

# Framing Russia's Arctic Interests

## Implications for Canada

Report on a Workshop Held on 24 February 2023



Ryan Dean, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, and Kari Roberts

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## Workshop Report

The [Canada-Russia Research Initiative](#) (CRRI) and the [North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network](#) (NAADSN) organized the workshop “Framing Russia's Arctic Interests,” held in Victoria, BC on 24 February 2023. This invitation-only workshop brought together a group of Canadian experts with diverse opinions to interrogate Russian strategic messaging and signaling in the Circumpolar Arctic and what this means for Canada and its allies on the larger international stage.

This one-day workshop, held on the first anniversary of Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, was designed to foster greater understanding of security challenges that risk affecting the North American Arctic. Sessions examined Russia as an Arctic state in the larger context of global strategic competition, how it frames its Arctic interests, and the risks, vulnerabilities, and opportunities facing Canada and its allies with respect to Russia and the Arctic in regional and global contexts. Panels on Canadian and Russian narratives and threat perceptions were followed by a foresight activity involving future scenarios.

This workshop was held under modified [Chatham House Rules](#): “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) may be revealed.”

### Workshop Organizers:

Kari Roberts, Ph.D.

Chair of the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies at Mount Royal University and NAADSN Coordinator

Ryan Dean, Ph.D.

NAADSN Postdoctoral Fellow and Research and Policy Coordinator

P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Ph.D.

Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in the Study of the Canadian North and Professor in the School for the Study of Canada at Trent University and Network Lead, NAADSN

Anna Tsurkan, Ph.D.

Founder and Project Coordinator of the Canada-Russia Research Initiative (CRRI), and NAADSN Member

## Background<sup>1</sup>

By nearly every metric, the Russian Federation is the largest Arctic state. Its vast Arctic territory covers approximately 9 million square kilometers. Its Arctic coastline stretches over 24,150 kilometres, extending more than halfway around the Circumpolar North. More than 2.5 million Russians live in the Arctic, representing nearly half of the global population living in the Circumpolar North, but less than 2 percent of the Russian population resides there. Activity within the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation generates between 12–15 percent of the country’s GDP and, before the West introduced expanded economic sanctions in 2022, represented one-quarter of Russia’s total exports.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, sustainable development of the region is amongst Russia’s foremost national priorities, which also include “the use of the Arctic region as a strategic resource base” for socio-economic development, the “preservation of the Arctic as an area of peace and cooperation,” protection of Arctic ecosystems, and the promotion of the Northern Sea Route as a major transportation artery.<sup>3</sup>

Given the region’s immense resource base and economic potential, as well as Russia’s limited ability to project military power after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow tried for years to avoid taking overtly aggressive steps in the Circumpolar North. Instead, its rhetoric described the “Arctic as a territory of peace” – messaging tailored for Western audiences. Following its illegal annexation of Crimea and sponsorship of the military conflict in southeast Ukraine in 2014, Russia’s behavior in the Arctic changed. Re-militarization and provocative rhetoric replaced previously benign discourses and behavior.

Today, NATO identifies Russia as its primary security threat. According to the alliance, “the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Nevertheless, NATO remains willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow to manage and mitigate risks, prevent escalation and increase transparency. NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia.”<sup>4</sup> In an opinion editorial written before a trip to Canada in August 2022, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated that:

NATO has a clear interest in preserving security, stability and co-operation in the High North. The Arctic is the gateway to the North Atlantic, hosting vital trade, transport and communication links between North America and

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws from P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Troy Bouffard, and Adam Lajeunesse, “Russia’s Information Operations: The Kremlin’s Competitive Narratives and Arctic Influence Objectives,” *Journal of Peace and War Studies* 4 (October 2022): 161-186, <https://www.norwich.edu/pawc/journal/3996-2022-issue-journal-of-peace-and-war-studies-2>.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandr Kozlov, “Александр Козлов: «Арктическая стратегия учит особенности каждого приполярного региона страны»,” [Alexander Kozlov: “The Arctic strategy will take into account the peculiarities of each circumpolar region of the country], 13 November 2019, <https://arctic-russia.ru/article/aleksandr-kozlov-arkticheskaya-strategiya-uchtet-osobennosti-kazhdogo-pripolyarnogo-regiona-strany/>.

<sup>3</sup> Arctic Council, “The Russian Federation,” 21 January 2022, <https://arctic-council.org/about/states/russian-federation/>.

<sup>4</sup> NATO, “Relations with Russia,” 14 July 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50090.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm).

Europe. Ensuring freedom of navigation and unfettered access is essential to keep our economies strong and our people safe. Russia's ability to disrupt Allied reinforcements across the North Atlantic is a strategic challenge to the Alliance. Authoritarian regimes are clearly willing to use military intimidation or aggression to achieve their aims. At the same time, they are stepping up their activities and interest in the Arctic. NATO is increasing our presence and vigilance across the Alliance, including in the High North. With strength and unity, we will continue to deter aggression, protect our values and interests, and keep our people safe.<sup>5</sup>

During the initial phase of Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, Russia stressed resistance to the alliance. With NATO cohesion galvanized to a new level by March 2022, Russian official messaging began to focus on reinforcing and reminding others of its self-proclaimed dominant position in the Arctic. With limited means to demonstrate its operational power against the West, Russia has turned to information to project power and to test the Arctic resolve of NATO and its members.

Although the Arctic states share many common interests in the circumpolar region, resurgent geostrategic competition and the war in Ukraine have reinforced how Russia and the other seven Arctic states are not like-minded and are competing for international legitimacy. Some Western analysts suggest that Russian international behaviour since the 2014 Crimean crisis portends similar revisionist designs for the Arctic region (sometimes drawing a distinction between the European and North American sub-regions), while others emphasize vested Russian national interests in preserving the regional *status quo*.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Russian media discourse spans a range of opinions, from hard "conflict" frames that emphasize NATO aggression to those promoting "Arctic exceptionalism" with the region as a "zone of peace."<sup>7</sup> Official Russian messaging associated with increased investments in Arctic military capabilities also signifies both competition with NATO adversaries and dual-use applications to address "soft security" needs.<sup>8</sup>

## Panel Discussions

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<sup>5</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, "NATO is Stepping Up in the High North to Keep our People Safe" *Globe and Mail*, 25 August 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_206894.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_206894.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Valery Konyshov and Alexander Sergunin, "Is Russia a revisionist military power in the Arctic?," *Defense & Security Analysis* 30/4 (2014): 323-335; and Pavel Baev, "Russia's ambivalent status-quo/revisionist policies in the Arctic," *Arctic Review* 9 (2018): 408-424.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Ekaterina Klimenko, Annika Hilsson, and Miyase Christensen, *Narratives in the Russian Media of Conflict and Cooperation in the Arctic* (Stockholm: SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security 2019/5, August 2019); and Evgeniia Sidorova, "Content Analysis of the Russian Press Before and After the Ukraine Crisis," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 25/3 (2019): 269-287.

