

# THE MELTING OF THE WORLD'S LAST STRATEGIC FRONTIER:

*Understanding the Arctic in the 21st Century*

22 APRIL 2026

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## Conference Summary

This half-day conference convenes Arctic States and the broader Atlantic Community, international experts and industry leaders to collectively navigate these and many other challenges and interdependencies.

Structured around three panels, this conference will bring three different yet converging axes of analysis: Diplomatic, Academic and Operational.

## Conference Concept Note

Nation's recent updated Arctic Policy Frameworks and high-level engagements in Nuuk, have underscored a commitment to strengthening Arctic sovereignty, enhancing continental defence, and deepening cooperation with Arctic partners. Indeed, The Arctic is undergoing rapid and intense transformation. Driven by climate change, resource competition, and institutional evolution, the High North is positioned as a pivotal arena of the 21st-century strategic competition, with profound Atlantic implications.

The rapid melting of sea ice is opening new maritime corridors, including the Northern Sea Route and potential transpolar routes, with significant implications for global trade and supply chain reconfiguration. At the same time, retreating ice is facilitating access to critical raw materials, hydrocarbons, and strategic minerals essential for the energy transition and advanced defence technologies. These developments heighten economic opportunity but also strategic rivalry.

Indeed, climate change is not a distant threat in the Arctic. On the contrary, it's a threat multiplier that affects infrastructure, mobility, economic stability, and community safety also further south along the Atlantic basin. Climate Change is a living reality whose phenomena are cascading southward testing our coastal communities resilience of, cultures and biodiversity alike.

A new strategic outlook on the Arctic-Atlantic geostrategic framework further implies a novel analysis on what critical infrastructures on land, coast and sea entail. Subsea cables, secure communications, energy routes, ports, and maritime chokepoints have become integral to comprehending Arctic-Atlantic security interdependencies.

Understanding these climate-security risks demands an integrated civilian-military response across multidisciplinary sectors of society and a new overview into the geopolitical equilibria unfolding in the High North.

Current geopolitical tensions also test existing multilateral mechanisms in the Atlantic and more concretely in the High North. This reality also requires a renewed multidisciplinary effort encompassing civil society, science, industry, economics, politics and strategy.

This half-day conference convenes Arctic States and the broader Atlantic Community, international experts and industry leaders to collectively navigate these and many other challenges and interdependencies. Structured around three panels, this conference will bring three different yet converging axes of analysis: Diplomatic, Academic and Operational. With the support of an international and multidisciplinary body of speakers, this conference will explore:

- The geopolitical and governance landscape of the High North;
- Climate-security risks, emerging supply chains and their Atlantic spillover effects;
- Critical infrastructure, defence strategies and activities in the Arctic and the emergence of new technologies.

The Arctic is no longer a distant frontier but rather a tangible and close reality. Solutions for the challenges this region faces, must be tackled with the North and for the North. Hence, the Atlantic Centre, in cooperation with the Higher Institute for Social and Political Sciences, the National Defence Institute and with the support of the Embassies of Canada, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, are proud to host a half-day conference on 22 April dedicated to the Arctic.