

International Policy Cooperation in the Arctic

Scott Barrett

Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Yale Center for the Study of Globalization

One World



Many States



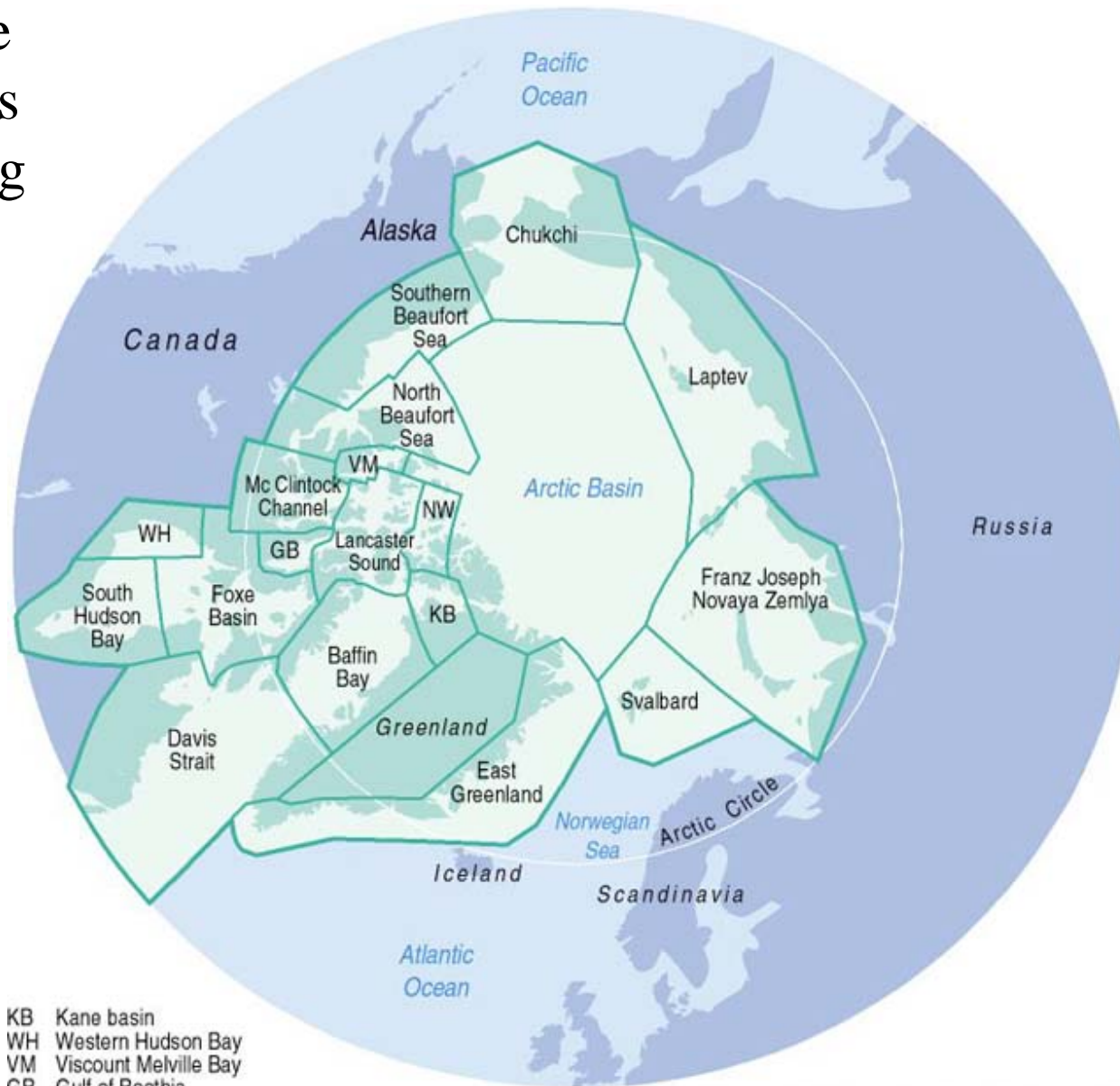
Polar Bears

Bears at risk of extinction in the 1950s.



Unilateral approaches did not work.

20 separate populations overlapping the territories of 5 states.



KB Kane basin
WH Western Hudson Bay
VM Viscount Melville Bay
GB Gulf of Boothia
NW Norwegian Bay

Source : IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group 1997.

Polar Bear Treaty

- Agreement to limit hunting agreed in 1973.
- When treaty negotiated, about 1,500 bears killed each year; total population about 5,000-19,000.
- Treaty limited cull to 750 bears each year; the population recovered.

Today

- Today, population about 22,000-25,000.
- In May 2006, bears' status changed from “conservation-dependent” to “vulnerable.”
- Polar bear subject to new threats.
- Polar Bear Treaty did not require the participation of more than 5 countries.
- The new threat is global.



Photo Credit/Crédit photographique: Dan Crosbie

Two Climate Agreements

- Framework Convention
- Kyoto Protocol

Framework Convention

- Goal to stabilize “greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”
- Ratified by every country except...
- So, there is a consensus, but what level of concentrations is dangerous?

Concentrations

- Today, about 380 ppm.
- Pre-industrial, about 280 ppm.
- Some say concentrations should be limited to 450ppm, or 550ppm, but
 - Do we know 449 and 549 are “safe”?
 - Risk-risk tradeoffs.
 - Mitigation costs need to be considered.
 - Who is responsible for meeting a global target?
 - Climate change may offer benefits, at least to some regions over some periods of time.

The North-West Passage



Kyoto

- By design, Kyoto does very little. It will not stabilize emissions let alone concentrations.
- Kyoto was meant to provide a foundation, but does it?
 - Participation
 - Compliance

Participation

- Bush rejected the agreement, partly because compliance costs high.
- Non-Annex I countries do not have to reduce emissions.
- Former Communist states get “hot air.”
- Limits for Canada, Japan, and Russia increased, to gain their participation.
- Russia only joined after gaining support from the EU for WTO accession.

Compliance

- Penalty of 1.3 added in Bonn, but:
 - Defers punishment.
 - Future emission limits endogenous.
 - Relies entirely on self-punishment.
 - Article 18 requires that “procedures and mechanisms...entailing binding consequences...be adopted by means of an amendment.”

A Multi-track Future

- Mitigation--that is, reducing atmospheric concentrations.
- R&D--to lower the cost of mitigation.
- Adaptation--to reduce climate change damages.
- Geoengineering--to address the threat of “abrupt” climate change.

R&D

- Substantial long term reductions in emissions will require “breakthrough” technologies.
- No country has a strong enough incentive to undertake required R&D unilaterally.
- Focus should be on technologies that are likely to be diffused globally.

Mitigation

- Drop pretense that there will be international enforcement.
- Focus on what countries can and should do on their own.
- International assistance will be needed to diffuse these globally.

Adaptation

- Much will be done automatically.
- Rich countries can take care of themselves.
- Poor countries the most vulnerable; they require assistance.
- Adaptation requires development.

Geoengineering

- Advantages
 - Can “turn on a dime.”
 - Can be turned off relatively quickly.
 - Is likely to be very inexpensive.
 - A single project.
 - Can have environmental benefits.
 - Allows CO₂ to be high.
- Disadvantages
 - Climate effects uncertain.
 - Environmental problems.
 - Ocean acidification.
 - Winners v. losers.

Summary

- It's easier to address regional than global challenges.
- Addressing climate change requires
 - International cooperation.
 - New technologies.
 - Leadership.