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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. JONES: Good morning. Welcome, everybody. Thank you for joining us this morning. I'm delighted to welcome everybody to Brookings and, in particular, to welcome our distinguished panel to join us in a conversation about a region of growing importance to the United States, to the other major powers, and to the world at large, namely the Arctic.

I'm delighted to welcome this morning James DeHart, who is the U.S. coordinator for the Arctic region since July of 2020. Jim has had a long career as a senior foreign service officer holding the rank of minister-counselor; has previously served as special assistant for Europe and as special assistant for Eurasia at NATO Headquarters, in Afghanistan, and in other posts; and perhaps of particular relevance to today, served between 2015 and 2018 as deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in Oslo, Norway, one of the major Arctic states.

We are also joined by Camilla Sørensen, who's an associate professor at the Royal Defence College. She did her postdoctoral research at the School of International Studies in Peking University and has developed deep expertise on Chinese foreign and security policy and East Asian security, and comes from Denmark, the other major Arctic European state.

And then we're going to also be joined by Heather Conley, who is the senior vice president for Europe, Eurasia, and the Arctic, and the director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at CSIS. Prior to joining CSIS, she served for several years as the executive director of the Office of the Chairman of the Board of the American National Red Cross; and before that as deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. And is to my account the most knowledgeable and the most consistent Arctic watcher in Washington, D.C.

So, it's a pleasure to have you all with us.

Under normal circumstances, we would have a fourth panelist, namely Rush Doshi, who just released a report on "China's Arctic Activities and Ambitions," together with his co-authors Alexis Dale-Huang, Gaoqi Zhang, and John Ferguson. But Rush has joined the administration, so having described the problem, he's now sitting in the White House and has to fix it, serving as director for China together with Laura Rosenberger and Kurt Campbell. So, we wish him luck in that role.

Before I introduce his -- I'll very briefly introduce his report since he is not here to do so, but I'll do it in large part by trying to frame the discussion overall. I mean, it seems to me that there has long been a debate between competing perspectives on the Arctic. There are many who see it primarily in commercial and increasingly in energy terms. It's been referred to as the next major emerging economy. There are some who see it primarily in terms of issues of the global commons, the environment, climate change, melting Arctic ice and sea level rise. And some who see it primarily in strategic and geopolitical terms and increasing militarization of the Arctic included in that. It's often recalled that it was a key battleground during the Second World War and quite an important source of tension and friction between ourselves and the Soviets during World War II.

Overall, it seems to me that most of the nations who have a serious presence in the Arctic have a mix of those three issues in their -- or those three viewpoints in their strategy. But it does seem to me that there has been a decided rebalancing in several states' policy towards the strategic and the geopolitical domain. I would argue that that's been part of a tilt in U.S. strategy, but Jim will correct or refine that point. I would say it's long been central to Russia's strategy, both the energy dimension and the strategic dimension.

Europe I would say is more divided. Continental Europe often looks to the Arctic as a global commons question and an issue for governance and collaborations. And the Arctic states have more direct interests, but there are differences of views among the Arctic states, and we'll come to that. And then there's the question of China and China's ambitions and its strategy.

Rush and his co-authors in their paper make a fairly detailed case, a fairly detailed argument to suggest that the strategic and the competitive perspective has long been dominant in China's strategy, certainly in the planning documents of both the Communist Party and the PLAA, PLAN, if not necessarily among all the strategic, scientific, and commercial actors in China. But I know that others have a different perspective on China's ambitions and its strategies.

We can debate the China question. I also want to debate the kind of broader question of where we are on the spectrum between a zone of cooperation in the management of the global commons on the one hand and a zone of competition and strategic and military terms on the other. What mix of

those are at place and what's the state of governance of this extremely important region?

Jim, with that, let me turn the floor to you. I'll simply remind everybody we are on the record. The audience can pose questions @BrookingsEvents. They can hashtag at #ArcticChina. And I've got questions from the audience already; we'll come to that. We'll have a discussion among the panel first and then turn to audience questions.

So, with that, Jim, thank you for joining us and over to you.

MR. DeHART: Bruce, thanks very much and thanks for the invitation to be here. I appreciate this important event hosted by Brookings and also the report that is an important piece of work. I appreciate that contribution and very happy to be here together with Heather and Camilla, great colleagues.

So, let me just jump right in. The United States is an Arctic nation by virtue of Alaska and we have very important interests in this region that is close to home. And fundamentally, we have an interest in the Arctic remaining peaceful and remaining a place where no new threats arise to our homeland. But we also have wide-ranging interests in cooperation in the Arctic on the science related to climate change, of course, and science more broadly on environmental protection, on safety.

And, of course, a lot of this work takes place through the Arctic Council, which is the premier multilateral forum for the region. And we have a strong interest in sustainable economic development across the region that benefits local communities, including the Alaska Native community, our own citizens in the state of Alaska.

And I hesitate to rank order any of these interests, but, Bruce, I think you make an important observation that different people look at the Arctic through different lenses. And I think as a government we need to have the flexibility and the bandwidth really to take a comprehensive approach to the region and give attention to the full set of interests which are varied. And I know today we're going to focus in particular on security, but it is important to note that we do have this wider set of interests there.

