



Neighbours in the North: Workshop Report on *Canadian Perspectives on Arctic Alignments with the Kingdom of Denmark* held 20 March 2023

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The 20 March 2023 hybrid workshop on *Canadian Perspectives on Arctic Alignments with the Kingdom of Denmark* was held at Kerr House, Trill College, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada and in a virtual format using Zoom.

This workshop was organized by the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN) and the School for the Study of Canada at Trent University pursuant to a visit to Ontario by Torsten Kjølby Nielsen, Senior Chief Counsellor for Arctic affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, to meet with and learn from Canadian academics and students. This activity brought together academic experts (both established and emerging) from across Canada to reflect on the contemporary state of Canada-Kingdom of Denmark relations, geopolitical drivers affecting the countries' respective foreign and security policies in the region, and opportunities to bolster Arctic cooperation. The conversation was structured into three panels:

- Maintaining a Peaceful, Secure, and Safe Arctic
- Enhancing Bilateral and Regional Cooperation
- Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Background

The Kingdom of Denmark consists of three countries: Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Denmark. Greenland, which achieved Home Rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009, makes the Arctic an essential part of the Danish realm and Denmark a strategically significant Arctic coastal state. "The Arctic has to be managed internationally, based on international principles of law, to ensure a peaceful, secure and collaborative Arctic," [Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(MFA\)](#) declares. According to the Danish Constitution, the Kingdom has the authority to enter into obligations under international law as well as responsibility for conducting foreign policy. Nevertheless, the [MFA notes](#) that the Faroese Government and Naalakkersuisut (the Government of Greenland) insist on "close, respectful and equal cooperation on matters related to foreign, security and defense policy with particular relevance to the Faroe Islands and Greenland." In the [Kingdom's strategy for the Arctic 2011- 2020](#), the Governments of Greenland, the Faroes and Denmark set out core opportunities and challenges that frame their common political objectives for the Arctic. They are currently working on a new strategy for the Arctic for the period 2021-2030.

Geography makes Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark close neighbours in the North. Even though the two countries now share a land border on Hans Island/Tartupaluk, their relationship is often overlooked – partly a

result of the dominance of the United States in both countries' strategic affairs, the association of Canada with North America and Greenland with Europe, and a lack of regular transportation connectivity between them. Nevertheless, the [Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs observes](#) that:

Only 26 kilometres separate northern Canada and Greenland. This close geographical proximity underpins the close and ever increasing bilateral relationship between Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark. The Kingdom of Denmark and Canada are both founding members of the Arctic Council, which was established in 1996 upon the signing of the Ottawa Declaration, and both States are strong supporters of the Ilulissat declaration of May 2008 on the cooperation between the States bordering the Arctic Ocean.

These declarations constitute the groundwork for the continuous effort of The Kingdom of Denmark and Canada to improve the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, the sustainable development of the Arctic and the protection of the Arctic environment. Greenland has a very high degree of self rule and the Governments of Denmark and Greenland work closely together to ensure the prosperity, safety and good quality of life of the population in Greenland.

The Kingdom of Denmark is committed to the Arctic Region also by sharing in the responsibility of the Nordic Council's involvement in the issues concerning the Arctic as an integral part of the Nordic Region. Hence, the Kingdom of Denmark joins its Nordic neighbours in a Nordic co-operation to strengthen the actions to improve the quality of life for the indigenous people in the northern areas and to support the social and cultural development for the Arctic people.

Reflecting on the 3,000-km shared Canada-Greenland maritime boundary and "rich historic and cultural links between the Inuit populations on both sides of the border," [Global Affairs Canada highlights](#) that "Denmark is a close, like-minded partner for Canada across a range of priority issues, including security and defence, trade and investment, climate change, cooperation in the Arctic, development and human rights." Recent steps suggest a genuine desire to build upon these commonalities, with Arctic affairs a source of shared values, interests, and responsibilities.

On 14 June 2022, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Jeppe Kofod, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and Múte B. Egede Prime Minister of Greenland and Vivian Motzfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade of Greenland, issued the following [joint statement](#):

Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark together with Greenland 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. We commit to deepening our cooperation across a range of priority issues in support of peace, prosperity and stability globally, as well as in the Arctic region.

Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark are committed to strengthening relationships that are key to our collective security. We will continue to cooperate closely within NATO, with the EU and the international community to end Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. Russia bears the sole responsibility for the illegal aggression, which violates international law and has caused mass destruction, senseless loss of human life, and food and energy security crises that threaten vulnerable populations globally.

Together we pledge our steadfast support to Ukraine and salute the courage and resilience of its people. ...

Democracy is the foundation of long-lasting peace and security, sustainable development and prosperity. Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark are committed to increasing bilateral and

multilateral cooperation to promote our democratic values, including in the use of digital technologies and in cyberspace. ...

In the Arctic, our countries share a unique bond, firmly rooted in the rich historical and cultural ties between Inuit in Canada and Greenland. The ongoing and historical links fostered by Inuit in both Greenland and Canada provide opportunities to strengthen cooperation, between the two countries' governments, including in areas of culture, mobility and transport, natural resources, and sustainable development through trade and infrastructure.

Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, together with Greenland, celebrate the signing of a new boundary agreement resolving long-standing disputes over the maritime boundary in the Lincoln Sea and the sovereignty of Tartupaluk/Hans Island. It also establishes a boundary on the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the Labrador Sea. 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. 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. We commit to further strengthening this cooperation, which will bring important benefits for the people living in the Arctic.

To address the most challenging crisis of our time, Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark will take urgent action to address climate change and mitigate its consequences. We are committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and we will promote trade and investment in clean technologies to promote a green transition and economy-wide decarbonization. Climate change is affecting the Arctic faster than any other region in the world. Our countries together with Greenland commit to helping our communities monitor and build resilience in response to climate change in the Arctic through enhanced collaboration in research that uses both scientific and Indigenous and local knowledge.

We look forward to increasing and expanding our cooperation in the years to come.

In this workshop, participants were invited to reflect upon the current as well as opportunities for enhancing and expanding this cooperation in bilateral and multilateral contexts.

Event Summary

Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, School for the Study of Canada, Trent University, and **Torsten Kjolby Nielsen**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Denmark, introduced the session. They highlighted the importance of collaboration between the Kingdom of Denmark, the Government of Canada, and other partners and allies (both international and sub-state). Input from this workshop would be helpful in informing the development of Denmark's new Arctic Strategy, which is in progress.

Panel 1: Maintaining a Peaceful, Secure, and Safe Arctic

Moderator: Nicole Covey, Ph.D. candidate, Canadian Studies, Trent University

The first speaker, **Dr. Thomas Hughes**, a postdoctoral fellow with the Department of Political Science at the University of Manitoba, reflected on NATO and the Arctic link between Europe and the North Atlantic as a primary focus (rather than the defence of North America itself). [Situating recent NATO exercises and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's August 2022 visit to Canada in context](#), he highlighted the Alliance's clear interest in stability, security and cooperation in the High North – as well as unfettered access to the region “to keep our economies strong and our people safe.” NATO represents a collective capability, Dr. Hughes observed, but it is important to look specifically at who is doing what and what priority they are assigning to particular

activities. He explained how the scope of Exercise COLD RESPONSE 22, alongside the expanded frequency and size of Russia's Northern Fleet exercises, highlight the extent to which the European Arctic is a focus of military activity. What are the implications of this messaging vis-à-vis Russia? Even if individual exercises do not meet the threshold for mandatory reporting, they collectively do.

Even while Russia is committing large numbers of its troops and military matériel to the War in Ukraine, Russia's military has retained a significant ability to operate in the Arctic, particularly at sea, and has sought to develop this further. What effect will the accession of Sweden and Finland have on Russia's military posture? Does the membership of the seven like-minded Arctic states in NATO render obsolete Arctic regional security fora such as the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable? Does "preserving security, stability and co-operation in the High North" (Stoltenberg's words) involve Russia? How do we ensure that our signals are received by Russia as we intend them to be?

