ACTIVITY REPORT

NAADSN
North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network

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The Changing Arctic: Canadian and Icelandic perspectives

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Amidst a rapidly changing geostrategic environment precipitated by Russia's full invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and dramatic climatic changes in the Arctic, Canadian and Icelandic practitioners, academics, and government representatives gathered on 7 June 2023 in Reykjavík, Iceland to discuss future Canadian-Icelandic Arctic cooperation and coordination. Topics included: the defence and security of the North American and European Arctic and the North Atlantic regions; challenges to the current global Arctic governance regimes; and societal challenges in the Canadian and Icelandic Arctic related to gender, human security, environmental sustainability, and economic development. This NAADSN Activity Report provides a summary of topics discussed and lessons learned for future knowledge and expertise sharing in the strengthening the Canada-Iceland relationship.

Background

On Wednesday, 7 June 2023, NAADSN, the Centre for Defence and Security Studies (CDSS) at the Unviersity of Manitoba, the Institute for International Affairs (IIA) at the University of Iceland, Varðberg (Association of Western Cooperation and International Affairs), and the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-hosted "The Changing Arctic: Will the Arctic see greater military engagement or continued cooperation?" seminar at the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík. The seminar brought together Canadian and Icelandic academic experts and Icelandic politicians and government practitioners. In attendance were approximately eighty individuals from the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian embassy, foreign military and diplomatic representatives, students, and local media.

The seminar consisted of opening remarks by Pia Hannson (Director of the IIA) and the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs Þórdís Kolbrún R. Gylfadóttir. This was followed by three panels, each consisting of a keynote address provided by NAADSN members. The seminar concluded with a brief synopsis of the day by Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and concluding remarks by Iceland's Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson. With respect to summaries of the panel discussions, the Chatham House rule of non-attribution

has been applied to protect the views of the government practitioners who shared their expertise and knowledge.

This is the inaugural event of a new and continuing Canada-Iceland defence and security dialogue, where NAADSN, CDSS, IIA, Varðberg, and the Iceland Ministry of Foreign Affairs plan to rotate conferences between Iceland and Canada on a yearly basis to foster increased cooperation and better understanding of shared interests between the two communities. Canada will host Icelanders in June 2024.

NAADSN and Icelandic Representation and Sessions

Mr. Jónas Allansson, Director General in the Directorate for Defence at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland
A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?

Dr. Andrea Charron, NAADSN Co-Lead and Director, Centre for Defence and Security Studies
Addressing societal challenges in the Arctic. How to maintain effective cooperation in gender equality, societal security, environmental sustainability, and economic development despite growing strategic competition?
New Challenges to Arctic Governance

Mr. Nicholas Glesby, NAADSN Research Fellow
Rapporteur

His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson, Iceland's Ambassador to Canada
Overview and Concluding Remarks

Minister Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland
Welcome and Opening

Dr. James Fergusson, NAADSN Fellow and Deputy-Director, Centre for Defence and Security Studies
Keynote: *A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?*

Ms. Sóley Kadal, Representative of Iceland's Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries
Addressing societal challenges in the Arctic. How to maintain effective cooperation in gender equality, societal security, environmental sustainability, and economic development despite growing strategic competition?

Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, NAADSN Lead
A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?
Moderator*: New Challenges to Arctic Governance*
Overview and Concluding Remarks

Dr. Marc Lanteigne, NAADSN Coordinator and Associate Professor at UiT: The Arctic University of Norway
Keynote: *New Challenges to Arctic Governance*

Ms. Bridget Larocque, NAADSN Co-Lead and Chair, Northern Advisory Board
Keynote: *Addressing societal challenges in the Arctic. How to maintain effective cooperation in gender equality, societal security, environmental sustainability, and economic development despite growing strategic competition?*

Ms. Pia Hansson, Director of the Institute for International Affairs (IIA)
Welcome and Opening
Moderator: *A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?*

Ms. Guðbjörg Ríkey Th. Hauksdóttir, PhD student, University of Iceland
New Challenges to Arctic Governance

Dr. Bjarni Már Magnússon, Professor in Law, Bifröst University
Addressing societal challenges in the Arctic. How to maintain effective cooperation in gender equality, societal security, environmental sustainability, and economic development despite growing strategic competition?

