QI Conference:

Restoring Arctic Exceptionalism

June 12th, 2025
9:00 - 11:45 AM ET

Keynote Address: The Transformation of the Arctic by Climate Change

Lora Lumpe (00:00):

Good morning, everyone. I'm delighted to welcome you to this public conversation and conference on Restoring Arctic Exceptionalism. My name is Lora Lumpe. I'm the CEO of the Quincy Institute. It's been our honor to partner with the Arctic Institute for a two-day conference. Yesterday was a public policy conference in the same room, followed by this important conversation today with some principals who are centrally involved in questions having to deal with whether and how we return to a state of Arctic exceptionalism.

(00:38)
If this is your first encounter with the Quincy Institute, we are a new five-year-old institution, a think tank research project and journalism project that seeks to move the United States foreign policy away from a focus on global hegemony, and dominance toward greater coexistence and diplomatic cooperation as the world distribution of power changes. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Romain Chuffart, to introduce his institute. He will introduce our moderator, and she will introduce our special first guest. Thank you for being here.

Romain Chuffart (01:18):

Thank you so much, Lora. As Lora said, my name is Romain Chuffart. I'm the managing director of the Arctic Institute, and it's my pleasure today to partner with the Quincy Institute as well to organize this event. For those who don't know the Arctic Institute, we were founded in 2011. We are 501(c)(3) based, registered in Washington DC, with a network of researchers across the world, to promote really, our core idea, our mission is to promote, adjust, secure and Sustainable Arctic.

(01:48)
We do that by elevating diverse voices, new knowledges, and new ideas about the Arctic. Without further ado, I would like to introduce our moderator for this session, Victoria Herrmann, who's a senior fellow at the Arctic Institute, and also the former managing director from 2015 to 2022. Victoria, please, the floor is yours. Thank you so much.

Victoria Herrmann (02:16):

Senator Lisa Murkowski needs no introduction to a room of Arctic experts. As the senior Senator from Alaska, and the first Alaskan senator born in the state, she is the fiercest advocate

for Arctic policy, cooperation, and research, certainly in the Senate, and perhaps all of Washington. Instead of reading through her bio, which you all have, I thought I would highlight two things that really inspire me about Senator Murkowski.

(02:54)
The first is that she takes time to both elevate the geopolitical importance of the Arctic, but also the need for every American citizen and resident to know that America is an Arctic nation. 10 years ago in the last US chairmanship of the Arctic Council, I had the honor of being invited by Senator Murkowski to a senate round table, where we talked about geopolitics, about hard security, but in equal measure, she also talked about the importance of Arctic education in all 50 states, so that someone like me, a girl from the Jersey Shore, knows that it is important for all of us to understand the Arctic's role in our daily lives, and to invest in Arctic policy and cooperation.

(03:49)
That balance of micro and macro skills is something that she continues to balance, even as we are overpowered by these macro narratives of geopolitical tension. The second difference and inspiration of Senator Murkowski is that she chooses to engage in civil society. There are many representatives that choose to stay in Capitol Hill to only talk with their colleagues. Senator Murkowski chooses to go to Iceland for the Arctic Council.

(04:26)
She chooses to show up virtually to hear from high schoolers in Alaska from my National Science Foundation grant three years ago, to hear about acoustic science in the Arctic. She's choosing to be here today to make sure that Arctic voices, Arctic experts, civil society is engaged, part of the conversation. Those two things, that the Arctic research and policy community is diverse with many voices, and that we have micro and macro narratives that have to be considered, I hope, are two themes that will also inspire you after you've spent today with us. Without further ado, it is my distinct honor to welcome Senator Lisa Murkowski.

Lisa Murkowski (05:20):

Lovely introduction. Well, thank you and good morning, everyone.

Various Audience (05:24):

Morning.

Lisa Murkowski (05:25):

Good morning, all the way in the back there. It doesn't feel like the Arctic out there this morning. Yeah, sorry about that. As we were driving over here this morning, I was recalling a conference, an Arctic conference that I attended in 2010. I've been participating, as I look at some of you in the room here, I've been participating in Arctic engagements for decades now, but this particular forum was actually in Miami of all places.

