

ATLANTIC
— CENTRE —

ARCTIC CONFERENCE REPORT

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ISCSP, ULisboa

Canada



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THE MELTING OF THE WORLD'S LAST STRATEGIC FRONTIER:

Understanding the Arctic in the 21st Century

The Arctic is undergoing rapid 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.

Melting sea ice is opening new maritime corridors, including the Northern Sea Route and potential transpolar routes, with reshaping global trade and supply chains. At the same time, retreating ice is enabling access to critical raw materials such as rare earth elements (REEs), hydrocarbons, and strategic

minerals essential for the energy transition and advanced defence technologies—intensifying both opportunity and rivalry.

Climate change in the Arctic is not a distant threat, but a present reality and a threat multiplier, with cascading effects disrupting weather patterns, coastal communities, cultures, and biodiversity.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAN JUSTEN DE VASCONCELLOS
ICELAND

A new Arctic-Atlantic geostrategic outlook calls for rethinking critical infrastructure across land, coast, and sea. Subsea cables, energy routes, ports, and maritime chokepoints are now central to understanding security interdependencies. Addressing these risks requires integrated, multidisciplinary responses and a renewed perspective on evolving geopolitical balances in the High North.

Rising geopolitical tensions are also testing existing multilateral mechanisms, particularly in the High North, demanding closer collaboration between science, politics, industry, the military, and civil society.



AN ARCTIC SPRING DAY. STUDY FROM NORTH NORWAY - ANNA BOBERG (SWEDISH, 1864 - 1935)

Rising geopolitical tensions are also testing existing multilateral mechanisms, particularly in the High North, demanding closer collaboration between science, politics, industry, the military, and civil society.

This half-day conference brings together Arctic States, the wider Atlantic community, international experts, and industry leaders to address these challenges. Structured around three panels - Diplomatic, Academic, and Operational - that explored:

- The geopolitical and governance landscape of the High North;
- Climate-security risks, emerging supply chains and their Atlantic spillover effects;
- Critical infrastructure, military strategy, and technological developments in the Arctic.

The Arctic is no longer a distant frontier but an immediate reality. The Atlantic Centre, in cooperation with the Higher Institute for Social and Political Sciences, and with the support of the Embassies of Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, are proud to have hosted this half-day conference on 22 April dedicated to the Arctic.

THE ARCTIC IS NO LONGER A DISTANT FRONTIER BUT AN IMMEDIATE REALITY.



A MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

Rear Admiral Nuno de Noronha Bragança

You may be wondering: why are we in Portugal discussing what is unfolding "up there"? The answer, is simple: we believe that "up there" is "right here." Even if we do not see it directly, we cannot remain blind to the rapid changes unravelling in the North.

The planet is warming. Just last month was tied as the second warmest March ever recorded globally. Land temperatures ranked among the hottest we have ever seen, and our oceans—which regulate so much of our climate—recorded their second warmest March on record.

These conditions demand a novel operational outlook. In the High North, solutions must be delivered not only by the North for the North, but—as we see it at the Atlantic Centre—by the Whole-of-Atlantic Community for the North.

We need to be present, we need to be informed, and we need to step outside our immediate surroundings to learn from others, prioritizing preparation over improvisation and viewing cooperation as a strategic imperative.

What happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be "Nuno de Noronha Bragança".

Rear Admiral Nuno de Noronha Bragança
Atlantic Centre Coordinator



WELCOMING WORDS

Deputy Minister for Defence Policy, Nuno Pinheiro Torres

In a shifting global order, the Arctic is becoming a strategic chessboard where the great power competition is unfolding. Timely, the Atlantic Centre, organized this conference with the ISCSP, the Diplomatic Institute and with the support from the Embassies of 5 Arctic countries, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, to discuss the growing relevance of this key region for the security of the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Arctic is one of the most affected regions by the rise of global temperatures. The current trend in the melting of the ice will probably allow, for short periods of time, by the end of the summer, the opening of two commercial shipping lanes: the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route. A transpolar sea route, crossing the center of the Arctic, seems unlikely in the near future. Unless a dramatic reduction of the thick ice cap occurs. If and when that happens, a worse-case scenario, then we have reached a tipping point. A cascade of damaging effects would arise from the acceleration of the warming of the planet, like the rise of sea levels and changes in the ocean circulation patterns leading to the disruption of the global weather. A daunting outlook for the future of humanity. Hope we don't get there.

