

ACTIVITY REPORT



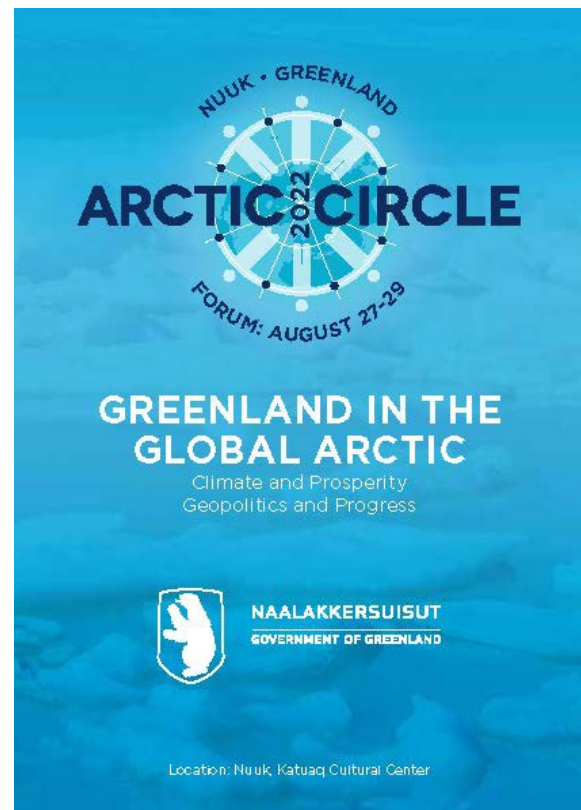
Arctic Circle Forum Greenland 2022

Greenland in the Global Arctic: Climate and Prosperity, Geopolitics and Progress

Nuuk, Greenland
27-29 August 2022

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The Arctic Circle Forum in Nuuk, Greenland (27-29 August), saw NAADSN representation by Whitney Lackenbauer, Andrew Bresnahan, Randy “Church” Kee, Michael Sfraga, and panels co-organized by NAADSN, Nasiffik, and Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) on “The Future of Arctic Cooperation: Still Exceptional?” and by Nassifik, Inuit Circumpolar Council, and NAADSN on “Indigenous and Local Security.” Canada’s three Territorial Premiers invited Lackenbauer to introduce and moderate a panel that they were featured on, which linked defence and security investments to healthy Northern communities.



Background

The Arctic Circle is a non-profit organization, established in 2013, which convenes meetings featuring delegates from Arctic and non-Arctic state governments, Northern governments, universities, think tanks, environmental organizations, the private sector, and Indigenous communities. An annual Arctic Circle Assembly is held in Reykjavik, with Forums held periodically in various other Arctic and non-Arctic cities. After a two-year pause due to COVID-19, an Arctic Circle Forum was held 27-29 August 2022 in Nuuk, Greenland, which brought together about 400 delegates from nearly thirty countries.

Greenland’s Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the Greenland Forum. Canadian representation included more than thirty delegates from Global Affairs Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and other federal departments and agencies; the Premiers of Nunavut, the Northwest

Territories, and the Yukon, as well as their staff; and teams from Inuit organizations including Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), and Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada (ICC-C). Other countries with official diplomatic presence included ambassadors or representatives from the European Union, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Singapore, UAE, India, and the People’s Republic of China. There was no official Russian representation at the forum, although one Russian national studying in Norway did participate.

The Greenland Forum included various plenary presentations and sessions on topics related to Arctic security at all levels (from high-level geostrategic competition to Indigenous and local responses to practical challenges on the ground), as well as intersections between security and domestic equity gaps. Other topics included “green” and critical minerals, critical infrastructure, “the return of Asia” to the Arctic and Greenland (a rather opaque and peculiar framing), the effects of climate change on food systems, emerging shipping and trade opportunities, examples of and opportunities for peaceful cooperation in the Arctic (including the landmark Canada-Denmark/Greenland boundary resolution), Indigenous peoples in circumpolar politics, and priorities for research cooperation. Relations between the Russian Federation and the other seven, like-minded Arctic states were a topic of frequent discussion and debate, with Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 have a clear influence on the proceedings - yet another example of the “spillover” of international affairs into the Arctic space.