Dr. Hughes also offered insights into why Canada is relevant to NATO in an Arctic context. Geographically, our territory places us in the Arctic. He also cites our subject matter expertise and experience in Arctic operations, citing the Canadian Rangers as training leaders. In order to play a leading role in NATO regional activities more broadly, Hughes insists that Canada will need to invest more in equipment, domain awareness, and infrastructure. We will also have to ensure that the political and operational 'seams' that divide the European and North American Arctics are comprehensively addressed, particularly in terms of data sharing. Canada's commitment to establish the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence (CCAS COE) - a platform through which military and civilian actors will develop, enhance, and share knowledge on climate change security impacts – has particular value in connecting hard security priorities of NATO with other aspects of security. Given that the Kingdom of Denmark straddles the European and North American Arctics, it is in a unique position – and is an essential partner.

Dr. Andrea Charron, Associate Professor with the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies (CDSS) at the University of Manitoba, framed the interconnectedness between eastern parts of Inuit Nunangat (the Inuit homeland in Canada) and Greenland. For example, she highlighted the importance of the US air base at Thule, Greenland, for the resupply of the Canadian Forces Station Alert, as well as the practice of towing Canadian ships that have run into problems in the eastern Canadian Arctic to Greenland for repairs. She anticipated that North American defence discussion would factor prominently in US President Joe Biden's visit to Canada in April 2023, but also expects that, on a grand strategic level, the US will continue to prioritize Asia and Europe over the defence of North America.

Dr. Charron explained how the [North American Aerospace Defense Command \(NORAD\)](#) is a combatant command that is an essential part of the US Unified Command Plan. It is the independent air defence command or component twinned with USNORTHCOM – a US combatant command responsible for ballistic missile, land, and maritime defence for the continental United States, including Alaska. The two, in turn, co-exist with ten other combatant commands. This structure enables adversaries to exploit, and manipulate seams and capability gaps amongst the regional combatant commands, as well as those between NORAD/USNORTHCOM and NATO. In this regard, particular concern has been directed towards Russia and the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom and Norway (GIUK-Norway) maritime gap in the North Atlantic which is a choke point and transit route to and from the European Arctic. Furthermore, USINDOPACOM shares responsibility with NORAD/USNORTHCOM for the Arctic along with USEUCOM, which is the "lead" (given that Russia is in its area of responsibility), but USNORTHCOM is the US military's Arctic capabilities' advocate and USINDOPACOM has many of the needed

capabilities. These seams and capability gaps are ripe for exploitation, and it is important for the US to address how its combatant commands are sharing information.

Dr. Suzanne Lalonde, Professor of Law at the University of Montreal, spoke from an international legal perspective and emphasized the need for vigilance to ensure that Arctic regimes continue to function and that competitors do not exploit ambiguities in these regimes. With respect to the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA) that entered into force in June 2021, she noted how David Balton, Special Advisor on Arctic affairs for President Biden, had cautioned last year that the agreement would be difficult to implement. The ten signatory parties (including Russia) successfully completed the first Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Incheon, South Korea, in November 2022, reaching consensus on several key steps forward to implement the CAOFA. One of the key elements of this work that Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark can support is the Science Coordinating Group, by ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are involved and by shaping the protocol for data sharing. This is an example of where there is value in having our countries speak with a common voice on important issues.

Lalonde raised several examples where it is important to ensure that nefarious actors do not exploit legal ambiguities to the prejudice of our interests or the rules-based order as a whole. She explained how Russia had complied with international law in its Arctic continental shelf submissions to the UN *Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)* over the past two decades, including its partial [revised submission on 14 February 2023](#). (The Commission rejected Russian evidence as insufficient to prove the continental nature of the Gakkel Ridge, which may also impact the [Kingdom of Denmark's December 2014 CLCS submission](#)). She emphasized that we will need to ensure that Russia respects article 83 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) with respect to negotiating in good faith, as well as article 3 stipulations about provisional arrangements of a practical nature (which oblige that some action be taken in this direction by the states, even if they cannot arrive at an arrangement) and prohibits actions that hamper a future agreement.