<sup>8</sup> Valery Konyshov and Alexander Sergunin, "The Changing Role of Military Power in the Arctic," in *The Global Arctic Handbook*, eds. M. Finger and L. Heininen (Cham: Springer, 2019), 171-95; P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Alexander Sergunin, "Canada's and Russia's Security and Defense Strategies in the Arctic: A Comparative Analysis," *Arctic Review of Law and Politics* 13 (2022): 232-257.

Co-organizers Kari Roberts and Anna Tsurkan offered a land acknowledgement and opening comments. They emphasized that the intent of the gathering was for participants to focus on dialogue and conversation rather than delivering conventional academic papers. They also offered personal reflections on the War in Ukraine and both its geopolitical and human dimensions, including implications for personal relations. How can we engage with Russian academics who have stayed in Russia and do not support the war or the Putin regime, given that it is impossible for most people to leave the country? How are we factoring in the Russian censorship of Russian academia and think tanks, which cannot publish any perspectives critical of the war – as well as a culture of hatred which means that no one can contradict state narratives in Russia without reprisal? How can we, as Canadian scholars, really know what is going on within Russia?

The first panel looked at **“Canadian and Russian Narratives.”** Panelists presented on general Russian narratives about the Arctic states grounded in anti-Western and anti-American tropes, as well as specific narratives targeting individual countries or regions (such as Greenland’s place in the Kingdom of Denmark). Russian narratives propagated in media, policy, and political discourses are designed to serve the country’s strategic goals. Through these efforts, Russian state actors seek to construct and maintain an official narrative of the region, its governance structure and power dynamics. Presentations suggested that Russia’s Arctic narratives should be understood and analyzed as part of a grand legitimizing strategy, seeking to reinforce Russia’s self-perception as the largest, strongest, most developed – and most legitimate – Arctic player. As an emerging region of increasing strategic importance, the competition involving the Arctic information domain is occurring in the open and in a manner designed to encourage public consumption of narratives. Pro-Russian messaging suggests Russian superiority over the West, seeks to legitimize Russia as the largest Arctic rightsholder, and establishes the requirement for Russia to defend its Arctic territory against the US and NATO as strategic competitors. The state does so by promoting Kremlin statements and its Arctic Development Doctrine, touting Russia’s icebreaking and construction programs in the North (including the refurbishing and modernizing of military infrastructure and air-defence systems) and claiming the superiority of Russian weapons systems in the Arctic region. Furthermore, Russia trumpets its extensive energy resources in the Russian Arctic – and suggests that these are a primary driver of the United States’ covetous interest in the region. In terms of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), Russian official messaging suggests that the country promotes control over these waters for stability in the region to ensure conflict-free operation of this Russian economic artery. Russian narratives also highlight the country’s adherence to international law, respect for sovereignty, openness to dialogue, and readiness to discuss common issues.

Even in the wake of Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it has maintained consistent justifications for its official positions. Presenters identified how dominant narratives include: Russia as besieged, Russia as strong (rather than weak), Russia as defensive actor, Russia as an “exceptional” actor responsible to defend the world against “fascism” and liberal elites, and Russia as defending the rules-based international order (and upholding it in the Arctic particularly). Analysis of narratives emanating from Russian organizations such as the Russian

International Affairs Council (RIAC), Northern Forum, and its Expert Center for Arctic Development (PORA) also reveal a changing paradigm in the circumpolar region. Themes include cooperation with the Peoples Republic of China, further regional militarization, and blame of the West for cutting off dialogue; all of this occurs alongside hope for an eventual resumption of circumpolar cooperation (with Kremlin overtures to Asian trade commissioners from “friendly nations” such as China and India filling in the gap).

How do we know what we know, and how do we study Russia? We tend to analyze developments and dynamics through our own Western lens, which has led to fear, anger, and a propensity for sweeping statements and generalizations (such as the notion that we “got it all wrong” by thinking that Russia was “normalizing” within the democratic international system and becoming a “democratic” state). Increasingly limited access to narratives and information from within Russia means that we must be vigilant to seek out verifiable sources and not simply apply our Western logic or assumptions to Russia.

Discussions included the idea of “defence of Russian territory,” with one participant insisting that Russia has always been an empire and has never abandoned its neo-imperialist ambitions – with the seeds of the Ukraine War evident back in the 1990s. Others noted how even progressive Russians saw Crimea as an inherent part of the Russian state – the reflection of state media brainwashing. Conversely, Russian propaganda directed at Western audiences has influenced both right- and left-wing extremists (the “horseshoe theory”). Are Western perspectives “blinkered” in two directions: on the one hand, lamenting the death of our post-Cold War liberal democratic dreams; and, on the other hand, potentially over-correcting in the face of a strong *global* consensus that is pro-Ukraine (an apt characterization, if we do not fixate on the “exceptional” cases of China and India)? Other commentators noted Russia’s unwillingness to recognize its history of colonizing its own territories, the lack of conversation about reconciliation or decolonization, and the absence of legal justification for secession (owing to the legal concept of *uti possidetis*) that Russia illegitimately claims when it violates international agreements to foment or support certain separatists (Luhansk, Donetsk, Crimea) and not others (Chechnya).

The second panel considered “**Perceptions of Russian Threats,**” which emphasized the importance of how Canada and its allies see and interpret Russian activities in the Arctic, and in return how Russia interprets Western actions and intentions, often viewed through the prism of its own capabilities. The overarching theme of the panel was the absence of trust and communication between Russia and the other Arctic states, elevating the potential for misinterpretation and heightened insecurity.

The actions of Canada – through both NORAD and NATO – can influence how Russia perceives its own vulnerabilities in the region. The panel discussion highlighted the cultural differences that animate Russian and Canadian understandings of security and threat, and also what confidence and trust building mean to each. While Russia and Canada share some of the same challenges in the Arctic, they have different stakes, and understand deterrence and confidence building very differently.

The war in Ukraine further animates Russia's perceptions of its own security, as its over-extension there may affect the resources available to deploy to the Arctic. The longer the war in Ukraine continues, the more likely Russia's Arctic capabilities may be diverted there, and this may necessitate the repurposing of Russia's "best and brightest" pilots and mariners, leaving less experienced personnel in the Arctic, thereby raising the spectre of accidents and misunderstandings. Russia primarily perceives the North American Arctic zone as an "air threat," measured by intentions and capabilities. Russian "buzzing" of NORAD airspace has historically been a fairly common occurrence in the Arctic, although these actions have been reinterpreted in the North American Arctic, in light of the war, and also the entry of Chinese balloons into Canadian airspace in 2023. When combined with recent changes to NORAD's Senior Command, notably the potential arrival of new commanders less accommodating toward Russia, this may contribute to a shift in threat perceptions on both sides.