Geopolitical tensions in Europe are spilling over to the Arctic. As 7 out of 8 Arctic States are NATO members, Russia is the main threat to tackle. Russia' ongoing "shadow war" with NATO, using gray zone tactics, has surfaced in another battlefield.

In the last two decades Russia has been modifying its military posture in this region, with the reopening and modernization of old bases from the Soviet period. The Russian Arctic 2035 Strategy, adopted in 2020, aims economic dominance, with the establishment of a Northern Sea Route. And points to an expansion of the exploration of fossil fuels and mining. Moreover, Russia wants to achieve military superiority, shifting the Arctic from a cooperation area to a confrontation arena.

We should bear in mind that the majority of the Russian nuclear submarines, with its second-strike capability, are located in Arctic military bases. And the Arctic skies are the shorter path for Russian strategic bombers and ballistic missiles to reach north America.

An emerging player in the region is China, a self-proclaimed near-Arctic State. The approach of

China is different, not military in nature but mainly economic. In fact, China has a two-fold interest in this region: to establish a “polar-Silk Road”, reducing the travel time and avoiding chokepoints; and to guarantee access to critical minerals and rare earth elements, in order to reinforce its control over the supply chains of these key components for renewable energies and digital technologies.

The race for the abundant natural resources of the Arctic has been labeled by experts as the “new great game”.

In order to win this power competition, working with allies and forge partnerships will be critical. Good examples are joint naval patrols for the protection of critical infrastructures, like undersea cables. As you know United Kingdom and Norway establish one joint patrol for the North Atlantic. Recently, this April, the navies of these two countries detected and followed, for a month, Russian spy submarines, that were mapping cables and pipelines while operating in the waters of the North Sea.

The North Atlantic and the Arctic oceans are a geopolitical and security continuum as there are no borders in the Ocean. Considering specially the route of Russian nuclear submarines from their bases in the Kola peninsula to the Atlantic Ocean, through the Bear Gap and Gukh Gap, it is fundamental to have an accurate situational awareness of their path. So, to monitor Russian’ fleet of vessels and submarines, transiting across that “sea corridor”, must be a strategic priority. We need “eyes” in the sky and “ears” underwater.

Portugal holds a strategic position in the North Atlantic with the Azores archipelago. The vast oceanic area of Santa Maria Flight Information Region connects in the north to Canada’ Gander FIR and to UK’ Shanwick FIR. And further north joins

Iceland FIR. Considering the geographic location of our countries, our shared values and common interests, I wonder if we shouldn’t enhance our cooperation in order to detect and track the routes of any vessels or submarines from hostile powers that might try to do deep-sea illegal mining or disrupt undersea cables.

I will conclude: in view of the excellence of the speakers, I anticipate a fruitful exchange of ideas for a better understanding of the challenges arising from a melting Arctic. Unfortunately, I will not have the possibility to stay and learn from the three panels. You will excuse me as I have to leave to join the official visit of the President of the Republic to our navy.

On the geopolitics of the Arctic, I wrap-up with the words of Tim Marshall: “there are 5.4 million square miles of ocean up in the Arctic; they can be dark, dangerous and deadly. It is not a good place to be without friends.”





DIPLOMACY IN THE ARCTIC

Ambassadors Roundtable



Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias
Diplomatic Institute



Elise Racicot
Ambassador of Canada
to Portugal



Karina Asbjørnsen
Deputy Head of Mission
Norwegian Embassy in
Lisbon



Christian Lindholm
Ambassador of Finland
to Portugal



Elisabeth Eklund
Ambassador of
Sweden to Portugal

The moderator, Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias of the Diplomatic Institute, opened the first panel, "Diplomacy in the Arctic: Ambassadors Roundtable," by reiterating a recurring theme of the conference: the Arctic is no longer a remote periphery but has become a central component of the Earth's climate system, with growing economic, strategic, and geopolitical significance.

The discussion began by highlighting the accelerating pace of climate change in the Arctic, which is warming at a rate significantly higher than the global average. This phenomenon has profound implications not only for the region itself but also for the wider world. The consequences include rising

sea levels, shifting weather patterns, and biodiversity loss, all of which generate cascading effects on agricultural cycles, extreme weather events, and ocean circulation systems across the globe.

The panel also emphasized the Arctic's increasing economic relevance. As ice coverage diminishes, access to vast reserves of hydrocarbons, critical minerals, and fisheries is expanding. Simultaneously, the opening of maritime corridors such as the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage is enhancing the region's potential as a hub for international trade, at least during seasonal periods of navigability.