And in a lot of ways the status quo in the Arctic is enviable. It is a place of no conflict and peace and where cooperation on science in all sorts of areas has really been remarkable. And so there's a lot of things we'd prefer not to change, but the status quo is not going to hold because the Arctic is

warming more than twice as fast as the global average. The sea ice is receding on a seasonal basis. And so not overnight, but in the years and the decades ahead we would certainly expect to see significant growth in tourism, in shipping, in resource exploration. And we need to have our eyes wide open that other states are interested in being involved in the Arctic, interested in being present. And so they're making plans and they're developing capabilities to do so.

Russia and China pose particular challenges because of the rise in geopolitical tensions and competition. Russia more of a hard security problem; China more of a soft security challenge. And I think today we're talking about China. So, I'll tell you what we see, which is a lot of Chinese interest in the Arctic, in being present. A lot of interest from Beijing in acquiring infrastructure across the region, in acquiring mineral licenses, perhaps not so much for their profitability, but for the chance to establish footholds and gain some ground that it could use in whatever its long-term plans may be. And Chinese science platforms across the region, icebreakers and ground stations linking to satellites that have dual-use potential and could contribute to a future Chinese ability to operate militarily in the region, although they don't really have a meaningful security presence at this time.

And we've seen how Beijing has done development elsewhere in the world: lack of sustainability, lack of transparency contributing often to corruption, unmet promises to local communities. So, we have concerns about those kinds of approaches, obviously, in the Arctic. And we have concerns about the national security implications of the Chinese acquisition of critical infrastructure.

So, what are we doing about this? The answers are to be found, to a large extent, in the interim national security strategic guidance that President Biden issued in March, where he talked about upholding international rules and institutions and revitalizing our alliances and making sure that our foreign policy links back to our domestic renewal.

Three principles really important to the Arctic. The first one, upholding international law, international rules, institutions. You know, Beijing would probably have you believe that the Arctic is a global commons, that it is a place of undeveloped governance, and where resources are up for grabs. That's not the case. We have international rules, strong rules, in the region, notably Law of the Sea, which we follow in practice. We see the provisions as consistent with customary international law. And

we have the Arctic Council, of course, that puts the eight Arctic states and the indigenous communities at the forefront of governance in the region.

So, the frameworks are there. We need to reinforce those, protect those, insist that other countries adhere to those. And the next Arctic Council ministerial take place in Reykjavik in May 19 and 20. Secretary Blinken will be going and so will be supporting that important forum and continuing to lead there in the Arctic Council.

Second principle, revitalizing our alliances. We have really close relationships with our NATO allies and partners in the Arctic region. Their eyes are wide open, as well. They have taken very important steps to pass investment screening legislation, other measures, so they can look at investments from Beijing through a national security lens; very important. And they've turned off a number of projects of concern instigated by the PRC.

Third principle of connecting our approaches in the region to our domestic policy, you know, what we do in Alaska as far as our domestic investments has a real impact on how we project influence beyond the American Arctic. So, we need to have that conversation about both domestic investment and foreign policy together. And we understand that the people that live in the Arctic, including our own citizens, need good, high standard investment as an alternative to what Beijing may do, but also because it's important in itself. And we need to align those investments in that business with our interest in environmental protection and climate change goals. Critical minerals certainly plays into that.

So, I should stop. So, just to quickly sum up, you know, we do have a major interest in cooperation in this region. That is very much our focus and our intent. At the same time, we recognize the risks. We work really closely with our allies and partners to address those. And I think the report here and the discussion organized by Brookings is a great contribution to understanding the situation that we have there. So, thanks again for the invitation.

MR. JONES: Great, Jim, thank you very much. Camilla, let me turn it to you. You're one of the allies with whom we cooperate closely in the region, but you also have -- Denmark also has its own interests and its own perspective, so I'd be very curious to hear your take on the overall situation, on China's ambitions and intent, and any other issues you want to raise.

MS. SØRENSEN: Thank you, Bruce. And thank you and the Brookings for inviting me today.

So, for my initial remarks, as you indicate, I've been tasked with giving an overview of the Nordic views and developments in Arctic security and specifically on China in the Arctic, and then zoom in on Denmark-Greenland. And all this in five, seven minutes. So, it will be some main points and then we can go into the more specifics in the following discussions and Q&A.

So, from reports that I've conducted in 2019 and 2020 with colleagues also from the Danish Institute of International Studies on how the Nordic Arctic states -- Finland, Norway, Iceland, and of course Denmark -- assess and seek to deal with or adjust strategies in relation to the changing security situation in the Arctic. There are kind of three main common points.

First, the smaller Arctic Nordic states, they prioritize maintaining the Arctic as a low-tension region, and that is kind of their key framing and the key objective in their Arctic strategies. And that is despite the growing military build-up and the growing military activities driven mostly by Russia or the U.S., but also where Finland, Norway, and Denmark contribute and have increased their military presence and activities in recent years. Despite this, there is a strong emphasis in the Nordic capitals on -- that this militarization in the region does not run counter to their priority of maintaining low tension, strengthen multilateral cooperation, and legal frameworks. It is also seen and also thought -- presented to us two parallel developments that not necessarily inflict on each other, so we can return to how that can continue to stay that way.