Dr. Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir, Professor of International Relations at the University of Iceland
A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?

Mr. Davíð Stefánsson, President of Varðberg (Association of Western Cooperation and International Affairs)
New Challenges to Arctic Governance

Welcome and Opening

Pia Hannson, Director of IIA, welcomed participants by acknowledging the military and collective security challenges in the North Atlantic region, particularly those triggered by Russia's full invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Beyond a growing recognition of the importance of strategic cooperation, Iceland and its allies also need to cooperate effectively in areas such as gender equality and economic development. There are numerous societal challenges in the way of completing these objectives. Canada and Iceland can share knowledge and expertise to understand differing perspectives and find solutions.

Next, Iceland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, delivered a strong rebuke of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and buildup of military capabilities and activities in the Russian Arctic. Icelandic policymakers are not fooled by the myth of Arctic exceptionalism (where the Arctic is isolated and stands alone from other geopolitical issues elsewhere), given the increasing linkage of geopolitical trends to economic and political developments in Iceland and other states. It seems unlikely that Russia will change its policy course in

the short-term and the strategic importance of the North Atlantic is rising. Iceland's National Arctic and Security Policy commits Reykjavík to low tension and follows the basic tenants of international law and respect for state sovereignty.

Minister Gylfadóttir further stated that if there is one guiding star in Icelandic foreign policy, it is the values and principles reflected in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Iceland has limited options in a world where rules are selectively applied – the worldview that Russian and other non-democratic rulers maintain. It is not possible to have political cooperation with Russia in the near future without Iceland going against the same basic values that are the basis of Arctic cooperation. Might does not make right.

The Minister added that Icelandic cooperation with Russia today would undermine common Western principles and values that seek to safeguard stability, peace, and responsible economic and resource development in the Arctic. In order to avoid disputes or crises that can result in unintended escalation, Iceland seeks to set clear boundaries with Russia while acknowledging Arctic "exceptionalism" cannot be a temptation to approach Russia as a security partner at this time. The seven Arctic states other than Russia (Canada, Iceland, the Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the United States), should show leadership by continuing to cooperate with the international community, key Arctic stakeholders, and relevant third parties who have strategic interests in the Arctic.

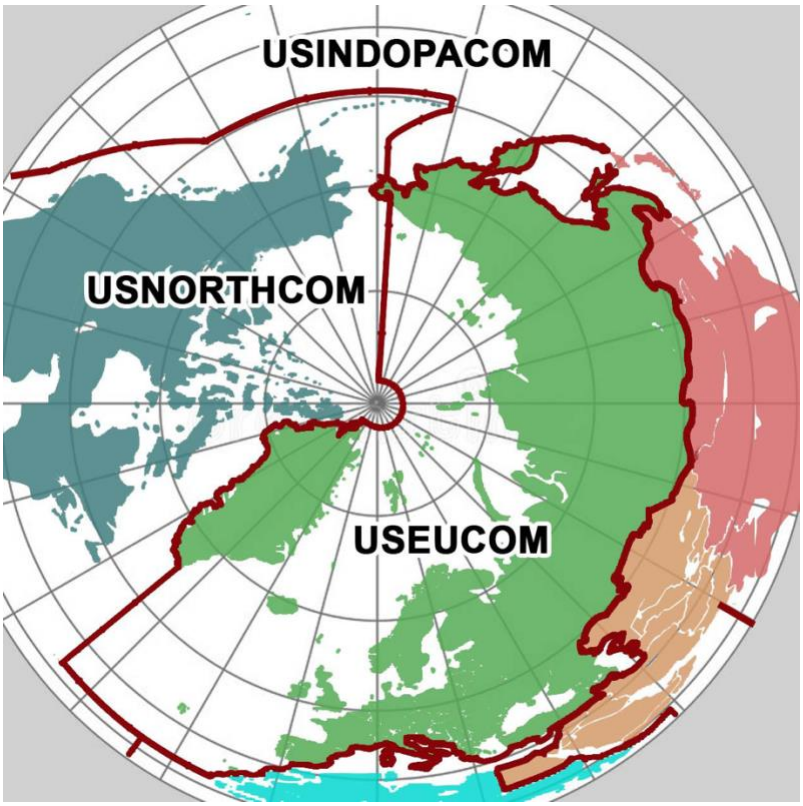
The seven like-minded Arctic states are increasing situational awareness and presence in the North Atlantic region for both military issues and to track climate change effects. Iceland's key allies are the other like-minded Arctic states as well as the United Kingdom. Reykjavík's bilateral partnership with the United States continues to be a key pillar of its defence and security policy, and Iceland is strengthening its resilience through such measures as enhanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities. The Minister ended her comments by highlighting the growing interest, engagement, and cooperation amongst the seven like-minded Arctic states to commit to international law and the international rules-based order in the Arctic.

Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, provides opening remarks. Photo credit to mbl.is/Arnþór Birkisson.

Panel 1: A transformed security landscape in the Arctic and North Atlantic. How can allies and partners strengthen their collective security in the region?

Dr. James Fergusson, Deputy-Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba and NAADSN Fellow delivered the keynote address for the first panel on "Command and Control (C2) Seams and Iceland." He began by providing a brief history of how the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) was sold politically to the Canadian public by rationalizing it as part of Canada's commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO is Europe and North America's frontline, and today, Canada and Denmark are beginning to view Greenland with greater strategic interest for their own defences. Iceland's defensive capabilities mainly lie within the Iceland-United States' bilateral relationship that was first established during the Second World War and formalized in 1951. Are these ties being rejuvenated in the new strategic environment with an emboldened Russia and are these ties still functional?

Dr. Fergusson then pivoted to discuss NORAD and US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM – which is the US combatant command twinned with NORAD). NORAD's missions are: aerospace control, aerospace warning, and maritime warning of continental North America. Given renewed strategic attention to the North Atlantic, he suggested that the US Unified Command Plan (which divides the world into 11 combatant commands) needs to be reconsidered to include Greenland in North America's area of responsibility (AOR). Canada has promised $40 billion over 20 years and $6 billion over 5 years for NORAD Modernization efforts. Canada first agreed to this NORAD Modernization cycle in 2017 as part of Canada's defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), and in a joint statement from Prime Minister Trudeau and President Trump. Funds were not identified until 2021 and a joint statement from the Canadian defence minister and US defence secretary as well as one by Prime Minister Trudeau and President Biden.



North America Unified Command Plan seams (courtesy of US Department of Defense) created by Troy Bouffard. Note there are 3 combatant commands with Arctic responsibilities.

NORAD Modernization considerations date back to around 2010 and are largely prompted by two distinct threats. First, the development of long-range air (ALCMs) and sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) rendered the North Warning System (NWS) – a string of short and long-ranged radars owned by Canada and the United States – obsolete as it does not have in-flight tracking capabilities and, therefore, provides suboptimal

situational awareness. Second, by 2017, Russian development and testing of hypersonic glide vehicles in sub-orbital space meant that neither the NWS or the US Ballistic Missile Early Warning Network (BMEWS) could track these new delivery systems, leaving North America vulnerable to new advanced weapon technologies. The political environment to address these gaps was lacking until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine which, coupled with new western artificial intelligence (AI) technology, drove North American decision-makers to commit funding for NORAD Modernization.

Elements today are reminiscent of NORAD's origins in the early 1950s. First, the emergence of long-range strategic bombers married to nuclear weapons represented technological development and changes, and bearing similarities to the current hypersonic development. Second, the Cold War brought a new bipartisan consensus in North America on how to 'contain' the Soviet Union. There is now quad-partisan consensus in Ottawa (Liberal, Conservative, New Democrats, and the Green parties) on the need for defence investments, which is particularly important because NORAD investments are technically challenging and have often been subject to bitter public debate. Third, during the Cold War, the North American public perceived a world divided by capitalism and communism, with similar conditions today between democracies and authoritarian regimes. This is not conducive for arms control arrangements between Russia and the West, and it constrains policy makers who are trying to reduce tensions. Fourth, there needs to be a balance for credible deterrent requirements between the West and potential adversaries to avoid generating misperceptions in a political crisis and incentivizing adversaries to pre-emptively strike or 'go first.'