Canada and Russia share various human security threats in the Arctic, such as climate change and the impact of development on Northern communities, but when it comes to more traditional threats, Russia perceives its chief threat to be NATO. Russia has deployed a considerable portion of its military infrastructure to the Arctic, and therefore has much more to lose as NATO escalates its militarization there. The more militarization, the higher the stakes, and the more likely this is to elevate Russia's perception of the threat NATO poses. For Canada, the threats in the Arctic are less immediate, as Canada does not house a sizable percentage of military assets in the region. Relatedly, Russian leaders are keenly aware of the asymmetry between American and Russian power projection capabilities. The US is able to project military power on multiple fronts, but Russia lags far behind. Given its over-extension in Ukraine, Russia is less well equipped to project power in the Arctic or even defend Russian interests there over the long term. One participant speculated that this could explain why we have not seen much "boat rocking" from Russia in the Arctic.

Ultimately, the actual threat that Russia poses to the North American Arctic is directly tied to Russian perceptions of the balance of their military capabilities. NATO's signaling of its capabilities and intentions in the Arctic will influence Russia's response. Should NATO signal plans for greater militarization in the Arctic due to fear of Russian aggression, this could reanimate a security dilemma in the region in which Russia feels pressured to reciprocate. Coupled with a diminished military, and less seasoned personnel in the region, this creates a perfect storm for misperception and error, which some participants felt Canada was ill-prepared for.

If the greatest threat to the North American Arctic is misperception and miscalculation, this suggests that confidence building should be a key pillar of Canada's approach to Russia in the region. Some participants problematized the notion of confidence building though, noting that it requires trust, which is in short supply between Russia and the West at present. The challenge for Canada and other Western Arctic states is to avoid interpreting Russia's threat perceptions through a Western lens. There is a cultural difference between how each operationalizes deterrence: Russia prioritizes uncertainty and Canada values stability and predictability. These approaches are fundamentally at odds, which heightens the risk of misinterpreting Russian activities.

As the Ukraine war continues, Russia will likely continue to become a diminished power economically, demographically, and even militarily. Moreover, Russia stands little chance of restoring its status on the world stage without atoning for its war crimes. It is not clear whether a weakened Russia would be more or less dangerous to the West. How the West responds to Russian decline and ostracization will need to be balanced with important decisions about whether, and how, confidence building measures with Russia are desired and even possible. Any discussion of confidence building should include a conversation about what exactly it is that we want to build confidence *for*. If it is to be a means to an end, rather than an end itself, confidence building is best pursued once Canada and its allies determine what normal relations with Russia in the Arctic should look like, and what this means for North American Arctic security. Ultimately, taking measures to reduce the space for misinterpretation of one another's intentions is a worthy goal.

For the lunchtime **Keynote Address** (delivered via Zoom), Bridget Larocque introduced Dr. Pavel Sulyandziga, Chairperson of the Board of the International Development Fund of Indigenous Peoples in Russia (BATANI) and a Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College. His colleague Aivana Enmyinkaou (Siberian Yupink from Chukotka) served as the interpreter. Dr. Sulyandziga began with a rich reflection on how Canada and the USSR started cooperating on Arctic issues in 1990, when Indigenous peoples from both countries met to discuss Indigenous issues. He was a delegate and chair of the Udege community's delegation. He remembered a speech by Mary Simon in which she said how she saw, despite different ideologies, that they had much in common, and that it was important to write and work together to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. He also recounted the visit of a Canadian delegation (including Inuit Circumpolar Council and Government of Canada representatives) to Kamchatka, where the program included theatrical performances, song, and dancing. Initially, there were no discussions planned with the Kamchatkan Indigenous community, so Viola Ford of ICC said that she would simply head back to Canada if Russian Indigenous Peoples were not involved. While Canadian government representatives insisted that they could not dictate terms to the Russian Government, Ford said it made no sense to stay. Rather than force the issue, Russia changed the meeting program to include Russian Indigenous participation, and cooperation between Indigenous Peoples from both countries began. Today, Dr. Sulyandziga said, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have made tremendous progress in advancing their rights, but Russian Indigenous Peoples have taken a big step backwards.

His reflections then turned to the War in Ukraine, which he noted was a shock to everyone. The war that Putin started a year ago was part of a persistent pattern, and he said that the Russian people held particular blame for raising the regime that launched the war. He also stated that part of the blame rested with the West, owing to Western countries' cooperation with the Russian Federation on economic issues, coupled with a willingness to overlook violations of human rights in Russia.

Dr. Sulyandziga elaborated on the case of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). Although many people still think of the organization as one representative of the people who are forced by the Kremlin to espouse pro-government positions, it is *not* an



organization of Indigenous Peoples but instead it is an arm of the Russian regime. Part of the RAIPON leadership is comprised of members of the Russian parliament who voted for the war to start and thus are guilty of war crimes. Some RAIPON leaders have written complaint letters against Russian Indigenous activists who have been detained for their opposition to the regime. He also highlighted that the Arctic Council's Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS) is headed by a Russian who works for the Russian government. This means that everything done by the IPS is automatically known to the Russian government and the Federal Security Service (FSB). This makes it very dangerous for Russian Indigenous representatives to raise issues within the Arctic Council, as their concerns will be relayed to the FSB immediately.

Dr. Sulyandziga also raised the disproportionate number of Russian Indigenous people who have been conscripted to fight in Ukraine. On the Russian side, the number of Indigenous combatants in the war is proportionally higher than the number of ethnic Russians combatants. With mobilization criteria paying no respect to Indigeneity and the roles of men within those societies, recruitment has had deleterious effects on the cultures and traditions of Indigenous peoples in Russia.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, data sets (collected by a team of volunteers from social media and other available sources) demonstrate large inequalities in the army mortality rates across Russian regions, with the highest mortality of soldiers originating from poor regions in Siberia and the Russian Far East and the lowest from Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>10</sup> In short, the share of Indigenous peoples in the total number of deaths in the war appears to be disproportionately high, based upon official Russian statistics and numbers provided by Russian scientists. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that the war in Ukraine has rendered Russia's Indigenous peoples more vulnerable and has imposed a disproportionate burden and cost on them. This story is not well known in Russia owing to censorship.