But this also leads to the second general point or observation, which is that in the Nordic capitals the issue is not narrowly dealing with Russia or for that matter China, but it's also dealing with -- or it's dealing with intensified great power, a tension great power competition, because this increasingly sets the overall frame also for cooperation on climate, on research, economic developments in the region. So this means that for the Nordic Arctic countries it's also the challenge of dealing with new or changing U.S. requests and expectations that relates to how the U.S. increasingly sees the Arctic security through this lens of great power, tension great power competition, and hence sees Russia and China also in an Arctic context as great power competitors or rivals. And this view is not shared in the Nordic capitals, but

they have to adjust to or deal with that their closest, most important ally -- the U.S. -- sees it this way.

So, how the Nordic states adjust or deal with the changing security situation and the changing U.S. strategic view or approach to the region that varies, of course. But generally, we've seen an effort to try to take what we could call a dual approach, which is then the third common point.

We see Finland, but also Norway and Denmark, trying to avoid provoking or escalate tensions by seeking to be transparent; under military exercises, seeking to keep dialogue, reassuring policies in relation to Russia. But still delivering -- while they deliver on U.S. requests, increase their cooperation with the U.S. in the region, not only on security, but also on military -- in the military.

But it's getting more and more difficult to balance. It's getting more difficult to hit this dual approach as relations between the U.S. and Russia worsen and also as the military presence and activities continue to grow; for example, with the recent stationing of U.S. Air Force on Norwegian soil and the more assertive Russian military activities or exercises. So, the concern in the Nordic capitals is the risk of getting entrapped, you could say, in this great power tension or rivalry.

On China specifically, China is generally not considered a direct security challenge or direct military threat in the Arctic or in general in any way that approaches the level of concern expressed by the U.S. Again, it varies in the different Nordic countries. Finland has taken the most positive proactive stance on China's Polar Silk Road. Finnish companies have cooperation on communication, cable technology, icebreaker capabilities with Chinese counterparts.

But there is a general skepticism towards China as this near-Arctic state, a growing Chinese influence on Arctic governance, etc. There is skepticism and concern. But there is also acknowledgement of the needs and benefits of working with China also in an Arctic context on research, on climate, infrastructure development, and resource extraction.

But again, that being said, and Jim also hinted at this, there are growing efforts in trying to deal with the -- identify and deal with the risks that are involved. When you work with China, it's these investment screening mechanisms, but also other institutional and legal mechanisms that are being worked on.

Briefly, lastly, briefly on Greenland, there are many accelerations in American and

European academic, political circles, and the media when it comes to Chinese presence in Greenland and Chinese influence on Greenlandic politics and on Greenland-Denmark relations. There is no substantial Chinese presence or significant Chinese investments in Greenland and there is little actual evidence to support the prevailing analysis of an overly assertive Chinese conduct in Greenland or Chinese support to Greenlandic independence or, more general, of Chinese involved in Greenlandic policies.

This I stress not to neglect the potential importance of Greenland in the future developments in Greenland and the potential risks and vulnerabilities that could follow. Greenlandic politicians surely continue to see big potential economic development opportunities in improving relations with China, especially for the Greenlandic fishing industry, tourism industry, and mining industry.

However, they are also increasingly aware of the limitations. A recent survey of Greenlandic views on security policy and specifically the great power, show that there's no strong Greenlandic support for having China as an important political, not to speak of security, partner. So, here the Greenlanders placed themselves solidly in the U.S.-NATO camp or alliance.

I think my minutes are up. I better stop here and leave the rest for the discussion and Q&A. Thank you.

MR. JONES: And we'll come back to several of the questions and several of the issues that both Jim raised and then you've raised.

Heather, you've been watching this evolution in American thinking and the region as a whole. Give us your perspective either on the things that Jim and Camilla have said or simply your own view on what's transpiring and how China fits into the bigger picture.

MS. CONLEY: Bruce, thank you so much. And it's always such a privilege to be with Jim and Camilla. Thanks so much. I mean, congratulations to Rush and the team for a really, really great report that dives deeply into Chinese thinking about the Arctic.

As Camilla noted, there's just a lot of hype. There's a lot of just immediate sort of knee-jerk reaction of what is China doing in the Arctic? And it really helps to go through it in a very thorough and comprehensive manner what is Chia's policy. So, again, congratulations.

You know, Bruce, in some ways in your introduction you were sort of bringing us what is the Arctic? I mean, what is it about this that we are really increasingly focusing our attention? It's because of environmental transformation, I mean, catastrophic transformation of the Arctic. It is because of the economic opportunity. It is because of the greater militarization. And it is because 4 million people live in the Arctic and their way of life is dramatically changing. It's all of those things. And I think that's what, in some ways, for policymakers, is really hard because it's driven by all of those factors and that the Arctic doesn't neatly fit into anyone's geographic remit. There's a North American Arctic, which is very different from the European and the Eurasian Arctic. There are, you know, so many regional, strong regional interests, but, of course, there are global interests, as well. So, this is a really fascinating topic and I'm so glad we're having this discussion.