From a security standpoint, the Arctic is increasingly viewed not as a protective buffer but as a strategic corridor. The shortest routes between major powers traverse the polar region, making it highly relevant for missile defence systems, early-warning capabilities, naval operations, and the protection of critical communication infrastructure. As a result, the Arctic is becoming an increasingly important arena in broader geopolitical and security calculations.

Despite these emerging challenges, the panel noted that the Arctic has traditionally served as a model of

pragmatic international cooperation. Institutions such as the Arctic Council have facilitated collaboration on scientific research, environmental protection, and sustainable development. However, what was once considered a relatively low-tension environment is now characterized by a delicate balance between deterrence and stability. The central diplomatic challenge facing Arctic governance today is how to preserve channels of dialogue and cooperation on shared concerns while navigating an increasingly polarized international landscape.



THE ARCTIC IS A CENTRAL COMPONENT OF THE EARTH'S CLIMATE SYSTEM, WITH GROWING ECONOMIC, STRATEGIC, AND GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE



AN ACADEMIC PRESPECTIVE

Understanding Arctic Strategic Complexity



Dwayne Menezes
Founder and Managing
Director Polar Research
Initiative



Katarina Gårdfeldt
Director of the Swedish
Polar Research Secretariat



João Canário
Professor at the
Department of Chemical
Engineering, IST, ULisboa



Chris Penny
Associate Professor at Norman
Paterson School Of International
Affairs, Carleton University

The moderator Dr Dwayne Menezes of Polar Research and Policy Initiative (PRPI) opened the session by sharing that, first with hushed voices and occasional whispers, and then with the loud beating of drums and the constant sounding of trumpets, the world has entered The Arctic Century. We are now living at a time when the Arctic region no longer constitutes a mere periphery of growing strategic importance but which has already emerged as an epicentre of geopolitics and geoeconomics in the twenty-first century. A future that the most discerning in policy and academic circles had long predicted is firmly the present – and here to stay.

He noted that a quick glance at the world from

above will show an observer why the Arctic is simply too important a region for the rest of the world to ignore. It is where three continents – North America, Europe and Asia – come into such close proximity to each other that, as the region warms and the ice melts making them more connected, it raises the sceptre of cooperation, competition and possibly even confrontation. Looking at a map of the circumpolar North, the Arctic might be seen to comprise three subregions: a North American Arctic, a European Nordic Arctic and a Russian Arctic, with Greenland sitting at the overlap of two: geographically, North American; politically, Nordic. These subregions may differ from each other in various ways politically, culturally and economically,

and may have overlapping interests and underlying rivalries. But they also have common interests and shared challenges that transcend distinctions and serve as the basis for cooperation through instruments such as the Arctic Council, International Arctic Science Committee, indigenous peoples' organisations, and more. Challenges to international law, the importance of research cooperation, and climate change may be seen to be cross-cutting issues affecting the region as a whole and going beyond it. He welcomed the three panellists whom he said were well placed to help us explore and understand – from an academic perspective – the strategic complexity of the Arctic.

Professor Chris Penny of the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs in Ottawa, Canada, began by pointing out how Arctic cooperation, as we know it, would not survive American military annexation of Greenland, which would constitute an unlawful act of aggression against Denmark. This could lead to actual armed conflict in the region, as Denmark would have a legal right of self-defence (which other states could lawfully support). Even if annexation is unopposed, all states would have international legal obligations not to assist it, not to recognise it as lawful, and to work to end it. None of these obligations is conducive to continued cooperation in the Arctic, whether in scientific, defence or other areas, particularly as it relates to Greenlandic territory. Canada and other Arctic states would have to choose: adhere to core international legal obligations or maintain a cooperative relationship with the United States. Principled Arctic cooperation requires ending this American threat. Later, during the discussion, he commented also on how Arctic research cooperation was also affected in terms of face of recent geopolitical events. After all, as the final reports of the ICARP IV Process state, 'most Arctic research cooperation relies on some form of diplomatic engagement, which is heavily influenced by political and geopolitical factors'.