Security: Indigenous and Local Responses (27 August)

This session was organized by Nasiffik - Centre for Foreign & Security Policy at Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland; the Centre for Arctic Security, Royal Danish Defence College; and the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN). Jeppe Strandsbjerg, Nasiffik, University of Greenland/Royal Danish Defence College, spoke on “What Arctic Security, and for whom? Reconceptualizing Sectors and Scales of Security for Arctic Peoples,” in which he parsed security about and for people in the Arctic. P. Whitney Lackenbauer of Trent University/NAADSN presented on the “The Canadian Rangers as Unconventional Security Model,” highlighting why it has proven a successful model for mobilizing Arctic ways of knowing and being through a unique form of military organization and practice that supports various forms of resilience. Audience members noted his inclusion of first-person quotes from Northerners on his PowerPoint slides, which grounded the presentation in extensive fieldwork that Lackenbauer has undertaken with Dr. Peter Kikkert of St. Francis Xavier University over the last four years. Andrew Bresnahan (King’s College London/NAADSN) approached the issue from an Inuit Nunaat perspective. He emphasized our “strategic duty to be mindful,” highlighting how adversaries have influenced decolonization activities elsewhere as a wedge to open political and societal fault lines, as well as equity gaps as a national security issue. He also noted governance and democratic instruments within the Canadian Arctic, identifying the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee (formed in 2017, which now includes defence and security as a priority area) as a prime example. Craig Fleener from the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies in Alaska spoke on “Addressing Local Security: An

Alaskan Perspective,” in which he emphasized the value of people “who know our land and cultures” – asking rhetorically “why would you want to rely on anyone else?” – and explained the value of the US military enhancing its engagement with Alaskans through a force modelled on the Canadian Rangers. He also promoted a broader definition of security (including food and infrastructure security), reminding the audience that “you do not think about national defence when you are focused on your next meal.” Andre Moreau, Government of Nunavut chaired the session, and Jackie Kidd of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami was also in attendance. The session attracted a full room and elicited many follow up discussions about the Canadian Rangers and Arctic peoples and security more generally.

Security in Ice-Free Arctic (27 August)

This panel was organized by the Danish Institute for Advanced Study, University of Southern Denmark (SDU), and Loughborough University in United Kingdom. Christina Viskum Larsen, the Director of the Arctic Researcher Network at SDU, Head of Research at the Center for Health Research in Greenland, and a member of the National Institute of Public Health in Copenhagen, spoke on climate change and public health, offering insights into determinants of health and wellbeing in the circumpolar world. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, a Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Loughborough presented on “Geopolitical Challenges Across a Warming Arctic.” She highlighted how the War in Ukraine looms over every layer of politics in the Arctic region, with a heightened spectre of stress-testing along borders, and even the prospect of a nuclear exchange. The war has changed the map of the Arctic, bringing an end to Finlandization and seeing Sweden reject its traditional neutral status. In this dangerous period for Baltic and High North states, Kennedy-Pipe emphasized that Russia’s preoccupation with strategic depth – a key aspect of the Cold War – is now back. She emphasized distinct Chinese and Russian views of the Eurasian Arctic, noting the Asian power’s desire for influence and greater reach, its interests in surveillance, and its use of soft power.

Whitney Lackenbauer of Trent University/NAADSN presented on his framework for conceptualizing Arctic security threats “through, to and in” the region. Generally, threats “through” the Arctic, such as strategic weapons, are best analyzed at the international, circumpolar or sub-regional levels. While conflict is unlikely to be generated in the Arctic region itself, he suggested that the leading threat “to” the Arctic is the risk of spillover effects from strategic competition between Russia, China and the West. Significant threats “in” the Arctic requiring collaboration include emergency response, search and rescue, infrastructure, and military operations. Some threats, such as climate change (which is caused by activities outside the region and thus represents a threat to it, while regional and local climate dynamics in the Arctic such as extreme weather threaten local residents), will straddle these categories, but this conceptual exercise around threats can help to determine appropriate scales for preparedness and response to different threats rather than bundling them all together in the generic category of “Arctic threats.” Comparing and contrasting how this framework applies in different sub-regions of the circumpolar Arctic, Lackenbauer concluded that like-minded nations needed to more carefully coordinate and calibrate their strategic messaging, promote integrated deterrence as a source of

regional stability, pursue information dominance, and synchronize allied efforts as global and regional competition heightens.

