canadian and Soviet states were to transform frontiers, eliminating differences. The “others” were no longer to exist. This logic brought indigenous peoples into inescapable conflict with the modern state. As a result, modern states and indigenous peoples became political *enemies*. Modern state–building changed the politics of Aboriginal–state relations from one of coexistence to one of “friend and enemy.”

In fundamental ways, the nomadism and anarchism of Aboriginal political communities were radically incompatible with the logic of modern states—and vice versa. Conflict was inevitable. It is from this perspective that the policies of modern states concerning indigenous peoples must be understood. The modern state sought to achieve unity in its political community. Aboriginal political communities existed outside the body politic and, thus, had to be incorporated. The idea of a cultural mosaic within the borders of a single nation-state was not yet taken seriously, if at all considered.

The elimination of indigenous ways of life was not the only goal of Aboriginal policy in Canada and Russia. It was accompanied by goals related to assimilating indigenous people into the social fabric of the dominant society, as well as goals related to the enfranchisement of indigenous individuals. Soviet scholars were unabashed in their assertion that the Soviet state actively sought to transform—completely—the way of life of indigenous peoples. The Soviet government began an all-inclusive restructuring of the way the life of indigenous peoples after the end of the civil war. In Canada, the Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, declared: “Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no [Indian] question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill” (as quoted in Ponting and Gibbins 1980, 18). Matching rhetoric with action, the state in Canada and Russia pursued these goals through a variety of policy instruments and, in the process, restructured the political, economic, social, and cultural bases of indigenous ways of life.

State Administration

The will of the state was implemented through the creation of special administrative agencies to address Aboriginal affairs. In contrast to their colonial and absolutist predecessors, the administrative agencies for Aboriginal



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affairs of the Canadian and Soviet states were far more bureaucratic, centralized, coherent, and, thus, more capable.

The British North America Act of 1867 specified that authority for Indians rested with the federal government of Canada. In 1880, the federal government proceeded to create the Department of Indian Affairs. The department was housed under the Minister of the Interior until 1936, when it was placed under the Department of Mines and Resources. In 1949, Indian Affairs was transferred to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and in 1965 it was merged with the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources. Finally, in 1966, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was established in its current form.

The administration of Aboriginal affairs followed a parallel course in Russia. After the 1917 revolution and civil war, it was reported that “the natives of the North live outside the limits of the Constitution of the RSFSR” (Levin and Potapov 1964, 490) and were in need of “extreme measures for their salvation” (Levin and Potapov 1964, 490) and of rapid inclusion within the sphere of Soviet authority. The government, therefore, found it necessary to create a special agency for the handling of the small nationalities and, in June 1924, the Committee for the Assistance of the Peoples of the Northern Outlying Districts (Committee of the North) was established to address Aboriginal affairs. In April 1934, it was resolved that the work of the Committee of the North was completed, and in 1935, its tasks were transferred to “Glavsevmorput,” the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route. In 1962, a permanent working group for the peoples of the North was established in the Council of Ministers of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic; and, in 1990, the newly created Goskomsever (State Committee on the Social and Economic Development of the Northern Regions) assumed primary responsibility for Aboriginal affairs.

The state created special legislation to guide the administration of indigenous peoples. In Canada, the primary legislation was the Indian Act of 1876. The act was comprehensive, defining who was an Indian, the special rights held by Indians, the special limitations placed on Indians, and legislation concerning the enfranchisement of Indians as Canadian citizens. Although the intent of the legislation was to facilitate the incorporation of indigenous people into the dominant body politic, the very development of separate legislation helped institutionalize differences between dominant and Aboriginal political communities. For example, individuals defined as Indians under the Indian Act were exempt from military service and taxation; they were also prohibited from consuming liquor in public places, from practising the potlatch and sun dance, and from political organizing. A number of the most egregious elements of the act were repealed in the 1951 Indian Act. Despite its faults, however, the act is perceived by some indigenous people as one of the major protections of Aboriginal rights, and a plan to eradicate the act in 1969 was quashed. The paradox of the Indian Act is that while it controls Aboriginal people and



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communities, the measures of control, themselves, simultaneously helps to institutionalize their existence as separate political communities.

The Soviet Russian state, too, created special legislation to address the question of indigenous peoples within the new political order. However, unlike Canada, the Soviet state did not create a single, comprehensive act. Instead, special decrees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and of the Council of Ministers of the USSR were issued periodically to guide the administration of indigenous peoples. Similar to Canada, in 1925 the peoples of the North were exempted from paying all state and local taxes and from the obligation to take part in conscript labour and active service in times of war. Other notable decrees were those of 1957 concerning the social and economic development of the peoples of the North, which preceded mass villagization of Aboriginal communities across the North; and the 1980 decree, which not only sought greater integration of indigenous peoples into the dominant economy and society, but also attempted to address deteriorating social and economic conditions of many Aboriginal communities. As in the case of Canada, because the state treated indigenous peoples differently in law and administration, the state paradoxically reinforced differences while attempting to eliminate them.