I have to say it's been an evolution of thinking about the Arctic. For quite some time there was this myth of Arctic exceptionalism, that the geopolitical tensions could rise everywhere, but the Arctic could be protected. And that exceptionalism has now given way to now the understanding of strategic or great power competition in the Arctic. It took us -- I think it took the intellectual community a little time to move because, exactly as Camilla said, we want this to be a place of low tension. But the fact of the matter is we have to manage these tensions in order for them to remain low. And by just -- again, this sort of comes around, this exceptionalism, if we insist that they're low tensions, we're not managing them. So, I'd like us to think about shifting to management.

But what's so interesting as I watch the Arctic, it is truly a strategic bellwether. I mean, it was the first area in 1989 where then the Soviet Union put forward some new thinking about the Arctic. It was the first, literally, to thaw geopolitically the end of the Cold War. And, in fact, the Arctic was the first to start showing us tensions in 2007 and 2008, when Russia again began long-range bomber runs in the Arctic, which was part -- you know, I think President Putin's speech at, you know, the Security Conference in 2007, it was showing us that some things were shifting and we didn't want to see it. We didn't want to recognize it. Now we have a great deal to think about and to recognize.

So, of the three powers, you have Russia as the great power in Arctic. Its nuclear capabilities, its second strike capabilities, its future is the Arctic economically. So, the stakes could not be

higher for Russia about the Arctic, which tells us that this is going to be an area of great prioritization and importance for the Russian government.

For China, it's been an emerging strategy, wanting to retain full access to the fisheries, to the waters, to the minerals, to the energy certainly, but also for a diversification strategy in case the Straits of Malacca are closed. In fact, even Vladimir Putin was advertising after the Suez Canal blockage from the *Evergreen* cargo ship, you know, look at the northern sea route. You know, welcome, welcome, this is your new route. It is a diversification strategy.

So, the U.S. is a power that is reawakening to the Arctic. Now, how we're reawakening is we're writing a lot of strategies. We're trying to organize ourselves a little bit. But we're having a hard time making those difficult budget choices where we have to substantially increase our presence in the Arctic. That presence can be icebreaker presence. That can be a reopening of a consulate in Nuuk. That can be a more scientific presence, more economic presence, more security presence. But we have to think about this enduring presence in the Arctic.

Just a few final words about China, and I know we'll think about this more deeply in the Q&A. In my mind, for U.S. policy Russia's militarization is the key near-term priority for the United States and our NATO allies to address, full stop. The problem is sometimes we have a hard time, we either want to focus on China exclusively or we try to manage Russia so we can make sure we're exclusively focusing on China.

Russia is the immediate threat. And we have no way to talk to Russia about their military build-up. The Arctic Council can't do that. We don't have a format. That's how we manage tensions, more transparency, more confidence-building measures.

But China is a long-term strategy. They're thinking about the Arctic strategically and, you know, what is it going to look like in 2040, 2050? They want to retain access. The reason they went to this undetermined sovereignty in their whitepaper, of course, the Arctic is a well-governed space for Law of the Sea Treaty, but they don't want to have those Arctic coastal states exclude China from access to the central Arctic international waters, from having access to the seabed potentially. So, they want their presence scientifically and economically to ensure they have that access.

And as Jim noted, the problem is with that commercial, economic, and scientific presence will come dual-use, whether it's fishery vessels or scientific research. And that's where we need greater transparency.

There is an awakening of strategic competition in the Arctic, but we need to do so much more to get ready for the Arctic to play a much more vital role in U.S. national security and defense, as well as the evolution of our allies. So, this is an important topic. Thank you so much for a great report and facilitating this conversation.

MR. JONES: Great. Thank you so much, Heather. And thanks to all of you.

Look, what I want to do is start posing a number of questions to you all. I'm actually going to feather into that questions that are coming in from the audience because there's some great questions and they organize themselves really around the themes we've already discussed.

So, I want to start with the question of militarization. And I want to link it to two related questions -- two related themes. One is, Heather has pointed out do we have forms for managing conflict? We do have the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable. I don't know vibrant that mechanism is. China is not a participant. I don't know how much that matters at this stage.

And I want to connect it also to a question about China-Russia cooperation. One of the things we've seen in other regions is this sort of very complicated dance between Moscow and Beijing, where they are cooperating in quite important ways, although there are still deep strategic tensions between them. Certainly over the last several months as the United States has sort of reengaged its allies, China and Russia have signaled their kind of growing level of strategic coordination. We've seen acute tensions between them in the Arctic and we've seen serious collaboration, especially on energy.

So, if we could come to this as sort of a two-part question. To what extent are we -- to what extent is the militarization that we've seen the beginnings of an arms race or the militarization is just sort of everybody establishing some presence? And how concerned are you all about Russia-China cooperation or collaboration in the Arctic?

Jim, let me start with you.

MR. DeHART: Yeah, thanks. So, first, on militarization, I mean, the Arctic has long been

militarized in the sense that different states have forces there and capabilities. And it's a critical area for nuclear deterrence strategy. That's a major consideration for some states.