Andrew Bresnahan, a Master's student at King's College London/NAADSN, reflected on changes in connectivity associated with the changing sea ice in Inuit Nunaat. He noted how the Inuit calendar differs from the conventional Western four-season one, and celebrates when the time "when the sea ice returns" because it facilitates renewed inter-community connections by sea (in a frozen state). Accordingly, discourses around "ice-free" as a proxy for connection may not align with Northern peoples' own positionality, and he encouraged us to consider where our connections are in a moment of geopolitical transformation. The changing cryosphere is bringing new visitors to the region, requiring new domain awareness and understanding of who these people are (and the influence or information-gathering activities they might be undertaking). Dr. Bresnahan spoke to Chinese financial penetration of the Canadian mining sector, as well as rising attentiveness to supply chains and critical minerals. Ultimately, he emphasized that Arctic homelands "resonate" with global events, but that the Arctic is less a driver of global change than vice versa.

Canadian Territorial Premiers' Panel on Healthy Communities (27 August)¹



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This session, moderated by Whitney Lackenbauer (Trent University/NAADSN), built upon the presentations by NWT Premier Caroline Cochrane, Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok, and Yukon Premier Sandy Silver at a plenary session earlier in the afternoon. The Premiers highlighted initiatives underway in the three territories and emphasized the importance of investing in housing, health care, education and infrastructure to build healthy, vibrant and resilient communities in Canada’s North. They told the audience that all thirteen of Canada’s Premiers agree on the importance of strengthening Arctic sovereignty and security, and have called on the federal government to identify new financial resources to support sovereignty in Canada’s North and the implementation of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

Premier Cochrane emphasized that the three territorial premiers shared the message: “nothing about us without us.” With geopolitical instability bringing a renewed focus on Arctic sovereignty and security, she emphasized that northern security is more than just a robust military presence. It is about building strong, resilient communities through significant investment in critical infrastructure like roads, ports, telecommunications and energy. She highlighted that global powers are extending their influence and control in the Arctic through massive investments, increased marine traffic, and partnerships to advance Arctic projects and positioning, seeking to secure opportunities for themselves and to influence the international rules and policies that will set the terms for what happens in the Arctic. Instead, she said that Canada needed to look at sovereignty through the lens of the people – with Southern Canadians asking Northerners what they need rather than setting the agenda according to southern priorities. “It’s been too long that people have decided the needs of the North without consulting us enough and that’s not appropriate,” she said. “We live here, we have the most at stake here and so we need to be part of those conversations.” Cochrane said there’s a need for international co-operation on shared challenges such as climate change, geopolitical concerns, and a lack of

“The future seems to be coming a bit faster for the North, as issues of global security, the need for sustainable, thoughtful economic development, technological innovation, food and housing security, and climate change all come to a head in the region. That’s why it is so key to be present at events like the Arctic Circle Forum, where we can find shared objectives, build alliances, share ideas and take on the future together.”

Caroline Cochrane, *Premier of the Northwest Territories*

“Participation in international forums provides opportunities for GNWT political leaders and officials to meet decision-makers from across the globe and discuss key issues, such as investment, infrastructure, security, sustainable development, and tourism. We are committed to working across borders and with Indigenous northerners to improve the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the Arctic regions.”

Diane Archie, *Minister of Infrastructure, GNWT*

Source: GNWT News Release, “[NWT Premier seeks shared economic, environmental and social priorities at international Arctic forum in Greenland](#),” 25 August 2022

sustainable architecture compared to the south. “We cannot think in isolation. We do need to work together — not only the Arctic region of Canada but circumpolar,” she said. “All of us need to be concerned and we all need to be at the tables and talking about it.”

Premier Akeagok focused his opening remarks on Inuit resilience. He explained how growing concern about Arctic security has drawn attention to the issues that Inuit have long lived with, highlighting the infrastructure gap between Canada’s North and South. Akeagok said seeing the growth and infrastructure in Nuuk, such as seaports and housing construction, was an “eye opener” for what is possible for Canada’s Arctic communities. He noted particular opportunities for relatively small-scale infrastructure projects to support vibrant small communities. The creation of a deep sea port in Qikiqtarjuaq will promote opportunities for a sustainable fishing economy locally, and longstanding neglect for infrastructure elsewhere limits access to sustainable resources right in Canada’s backyard.