Dr. Sulyandziga did not call on anyone to stop cooperating with Russia Indigenous Peoples, and instead promotes the cooperation following the model of engagement during the late Soviet era. He did, however, call for excluding RAIPON as it is currently constituted and ensuring that it is not misconstrued or misrepresented as an Indigenous Peoples Organization.

During the discussion period, Dr. Sulyandziga shared further insights on the assistance that ICC provided to the creation of RAIPON. Through a five-year program, ICC Canada funded RAIPON's Moscow office and regional offices, providing them with computers and printers, as well as offering training courses on human rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights, small business development, and self-government. When Dr. Sulyandziga was elected vice-president of RAIPON in 1997, the organization had accrued significant debts and penalties owing to the Russian tax service, which ICC Greenland helped to settle. In terms of supporting Indigenous organizations that are activists for Russian Indigenous peoples' rights and economic development, he emphasized the importance of ensuring that efforts do not violate any laws so that the people

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<sup>9</sup> Ekaterina Zmyvalova, "The Rights of Indigenous Peoples of Russia after Partial Military Mobilization," *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 14 (2023): 70-75.

<sup>10</sup> Alexey Bessudnov, "Ethnic and regional inequalities in the Russian military fatalities in Ukraine: Preliminary findings from crowdsourced data" (December 2022), [https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/s43yf?fbclid=IwAR2xstjU32-FRrjowb2gXwVA90GKwdt1-ACofD7lXScMhEMYIG6SwhgSnQl&utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/s43yf?fbclid=IwAR2xstjU32-FRrjowb2gXwVA90GKwdt1-ACofD7lXScMhEMYIG6SwhgSnQl&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email).

involved can still lead their lives. It is also important to continue cooperating with Russian scientists to collect data and implement projects – albeit quietly.

Discussions also focused on the nature of cooperation with activists who are still connected with Russia (and might return in the long-term and introduce change), the fragmented nature of Russian political opposition, and the small circle of Russian Indigenous leadership and activists (which includes RAIPON members – but not the leaders), who are trying to do positive things for Russia and for its Indigenous Peoples. Discussions also ensued on Russian Indigenous scholars being unable to access conferences and workshops with Western counterparts, the interactions at which provide Russian scholars essential opportunities to learn and apply Indigenous methodologies. The challenge is distinguishing between Russian Indigenous leaders and scholars who support the Putin regime and benefit from it, and those who do not, and discerning how people from outside Russia can support people living and working in the country without endangering the latter.

The third panel considered “**The Future of the Arctic Council and Regional Governance**,” a critical subject considering the seven like-minded Arctic Council states’ decision to pause their involvement in the forum after the renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine. The panel emphasized the importance of trust and recognized that building on the legacy of regional cooperation is essential to future stability. Participants expressed concern that a narrow focus on the war, and a preoccupation with security issues, could jeopardize the decades-long record of cooperation in the Council. Reflecting this fear, one participant noted that the war risks setting back Arctic cooperation 40-50 years. There was widespread agreement that it is imperative to resist this and to ensure that the important accomplishments of the Council are not undermined or undone. The Council’s historical legacy was emphasized, notably the legal structures that are presently in place and functioning effectively. While brutal, the war in Ukraine remains a limited war, and this is relevant because it means that some collaboration is still occurring between Russia and the West (for example the sharing of satellite data, fisheries management, and limited communication between military commanders to avoid accidents). The AC has been frozen, and rightly so, but the war will not last forever and it is important to consider what Arctic cooperation can look like when it is over. Most participants felt that it would be a shame for security priorities to overshadow all of the other important issues in which the Council can be successful over the long term.

While the war has created uncertainty about the AC’s longevity *as an institution*, the record of cooperation at lower, working levels, can still be leveraged. While the Council *as it was* may not survive the war, the cooperation it has fostered can and must be deliberately preserved. While truly *circumpolar* cooperation is impossible without Russia, all hope is not lost. One participant raised the possibility of creating an A-7 forum (comprised of the Arctic states minus Russia) which could enable cooperation in other ways and could even include the Permanent Participants (presumably less RAIPON). Other participants strongly resisted even the language around an “A-7,” suggesting that this would play directly into Kremlin narratives of exclusion and Western institutionalization, and instead emphasized the benefits of having the seven “like-minded” Arctic states continue to preserve the Arctic Council as a forum for which Russia should want to

return when the Russian people bring about the internal conditions for their country to begin to restore trust amongst the international community. Without a forum like the Council, there is a risk of losing the progress that has been made toward an Arctic governance model that includes the voices of Indigenous Peoples. Not all participants celebrated the Council's progress on Indigenous representation, with some expressing concern that the Council did not go far enough in privileging the voices of Northern peoples and communities. Some discussants noted that the current "pause" of some members' Council activities may present an important opportunity to reimagine how to center Indigenous perspectives in Arctic governance more effectively.

Participants returned to an earlier conversation about confidence building, agreeing that there may not be many opportunities for it now, but that Western Arctic states should avoid measures that could destroy future opportunities to rebuild trust. One participant noted that Canadian calm in the face of heightened "anxieties" about Arctic security is essential to confidence building. Accepting Russia as an important and secure Arctic power is critical to this process. Anxiety reduction measures are especially important because the Russian regime is paranoid, dangerous, and has shown a willingness to obviate the truth and reject reality, which further erodes trust. Given this, Canada should take care to avoid inadvertently "pushing Russia over the edge" with ramped up Arctic security rhetoric. This same approach ensured the Cold War remained cold, and it is worth bearing in mind today. One participant speculated that a possible way to insulate the region from wider geo-strategic shifts in the balance of power could be to move toward the conception of "global Arctic," which could introduce the constructive presence of other states beyond simply NATO members and Russia in the region, thus having a stabilizing effect. Ultimately, while the war in Ukraine has tested regional governance structures, the legacy of trust, confidence building, and cooperation provides a solid foundation upon which a re-framing of Arctic governance can take place.

## **Breakout Group Discussions on the Future of the Arctic Council**

The first scenario discussed the future of the Arctic Council and the pending handover of the Russian chairship to Norway. What would the next two years have in store for the forum? Groups were also asked to consider the political situation in Russia and how the ongoing war in Ukraine affects the functioning of the Arctic Council (see Appendix B).

Various participants emphasized that the Arctic Council provided two major contributions to the region. The first is symbolic value, given that the forum is a truly circumpolar cooperative body that includes all of the Arctic states and Permanent Participants (PPs). This inclusivity renders the Council unique among international institutions, lending it political legitimacy. The second is practical value, with the Council's working groups facilitating an exchange of scientific information between the Arctic states, PPs, and Observers. This produces regional data sets that are truly circumpolar. The seven like-minded Arctic states' decision to "pause" their participation in Arctic Council activities involving Russia, owing to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, places the forum's symbolic and practical utility in question.