The next panellist, Professor Katarina Gårdfeldt gave an overview of the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat in her capacity as its Director-General, and focused on its role in enabling and coordinating Swedish research in the Arctic and Antarctic. The Secretariat's mission, she noted, is to promote polar research, organise major expeditions, support researchers and infrastructure, and represent Sweden in international polar forums. It also manages permits under the Swedish Antarctic Ordinance and works to make Swedish polar infrastructure accessible to both national and international scientists. Key Swedish research facilities managed by the Secretariat include the Abisko Scientific Research Station, located north of the Arctic Circle with more than 100 years of environmental observations, and the Kristineberg Marine Research Station, one of the world's oldest marine laboratories, now being upgraded to support polar and cold-region research. In Antarctica, the Wasa and Svea and Heimefrontfjella stations provide environmentally responsible bases for fieldwork. The icebreaker Oden was presented as a central asset, enabling advanced Arctic and Antarctic research through its powerful icebreaking capability and onboard laboratories. Research themes discussed in the talk included climate change, environmental monitoring, marine and oceanographic studies, ecosystems, and atmospheric science.



The Portuguese polar scientific community recognises the critical importance of the Arctic as a key region for understanding global climate dynamics, particularly in light of its extreme conditions and the accelerating effects of climate change.

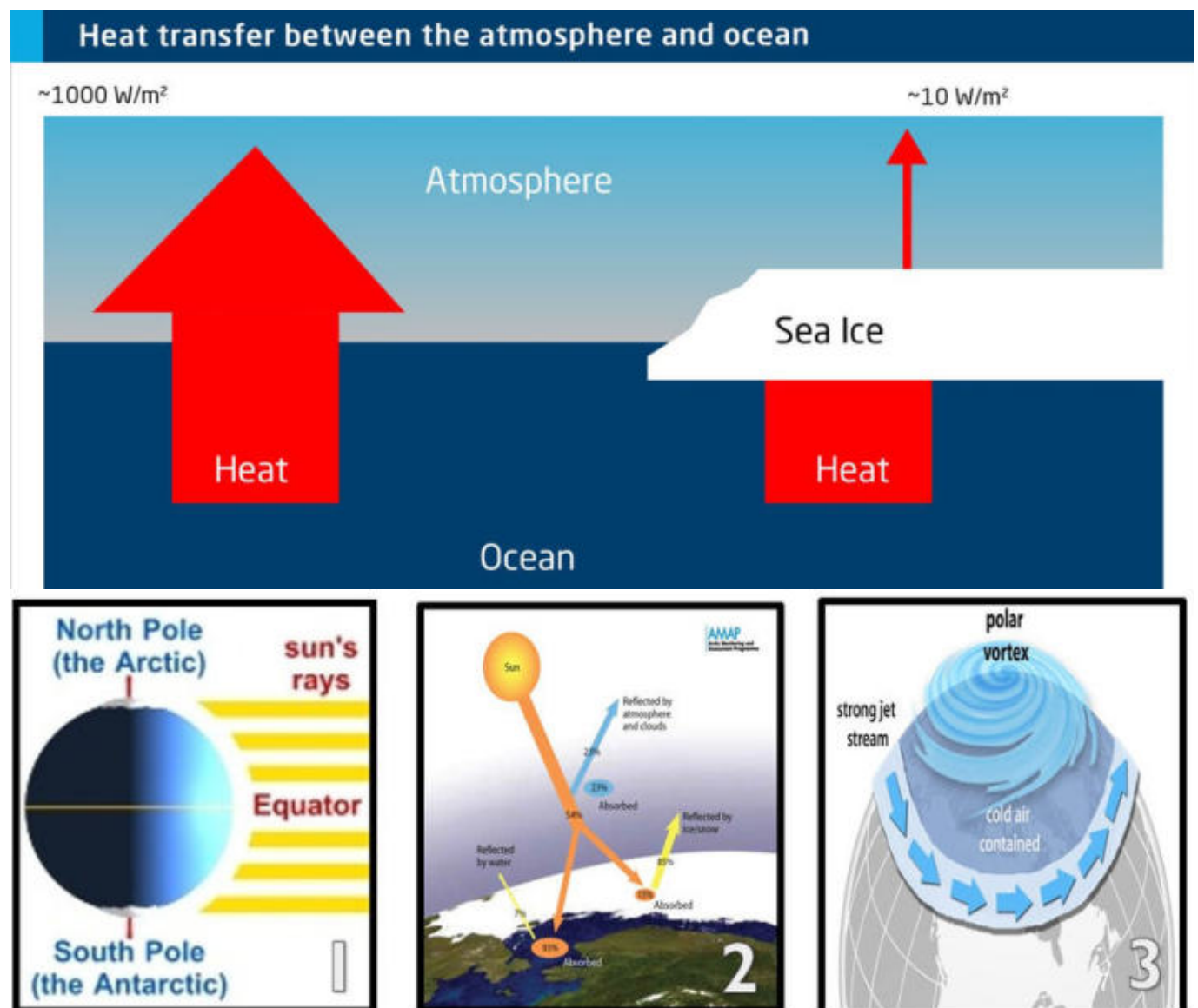
vessel with high ice class and modular design. The importance of outreach and societal engagement was emphasised through the Teachers Programme and the Artists Programme, which bring educators and artists into polar expeditions to connect science with education, culture and the broader public. Together, these efforts demonstrate how polar research integrates science, infrastructure, innovation and society.