I think, you know, when we look at Russia's activities we see, obviously, that they're doing a lot in the military domain, refurbishing old bases, establishing new capabilities. Their outlets to the North Atlantic from their part of the Arctic is extremely important for some of their assets' capabilities. You know, so, the key here is we've got to be rock solid together with our NATO allies; make sure that NATO is and remains capable, as I'm sure it will be; and strengthen our deterrence posture there.

You know, as for Russia-China cooperation, it looks a little transactional to me. I mean, Russia, I think, has -- sees a major interest for itself in getting the hydrocarbons out of the North while the getting is good and has decided it needs Chinese investment to accomplish that goal. But, at the same time, Russia's protective of its status as one of the eight Arctic states, and so I think they're trying to figure out how to do this in a way that doesn't give Beijing undue influence into Arctic governance and a larger role and certainly not a security role in the Arctic region. So, I think it's a careful dance.

MR. JONES: I do note that if you look at Chinese energy needs, right now the vast majority of it flows out of straits that we secure. If they shift them to the northern Russia-secured straits that would be an important point of leverage in that relationship there.

Camilla, do you want to come in on these two questions?

MS. SØRENSEN: Yes, thank you. Yeah, I think Jim's right, there's always been a certain level of militarization. You also talked, Bruce, in the beginning of the importance of the Arctic during both the Cold War and the Second World War, so it's not new that there is a high strategic importance of the Arctic.

I think what's changing now, and this is also what Heather touched upon, is that it is both growing tension coming from the outside, the general growing tension among the great powers and the international system, you could argue, and then it's the Arctic opening up, so there is also more to compete about in the Arctic. So, I think it's a different, more complex mix of security dynamics that are playing out and make it more difficult to maneuver.

And we see at least from -- in Denmark and in relation to Greenland, we see that there is

a growing focus on strengthening their military presence from the U.S. and also from the Danish defense. We don't have total surveillance over Greenland. It's huge, a very long coastline. And it's not been seen as a big issue. It's not been a priority, but it is now in a different way. So we are also strengthening our military capabilities, the military resources that goes north. So, I think we're seeing it not only from the great powers, from Russia, from the U.S., but also from the smaller Arctic states, that simply that there is a growing awareness of the need to have surveillance in place, to be clear on what is happening in the Arctic.

And this is a new thing, I think. Before, it's more been kind of a great power militarization, the great power strategic importance of the Arctic, where it is now also to a higher degree coming in. Some of it comes as a response to, as I mentioned in my talk, to requests or expectations from the U.S., from NATO, but some of it is simply also driven by a need.

As the Arctic opens up, you need search-and-rescue capabilities. You need to be able simply what -- so there's a lot of other requirements, as well, oil spill, other crises that could happen in your near seas. So, there's a lot of -- and where to see what is, you know, militarization and what is building up a military capability to deal with crisis situations, that the really difficult issue that could cause misunderstanding and escalations that we really want to avoid. So, that's why calling for confidence-building measures, dialogue, and the things you mentioned, reemphasizing the Arctic security dialogue, and other things are I think the way to move forward.

On China-Russia, I agree that there is this ambivalence. I think a lot of what is pushing China and Russia together is also coming from outside of the Arctic. Right? It's a shared concern about the way that they see the U.S. increasing pressure on China, in East Asia especially, and on Russia in Russia's other near neighborhood. So, they kind of see a more common stand on some more international non-Arctic issues. And in the Arctic, of course, it's the Yamal LNG project especially that is driving their cooperation, but also within science and even military cooperation we see a strengthening in recent years.

But again, the Russians are very careful. They surely do not want the Chinese to play a bigger role in Arctic governance, so actually there we share, the U.S. and Russia share, a clear common

interest in not allowing China to play a bigger role in Arctic governance.

MR. JONES: Heather, on these two themes?

MS. CONLEY: Yeah. I mean, we know there's a need for some type of dialogue mechanism on militarization of the Arctic. And, you know, we've been searching for one. The Arctic chief of defenses have tried to meet; didn't work out very well. The U.S. European Command has held a security roundtable. You know, of course we had the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which is a super useful forum for the eight Arctic Council members. But it's, again, not quite right.

And this is something at least Russian experts, academics, and American analysts agree. We need to create this forum quite urgently exactly because, as Camilla said, I mean, we have some fairly dangerous situations. You have the Russians doing electronic warfare, GPS jamming during exercises. We've had a sinking of a Russian submarine in the area. This is ripe for risk miscalculation and accidents, so we really do need greater confidence, code of conduct.

I mean, we're going back to basically OSCE Vienna Document principles, but making sure that we don't misunderstand each other because we both are exercising more in the Arctic. The U.S. is doing freedom of navigation operations that we haven't done for a long time. There's always a risk of accident and the Russians are certainly exercising more. So, this really has to be now focused with great urgency. We've experimented, but now we really do have to create some type of forum.

On Sino-Russian cooperation, you know, Jim, we've moved past transactionalism between Beijing and Moscow. I think we are seeing something more durable, exactly as Camilla said. You have the energy, Yamal LNG, the economics. The only way Russia really can fully develop its Arctic, the northern sea route, the energy production, is if China pursues it very robustly, which it hasn't thus far, but it's certainly an important part. And the only way that China retains full access to the Arctic is if Russia allows it to retain that full access. So, that mutuality I think will only continue to grow.