Through these policy instruments, the states of Canada and Soviet Russia implemented changes that radically transformed Aboriginal political life to fit state systems. Predictably, as modern states, Canada and Soviet Russia pursued aggressive assimilationist policies. These states imposed institutions of local government, introduced dominant forms of economic organization, and attempted cultural change through the education system. However, as federal states, they pursued contradictory segregationist policies, the most important of which was the creation of separate territorial-administrative units for indigenous peoples in the form of reserves and soviets. In both countries, the stated reason for segregationist policies was that indigenous peoples were so “backward” that their incorporation required a transition period, as well as special, separate measures. The combination of these contradictory policies, however, eventually led to the emergence of contemporary struggles for Aboriginal self-government.

Internal Political Colonies: Eastern Canadian Arctic and Greenland

Today, Greenland and Nunavut are held as models of indigenous self-determination. Both cases are interesting for several reasons: the overwhelming majority of the residents in each case are of Inuit origin; both exercise forms of public self-government (see BCS 100); both have become active players in the international arena. Arguably, the creative arrangements for indigenous self-determination that emerged in both cases are rooted in the political arrangements each experienced with the nation-states that governed them. Until the



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achievement of Home Rule in 1979 and the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the Inuit of Greenland and the Canadian eastern Arctic were governed as internal political colonies of Denmark and Canada, respectively. Following is an outline of what an internal political colony is and how it shaped political development, including the foundation for Inuit self-determination.

Internal Political Colony, Defined

An internal political colony exists where a people, who are distinct from the majority population of a nation-state, do not enjoy the same political rights as the majority population and have little direct control over the governance of their people and lands. This definition does not assume a situation of economic dependency and exploitation, though that may also occur; rather, it focuses on the political aspects of Aboriginal–state relations.

Internal Colonialism in Canada and Denmark

As noted in Module 6 of this course, Greenland was legally and constitutionally a colony of Denmark until 1953; arguably, it remained so, politically, until the achievement of Home Rule in 1979. The Inuit of the eastern Arctic of Canada experienced a similar political relationship: until 1967, the Northwest Territories, of which the eastern Arctic was then a part, was governed directly by Ottawa; only after 1999, with the creation of Nunavut, have the Inuit accomplished self-government over their lands.

The eastern Arctic of Canada, together with the western Arctic (but not including the Yukon Territory), constituted the Northwest Territories (NWT) between 1912 and 1999. Throughout this period, indigenous peoples were the majority population, with the Inuit being the overwhelming majority in the eastern Arctic, and Indians and Metis comprising about half the population in the western Arctic. Although there was an increasing non-indigenous presence in the western Arctic, there was no comparative presence—administrative, commercial, or otherwise—in the eastern Arctic; in fact, the Eastern Arctic Patrol (of the Canadian national police force) was not regularized until 1922. It was not until the 1950s that the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources assumed administrative responsibility for the region. The responsibility for the Inuit people was a contested matter. The federal government did not always assume it had a fiduciary responsibility for the well-being of the Inuit in the way that it understood with respect to the Indian peoples. It was not until 1939 that the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that for administrative purposes, the culturally distinct Inuit were Indians. Nevertheless, even during the revisions of the Indian Act in 1951 and 1985, the Inuit were excluded from the definition of “Indian” and, therefore, do not have official “status.” There is no national registry for Inuit, as there is for Indians.



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The period after the Second World War saw major changes in the NWT. Large migrations of workers and their families from southern Canada went to the NWT, primarily for the development of minerals, oil, and gas, and increasing numbers of indigenous people became involved in the expanding wage economy, especially in the western Arctic. The eastern Arctic was less rich in resources and did not see the same degree of influx of non-indigenous people. Nonetheless, the economic and demographic changes in the NWT as a whole precipitated an increase in pressure on the Canadian government to address issues of governance and administration. By 1951, there were a few elected members from the western Arctic who served on the Territorial Council. It was not until 1965 that an indigenous person was appointed to the council. The reality was that power was exercised by Ottawa through the Commissioner of the NWT, under the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources. It was not until 1967, as a result of the Carrothers Commission, which recommended a series of political reforms for the NWT, that a territorial capital was established in Yellowknife and representative government for the NWT was implemented. Increasing devolution of authority from Ottawa occurred, especially during the 1980s. Nevertheless, the constitutional status of the NWT remained that of a territory, in which political authority could be arbitrarily taken back by the federal government in Ottawa.

The colonial status of Greenland, as discussed in the previous module, predates the modern state-building period in Denmark. (The abolition of absolutism in 1848 and the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1849 mark the beginnings of a modern constitutional state in Denmark.) Danish interest lay not only in trade and commerce through the Royal Greenland Trade Company, but also in scientific exploration. In 1878, for instance, a commission was established to research the geology and geography of Greenland. Although Denmark claimed control over Greenland, so, too, did Norway, notably over east Greenland. It was not until 1933 that the International Court in The Hague ruled that the Danish sovereignty extended over the whole of Greenland. As in the situation with the Canadian Inuit, administrative intrusiveness into the lives of Greenlandic Inuit was limited until the Second World War.