Finally, Professor Joao Canario of the Department of Chemical Engineering at the Instituto Superior Técnico, University of Lisbon, and a member of the coordinating committee of the Portuguese Polar Program, highlighted the growing attention being paid to the Arctic in the increasingly vibrant Portuguese polar research community. The Portuguese polar scientific community recognises the critical importance of the Arctic as a key region for understanding global climate dynamics, particularly in light of its extreme conditions and the accelerating effects of climate change, including Arctic amplification. Their collective research efforts, he observed, address pressing environmental challenges such as the mobilisation and cycling of contaminants resulting from permafrost thaw, the Atlantification of the Arctic ocean and the ongoing difficulties faced by

A significant new initiative highlighted was Polar Connect, an emerging project aiming to establish a high-speed digital connection between Europe and the Indo-Pacific via the Arctic. By routing data cables through polar regions, Polar Connect has the potential to significantly reduce internet latency, improve global connectivity, and position the Arctic as critical digital infrastructure alongside its scientific importance. The talk concluded with future-looking developments, including plans for a new climate-neutral, year-round polar research Indigenous communities in accessing safe drinking water. They also acknowledged that changes in the Arctic have far-reaching consequences beyond the Arctic region, including potential impacts on atmospheric circulation patterns, such as the polar vortex, which may influence weather variability and extreme events in Portugal. As an active contributor to international Arctic cooperation and polar organisations, the Portuguese Arctic community engages across a range of scientific disciplines. Looking to the future, they were committed to reinforcing Portugal's role in Arctic research through the ongoing development and implementation of a national Polar Strategy and by supporting the growth and training of a new generation of polar scientists.

Gårdfeldt and Canario also highlighted how Portugal and Sweden engaged with the ICARP IV Process and were now preparing for the Arctic Science Summit Weeks they would be hosting in Porto, Portugal, in 2028, and in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2029. Finally, all panellists also discussed the importance of engaging respectfully and meaningfully with Indigenous Peoples. Menezes observed that there was a fatigue with Arctic research and a distrust towards Arctic researchers in some Arctic communities, shaped by a long history of negative experiences brought about by attitudes of condescension or disregard, or that made Arctic research seem like an extractive industry. The panellists agreed that while effort was

being made to change such attitudes and practices, with the International Arctic Science Committee explicitly stating that it holds traditional knowledge, Indigenous knowledge and Western scientific knowledge to be co-equal and complementary, more had to be done. They highlighted the importance of engagement with Indigenous Peoples, the co-production of knowledge with Indigenous communities, and the promotion of Indigenous-led research in line with the reports of the ICARP IV Process and outlined some of the approaches taken or encouraged in their research communities in this regard.





AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Navies, Critical Infrastructure and Technology



Sandra Balão

Associate Professor and
Director, Department of
Strategy and Strategic Studies,
ISCSP — ULisboa



Filipe Taveira Pinto

Navy Commander,
Portuguese Navy



Lise Christensen

Center for Military Studies
University of Copenhagen



Josué Barão

Business Development,
TEKEVER

This panel was moderated by Professor Sandra Balão, whose institutional authority as Director of the Department of Strategy and Strategic Studies at ISCSP, Universidade de Lisboa, and scholarly expertise in Polar and Extreme Environments Studies Policy and Strategy with a focus on Geopolitics, Governance and Security provided a rigorous intellectual framework for the exchanges among the three speakers. Her moderation ensured thematic coherence across three substantively distinct contributions, sustaining the analytical thread from political diagnosis through operational testimony to technological innovation.