(06:03)
If we're thinking we're not really connected to the Arctic here today, think about what it feels like when you are in Miami and you're talking about the Arctic really as a crossroads. We were talking about the Arctic as a crossroads back then, an Arctic, a crossroads where cooperation or conflict were your two themes. 2010 was a long time ago, I can guarantee you that, but I think the message is still as relevant and as strong. The hope's still there, but to your point, we have to keep showing up for it.

(06:45)
That's kind of what I want to underscore here this morning. I've seen that hope of what can come from the Arctic play out in gentle, quiet ways at time, in ways of cooperation. Iñupiat whale monitoring crews in Utqiagvik that are sharing live ice updates with Canadian SAR teams across the Beaufort. We've had students from Greenland, sitting next to young people from Alaska, sitting next to young people from Canada, sharing stories. We've seen Norwegian airmen training side by side with our National Guard on the sea ice.

(07:36)
It's these examples of cooperation, and these just aren't drills. It's more than that. It's the diplomacy in action. I think we need to remember the value that that comes. You may be in a uniform, thinking about your mission, but in between, you're talking to your counterpart from another country about where they're from, what their experiences are, and you don't necessarily see this aspect of the connection on the front page of the newspaper. To me, that's what Arctic exceptionalism really looks like.

(08:23)
This idea of exceptionalism isn't a given. It is effectively a choice. It's a decision that we have to make, and we've got to make it again and again and again. If we want the Arctic to be exceptional, every Arctic nation has to actually act that way. There can't be any exceptions to this. Right now, I just would suggest that maybe we're not at 100% yet, right? Okay. We can start with Russia, the biggest exception here to exceptionalism from its war in Ukraine onward.

(09:03)
It wasn't too many months back, we had Russian and Chinese joint bomber flights and naval exercises near Alaska's ADIZ. We saw IUU fishing operations on a daily basis there. These are cracks that really threaten that vision, if you will. These fissures widen when critical positions like the US Arctic Ambassador are left vacant. There's a hole there, or when our longtime trusted partners feel threatened by words that are just thrown around, careless rhetoric from our own leadership. That doesn't help us.

(09:48)
I'm looking at what is going on on the Hill right now. We're working through a reconciliation process. We're working through appropriations already. I will tell you this: ships matter, aircraft matter, but they can't carry all the weight. They shouldn't carry all the weight. Keeping the Arctic from becoming another front line depends, depends on the scientists, it depends on the diplomats, it depends on the people who show up quietly every day.

(10:20)
That's why I choose to be here. This is why I keep pushing on this year over year over year, because I think that real meaningful Arctic engagement is so much broader than what we're talking about right now, just from an appropriations perspective. This engagement is not just with Arctic Council, although that is certainly the prime venue here, but it is through every possible channel out there. It's the bilateral talks, it's the coalitions, it's the youth exchanges. It's the opportunity to visit with our ambassadors on a quiet morning.

(11:11)
One of my friends, I think one of the sharpest Arctic minds, Dr. Mike Sfraga, calls this the Trans-Arctic Alliance. The Trans-Arctic Alliance is not a threat. It's a space. It's a place where Arctic nations and its neighbors can share these conversations about everything from icebreakers to mental health, to space technology, to youth empowerment. These are the things that we need to be just factoring in. I'm not here to suggest to you at all that the United States has got this all figured out.

(11:48)
We've got some real gaps. We know we have gaps in infrastructure. We know we have gaps in readiness. We also have a big gap right now in trust. Trust. Yesterday, I was able to host a little coffee over in my Capital office. Senator Peter Welsh from Vermont was with me. We had representatives from the Kingdom of Denmark. It was just an hour-long conversation here, but it was good conversation. The word that we kept hearing was trust. I'm told in Danish, and I'm looking at my ambassador over here, that the word is [foreign language 00:12:31].

(12:30)
Am I saying that correctly? [foreign language 00:12:32], the sense that your partners show up when it counts. Man, isn't that really what we're hoping for, that those that you've been working with, that you think you've got a relationship, that they show up when it counts. I have to ask, are we here? Are we here for Greenland, our partner for over 80 years? We've been a good partner for a long while. Are we showing up when it counts?