These elements point to the need for a credible deterrence by denial and global deterrence posture for USNORTHCOM. However, this is a delicate balancing act and policy-makers must consider various elements: how to prevent war and escalation, how to prevent any military events in the Arctic that can trigger a broader war as a result of accident or misperception, and how to create conditions to isolate the Arctic from conflicts elsewhere? The solution to these challenges is more than just procuring new defence capabilities or rearranging military organization structures. Solutions also must consider factors such as the redirection of time and space in conflict, political interests, and military cooperation alongside the expanding costs of advanced military technology and hardware.

During the Cold War, the North Atlantic was seen as a NATO issue area, not a North American one. Iceland's role in North Atlantic defence was providing anti-submarine warfare and protection of the sea lines of communication, especially around the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap (GIUK). Today, for the defence of North America, the United States and Canadian governments might consider Greenland as part of USNORTHCOM rather than as part of USEUCOM. The new strategic environment for North America requires different investments and encourages a reconsideration of political requirements. Given that the current C^2 seam between NORTHCOM and EUCOM in the North Atlantic represents a potential aerospace backdoor to North America (a reverse from the Cold War when Europe was the front lines), policy-makers need to better manage common threats that differ from historical trends. A solution may entail an expanded NORAD regional commitment to include Greenland and Iceland, which may, in the case of the former, already be slowly underway with the Danish liaison officer switching from embedding within US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) to NORAD/USNORTHCOM.

The core of the NORAD arrangement is twofold. First is the power imbalance between Canada and the United States. Canada needs American military resources for its defence and security. Second, NORAD provides a venue for Ottawa to ensure that Washington knows Canadian interests and that they are taken into account within North American defence designs. This comparison extends to the management of the Danish-Greenlandic relationship and the role of Iceland as a small state neighbour. When smaller states band together they can achieve influence in decision-making with the United States.

NATO and the Canada-US (CANUS) relationship has to get out of the Cold War thinking and restructure relationships. In this new strategic environment, is the CANUS bilateral relationship sufficient for Canadian interests, or is there merit for the protection of North America to include more direct security partnerships, including Iceland, through this particular lens? There is also an important security side of the defence equation: investments in the Canadian Arctic cannot be thought of singularly in defence terms and needs to be multi-domain, multi-agency, and multi-purpose. For example, space-based investments for communications provide enormous benefits to remote communities and could facilitate high-speed internet access and telehealth capabilities. These investments need to be both military and civilian-driven for dual-use purpose needs.

Dr. James Fergusson delivers his keynote address. Photo credit to mbl.is/Arnþór Birkisson.

Following the keynote address, Pia Hannson moderated the discussion with panelists Jónas Allansson (Director General in the Directorate for Defence at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland), Dr. Lackenbauer, Dr. Fergusson, and Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir (Professor of International Relations at the University of Iceland). The conversation began with discussions about Iceland's changing perspectives on defence and security since 2016. There are now two Icelandic liaisons stationed with the US Second Fleet and Joint Forces Command Norfolk, there is an enhanced US presence at US Naval Air Station Keflavik, growing awareness in Icelandic public opinion polling about the perceived threat from Great Power Competition, and a shift from viewing financial instability as the greatest threat to Iceland to possible armed conflict (likely against Russia) as the more pressing concern.

These considerations have fostered a desire for closer cooperation with Iceland and NATO, the European Union (EU), and the United States that is proportionate and calibrated to avoid unintended escalation or creating a security dilemma with adversaries. Additionally, further military and political cooperation between Iceland, Canada, and other Nordic states is needed. The 2021 Iceland Arctic Policy and National Security Strategy, as well as the invitation of Canadian PM Trudeau to the Nordic Council of Ministers' meeting in Iceland in June 2023, are examples of this shift.

From left to right: His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson, Iceland's Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Jónas Allansson, Director General in the Directorate for Defence at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, and, Mr. Davíð Stefánsson, President of Varðberg (Association of Western Cooperation and International Affairs). Photo credit to mbl.is/Arnþór Birkisson.

The Canada-Iceland relationship can help address other issue areas: growing militarization of the Arctic; maritime espionage; illegal commercial shipping; insufficient intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); hazards to Arctic infrastructure; and disaster assistance. The blurring of defence and security means that policy-makers need to delineate between threats passing **through** the region (hypersonics and other advanced delivery systems) to provide credible deterrence posture, and those threats capable of directly impacting **in** the Arctic (climate change). If most short-term threats are not kinetic, and instead are hybrid threats falling below the conventional threshold of war, are militaries or civilian agencies the proper lead?