The groups discussed whether Finland and Sweden joining NATO would fundamentally change dynamics in the Arctic Council. Most participants agreed that strategic messaging should strenuously avoid linking the seven like-minded Arctic states with their NATO affiliations, and that defence issues should remain separate from the Arctic Council. Doing otherwise could constrain future policy options for the member states. Second, attempting to cooperate with Russian scientists, academics, or Indigenous activists places these people in danger. While international sanctions have largely cut off institutional cooperation with these Russians, domestic measures imposed by the Putin regime target internal actors who are perceived to deviate from official positions as “national traitors.” Attempts to reach out to these actors could enable the Kremlin to identify and persecute them, thereby undermining future efforts for cooperation with these actors.

Does the Arctic Council need to be restored, reformed, or replaced with something new? Most participants agreed that there is little chance of creating a new circumpolar body to replace the Arctic Council. The purposes for which the Council was created in the 1990s, such as socializing Russia into the liberal democratic world, are no longer present. Nevertheless, pan-Arctic governance cannot exclude Russia and still claim to be circumpolar; the same is true with respect to Russia potentially creating a parallel “Potemkin Council” that does not include all of the other Arctic states. Accordingly, the Norwegians are likely to dedicate their chairship to trying to keep the existing structure of the Arctic Council in place, applying a minimalist approach to adhering to the Council’s terms of reference, and preserving the forum until conditions allow for reinvigoration some time in the future. Norway has always strongly supported the Arctic Council while acknowledging the realities of sharing land and maritime borders with Russia, making it well situated to manage the transition.

Participants also discussed the PPs and their central role in the Arctic Council. The PPs responded to Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine and the seven like-minded Arctic states’ “pause” on Council activities with a [series of press releases](#). RAIPON’s support of Putin’s regime and the invasion, as well as support from Sami and Inuit leaders in Russia, raised the question of PP independence from their Member states. Given Dr. Sulyandziga’s keynote on these subjects, one group raised the possibility of a “RAIPON in exile” being brought into the Arctic Council. Discussions also ensued about the [Indigenous Peoples’ Secretariat \(IPS\)](#) and how it could be compromised by Russia, with participants suggesting that it may be time to re-evaluate the secretariat and limit its exposure to that country. Should Arctic Council cooperation focus on the PPs, with the exception of RAIPON and the Russian-based parts of the ICC and Sámi Council? How could the ICC be supported without funding its Russian component?

For the Arctic Council to remain relevant, let alone become more effective, over the long term, cooperation must resume with the Russian delegation – but participants agreed that this cannot occur while Russian troops remain in Ukraine. Several participants suggested that the most likely outcome was for Putin to remain in power and the Ukraine to continue over the next two years (with the intensity of combat waxing and waning during this time) – but there was no consensus

on these projections. Nonetheless, the participants expected that policy options for engagement with Russia in a circumpolar northern context will remain severely constrained in the face of tremendous uncertainty.

If and when Russia is ready to re-engage with the West, the Arctic Council could be a fitting conduit to starting the process. For now, however, the Arctic Council appears to be at risk. Its consensus model means that any one member can derail a decision, and the “pause” of participation in activities could be seen as a violation of the terms of reference. Russia could endeavour to obstruct future Council work by attempting to disrupt consensus. Moreover, Russia could leave the Arctic Council to signal its overall displeasure with the international system, causing the regional forum to fail. Participants agreed that Norway’s pending chairship was a positive development and, managed prudently, could insulate the forum for the next two years.

Regardless of how Arctic governance develops over the next two years, the breakout groups acknowledged that the Arctic Council represents only a tiny piece of Russia’s overall engagement with the liberal democratic world. It is important for those who study the Arctic to keep this in perspective. Although Russia’s commitment to the liberal democratic order is clearly absent, the rest of the world still relies on Russia to keep order in the post-Soviet space. Accordingly, a weak and insecure Russia represents a serious risk to international stability – including in the Arctic.

### **Breakout Group Discussions on China and Russia in the Arctic**

The second scenario grappled with the Chinese and Russian relationship in the Arctic and how it could evolve in the current geopolitical context (see Appendix B). Despite speculation that these two authoritarian states could come together to oppose liberal democracy, there are substantial differences between Moscow, which looks to maintain the status-quo in the Arctic, and Beijing, which intends to increase its participation and influence in regional affairs. Groups were asked to consider if the official bilateral rhetoric of China and Russia being “[friends without limits](#)” would overcome these real differences.

The breakout groups unanimously agreed that neither the People’s Republic of China (PRC) nor Putin’s regime have real friends in the international system. Their inability to engender trust means that their international relations are based on transactional, short-term, zero-sum calculations rather than the long-term, institutionalized, positive-sum relations such as Canada’s. Given the opportunistic nature of both Russia and the PRC, their bilateral relationship is characterized by *ad-hoc* relative power concerns. The fractious history between China and Russia, such as territorial losses to Russia during the so-called Chinese “century of humiliation” and numerous military clashes both as empires and communist states, compound this wariness. Accordingly, the Sino-Russian partnership does not represent a new global, or Arctic, axis.

Myriad roadblocks prevent Russia and China from developing an intimate Arctic relationship. First and foremost, Russia is an Arctic state and China is not. The Arctic Zone of the Russian

Federation (AZRF) is critical to the security and economic development of Russia, and much of its nuclear deterrent (including the bulk of its second-strike capability) is based there, with Russia continuing to prioritize the protection of its Arctic bastion. The Kremlin's economic measures, most notably its insistence of at least 51% ownership in any project, indicate its strong nationalist bent.

The international sanctions on Russia present both risk and opportunity for China. At the moment, the Sino-Russian trade relationship favours China, as it can purchase Russian resources at heavily discounted rates. While this situation does not favour Russia, Putin's regime may be forced to make these sacrifices in the short term to ensure its long-term economic survival. Lack of foreign technology and investment may allow China to overcome Russia's insistence on a controlling interest in Arctic developments going forward. If this stance were to weaken, it could leave Russia in a subordinate position in the bilateral relationship. However, increased Chinese economic activity in Russia risks violating sanctions, further isolating the PRC from the liberal democratic world. Participants acknowledged that China is effective at pulling resources out of foreign countries, but Western sanctions against Russia have tempered this approach.

The War in Ukraine will dictate the future Arctic relationship between China and Russia. If Russia were to win decisively, China would become a friendlier neighbour and a more agreeable Arctic partner. China does not want a strong Russia, however, preferring a subordinate Russia. The weaker that Russia becomes, the more resources that China could extract without having to dedicate infrastructure spending towards the AZRF. Regardless of the outcome of Russia's War in Ukraine, China will likely continue to green its energy grid to make itself less dependent upon foreign supplies of oil and gas. This would help China to avoid a situation akin to Europe's.