First Speaker – Lise Christensen, Center for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen

Lise Christensen, researcher at the Center for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, opened the panel with a contribution that established the historical and structural foundations of Arctic strategic relevance. Her analysis proceeded from the observation that the region's current strategic salience is not a recent discovery but the reactivation of a historically grounded condition: throughout the Cold War, the Arctic constituted the shortest ballistic delivery route between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the GIUK gap (Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom) served as

NATO's critical maritime chokepoint for Soviet submarine containment. The post-1991 period was characterised, with analytical candour, as one in which NATO played no significant role in the Arctic, ceding governance to the Arctic Council's civilian cooperative architecture. The 2014 annexation of Crimea was identified as the decisive structural rupture, triggering renewed NATO deterrence orientation, Russia's systematic reopening of Soviet-era Arctic bases – emblematically, Nagurskoye Air Base on Alexandra Land – and the progressive erosion of cooperative governance that culminated in Russia's suspension from the Arctic Council following the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Christensen further noted that, with Sweden's and Finland's accession to NATO, all seven Arctic states are now Alliance members and all self-governing territories – including Greenland – are covered under Article 5. Her treatment of the United States interest in Greenland was notably multicausal, encompassing strategic concerns over Russian and Chinese Arctic activity, integration into the proposed Golden Dome missile defence architecture, access to critical minerals, and – with analytical rigour – political motivations and psychological imperatives including prestige and status. Her presentation concluded with a diagnosis of four unresolved structural dilemmas for the Alliance: optimal resource allocation in the current geopolitical context; maintaining Alliance cohesion; determining which member states can realistically operate in and invest in Arctic-capable capabilities; and the imperative of interoperability.

Second Speaker – Commander Filipe Taveira Pinto, Portuguese Navy

Commander Filipe Taveira Pinto of the Portuguese Navy delivered a first-person operational account of Operation Ártico 24, the deployment of NRP Arpão (S161) – a Tridente-class diesel-electric submarine equipped with Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) – above the Arctic Circle as part of the multinational Brilliant Shield 2024 exercise, conducted with the



support of Allied navies, the United States Navy, a Danish support ship, and the Arctic Submarine Laboratory (ASL) of Canada. Operating in Baffin Bay, the submarine navigated the full spectrum of Arctic ice hazards – icebergs, bergy bits, growlers, and solid ice sheet – with the Marginal Ice Zone (MIZ) as the principal operational focus. Taveira Pinto's account was notable for its doctrinal candour: the physical environment (characterised by altered temperature profiles, modified sound propagation, heightened ambient noise, dynamic currents, and the interference of ice cover above) collectively invalidates procedures developed for temperate Atlantic operations, necessitating new sensors, new procedures, and new operational approaches. The mission's primary gain was the demonstrated capability to operate with allied forces in the MIZ, defined as the transition zone between open ocean and consolidated ice and characterised by variable ice thickness, fragmented cover, and degraded sonar performance, alongside the development of TTPs for under-ice operations and the foundations for national Arctic submarine doctrine. In doing so, Commander Taveira Pinto provided a direct operational response to the dilemma Christensen articulated about which Alliance members can realistically contribute to Arctic operations, demonstrating that a Southern European, non-Arctic NATO member can deploy meaningful subsurface capability in the High North.

Third Speaker – Josué Barão, Business Development, TEKEVER Group

Josué Barão, representing TEKEVER Group a Portuguese-origin European aerospace and defence technology company with operations across Portugal, France, and the United Kingdom – addressed the technological dimension of Arctic maritime domain awareness through the proposed ATLANTIC Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) satellite constellation, in his capacity as Business Developer. Barão structured his problem statement around six interconnected surveillance failures: limited maritime surveillance coverage in the Arctic; weather and polar darkness that constrain optical observation; the absence of persistent monitoring over large ocean areas; delayed detection of suspicious vessel activity; slow identification of maritime incidents; and fragmented maritime domain awareness. Existing commercial Earth Observation systems, oriented toward high-resolution Data-as-a-Service models, were found to be structurally misaligned with the requirements for persistent wide-area Arctic surveillance. The ATLANTIC solution addresses this gap through all-weather, all-hours SAR imaging, defined as an active microwave imaging system enabling high-resolution imaging independent of daylight and weather



conditions, combined with wide-swath orbital geometry (~350 km), on-board data processing with near-real-time delivery to maritime authorities, and an orbital architecture optimised for high-latitude revisit rates. The programme is in active development, following a phased roadmap from feasibility through Earth Observation validation to full production, underpinned by a government and defence-oriented business model explicitly differentiated from commercial general-purpose Earth Observation applications.