A panelist also reaffirmed the Minister's comments by stating that the seven like-minded Arctic states need to uphold the rule of law and the rules-based international order, and ensure that Russia respects state sovereignty. Non-state actors also have rights under international law for scientific research and foreign direct investment (FDI) which the Arctic states must consider in articulating and demonstrating their commitments to international law. Current considerations on how to manage Russia also do not include military-to-miliary cooperation,

including confidence and security building measures. How can NATO members deter adversaries without creating or exacerbating a security dilemma for Russia? Creating stability does not necessarily mean peace, but it allows for dialogue with a military adversary to manage and balance interests. This means that a Russia-NATO relationship can withstand a shock without escalating towards unintended use of force. This is difficult to do in a black and white world where a lack of nuance limits the range of options. Fostering person-to-person relationships and opening backdoor channels may facilitate possible discussions or negotiations towards this objective, but any increase in armaments production from both Russia or the seven like-minded Arctic states will hamper the ability to begin these negotiations.

Another panelist emphasized how NATO is the most important part of Iceland's defence agreement with the United States. Providing transparency and sending clear strategic messages emphasizing risk mitigation and management. Even with the NATO link, militaries are not the answer for everything. Due to hybrid threats, bolstering resilience through NATO's Article 3 (which calls for every NATO member needs to withstand major shocks such as natural disasters, failure of critical infrastructure, and hybrid or armed attacks) is necessary. This can be coordinated through closer discussion amongst the seven like-minded Arctic states, and using the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) and Arctic Chiefs of Defence Staff Conferences (ACHODS) as venues for enhanced military cooperation.

The panel ended with some closing thoughts: that frontline defence is seen as a European issue because of the War in Ukraine, even though North America is subject to Russian attacks in the cyber and cognitive domains that are low signature and difficult to detect. North America is not immune from dynamics that spillover from the rest of the world. Cybercrime, organized crime, and increased populism are security concerns that are high on the political agenda for both Icelanders and Canadians. It will be difficult to find middle ground for back-channel conversations between the United States and Russia, with Canada unlikely to assume the facilitator role that it played for NATO in the 1950s. Further discussion is needed on the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) and how it fits within both broader NATO and NORAD arrangements. Finally, the Icelandic government has undergone recent organizational changes driven by necessity (rather than politics), with challenges such as cyber threats, combatting disinformation, and protection of critical infrastructure now falling under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Panel 2: New Challenges to Arctic Governance

Dr. Marc Lanteigne, Associate Professor of Political Science at UiT: The Arctic University in Tromsø, Norway and NAADSN Network Coordinator, delivered the keynote address for Panel 2. Dr. Lanteigne framed what he characterized as current and emerging "loud" and "quiet" challenges for the Arctic region. Important environmental concerns in the Arctic, such as pollution and the rapid melting of sea ice by the early 2030s, have significant legal, political, and economic ramifications. These considerations will increase the need for viable and reliant search and rescue (SAR) and maritime safety, which may or may not be coordinated through the Arctic Council under the Norwegian chairship from 2023-2025.

The loud challenge is that perceived re-militarization and hard power are back in the Arctic and the potential for spillover grows as defence and security threats become increasingly blurred. Security now involves dealing

with Great Power Competition, with a wide set of agendas and myriad viewpoints of different stakeholders. Who is identifying what kind of security is in play, and for whom? Rethinking security will affect Arctic governance and cooperation structures, particularly as defence issues roost closer to home (a sense felt by people in Tromsø, given its close proximity to Russia). Signs indicate that Arctic exceptionalism is gone, with the USS *Gerald R. Ford* transiting Norwegian waters (the first time that a US aircraft carrier has done so in 65 years) and the United States establishing a new diplomatic post in Tromsø.