Ultimately, while sanctions on Russia mean that Chinese influence in the Russian Arctic is likely to grow, this does not mean that China will become an "Arctic power." Participants suggested that Ukraine is a test of the Sino-Russian relationship, with China wanting the war to end but not with an outright Russian victory. This is reflective of the irreconcilable long-term geopolitical goals of both regimes. While there is space for short-term transactional cooperation in the Arctic, the longer-term goals for both China and Russia in the region are inherently zero-sum, prohibiting a more complex relationship from developing there. In this respect, most participants concurred that "friends without limits" is not an apt way to characterize or anticipate Sino-Russian Arctic cooperation.

In summary, the workshop generated the following responses to the questions posed during the scenarios:

- The War in Ukraine is likely to continue and Putin is likely to remain in power.
- The seven like-minded Arctic states should not resume cooperation with Russia through the Arctic Council while the war continues.
- Norway is well-suited to chair the Arctic Council over the next two years and to keep the forum alive so that Russia may re-engage when conditions allow.

- The continued relevance of the Arctic Council is in question. Its value lies in the exchange of information with Russian experts and in the symbolism that it holds for regional cooperation.
- China and Russia's bilateral relationship is transactional and lacks trust. Their national interests do not align in the Arctic, and the countries have zero-sum geopolitical objectives towards each other. Accordingly, the China-Russia relationship is unlikely to evolve past pragmatic cooperation.

## Appendix A: Workshop Participants

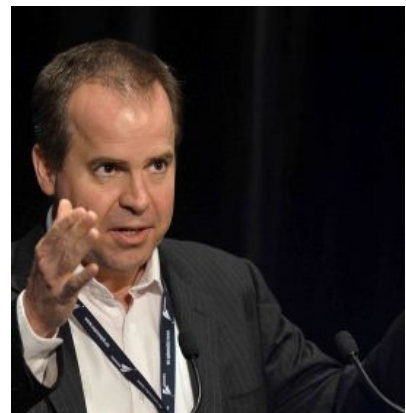
### Keynote Speaker



**PAVEL SULYANDZIGA** (PhD in Economics) is Chairperson of the Board of the International Development Fund of Indigenous Peoples in Russia (BATANI) and is currently a Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College (US). He was a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation (2006 - 2014) and advisor to the president of RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East). At the beginning of his career he was a school teacher of mathematics in Primorskiy kray, Russia (1984-1987). In 1991 he was elected as Chairman of the Indigenous Peoples Association of the Primorskiy kray. His international activity included participating in the Eurasian Club (Japan) on assistance to the education and preservation of culture of indigenous peoples (1991-1993); and visiting Indian reservations in the USA (California, Oregon, Washington) to study their experience on education, culture and self-governance (1993). From 1993 to 1994, Mr. Sulyandziga participated in the elaboration of a project on the preservation of biodiversity in the Bikin river valley, where he was responsible for project implementation. In 1994-1995 he participated in the project «Traditional Indigenous Crafts» funded by the Eurasian Club (Japan); he was Indigenous curator of the cooperative project on the preservation of the Ussuri Tiger; and in 1997-2000 he was coordinator of the Danish-Greenlandic Initiative for assistance to indigenous peoples of Russia. In addition, Mr. Sulyandziga was a councilor to the Governor of the Primorskiy kray on indigenous issues (1994-1997). In 1997 he was elected Vice-president and then in 2001 First Vice-president of RAIPON. From 2005 to 2010 he was a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

### Participants

**MICHAEL BYERS** holds the Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law. His work focuses on Outer Space, Arctic sovereignty, climate change, the law of the sea, the laws of war, and Canadian foreign and defence policy. Dr. Byers has been a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford University, a Professor of Law at Duke University, and a Visiting Professor at the universities of Cape Town, Tel Aviv, Nord (Norway) and Novosibirsk (Russia). His book *International Law and the Arctic* (Cambridge University Press) won the 2013 Donner Prize. Dr. Byers is a regular contributor to the *Globe and Mail* newspaper.





**ANDREW CHATER** is an assistant professor (limited term) in political science at Brescia University College in London, Ontario and a fellow at Polar Research and Policy Initiative in London, England. He was the 2019 Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in Arctic Studies at the University of Seattle in Washington. He completed his doctorate at the University of Western Ontario and was previously a graduate resident at the Rotman Institute of Philosophy. He holds a master's degree from the University of Waterloo. His research interests include Arctic governance, Canadian foreign policy and communication. His publications have appeared in such publications as *International Journal* and *Strategic Analysis*. Outside of academic life, Andrew plays music and has taught guitar in Iqaluit, Nunavut, as part of Iqaluit Music Camp. His recent publications include the NAADSN *Policy Briefs* "China as Arctic Council Observer: Compliance and Compatibility," (2021) and "Literature Review on Russia's Strategic Intentions Since 2015" (2020).



**ANDREA CHARRON** is the Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies and Associate Professor in Political Studies at the University of Manitoba. She has written extensively on Arctic security and continental defence issues, and regularly testifies on these subjects to parliamentary committees. She also lectures frequently at Canadian Forces College. Her recent articles and book chapters include "The Solidification of the Arctic Sovereignty Meme: Assessing Harper's Arctic Foreign Policy"; "Beyond NORAD and Modernization to North American Defence Evolution"; "Russian National Interests and the Arctic: Foreign Policy Implications for Canada" in *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Unipolar World*; and "Canada, the Arctic and NORAD: Status Quo or New Ball Game?"

**RYAN DEAN** is NAADSN Postdoctoral Fellow and Policy and Research Coordinator. He completed his Ph.D. in political science at the University of Calgary in fall 2022. His research focuses on Arctic policy and issues of sovereignty and security. His recent edited volumes include *Shielding North America: Canada's Role in NORAD Modernization* (co-edited 2021), *(Re)Conceptualizing Arctic Security: Selected Articles from the Journal of Military and Security Studies* (co-edited 2017) and *Canada's Northern Strategy under the Harper Conservatives: Key Speeches and Documents on Sovereignty, Security, and Governance, 2006-15* (co-authored 2016).





**WILFRID GREAVES** (Associate Professor, International Relations, University of Victoria) conducts research on intersections between security theory and environmental politics with focuses on climate change, energy extraction, Indigenous peoples, and the circumpolar Arctic. He has also published studies on Canadian foreign policy, complex peace operations, counter-insurgency, and Arctic governance. Dr. Greaves is author of more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and his first book, *Indigenizing Arctic Security: Polar Politics and Environmental Change in Canada and Norway*, is forthcoming from University of Toronto Press. His co-edited book with Whitney Lackenbauer on *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic* is currently in peer review. He was previously Lecturer at the Trudeau Centre for Peace, Conflict and Justice and a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Sami Studies at the University of Tromsø, Norway.