Chinese vessels have already demonstrated an interest in conducting maritime scientific research (MSR) in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the Arctic coastal states. Lalonde encouraged Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark to coordinate efforts at shared awareness and to discuss how activities might affect the environment. There is a basis to refuse consent to a foreign actor if it has not adequately divulged the purpose of the MSR, the methods, or the equipment used. Furthermore, all data and samples must be shared. We can and should work together to ensure that foreign actors are following all of the rules – with awareness of the dual-use applications of this scientific work. Lalonde also noted ongoing sensitivities about the status of the waters of the Northwest Passage, promoting enhanced cooperation to avoid triggers and grand declarations that can cause divisions between neighbours. Given that these Arctic waters are part of Inuit Nunaat – an Indigenous homeland – she suggests opportunities to emphasize the mobility rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Dr. Rob Huebert, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary, articulated his ideas around the [new Arctic security threat environment \(NASTE\)](#) and the ramifications of renewed great power politics on Arctic security structures, institutions, and infrastructure. As these changes continue to reverberate across the entire international system, he predicts that Canada will be particularly hard hit by many of these changes, requiring it to rethink its entire understanding of Arctic security. Established cooperative bodies have been badly shaken, and a new urgency has been given to the existing military alliance system (including NATO and NORAD). In his comments, Huebert highlighted the Arctic as the physical location from which Russian threats emanate, as well as what he discerns to be a heightened Russian, American, and Chinese consideration

of warfighting. With respect to Russia's bastion concept, how does the West compete without posing an existential threat that provokes unintended escalation?

The US has already started looking to add significant investments to improve their capabilities in Alaska and working closely with the Danish government to modernize the capabilities at Thule. Canada has also acknowledged the need to modernize NORAD, but Huebert observed that it has been reluctant to dedicate the actual resources to do so. Canada's Minister of Defence Anita Anand recently committed to spending \$5 billion over six years to modernize NORAD, and the Government of Canada has finally entered into negotiations to acquire the F-35 as its fighter replacement. According to Huebert, Canada still shows no sign of joining NATO and the US on ballistic missile defence.

Huebert then pivoted to the Kingdom of Denmark's response to the Arctic security environment. He contextualized the emergence of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) as a way for the Nordic countries to coordinate their security policies and operational capabilities in response to Russian aggression. He applauded Denmark's decision to procure the F-35, which provides a new fast air capability and interoperability with the US, as well as [talks between Washington and Copenhagen about a Defense Cooperation Agreement \(DCA\)](#) that could enable the deployment of US military forces in Denmark to complement the separate agreement that governs the American presence in Greenland. Huebert also highlighted how Thule Air Base in Greenland provides tremendous strategic value for US and NATO military forces and plays a critical role in extended deterrence. In an increasingly complex and dangerous Arctic defence and security environment, he encouraged better understanding of nuclear policy and modernization efforts and what these mean for the Arctic, as well as more sophisticated analysis of the implications of cyber and information warfare on our ability to respond to adversarial actions.

During the discussion period, participants discussed:

- how North Americans tend to divide the Arctic while Europeans see it as a more holistic space;
- Russia's increasing reliance on its Northern Fleet and nuclear deterrence as its conventional land forces are depleted in Ukraine;
- the complicated international legal environment with respect to fisheries given the competencies of the European Union and the Kingdom of Denmark (with Greenland an overseas country and territory rather than a member of the EU);
- the importance of North American Tri Command (NORAD, US NORTHCOM, Canadian Joint Operations Command) relationships to meet different defence and security threats (including defence support of civil authorities during emergencies); and
- opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the Nordic countries and NORAD

Panel 2: Enhancing Bilateral and Regional Cooperation

Moderator: Bridget Larocque, Co-Lead and Chair of the Northern Advisory Board, NAADSN

Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North at Trent University, provided a brief overview on Chinese and Russian influence activities in the North American Arctic. Hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns have become central pillars of Russia's evolving approach to waging twenty-first century conflict. While he assesses that conventional Russian military action against other Arctic states remains highly unlikely given the probability that such aggression would escalate into a general war that Russia could not win, Russia is likely to seek to exploit divisions amongst and within the other Arctic

states through concerted disinformation campaigns designed to polarize populations and exacerbate tensions. Analyzing how Russian efforts to frame Arctic positions in ways that are favourable to its interests are occurring in an overt manner using Russian state media channels and proxy sites, the findings of his team show how Russia's strategies seek to legitimize its position as the major Arctic power and to frame its military investments as defensive in nature against US and NATO aggression. For its part, the Kremlin understands the significance of seizing the messaging initiative as well as the difficulties and messiness of trying to respond or defend against dis/misinformation.

Russian narratives often depict the United States as an aggressive, militarizing force in the Arctic, positioning the US as the disrupter of regional peace and a catalyst for insecurity amongst its allies. For example, the US presence in Greenland is depicted as dangerous both because it facilitates Washington's dangerous ratcheting up of regional tensions and because it supports the US's ability to "project power" into the Arctic. Proxy site narratives also warn that this American presence invites Russian retaliation against Greenland in the event of a major power conflict. In advancing the idea of US colonialism and interference in the internal affairs of other Arctic states, Russian coverage of the Faroe Islands and Greenland seeks to delegitimize the American presence and those Arctic states or citizens who support it. Russian narratives point to the increasingly direct relationships that these countries have with Washington as a subversion of Danish rights and a form of unwelcome and undue American influence. Russian government proxy sites also highlight Greenland's colonial status and Denmark's alleged disrespect for Greenlanders. Economic messages are a subordinate part of the colonial narrative, with messaging in Russian state media and proxy sites emphasizing the benefits of independence by pointing to the increased control Greenland would gain over its resource and harvesting industries. The threat posed by alleged US militarization of the Arctic is often interwoven and linked to notions of colonial subservience. For example, US military activity is typically framed as something done *to* Greenland against Greenlandic interests, with Denmark building its relationship with NATO at the expense of Greenlanders.

China's political objectives in Greenland hinge on Beijing's desire to be accepted as a legitimate and essential actor in the circumpolar Arctic. Over the past ten years, Beijing has paid Greenland considerable attention, relative to the island's small population and economy. This political relationship is based on the promise of trade, investment, and (more recently) tourism, and – from a Chinese perspective – access to resources. Overall, China's political message has been to present itself as a valuable and reliable partner that can support Greenlandic economic and social development. Accordingly, the Chinese have proceeded cautiously, seeking to insert themselves into existing political and economic dynamics, rather than subverting or upending long-standing Greenlandic relationships.

While Moscow seeks strategic advantage in the North Atlantic through a fragmented NATO, China is still a relative newcomer to the region with comparatively few military interests there. As such, it appears to prefer a stable and predictable Greenland that is open to Chinese investment and partnerships. There are also indications that China has found it difficult to navigate the Danish-Greenlandic relationship, with its overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions and responsibilities. China is still learning how to work in this dynamic political environment but is seeking to build a more 'direct' relationship with Greenland, taking advantage of Nuuk's desire to diversify its trade flows while not blatantly crossing into Denmark's jurisdiction. Chinese narratives promoted through state-controlled media align with the diplomatic narratives shared by its embassy in Copenhagen. The overarching message is that China represents a fair and cooperative partner for Greenland that can support its development, while the United States is both aggressive and manipulative, seeking to use Greenland as a tool in its unfair attacks on China. Echoing Russian messaging about Greenland, Chinese sources

have also begun highlighting the environmental dangers of a US military presence, and the threats that Arctic militarization poses to Greenland. Chinese media discussions of Greenland also pay particularly close attention to the question of rare earth elements, a natural fit given the potential importance of the Kvanefjeld mine. These narratives highlight the technological and environmental superiority of China's REE processing system, conveying the idea that China is the ideal partner for rare earth mining.