Critical Assessment and Prospective Scenarios

The panel's collective argument, sustained across the contributions of Christensen, Taveira Pinto, and Barão, is that Arctic security in the twenty-first century cannot be managed by Arctic states alone, cannot be sustained without persistent all-weather surveillance infrastructure, and requires deliberate nichecapability investment by non-Arctic Alliance members. The coherence deficit – the structural gap between NATO's declared Arctic priority and its deployed capability – remains the primary strategic vulnerability, more consequential in aggregate than any single adversarial asset. Five prospective trajectories merit consideration: (1) a distributed NATO Arctic posture in which ATLANTIC achieves operational status, Portugal's submarine model is replicated by capable Allied operators, and MIZ TTPs are institutionalised at the Alliance level; (2) structural stagnation in which procurement timelines and competing budget pressures leave surveillance gaps unresolved and operational gains nationally siloed; (3) an intra-Alliance fracture over Greenland's status generating lasting damage to collective Arctic governance; (4) a vertically integrated Arctic surveillance architecture combining SAR orbital assets, expanded Pituffik Space Base infrastructure, and AIP submarines

operating in the MIZ; and (5) the MIZ emerging, as sea-ice retreat accelerates, as the functional strategic successor to the GIUK gap – the primary arena of underwater strategic competition in the High North. Portugal's composite contribution – submarine operational presence as demonstrated by Commander Taveira Pinto, space-based surveillance technology as presented by Barão, and the academic-policy intellectual production exemplified by this conference – constitutes a High North strategic niche of Alliance significance that merits formal recognition by NATO and the Portuguese state alike.





CLOSING REMARKS

Kenneth Høegh

Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials, Arctic Council

First of all, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity, on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark's Chairship team (the Kingdom being both Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Denmark), to give an introduction to the Arctic Council and our Chairship – as well as giving you some observations from my home community in Kalaallit Nunaat / Greenland.

My name is Kenneth Høegh, a Greenlander and the Arctic Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark, as well as the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials of the Arctic Council, the latter during the Kingdoms

Chairship of the Council 2025-2027. But, firstly some words on the broader Arctic and the Arctic Council.

The Arctic is home to more than four million people, whose well-being and health is top of the Arctic Council's agenda. As chair of the Senior Arctic Officials of the Arctic Council I would like to say a few words about the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council is the leading forum for cooperation in the Arctic.

One of the aspects that makes the Arctic Council unique in international relations is its structure that includes Permanent Participants: Namely the six organizations representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples that has been granted Permanent Participant status, giving them a seat at the same table as nation states.

The structure was created to ensure the active and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in all of the Council's work.

This means that the Council brings together Arctic States, Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities to collaborate on issues such as protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development in the region.

The Arctic Council Six Working Groups carry out the main work of the Council – addressing a wide range of issues, from climate change to emergency response, from mental health to sustainable development. Together they provide a broad and scientifically sound knowledge base to support informed decision-making.

It is though no secret that the geopolitical situation today sets some limits to the work of the Council.

In the current situation, the Working Groups conduct their meetings virtually. But they still manage to carry out important work. The Working Groups are the backbone of the organisation and their work make a real difference for the Arctic and the people of the region.

For the Kingdom of Denmark, it is of utmost importance to keep the Council vibrant and resilient, first and foremost for the people living in the Arctic. Five thematic priorities have been identified for our Chairship:

Indigenous Peoples and Communities of the Arctic;
Sustainable Economic Development, Oceans;
Biodiversity and last but not least Climate Change in



The Arctic is becoming more and more a geopolitical hotspot, so to say - and people in our home communities are concerned about the future, ...