The quiet challenge is that the Arctic is an international region and that every Arctic state defines where the Arctic begins and what the Arctic is. Arctic-adjacent states, or non-Arctic states, are asking for greater say in the region. There are thirteen official state observers in the Arctic Council, and how the Arctic member states address their interests will be a key consideration moving forward. Several non-Arctic states have expressed their desire to play a role in what they perceive as an increasingly "open" the Arctic, including China, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Japan, Korea, and Germany. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) economic group also seek greater influence, with strong Asia-Arctic diplomacy evidenced by recent Arctic Circle meetings in Dubai and Tokyo. These considerations raise questions about the potential benefits of a new forum or cooperative structure that would amplify the status of non-Arctic states, regardless of the future of the Arctic Council. Dr. Lanteigne concluded his remarks with three questions: What are we securing? What and who are involved in Arctic governance processes? And, how are Arctic stakeholders defined under current circumstances?

Following this keynote address, Dr. Lackenbauer moderated a panel featuring Dr. Lanteigne, Dr. Andrea Charron, Davíð Stefánsson (President of Varðberg - Assoication of Western Cooperation and International Affairs), and Guðbjörg Ríkey Th. Hauksdóttir (PhD student at the University of Iceland researching China-Russia Arctic relations). The panelists began by discussing the golden era of Chinese-Icelandic relations after the 2008 financial crisis and culminating with the signing of the 2013 free trade agreement. Given the recent shift in Icelandic public opinion on defence and security issues, there is now less support for the idea of China as the "golden ticket" for economic progress than before.

Circumpolar governance structures in the Arctic require cooperation with Russia, as Moscow is the largest Arctic state and twenty percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) is tied to the Arctic. Cooperation on the environment, climate change, scientific research, and SAR is vital. Discussions are important for Icelandic security, are in Reykjavík's national interest, and could be facilitated through the Arctic Council or Arctic Economic Council. There is a silent assumption behind Arctic governance: that the eight Arctic states and five littoral states (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States) remain in control of decision making, determining what happens in the region and with whom. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the hiatus of cooperation with Russia has upended this governance model. Arctic decisions are becoming fragmented and fractured, with the seven like-minded Arctic states on one side and Russia, China, and the rest of the BRICS on the other. Lost in the discussion are the six Arctic Council Permanent Participants representing Indigenous Peoples as rightsholders whom the Arctic states must consult. Accordingly, the Arctic states must be consistent about rules governing consultations with Permanent Participants and their contributions to scientific research, lest the West be accused of hypocrisy.

The panelists also discussed whether Arctic exceptionalism is dead, whether it ever existed, or if can it be sustained or rescusitated. The notion that the benefits of cooperation outweighed competition for at least two decades following the creation of the Arctic Council may have more explanatory power than the idea of "exceptionalism." The geographic, climatic, and political conditions of the 1990s created the need for the Arctic Council. Now, the perception of exceptionalism has been weaponized to point fingers, such as Chinese and Russian media alleging that NATO expansion has disrupted regional peace, harmony, and stability. Sub-governmental cooperation is essential moving forward, with panelists urging the opening of communication lines elsewhere while cooperation with Russia in the Arctic Council remains on "pause."

The "pause" on Arctic Council activities has delayed progress on environmental projects and SAR cooperation. This is especially critical given that scientific research requires the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge. Additionally, since the Russian economy is antithetical to environmental safety standards because of its reliance on the Arctic for a significant portion of its economic livelihood (example, the overdependence on fossil fuels and lack of pollution controls), it is imperative that progress on environmental projects and SAR cooperation find a path forward regardless of the Arctic Council "pause." Panelists also indicated a desire to reinvigorate dialogue with the Russians and Chinese using track two diplomacy (researchers, journalists, and, academics), particularly to discuss scientific cooperation in the Arctic. "De-risking" may also assuage media coverage accusing NATO of using Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a pretext for an enhanced Arctic presence – although some participants insisted that this remains unlikely.

The panelists then answered a series questions. The first was "What advice do you have for the Norwegian Arctic Council chair?" Answers suggested that the Arctic Council governance structure must be preserved to discuss environmental issues and future topics because it is practical and deconflicts pressing "day-to-day" issues. Representatives from the like-minded states can continue meeting at forums such as the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), the ACHODS, the ASFR, and scientific working groups where they make sense among. Participants also noted that scientists are interested in one another's research findings, regardless of geopolitics. Panelists also debated the implications of not continuing the Arctic Council, noting that there have already been Russian discussions contemplating alternatives.