As Arctic competition intensifies or shifts into new phases, Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark will need to be more diligent and committed to competing in all aspects of the information environment. The like-minded Arctic states maintain a profound advantage in their shared responsibilities, values, and principles, while Russia is increasingly isolated. Furthermore, despite Greenland's diplomatic overtures towards China in the 2010s, Greenlandic attitudes towards Chinese investment have become more apprehensive and voices critical of China have grown louder, amplified by fears of Chinese debt traps and an influx of Chinese labourers. In these contexts, it is likely that both Russia and China – despite their different Arctic interests and agendas – will seek to target North American Arctic audiences. In this respect, Canada and Denmark/Greenland have a shared interest in raising awareness amongst Arctic rightsholders and stakeholders about emerging risks and threats in the information domain and in building resilience against mis/dis/malinformation.

Dr. Mathieu Landriault, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Ottawa, spoke about a [survey that he and two colleagues conducted](#) with a total of five governmental officials from Canada, Denmark, Nunavut, Québec and Greenland, and one elected representative from Greenland, about the possibility of creating a forum of cooperation in the eastern North American Arctic. The governmental officials were in senior positions at the main department focusing on foreign affairs in their respective jurisdictions. Most thought that a new forum of cooperation in the region would be highly desirable, on the grounds of shared interests, common identity and cultural affinities. Consensual positions were also found regarding the central role that civil society would play in a new cooperative venue and on sub-national governments assuming a leading role to spearhead the initiative. Following these interviews, Landriault noted that it is difficult to pinpoint one government that could alone spearhead this new forum of cooperation. However, the governments of Nunavut and Greenland were the most enthusiastic about such a new regional forum, despite their low levels of institutional cooperation at present. Topics could include expanded trade and economic, as well as cultural, ties.

During the question-and-answer period, participants discussed:

- the importance of incorporating Indigenous interests into these conversations;
- the role that infrastructure investments can play in bolstering human security and strengthening governance;
- the nature of the Chinese threat to the North America and how we can heighten domain awareness, but how our responses must not end up undermining the very rules-based order that we are committed to uphold (which requires us to also recognize the rights that Russia and the PRC do have in the region);
- the importance of information sharing, including infrastructure that enables the sharing of confidential NATO material with Greenland and the Faroe Islands;
- how Russia has fought the hardest for the primacy of the Arctic states, which distinguishes it from China, and it has the most to lose and the most to gain from Arctic cooperation (the benefits of which were not enough to stop it from invading Ukraine);
- how Chinese interest in investments in Greenland appear to have decreased, and there is little to no Chinese activity in the country at this time;

- how the West's withdrawal from the Russian oil and gas industry, and from the Northern Sea Route, certainly hurt Russia's interests;
- how, despite general agreement amongst the Arctic Council member states on a mechanism to transfer the chairship from Russia to Norway, Russia could still be "spoilers" if they wanted to; and
- the realities associated with the Arctic Council still being a consensus organization, even after Norway assumes the chair

Panel 3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Moderator: Dr. Katharina Koch, postdoctoral fellow, School for Public Policy, University of Calgary

The first speaker, **Dr. Evgeniia (Jen) Sidorova**, a postdoctoral researcher with the School for Public Policy at the University of Calgary, presented on Indigenous Peoples and knowledge. She began by defining Indigenous Knowledge (IK), which she sees as an umbrella concept, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). In the Canadian context, she held up the Canadian Rangers as an example of the applicability of IK to sovereignty and security, with the Rangers guided by principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ, directly translated as "that which Inuit have always known to be true") and transgenerational transfer of knowledge in Inuit Nunangat. She also discussed Inuit sovereignty as processes of interaction, engagement, and relationships. For Indigenous Peoples, security often relates to access to food, shelter, water, a feeling of safety on the land, and the ability to move around freely. There is room for more research into whether these concepts are shared across Arctic Canada and Greenland, and what decolonizing Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews means in the context of bilateral and international relations.