And we've seen the joint scientific centers, the joint space research. We're seeing the Chinese military exercising much more frequently in Russia's annual military exercise, which each have an Arctic component. And now, of course, we have the fifth military district being the Northern Fleet and we will watch that exercise.

So, there is now I think greater and greater mutuality. That doesn't suggest that Russia does not -- you know, as much as its military projection is about the U.S. and NATO and defending its sovereignty in the Arctic, it's also about minding what Chia will be bringing increasingly towards the Arctic, as well. But those suspicions are being overwhelmed by the economic imperatives and Russia's urgency of developing the Arctic. That's where I think the mutuality fits in.

MR. JONES: Jim, did you want to come back quickly on that before we move on?

MR. DeHART: Yeah, if I could just come back on the points raised on the need for CBMs or new dialogues, code of conduct, and those sorts of things. I mean, one point I want to make is, I mean, the reason we're concerned about Russia in the Arctic really links to our concerns about Russia more broadly and how Russia is acting in the world and the trajectory that Russia appears to be on. So, you know, so even though the idea of Arctic exceptionalism is an attractive one, the fact is we have to link what we do in the Arctic to how we address Russia more broadly.

I think, you know, transparency is really important. And we do need to have effective mechanisms to address potential miscalculations on the military side. And, you know, and we need to keep channels open with competitors or adversaries, whatever you want to call them. It's not a great gift to talk. We should talk.

We do have mechanisms. Heather referred to the Vienna Document that strengthens transparency. We have the Incidents at Sea Agreement with Russia, Incidents at Sea and in the Air. We have ability to talk to Moscow about all of these issues and we should make sure that we're maximizing the use of these mechanisms and fora that we have and make sure there's no gaps.

We don't necessarily want to adopt a new forum simply because Moscow doesn't like the old one and sees an advantage in talking in a new construct that gives it the ability to rehabilitate its image or constrain NATO in some way. So, we have to go about this, I think, very, very carefully while addressing exactly the concerns that Heather and Camilla raised, to keep tensions low.

MR. JONES: You know, just before we were all closed down from COVID, one of my last trips was up to Tromsø and I went down to the Olavsvern naval base there, where, of course, the United States has now resigned a Status of Forces Agreement. This used to be a major sort of outpost for U.S.

submarines in the Cold War. And I got some insight into the scale of militarization. So, I confess I still do find a concern about the military dimension.

But I want to bring in two other topics before we wrap. I want to come to climate change and I want to come to the governance mechanisms as a whole.

On climate change, I mean, we're all aware I think about now about the levels of Arctic sea ice melt, how significant that is; the albedo effect, the potential for that to escalate. It has these ironic features that the fishing stocks become more productive in the short term because the water gets colder, but over time, of course, this is a pretty dramatic and potentially catastrophic level of climate change.

I want to ask anybody that wants to answer, you don't all have to answer, but any that wants to answer, I want to ask about scientific cooperation on climate. We saw last year the MOSAiC Expedition led by Germany, which had Russian and Chinese and European and American participation. You know, it used to be the case that the United States was overwhelmingly the source of oceanic and scientific research on climate change. Now that capacity is much broader. The Chinese have a growing capability, Russia has some capability, Europe has capability.

That cooperation is continuing. Are you worried about the sustainability of that cooperation on climate science and on climate issues? Do you believe that the kind of growing geopolitical tensions of the whole are going to crowd that out? Or do you think that climate cooperation and climate science cooperation will be sustainable even in periods of growing tension and rivalry?

If anybody wants to address that. Heather, do you want to kick us off?

MS. CONLEY: I'm just happy to jump in. This is -- I mean, America's always been a science power in the Arctic. That is where our budget has always I think excelled and it's been an essential part of our leadership. But we have been challenged about ensuring that strong international collaboration. This was one reason why the eight members of the Arctic Council worked together to negotiate a legally binding international science and technology agreement. In part that was driven, and Jim can correct me if I'm wrong, is because American scientists were not getting visas to travel to Russia. And, of course, Russia is the epicenter of where a significant amount of the climate transformation in the Arctic will take place. And the permafrost thaw question is, of course, first and foremost.

So, we have to make sure we can allow our scientists to collaborate. And as Russia -- you know, increasingly Western organizations are declared foreign agents and undesirables, even U.S. environmental organizations are going to have a hard time just even getting not only access, but supporting the great Russian scientific work that is happening and the civil society environmentalists that are moving that. So, that's a big issue.

But bringing in the China element, even more so we really do have to focus on the transparency of the science that is occurring in the Arctic for the name of science; making sure that these research centers and the scientists assigned to them are actually there to do that and that their work is data-rich.

We do have questions. A lot of China's scientific work is focused on the Arctic seabed floor. Well, there's a lot of reasons for undersea cables, sensors. This gets back to that dual-use question. If it stands up to the rigor of transparency, we need to collaborate and there's important reasons to do so. But we have to go into this very clear-eyed.

And this gets back into that strategic competition framework. So, there's a lot of work to be done in the science area. This is where the Arctic Council, I think, with greater collaboration can be of help. But there has to be some additional support in this space.

MR. JONES: Camilla, do you want to add?