The panel was next asked: "Is there a notion of Russian Arctic exceptionalism?" In Putin's mind, there is. Russia has half the population of the Arctic, the greatest cold-weather capabilities, and the notion of being an "Arctic nation" is deeply embedded in Russian culture. Russia and China's common goals are "aligned" to stop American dominance of the international order. Russia has signed on to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) memorandum. A few weeks before the invasion of Ukraine, Beijing signed on to a "no-limits" relationship to work with Moscow on artificial intelligence, security, and the Arctic. However, Chinese financial and infrastructure investments in the Polar Silk Road have been delayed, and there are few Chinese vessels transiting the Northern Sea Route highlighting practical limitations of the Chinese-Russian relationship. One panelist suggested that China is paying lip service to Russia, but is not willing to trigger Western sanctions against it. At the end of the day, China does not want to be responsible for propping up a Russian vassal state like it already does with North Korea.

Finally, an audience member asked the panel about Singapore's interest in the Arctic and whether its primary motive is prestige or economics. Answers highlighted how Singapore wants to position itself to be front and centre in terms of future commercial shipping in the region. Besides being a low-lying state that is exceptionally vulnerable to sea change levels generated by climate change, Singapore supports the idea of "club goods" and wants to reap the benefits that states receive by being accepted as Arctic-adjacent (with other examples including the UK, France, Poland, Ireland, Estonia, and the Netherlands). One panelist suggested that armed conflict is unlikely to break out in the Arctic Ocean, and that the like-minded Arctic states should welcome countries such as Singapore and France for the scientific capabilities and other net benefits that they bring to the region.

Panel 3: Addressing societal challenges in the Arctic. How to maintain effective cooperation in gender equality, societal security, environmental sustainability, and economic development despite growing strategic competition?

The keynote for Panel 3 was provided by Bridget Larocque, NAADSN co-Lead and Chair of its Northern Advisory Board. Ms. Larocque shared the video "One Health, One Future," produced by the Center for One Health Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The video highlights the importance of interdisciplinary research and collaboration between academic researchers and local knowledge in Indigenous communities. By incorporating other disciplines, research can be expanded outside of siloes and narrow interests. The concept of "One Health," drawing connections between humans, animals, and the environment, has been used by Indigenous Alaskans for thousands of years. An overarching theme is that the environment humans live in directly influences our health, and in turn, we influence the environment. As examples, holistic research on health incorporates culture, mental health, community health and wellness, substance abuse, and other forms of harm. When it comes to technological developments like remotely piloted aircraft, these devices can be used for sea ice, wildfire detection, or tracking sea life such as whales. The presentation highlighted how communities are real partners with scientists, and together they are learning how to better adapt, mitigate, and respond to modern problems in the Arctic using interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches.

After Ms. Larocque's keynote address, the Icelandic Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson, moderated a panel consisting of: Ms. Larocque, Dr. Charron, Sóley Kadal (Lead negotiator of the international fisheries agreement and a representative of Iceland's Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries), and Bjarni Már Magnússon (Professor in Law, Bifröst University). The panelists began with discussing the "One Health, One Future" approach as an example of collaboration between academia and local communities. The concept also emphasizes the Arctic as an Indigenous homeland, highlighting how the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was created to respond to the effects of environmental contamination in the Arctic on peoples' everyday lives. Policymakers and researchers must engage with Indigenous peoples to ensure their voices and perspectives are heard and prioritized in processes and institutions. Furthermore, local and Indigenous perspectives on human security that consider intergenerational interconnectedness and promote transdisciplinary approaches should be considered more fully.

Panelists suggested that the guiding philosophy of "nothing about us without us" is often overlooked in policy-making. Discussions between government and communities must involve serious and substantial local input and acknowledge the ideas and stories that are part of real lived experiences, rather than simply anonymizing the voices that share them. An Indigenous worldview inherently considers humans as the stewards of animals, lands, and the sea, leading the panelists to raise the question of how to standardize and institutionalize Indigenous Peoples' worldviews. Should NATO issue a statement agreeing with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Article 30, which requires military consultation with Indigenous Peoples, particularly when exercising or training on protected land? Discussion ensued on the complexity of decolonization and Indigenization of research, including gendered language, oral histories, and the ongoing legacies of colonization .