**ROB HUEBERT** (Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Calgary) is a leading Canadian commentator on Arctic security and defence issues in media, academic, and policy circles. He closely monitors and analyzes Arctic defence and international security trends, with a particular focus on strategic policy and military capabilities and how developments impact on Canadian Arctic security. His areas of research interest include: international relations, strategic studies, the Law of the Sea, maritime affairs, Canadian foreign and defence policy, and circumpolar relations. His books include *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (co-authored with Franklyn Griffiths and Lackenbauer, 2011) and *(Re)Conceptualizing Arctic Security: Selected Articles from the Journal of Military and Security Studies* (co-edited with Lackenbauer and Ryan Dean, 2017).



**THOMAS HUGHES** received his Ph.D from Queen's University, Ontario, where he was an Editorial Assistant at the Centre for International and Defence Policy. His primary areas of research are on confidence-building, deterrence, and strategic culture, with his dissertation focusing on the political effects of military exercises in Europe. Thomas co-edited the 2018 volume *North American Strategic Defense in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and also published work on the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft. Thomas gained his MA from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, Denver, and has also worked for the UN Inter-regional

Crime and Justice Research Institute.

**CHRIS KILFORD** served for 36 years in the Canadian Armed Forces as an army officer. In the latter part of his career, he specialized in foreign and defence policy issues. In addition to his general experience as a senior officer, Kilford has expertise in leadership and management, strategic planning, conflict analysis, peace operations and global governance issues. He is also a recognized expert on Turkish foreign policy and Middle Eastern political issues. His book chapters, articles and opinion pieces have appeared in numerous Canadian and international publications. Since retiring from the military in 2014, Kilford has taken on key roles with the Canadian International Council and is a member of the national board and president of the Victoria branch. He is also a Fellow with the Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy and a sessional instructor with the Canadian Forces College teaching online courses focused on geopolitical issues. Kilford held numerous senior positions with the Department of National Defence, including Acting Director Future Security Analysis and Military Liaison Officer with the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. He also served as the Deputy Military Attaché to Afghanistan in 2009-2010 and later as the Canadian Defence Attaché to Turkey in 2011-2014.



**P. WHITNEY LACKENBAUER** is Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in the Study of the Canadian North and professor in the School for the Study of Canada at Trent University, and the Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1CRPG) based in Yellowknife. Whitney is an adjunct professor at the Center for Arctic Security and Resilience at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Mulroneu Institute for Governance at St. Francis Xavier University. Previously, he has been Killam Visiting Scholar at the University of Calgary, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Canadian Forces College, and a Fulbright Scholar at Johns Hopkins University. He has (co-)written or (co-)edited more than fifty books and more than one

hundred academic articles and book chapters. His recent books include *The Joint Arctic Weather Stations: Science and Sovereignty in the High Arctic, 1946-1972* (2022); *A History of the Canadian Rangers of Quebec: 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (2022); *The Canadian Armed Forces' Eyes, Ears, and Voice in Remote Regions: Selected Writings on the Canadian Rangers* (2022); *Lines in the Snow: Thoughts on the Past and Future of Northern Canadian Policy Issues* (2021); *On Thin Ice? Perspectives on Arctic Security* (2021); *Breaking Through: Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic* (2021); and *China's Arctic Engagement: Following the Polar Silk Road to Greenland and Russia* (2021). [www.lackenbauer.ca](http://www.lackenbauer.ca)

**ADAM LAJEUNESSE** is the Irving Shipbuilding Chair in Canadian Arctic Marine Security Policy and an Assistant Professor at the Mulroney Institute of Government, St. Francis Xavier University. He is the author of *Lock, Stock, and Icebergs* (2016), a political history of the Northwest Passage, as well as co-author of the 2017 monograph *China's Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada*, and co-editor of *Canadian Arctic Operations, 1941-2015: Lessons Learned, Lost, and Relearned* (2017). Lajeunesse works on questions of Arctic sovereignty and security policy and has written



extensively on CAF Arctic operations, maritime security, Canadian/American cooperation in the North, and Canadian Arctic history. He is a fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, the Arctic Institute of North America, and the Centre for the Study of Security and Development and sits on the editorial board of the *Canadian Naval Review* and the journal *Arctic*. He frequently lectures to government and defence audiences at the Department of National Defence, CISIS, and Global Affairs Canada. He has participated in the Canadian government's academic consultations developing Foreign Affairs' new Arctic Policy Framework, and with DND in its Expert Stakeholder Consultations to develop federal defence policy, and with the Canadian Army to design the Forces' Arctic Operating Concept. In addition, Lajeunesse has presented evidence on northern defence to Senate and House of Commons Committees, is a regular participant on the inter-agency Arctic Security Working Group, as well as to foreign states, including biannual lectures to the NATO Defence College in Rome and to the British House of Commons sub-Committee on Defence.



**SUZANNE LALONDE** (Professor of International Law, Université de Montréal) is a specialist of the Law of the Sea, with an emphasis on the Arctic. She has appeared before parliamentary committees, advised the Government of Nunavut, taken part in Canadian Forces operations in the North, and regularly participates in the biannual meetings of the ASWG. She has been involved in various research projects analyzing the legal implications of an increasingly accessible Arctic region, identifying the most effective legal mechanisms – national, regional, and international – to adequately protect the Arctic

marine environment and the critical role it plays in the life of Northerners. She continues to produce ground-breaking work on the application of international and domestic laws related to Arctic security and safety issues, including how federal, territorial, and land claim jurisdictions may be applied, as well as identifying opportunities for enhancing circumpolar partnerships.

**BRIDGET LAROCQUE** is an Indigenous resident of the Northwest Territories, has extensive knowledge of the Northwest Territories and the broader circumpolar world, brings a distinct worldview from that region, and shares a comprehensive knowledge of research methods and Indigenous and gender issues. She serves as a policy advisor and researcher with the Arctic Athabaskan Council (ACC) and was executive director of Gwich'in Council International (GCI) from 2007-12, so she has tremendous expertise on the Arctic Council and Arctic governance issues. Her other recent work includes managing self-government negotiations for the Gwich'in Tribal Council, serving as land claim implementation coordinator and project analyst with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and as assistant negotiator with Executive and Indigenous Affairs in the Government of the Northwest Territories, and as Executive Director of the Fort Norman Community in the Northwest Territories.