Premier Silver emphasized that people interested in investing in the North or in tackling climate change should be concerned that northern communities have the resources they need, such as equal access to health care, in order to thrive. He noted how international concerns about Arctic security have intensified further since Russia’s expanded invasion of Ukraine in February. If not for these developments, he noted that his comments would be focused on “people-centric health discussions,” including mental health, best practices in rural Indigenous communities, and independent reviews with municipalities and First Nation governments. In linking national security, Arctic security, and sovereignty, Premier Silver highlighted the Canadian Rangers as a military organization “that addresses all three areas.” Serving as eyes and ears in remote regions, Rangers are key to defence, and they are also key to sovereignty by creating vibrant communities. As an educator, he touted the Junior Canadian Ranger program as offering important opportunities for students who may struggle in regular classroom education but thrive on the land. The premiers have a responsibility to focus on their people, and he spoke to seizing opportunities associated with surging interest in climate change and geopolitical issues to advance Northern agendas.

The Historic Agreement over Tartupaluk (Hans Island), Lincoln Sea, and the Labrador Sea Continental Shelf (28 August)

This session, organized by Greenland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Business and Trade, featured presentations by Kenneth Høegh, Head of Representation, Greenland Representation to the U.S. and Canada (offering a Greenlandic perspective); Henning Dobson Knudsen, Chief Counsel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, International Law and Human Rights Division; and Michelle Campbell, Counsel, Global Affairs Canada Legal Affairs Bureau. It was chaired by Whitney Lackenbauer, Trent University/NAADSN.² The panel provided expert insights into the 14 June 2022 agreement between Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, together with Greenland, that resolved the long-standing dispute over the sovereignty of Hans Island (which is known as Tartupaluk in Greenlandic) by creating a land boundary. This 1.3 km² barren and uninhabited sandstone island is situated in the middle of Kennedy Channel between Ellesmere Island and Greenland, lying exactly 18 km from both islands. Its status as

the source of the only outstanding Arctic dispute involving sovereignty over land meant that the island attracted a disproportionate amount of attention as an example of unsettled – and thus uncertain – boundaries.

The panelists explained how the tenth anniversary of the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2018 proved to be a catalyst for action on the Hans Island file, with officials from Copenhagen and Nuuk announcing that they were setting up a joint task force to explore options and provide recommendations on how to officially resolve outstanding boundary issues in the Arctic with Canada during a meeting later that month in Ottawa. The task force held intensive in-person negotiations in 2018 and 2019 before converting to a virtual format in 2020 and 2021 owing to pandemic-related travel constraints. As the chief negotiators recounted during the panel, the transition to a virtual format facilitated weekly (and at times even daily) meetings to work methodically through technical details. They emphasized how the friendly relations and close cooperation that characterize the Canada-Denmark-Greenland relationship proved instrumental, culminating in a five-day “marathon” final meeting in Reykjavík in November 2021. Three days of legal and technical discussions were followed by two days of intensive legal negotiations that yielded an agreement-in-principle. After receiving political approval in the various political capitals, this “3 in 1” agreement was officially signed in Ottawa on 14 June 2022.

The agreement sets a land boundary on Hans Island/Tartupaluk that follows a natural ravine that runs the length of the island, in a general direction from north to south, and divides the island roughly in half. While the setting of a boundary reflects conventional state practice and divides a part of Inuit Nunaat (the Inuit homeland that transcends state boundaries), the agreement also includes an innovative provision that is reflective of Inuit priorities by affirming the “traditional, symbolic and historic significance” of the island. The deal commits all parties to maintaining continued access to and freedom of movement on the entire island for Inuit and local people living in Avanersuaq, Kalaallit Nunaat, and Nunavut, Canada, including for hunting, fishing, and other related cultural, traditional, historic, and future activities. A practical and workable border-implementation regime for all visitors must still be devised, but the negotiators were particularly proud of achieving an outcome that ensures mobility rights and means that “there will be no fences on the island.”