Next, the panelists turned to the future of the Arctic maritime domain, including the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries' Agreement in light of the growing global demand for protein, and the rules outlining maritime boundary limitations in Iceland.

The panelists then turned to economic and military development in Canada's Arctic. Activities on Indigenous lands impact cultural identity and often promote Settler behaviours rather than Indigenous ways of knowing and being. While governments often cite a human presence in remote communities to legitimize claims to sovereignty, state practices can serve as a source of insecurity to the people living in those places. Iceland may have opportunities to facilitate conversations about these dynamics because it has no Indigenous Peoples. Panelists also discussed large infrastructure deficits in Canada's Arctic, including the lack of deep-water ports. Canada and the United States rely on Pittufik Space Force Base (formerly Thule Air Force Base) in Greenland for refueling in the region. Canada's Arctic lacks high-speed internet and telecommunications, has few roads, and has few hospitals. The standard of services in remote communities falls far below that available in the southern provinces or territorial cities. Economic development is needed, but it cannot come at the cost of Indigenous Peoples' cultural prosperity. The Arctic is a homeland, not a frozen desert or wasteland, so state officials must consult substantively with local communities about interests and needs. It is not enough to fly in and out for superficial discussions, and meaningful consultation instead requires sustained dialogue and relationship building.

Ottawa has committed to a massive investment of federal government money for new Arctic and Polar radar networks and runway improvements in the North. An attendee raised the question of whether local communities understand the complexities of these military procurement assignments and the ramifications that an influx of cash and workers can have on their social cohesion. Consultation with Indigenous organizations and entrepreneurs is needed to balance development with fresh air, clean land, and silence that communities have enjoyed since time immemorial.

Overview and Concluding Remarks

From left to right in the front row: Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, NAADSN Lead; Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland; His Excellency Hlynur Guðjónsson, Iceland's Ambassador to Canada; and, Mr. Jónas Allansson, Director General in the Directorate for Defence at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland; Photo credit to Kristinn Ingvarsson/Stjónarráð Íslands.

Dr. Lackenbauer provided a comprehensive overview of the day's discussions, emphasizing how various speakers had expressed their desire for further academic cooperation between Iceland and Canada on security an defence topics. He reiterated Dr. Fergusson's challenge to think differently and imaginatively about relationships in a changing security landscape requiring "dynamic cooperation," the balancing of hard and soft governance challenges, and the sharing of knowledge through sustained, respectful relationships. Specific areas for research in the Canadian-Icelandic relationship suggested during the panel discussions included: deeper Coast Guard cooperation and sharing of marine operating pictures; protecting fish stocks for economic purposes; aligning feminist foreign policies (even though Canada does not currently have a clear foreign policy document or strategy); gender equality in the Arctic; distinct knowledge sharing and collaboration; enhancing defence and security relative to Iceland's geostrategic position to Canada and the United States; exploring how military investments with dual-use benefits can address societal security needs; and enhancing trade between Nunavut, New England, Greenland, and Iceland due to the close proximity to one another.

Dr. Lackenbauer and Ambassador Guðjónsson concluded the proceedings with remarks on the deepening friendship and cooperation of the Canada-Icelandic relationship. By moving dialogue forward in academic settings, such as this conference, experts in both countries have an opportunity to expand their knowledge base about one another. Iceland can offer the perspective of being a small state, with no military, and a unique history when dealing with Great Power Competition. Since the United States' withdrawal from Keflavik in 2006, combined with Russia's invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, Reykjavík has had to reconsider how its defence and security policy is made, what states share the same values and goals, and to widen the scope of thinking beyond traditional Cold-War mindsets.

Given the focus on NORAD modernization and greater all domain awareness among allies, there is an opportunity for a greater understanding in Iceland of North American defence, its history, and its future. Holistic understandings provide an essential foundation for Canadian and Icelandic policymakers to discern opportunities for enhanced bilateral cooperation and manage constraints as the return of Great Power Competition reshapes the geostrategic environment in the Arctic. Opportunities for relationship-building and knowledge exchange, such as "The Changing Arctic" dialogue, move these conversations forward and contribute to a better shared understanding of the mutual challenges and opportunities of Canada and Iceland.

NAADSN, Ambassador Guðjónsson, and Pia Hansson.
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