**ADAM P. MACDONALD**, a former naval officer in the Canadian military, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Political Science Department at Dalhousie University. He is a Killam Scholar, holds a MINDS Doctoral Scholarship and is a Fellow at the Canadian International Council. Adam's doctoral work seeks to explain the differences in American strategic approaches towards Russia and China in the early post-Cold War era as a function of larger efforts to ensure its networked centrality in security and economic realms globally and within Europe and East Asia. His other research interests include various aspects of Canadian defence and foreign policy, specifically the impact on these by the burgeoning strategic rivalry between the US and China, naval policy and strategy, the military's role in domestic emergency response, and Arctic security.

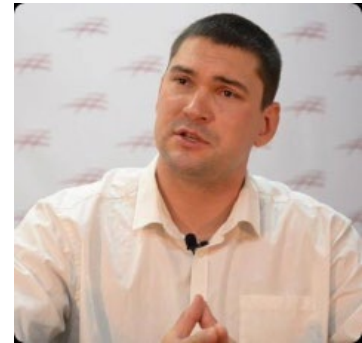
**KARI ROBERTS** is Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies at Mount Royal University in Calgary. Her research is primarily concerned with Russian foreign policy toward the West, with a specific emphasis on Russia-US relations and Russia's interests in the Arctic as they relate to Russia's wider foreign policy goals.





**EVGENIIA (JEN) SIDOROVA** is Policy and Research Analyst with Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Jen holds a Ph.D. in Political Science (International Relations and Comparative Politics) from University of Calgary. She identifies herself as an Indigenous Siberian (Sakha) from Yakutsk, Sakha Republic. Her special area of expertise is incorporation of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in wildlife management, science, and industrial development.

**SERGEY SUKHANKIN** is a Senior Fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, and an Advisor at Gulf State Analytics (Washington, D.C.). He received his Ph.D. from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. His areas of interest include Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea region, Russian information and cyber security, A2/AD and its interpretation in Russia, the Arctic region, and the development of Russian private military companies since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. He is now increasingly focusing on economic issues (the Northern Sea Route and oil/LNG projects) in the Arctic region. He has consulted or briefed with CSIS (Canada), DIA (USA), and the European Parliament. His project discussing the activities of Russian PMCs, “War by Other Means” informed the United Nations General Assembly report entitled “Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination.” He is based in Edmonton.



**ANNA TSURKAN** is a Founder and a Project Coordinator of the Canada-Russia Research Initiative (CRRI). This initiative is an independent, non-partisan, grassroots organization and research platform dedicated to fostering a greater understanding of the existing challenges in the relations between the two countries and accumulating meaningful studies to build a road for mutual cooperation. Anna created a CRRI concept and logo; designed and filled with content its website; manage website contributors; network to increase its expert database; plan and organize events.

Dr. Anna Tsurkan grew up in Russia, where she obtained all her degrees, including a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 2013-2018, Anna worked for the above-mentioned think tank in a capacity of a research fellow. In 2016-2019, she held an associate fellowship at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, UVic. Her main areas of research include U.S.-Russia and Canada-Russia relations, Islamic radicalism and counterterrorism, disinformation, and propaganda. Anna has written numerous papers and has given many presentations on a broad range of security and political subjects linked to Russian, U.S. and Canadian foreign policy.

## Appendix B: Foresight Questions

### Scenario #1: The Handover (and Future) of the Arctic Council: Competing Narratives

The handover of the Arctic Council chairmanship from Russia to Norway is quickly approaching. Russia's opportunity to chair was viewed by some as a "[legitimizing strategy](#)" for the larger policies of the country. Rather than having this effect, Russia's actions abroad delegitimized its Arctic policy. The "pause" of the Arctic Council by the seven like-minded Members in response to the invasion of Ukraine, and the resumption of cooperation to the exclusion of the Russian delegation effectively undermined the Kremlin's legitimizing strategy. While isolated from the other Arctic Council Member states, Russia has found strong support from the Permanent Participant [RAIPON and Russian-based parts of the Sámi Council](#), and has used its time as Chair to focus on a domestic agenda. The result is an Arctic Council controversially, but effectively, divided between the seven like-minded Arctic states and the "Russian Arctic." Can this persist?

Many commentators are [hopeful that the pending transfer of the Chairship](#) from Russia to Norway will proceed but the future of the Arctic Council is far from clear as long as the War in Ukraine persists. This scenario considered four possible futures of the Arctic Council within Norway's two-year chair:

- 1) War continues and Putin remains in power.
- 2) War continues and Putin is replaced in power.
- 3) War ends and Putin remains in power.
- 4) War ends and Putin is replaced in power.

Participants were asked to consider the following questions for each of the four scenarios:

- Will Norway's pending term as chair lead to more or less cooperation within the Arctic Council?
- Will the overall institutional effectiveness of the Arctic Council improve or degrade?
- Can cooperation with the Russian delegation be reestablished?
- Can the Arctic Council moderate competition and promote cooperation in the Arctic writ large?
- Can the Arctic Council continue as a regional forum, and if so, for how long?

### Scenario #2: China and Russia in the Arctic

In the wake of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Moscow's political and economic partnership with China has grown in importance. In the Arctic, this relationship is likely to play a pivotal role in the region's future, with the Kremlin increasingly reliant on China for both development capital and markets. While both the Russian and Chinese governments have portrayed the region as one in which their interests are in sync, and where cooperation dominates, significant friction exists beneath the rhetorical surface.

As the region's largest coastal state, and the most capable Arctic power, Russia has long insisted that Arctic governance remains the sole responsibility of Arctic states and Moscow remains intent upon protecting its dominant position in the Arctic. Beijing, in contrast, seeks to alter the status quo by advocating a greater role in Arctic governance. For years, China has maintained that its interests and capabilities in the Arctic make it a "Near-Arctic State," while promoting the perception of the Arctic as a global commons rather than a strictly regional space. As [Dmitri Trenin, former-director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, has noted](#), "Russia is, in a word, a status quo power, while China is seeking to open up the region for the world and capitalize on that."

While China portrays its Arctic partnerships as "win-win" arrangements, its position on various questions central to its future in the Arctic stand in stark contrast to long-established Russian policy. Participants were invited to consider the following questions:

- As Russia and China seek to strengthen their partnerships in the Arctic (and more generally), what friction points might muddy the waters of that relationship?
- What are the key gaps between Chinese and Russian policy in the Arctic?
- Do these have the potential to weaken or derail Sino-Russian cooperation in the region?
- Do Chinese and Russian views on the Northern Sea Route, seabed mining, and jurisdiction over the Arctic Ocean align?
- As the Chinese government and its state-owned entities digest the reality of Russia's war with Ukraine and adjust their approaches, are bolder investments likely to flow?



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