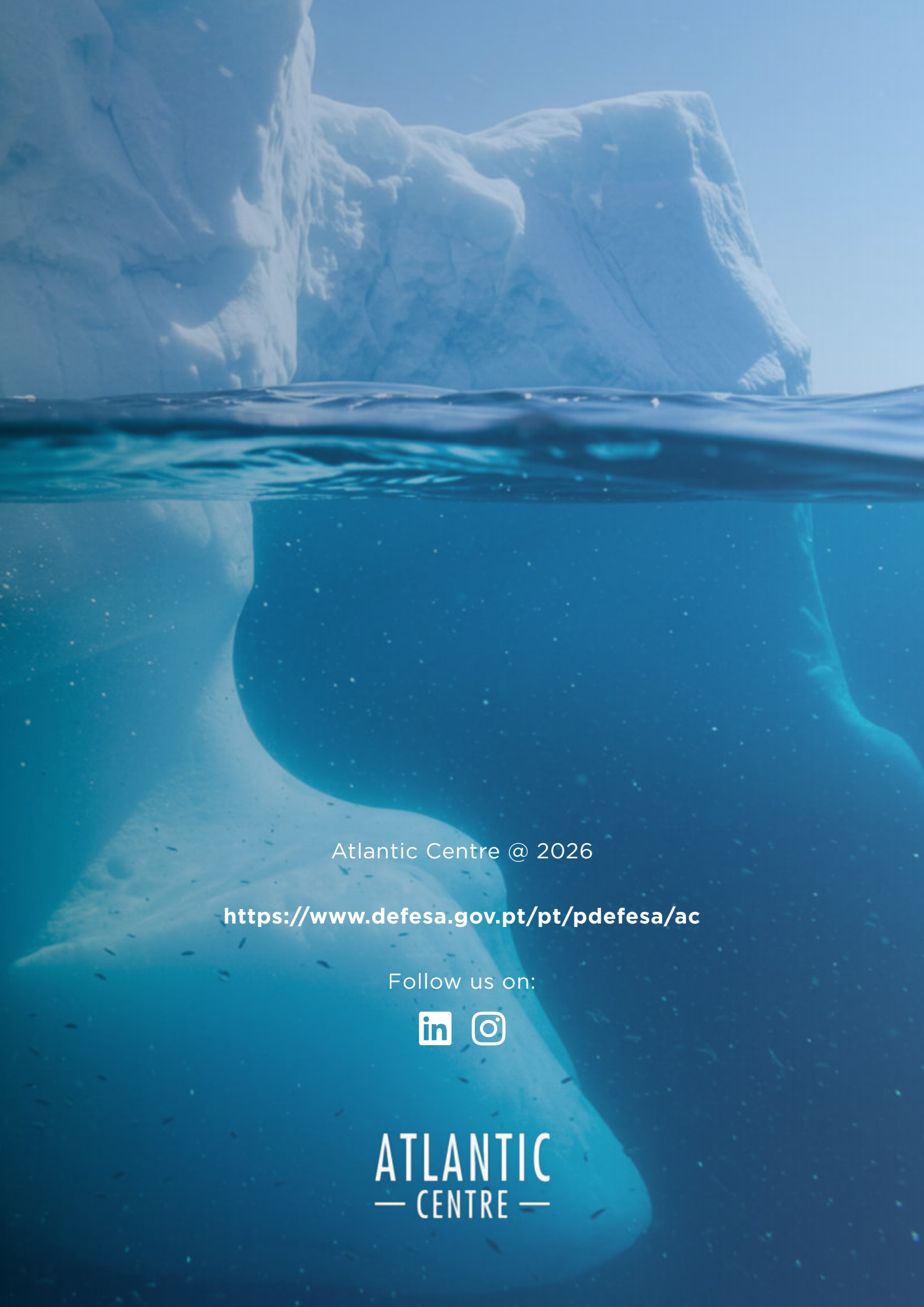
the Arctic. I personally look forward to the Youth Conference in Nuuk next year, which will bring together the youth from across the Arctic to discuss the common challenges they face.

I was born and raised in Southern Greenland, in the communities of Narsaq and Qaqortoq from where my family have lived for at least seven generations. My home is in the town of Qaqortoq, where my wife and I have raised our four children – and where we will eventually retire.

Our hometown Qaqortoq is the centre of South Greenland, a cosy and tightly knitted community of around 3000 people, with a stable population where everybody greets each other when meeting on the street.

Qaqortoq is a community founded in 1775 by one of my ancestors, a Norwegian merchant – a community that still is keeping much of its heritage, with much of the original architecture with colourful colonial houses and more modern buildings spreading up the mountains surrounding the town.

All in all, South Greenland is the Shangri-La of the Arctic, as an Englishman once described it to me. It is “the milder part” of Greenland, the green Greenland, a primarily Inuit community but with many characteristics from communities in rural Iceland and Northern Norway.

A full-page background image showing a large iceberg floating in the ocean. The top of the iceberg is visible above the water surface, while the much larger, submerged part is visible below. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a clear, lighter blue. The iceberg's surface is textured with cracks and ridges.

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