The period following the Second World War brought with it powerful forces of change in Greenland. One source of change was the large influx of outsiders, including Americans who to this day operate an air base at Thule. Inside Greenland, an effective Greenlandic leadership was emerging, capable of challenging historical patterns of colonial rule. Finally, the universal pattern of building strong welfare states, even more so among the Nordic countries, extended to Greenland. All of these factors led to a radically stronger state presence in the lives of Greenlanders.

In 1950, a White Paper (government policy paper) issued by the Government of Denmark advocated significant political and economic change. It suggested that a national council (Landsråd) replace the existing administration in Greenland



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and that the Royal Greenland Trade Company's monopoly end. By 1953, the colonial status of Greenland did end and Greenland formally became part of the Danish state, with guaranteed representation of two members in the Danish Parliament. But political change did not occur overnight. It was not until 1967 that the Landsråd chose its own Greenlandic chair. Policies, such as paying civil servants born in Denmark a higher rate than those born in Greenland for the same work, were a source of discontentment. Moreover, policy in areas such as education, social welfare, and economic development was still governed in Copenhagen. The Danish education system was implemented in Greenland, with Danish as the language of instruction, for instance. Many Greenlanders were moved into larger settlements. In 1950, about one-quarter of Greenlanders lived in urban communities; by 1975, the number had risen to 75 per cent. Fisheries and mineral and oil exploration were all driven by policies emanating from Copenhagen and increasingly from Europe.

In both Greenland and the Canadian eastern Arctic, the policies of modern states became increasingly intrusive in the lives of Inuit peoples. Many of these policies were aimed at improving the well-being of Inuit residents. However, these policies originated in the national capitals far from Arctic homelands. At the same time, these policies, such as the establishment of formal education systems, led to the emergence of Inuit political elites who would later make successful claims for self-determination within the states that governed them.

Student Activity

Consider the state policy concerning indigenous peoples in Alaska or northern Quebec. With which of the three cases covered in the Lecture does Alaska or northern Quebec fit closest: the unitary states, federal states, or internal political colonies? Why?

Summary

The political evolution of absolutist and colonial regimes into modern states over the past few centuries sparked dramatic change in Aboriginal-state relations. Regardless of the type of state, be it unitary, federal, or modern colonial, the characteristics of the modern state—bureaucracy, sovereignty, and fixed borders—necessitated state control over indigenous peoples. This state control was manifested throughout the North through restrictions of indigenous languages in the education systems, the creation of state-created territorial-administrative units for indigenous peoples, and other means of acculturation.



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To varying degrees, the assimilation of indigenous peoples was the end result of the modern state, regardless of its type. However, the type of state has become exponentially more important in the modern era, as indigenous groups make claims for political and economic rights. In unitary states, with their strong central governments, indigenous rights movements are relatively weak, with Sami people having gained little concrete political power or economic control of resources. In federal states, with their tradition of divisions of power, Aboriginal claims to land, resources, and political rights have been much more successful and continue to pose legal problems for the state, though more so in Canada than in Russia. Finally, the internal political colony has emerged as the least problematic political predecessor to self-determination—in the cases of Nunavut and Greenland, most likely owing to the limited non-indigenous migration to those lands.

Supplementary Readings/Materials

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Study Questions

1. What are some key differences between modern state and early administration of indigenous peoples?
2. What are the key differences in the administration of indigenous peoples and their lands in Canada and Norway?
3. Which factors are more important in explaining state policy concerning indigenous peoples: economic, cultural, or political ones?



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Glossary of Terms

acculturate	1 adapt to or adopt a different culture. 2 cause to do this.
Confederation	1 (in Canada) the federal union of provinces and territories forming Canada, originally including Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia and subsequently expanded to include the present provinces and territories. 2 (in Canada) the date of the creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1 July 1867.
enfranchise	1 grant (a person) the rights of a citizen, especially the right to vote. 2 give up one's status as an Indian.
federal state	formed by a compact between political units that surrender their individual sovereignty to a central authority but retain limited residuary powers of government; of or constituting a form of government in which power is distributed between a central authority and a number of constituent territorial units.
frontier	a region that forms the margin of settled or developed territory; the farthestmost limits of knowledge or achievement in a particular subject.
homogeneous	of the same or a similar kind or nature; of uniform structure or composition throughout.
nomad	a member of a people who have no fixed residence but move from place to place (for example, for food or fresh pasture) usually seasonally and within a well-defined territory.
polity	an organized society; a state as a political entity.
potlatch	a ceremonial feast of the American First Nations of the northwest coast marked by the host's lavish distribution of gifts or sometimes destruction of property to demonstrate wealth and generosity, with the expectation of eventual reciprocation.
Soviet	<i>noun</i> 1 a citizen of the former Soviet Union. 2 (soviet) an elected local, district, or national council in the former Soviet Union with legislative and executive functions. 3 (soviet) a revolutionary council of workers, peasants, etc. before 1917. <i>adjective</i> of or concerning the former Soviet Union or its people.
sun dance	an annual ceremony held at midsummer by some Plains Aboriginal peoples, marked by several days of fasting, dancing, and induced visions.



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unitary state	based on or characterized by unity; in terms of government, having only one central government, as opposed to being federal.
universalize	1 apply universally; give a universal character to. 2 bring into universal use; make available for all.

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