MS. SØRENSEN: Well, I agree. The focus should be on identifying and managing, minimizing risks when working with the Chinese within science, but I think we shouldn't -- we should try to prioritize doing it because they actually have a lot to contribute. It is a key priority and has been since they started engaging in the Arctic and the Antarctic decades back. It's been the science that's been driving it. It has real implications back in China, also the climate change we see in the Arctic and the Antarctic.

And they are developing capabilities, like technological capabilities and knowledge that would benefit us all to engage in. And we see that with their recent research expeditions in the Arctic that are actually doing really amazing things that we, at least, still can't do. So, we can learn, we can engage. And it's better, I think, that we do it than we just leave it to the Chinese and the Russians.

So, I think, but, of course, having a clear focus on the transparency, identifying and managing the risk that will always be there -- because the key challenge with China, of course, as Heather indicated, is that there will always be a mix of party, state, civilian institutions, military institutions. That's the way the Chinese political system is built. Right? So, it's very difficult to say here we only have a civilian researcher here; it's a military researcher. It's mixed. And under Xi Jinping it's the civil-military fusion that's getting even more -- with that is getting even more emphasized and integrated.

So, I think it's unavoidable, but we need to be able to manage those risks.

MR. JONES: Jim, do you want to add in?

MR. DeHART: I would like to because, you know, in my 29 years in the Foreign Service I have not been prouder than when I've sat in an audience and watched and listened to an American expert or scientist come and highlight, showcase the brainpower that we have in this country. And so what we do in the Arctic is really remarkable, the National Science Foundation, NASA, NOAA, others. NASA has a satellite that measures the Greenland icecap depth to the width of a pencil. We share this information with our international partners. It contributes to international understanding of what's happening on climate. So, what we do there is remarkable and I think the level of cooperation internationally in the Arctic on science is the gold standard. And no doubt in mind that's going to continue and we will absolutely make space for that in this administration.

I think, you know, a lot of this takes place through the Arctic Council. And we can continue that in the Russian chairmanship and we see potential for cooperation under the Russian chairmanship on the science related to climate. And I'm glad Heather mentioned the agreement that was negotiated in the Arctic Council. We want to implement that agreement and make more of it.

And then, you know, a lot of great work happens outside the Council, too. We've got a number of great science partners, Germany comes to mind, where, you know, a lot of that work is outside the Council. And I want to make clear that we really welcome that and we appreciate that, value that cooperation, as well.

When it comes to China, you know, we're looking for transparency. There's potential for cooperation there, but I think, as Heather said very well, it does come down to transparency.

MR. JONES: So, I want to -- it was a perfect transition because one of the questions that came in was about Russia's chairmanship of the Council starting in May. And I want to bring out this question of the overall governance in the region. There was some difference of view between Jim and Heather about they're sufficient in terms of risk mitigation and confidence-building measures. Camilla emphasized it in her opening remarks.

I'm particularly interested in this question of the non-Arctic states or the kind of near-Arctic states, the Brits, the Chinese, others. You know, Singapore has an Arctic ambassador now. I mean, there's a lot of interest in this region which goes beyond the territorial boundaries. And I'm curious to hear your perspectives on whether that sort of mechanism of eight-plus observers is a sufficient one. Are there other spaces where you see a need for governance innovation in the region or are we sufficient?

You know, if the framework here, to go back to Jim's remarks, is an enviable status quo, but the status quo can't hold because of changing climate and environmental conditions, and Heather's framework about the need to manage risks, and you meant it in military terms, but it seems to me across all of those dimensions we could think about managing risks, is there sufficient adaptability in the governance mechanisms to adapt to the changing status and the changing risks?

Heather, why don't you start? And we'll give Jim the final word.

MS. CONLEY: Great, thank you. No, I think this is a great question. And I think we are seeing where the status quo is starting to sort of not collapse, but really strain under the weight of all the issues we need these mechanisms to address.

Again, the Arctic Council was formed in 1996. Its origins were from a pre-Cold War environmental protection strategy. It does great work, but it can't do all the work that needs to be done. And in some ways we've put too much focus and pressure on something that's not designed for that purpose.

The good news here is that we have seen enormous governance innovation in the Arctic over the last decade. We mentioned the science and technology agreement, the search-and-rescue agreement, the oil spill response agreement. Now, these were not Arctic Council agreements. This is the

important part. The eight members used that framework to negotiate those legally binding treaties. We most recently had the 5+5 Agreement, which is a fisheries moratorium for the international waters of the central Arctic Ocean. Huge innovation needed.

So, there's flexibility. There's dynamism. The problem is there is no connective tissue to any of these wonderful things. They're not plugged into anything. We have an Arctic Coast Guard Forum that's not plugged into anything. We have an Arctic Economic Council that's not really plugged into anything. So, this now becomes a moment where we should think about how to make more efficient, to streamline the many very good organizations and processes we have, but there's no political will to do this.

And, Bruce, you're right, there's always this tension between the Arctic coastal states, the five, which have enormous weight and voice over governance because of the Law of the Sea treaty. You have the Arctic Council members, again, extremely close coastal states is the definition, that have a weight. And then you have the rest of the world saying, look, I'm affected by sea level rise and the Arctic oscillation and the jet stream and weather patterns shifting. I need to have this voice, too.