Although most media attention around the agreement fixated on the Hans Island agreement, the negotiations actually yielded a broader package deal that settles an approximately 79,000 km² overlap in the continental shelf in the Labrador Sea, modernizes the 1973 boundary within 200 nautical miles, and establishes the maritime boundary in the Lincoln Sea (north of Ellesmere Island and Greenland). The 2022 deal thus establishes a single, modernized 4000 km maritime boundary from the Lincoln Sea in the north to the Labrador Sea in the south – the longest continuous maritime boundary in the world. As a Danish negotiator explained, a strong commitment to resolving all three issues simultaneously opened space for creative solutions and compromise, rooted in a high level of trust and openness both politically and in the technical and legal delegations.

In his closing remarks on the panel, Lackenbauer noted that when Russia and Norway signed their historic maritime delimitation and cooperation agreement in the Barents Sea and Arctic in September

2010, foreign ministers Sergei Lavrov and Jonas Gahr Støre told Canada to “take note” and paternalistically instructed Ottawa to follow their lead. “We firmly believe that the Arctic can be used to demonstrate just how much peace and collective interests can be served through the implementation of the international rule of law,” they explained. “Moreover, we believe that the challenges in the Arctic should inspire momentum on international relations, based on cooperation rather than rivalry and confrontation.” Twelve years later, Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark/Greenland sent a similar reminder to the Kremlin, taking the signing of their historic agreement as an opportunity to emphasize how they are “close, like-minded partners committed to democratic principles, including the rule of law and gender equality. We work closely to support multilateralism and the rules-based international order, to protect human rights, minorities, Indigenous peoples and to safeguard democracy.” In contrast to Russia’s brutal tactics attempting to redraw boundaries in Europe, the solution was presented as a win-win-win outcome by the Canadian foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, which was echoed by Kenneth Høegh at the Arctic Circle Forum in Nuuk. “From the Lincoln Sea in the north to the Labrador Sea in the south, the line is the longest continuous maritime boundary in the world,” a Global Affairs Canada news release trumpeted. “This agreement is a testament to our excellent relations, and it demonstrates our commitment to the rules-based international order and in maintaining our shared ambition of the Arctic as a region of low tension and cooperation.”³ These messages remain crucial as Arctic coastal states look to settle their overlapping continental shelves in the central Arctic Ocean.

The Future of Arctic Cooperation: Still Exceptional? (28 August)

This panel, co-organized by Nasiffik - Centre for Foreign & Security Policy at Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland); Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC); and the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN) was moderated by Michael Sfraga, Chair, U.S. Arctic Research Commission, and included panelists Sara Olsvig, International Chair, ICC; Whitney Lackenbauer, Trent University/ NAADSN; Lassi Heininen, Professor Emeritus, University of Lapland; and Rasmus Leander Nielsen from Nasiffik. For years the notion of Arctic Exceptionalism has stipulated the region as a low-conflict area detached from broader security tensions elsewhere. Recently, much of what we thought we knew about regional cooperation has changed, however, because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the spill-over effects to the Arctic. This is posing challenges for various Arctic fora, with the pause of the Arctic Council as the most prominent (but by no means the only) example. While a contested explanation of Arctic affairs, the exceptionalism concept is worth continuous scrutiny and debate as how to safeguard détente, the inclusion of insight and voices of the Permanent Participants representing Arctic Indigenous peoples, and the prospect for renewed institutionalized cooperation in the future. The panel discussed potential avenues for collaboration with or without Russia, the various stumbling blocks to regain trust, and how Arctic actors might or can move forward in a time of tremendous uncertainty.

Notes

¹ See also Emily Blake, “‘Nothing about us without us.’ Northern premiers address Arctic Circle forum,” *Toronto Star*, 1 September 2022, <https://www.thestar.com/politics/2022/09/01/nothing-about-us-without-us-northern-premiers-address-arctic-circle-forum.html>.

² This summary draws from Lackenbauer’s recent article with Rasmus Leander Nielsen, “‘Close, like-minded partners committed to democratic principles’: Settling the Hans Island/Tartupaluk Territorial Dispute,” *Arctic Yearbook 2022*, https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2022/Briefing-Notes/3BN_-_AY2022_Lackenbauer_Nielsen.pdf

³ Canada, Global Affairs Canada, “Canada-Kingdom of Denmark joint statement on bilateral cooperation,” 14 June 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/06/canada-kingdom-of-denmark-joint-statement-on-bilateral-cooperation.html>.