Dr. Peter Kikkert, Assistant Professor of Public Policy and the Irving Shipbuilding Chair in Arctic Policy with the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government at St. Francis Xavier University, shared insights from his innovative research on search and rescue (SAR) and emergency management in the North American Arctic, looking specifically at areas where Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark/Greenland can work together. He emphasized that disaster and emergency management (DEM) must be considered part of the response to climate change, and should not be sidelined in discussions about climate and environmental hazards. Using the [Nuugaatsiq tsunami on 17 June 2017](#) as a case study, when a landslide 32 km northeast of the Greenlandic village generated a tsunami that washed away or destroyed eleven houses and killed four people, Kikkert explained how challenging environmental conditions and distance meant a delayed response. Nunavut often cites this as an example of risk for the people living in that territory. He encouraged further bilateral engagement and sharing of DEM lessons learned on the operational and tactical levels, citing incidents such as the 2015 Pangirtung fire at the hamlet's diesel electric generating plant (which led to a month-long state of emergency in the community).

Kikkert's work seeks to examine how we can work to build resilience at the community level in Inuit Nunaat. There are shared challenges with respect to SAR across Greenland and Nunavut, with Greenlandic police reports highlighting limited resources at the local level. He cited as a success story the bilateral response to a 2016 fishing vessel that sank in Davis Strait, while raising concern about a potential cruise tourism disaster requiring a mass rescue operation that would stretch our systems to their limits. Potential areas for improved information sharing flow both ways, including the Canadian Rangers, Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) Auxiliary, and CCG small boats program as models for Greenland, as well as Canada learning from the Danish Arctic Response Force as well as [SAR arrangements between Air Greenland and Danish Defence](#). He also proposed the idea of a regional operational planning committee, as well as more detailed comparative research on crisis management systems.

Steve Thompson emphasized the need for bilateral collaboration, citing the agreement in place between the Canadian Coast Guard and Joint Arctic Command for the last eighteen months. He explained that vessel traffic was increasing in the North American Arctic, but that Canada is finding ice in places that it does not used to be, owing to large pans breaking up and plugging channels in the Arctic Archipelago. This means that, in the short-term, the Canadian Arctic is *not* more “accessible” or “ice free.” He provided an overview of the CCG’s fleet recapitalization plan for aging vessels, as well as the CCG Auxiliary and community capacity (boat) program which has flourished since 2016. The latter is rooted in the idea that community-based solutions are preferable, and responded to community requests for training and equipment that has yielded a highly successful program. Thompson also cited ongoing forms of international cooperation (even though the Arctic Coast Guard Forum remains on “pause”), including a full-scale regional exercise planned for August 2023 in Iqaluit that will include components looking at how information flows to communities, as well as a bilateral exercise with the US Coast Guard in the Beaufort Sea in September 2023 that anticipates future exercises with Canada and Greenland in Davis Strait. The CCG shares information on prospective cruise traffic with its Danish and Greenlandic counterparts, with an expected surge in activity in the Nares Strait and in full Northwest Passage transits (including unconventional routes). A slide on cruise ship activity reinforced the obvious linkages between the Canadian and Greenlandic Arctics.

During the question-and-answer period, participants discussed:

- infrastructure to support boats and the expected lifespan of Arctic watercraft;
- the role of the military in SAR and marine rescue operations;
- funding for SAR, including the [renewal of the Ocean Protection Plan](#);
- the creation of a new [Arctic Lessons Learned Arena](#) (led by Norway) managed by the Arctic Council’s Emergence Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) working group, with the CCG creating a similar portal for itself; and
- low-impact shipping corridors and the state of hydrographic research in the North American Arctic.

In his concluding remarks, **Torsten Kjolby Nielsen** observed that these rich discussions covered areas of existing cooperation between Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, and he welcomed opportunities for much more. Given the small size of Denmark and the geographical location of Greenland, he noted that the Danish military can only be seen as defensive. He also anticipates a new multi-year Danish defence budget which will feature more investments in Greenland. We should expect heightened domain awareness as well as more civilian capabilities – with Greenlanders looking particularly forward to the civilian benefits that these investments will bring.

Nielsen gave a public North at Trent lecture that evening on “Arctic Interests of the Kingdom of Denmark at a Time of Geopolitical Rivalry in the Arctic.”

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