And that's where the Arctic Council is struggling because right now there are more observers than there are members. We started drowning out the permanent participants, again the indigenous, that we have to keep their voice at the center of this conversation. And it gets very hard when strategic competition begins to play.

So, we really are at a moment where we should streamline and make more efficient. But there's just simply -- I don't see the political will. And the Russian chairmanship will certainly promote Russia's very ambitious Arctic policies and programs, but I don't there's any political will to look at that governance question that you're asking us to say how can we make this connective tissue? How can we glue this region and then deal with that military risk that we talked about in the beginning?

MR. JONES: Camilla, your thoughts?

MS. SØRENSEN: Well, just to add on this, also in the Nordic capitals there is growing acknowledgement of the issue of the Arctic Council not dealing with hard security or military issues. And there are more, Heather called it governance innovation, creative ideas floating around. The Finnish-

Icelandic proposed this Arctic Summit that could deal with security issues some years back. I think it's still out there. And Denmark proposed like kind of an Ilulissat Agreement 2.0, that again you could kind of look at that. And that is, of course, the five coastal states, but it could be broader, as well. So, there are some ideas out there.

And you could argue that it would be a benefit if it came from one of the smaller Arctic states. Because for them it's also a way -- as I mentioned in my initial remarks, the challenge is to manage the growing great power tension, the militarization. So, for them it would also -- the way to go is also to try to strengthen multilateral initiatives, institutions, and pull in.

And for the great powers it might be easier to come into it if it's not driven by another great power. Right? We know this from our experience, from our history.

So, I think the ideas are there floating around, also, in the Nordic capitals. And I think we need to look more at those again.

MR. JONES: It's a very interesting thought. I am both an American citizen and a Canadian citizen, so I can't help also thinking about the Canadian dimension of that kind of middle power diplomacy, which is sometimes --

MS. SØRENSEN: Yeah, exactly, yeah, yeah.

MR. JONES: -- really quite important and (inaudible) in great power rivalry.

Jim, you are the connective tissue, at least in the U.S. Government. I want to add one element before you response. We have a number of federal executive fellows at Brookings. These are designees from the different services. And they have a paper coming out on the Arctic looking at the different sort of services' strategies. One of the points they make is that it actually falls to three different combatant commands, and pose the question of whether a unified combatant command on the Arctic would help raise the profile and the resources necessary. I'd be curious as to your thoughts on that.

And that's sort of just one example of the problem that Heather posed of so many different issues, so many different parts of governance. As I said, you are the connective tissue, but how do you think about the governance challenge either inside in the U.S. or in the region?

MR. DeHART: Yeah, thanks. A unified command for the region, I don't know. I mean,

it's a really complex question that I don't think that I could fully answer. I mean, the commands are organized as they are for reasons and there's, you know, obviously a lot of bones there.

But I think what it speaks to is sort of the cross-cutting actors in the region and why it's so important to have that integrated comprehensive approach that ties these different pieces together when you're looking at a region that, you know, cuts across regional bureaus at the State Department, cuts across functional bureaus, cuts across various commands, and, you know, states obviously, bilateral relationships and multilateral fora. So, you know, it speaks to the complex challenge of the Arctic.

A couple of points on the previous questions. So, observers in the Arctic Council, I think this is an area that we have some work to do and we need to think through together in the Arctic Council. You know, we have 13 observer states now. We have a bunch of organizations, also, and more states that are interested in signing up as observers. And I think we -- and there's a fair amount of uncertainty I think about sort of where we're headed with this and how big is too big or not big enough.

There are practical questions. How many representatives can you fit into a room in the future? And, you know, at what point does it get sort of cumbersome? We need to sort this out, I think, to make sure that having observers in the room is valuable to the states that are already there and also that is valuable to the observers, that it works for everybody. I can't tell you what the answer is on this, but I think it's an area of work for, you know, as we consider the next 25 years of the Arctic Council.

The second point, just to, you know, come back to this question of low tensions and how we keep them low, I think when you buy a house sometimes, you know, if you like the house, talk about it having good bones. And the Arctic has good bones. The Arctic Council is a really good forum. We always can work to strengthen it and improve it.

But I think it's really important to recognize it's more than the Arctic Council. It's the rules that exist connected to Law of the Sea. And when you look at what is governed under the exclusive economic zones of the Arctic states and then you look at the process of working out the extended continental shelves, now you are reaching, you know, far into the Arctic Ocean and you've got very little sort of unsettled area left.

These systems are working really well, so these are really good bones. They give me a

lot of confidence that we can keep the region low tension, avoid surprises, and, you know, work out differences through well-established and well-functioning processes. But to Heather's point, you know, the house doesn't maintain itself, so this takes constant work and attention, which, you know, I think we're very much prepared to give.

MR. JONES: Both connector and architect. Thank you all for this. This has been extremely interesting and very rich. I'm delighted to have had you here for this conversation. I hope it's brought more attention to the questions in the Arctic. We had almost 700 participants today, so that's a good sign in terms of levels of interest around town to these issues.

So, thank you to all of you. Thank you to our audience for being here. And thank you from me.

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