(13:07)
Greenland's head of representatives, Jacob, I am going to ruin it, Jacob, Isbosethsen. Did I say it close? I think if you say it fast, then it's okay. I'm just going to call him Jacob. He reminded me yesterday, just how deep the bond that we have that the United States has with Denmark goes. It also begs the question, are we showing up for our indigenous communities that are landing airplanes on crumbling airstrips, while they're seeing beautiful cruise ships glide right by their homes?

(13:49)
Are we showing up for our own country when we're still waiting for our first deep water Arctic port? Know that every dollar that we invest, every conversation that we have, every Arctic decision that we make is a down payment on that trust. All of that counts, and I think it all sends a signal. Sometimes maybe a quiet signal, maybe a loud blare there. I'm going to leave you with three things that I'm committed to. That is first, diplomacy matters. Diplomacy matters.

(14:29)
I'm going to keep pushing for a US Arctic ambassador and a great US Arctic ambassador, because relationships matter, and so do the people that keep them alive. We've got to have somebody in that very, very, very key position. I'm looking at my friend, Ambassador Bolton, who knows very, very well the role that we play there. The second point is balanced deterrence. I love the B word, balanced. We need icebreakers. We need radar systems, but we also need sea ice data. We need environmental research. We need community support for all of this, and all of this makes our region stronger.

(15:16)
We've got to have the science up there. Then the third point is just shared prosperity. This is everything from minerals to Arctic fiber cables. Let's be making these rules together, because that matters also. At one of the first Arctic Council assemblies, I said that Washington often ignores peaceful regions until crisis breaks. Let's break that pattern. Let's keep showing up. Let's keep investing in our people, and in our science, and in our partnerships.

(15:58)
I think if we do that, this concept of Arctic exceptionalism is not just a phrase on policy papers. It's not just what you have on your poster board here. It will be a promise kept for the next generation of Arctic kids, whether they're growing up in Utqiavik, in Nuuk, or in Tromsø. Thank you for your engagement, and thank you for your commitment to building this trust. Thank you. Your words were perfect. Keyed in.

Victoria Herrmann (16:38):

Yeah, [inaudible 00:16:40]. We'll take a few questions from the crowd. If folks have questions, if you can please start lining up by these well-positioned mics, I'll kick us off, but I already see we have some great students. I have had the privilege of working with colleagues and friends in Shaktoolik, in Marys Igloo. For them, they balance everyday disasters of erosion, of flooding with these macro crises that we're facing of how do we increase shipping sustainably?

(17:21)
How do we build the deep water port in Nome, so that we could capture opportunities as climate change presents them, but also address the real climate risks that villages face? I would love to just hear from your perspective, because not everyone may have had the chance to visit Alaska here. This balance for Alaskans of facing climate change on every day, but also balancing the evolving Arctic as it changes, and the opportunities that presents.

Lisa Murkowski (17:58):

It's a hard balance to find. When your community is threatened, when your school is literally eroding into the water, when you feel unsafe in your own home when the fall storms are approaching, it is really hard to separate that from anything other than the crisis that you are facing in front of you. For so many in the Arctic, and certainly in Alaska, in our US Arctic, there's no theoretical conversation about climate change. It is what is happening in your region.

(18:47)
It is what is happening in your area. Having said that, I think that there is a recognition of what these impacts that are very real and in real time to real people, they're also appreciating that this is also, it's not just my own personal vulnerability to the elements, but there is also a recognition that there is a security aspect involved as well. As this Arctic is warming and we're seeing less sea ice, they're seeing new things again, new things in front of their eyes, moving through waters where there wasn't much before.

(19:45)
There is an awareness that with the impacts of a warming climate with the impacts that they're seeing on their land, they're also seeing these broader changes that bring different threats, and they're not quite sure how big that threat is. How you balance that more global threat, that national threat versus how I am feeling with my own personal insecurity in my home, it's hard. It's hard to make that separation.

(20:23)
I wish that I could say that I felt we were on a better trajectory here in this country for how our government can be of greater help to those who are most vulnerable. We've been working with the community of Newtok for over 20 years now. The very first bill that I got signed into law was actually a transfer of land to help facilitate a move from Newtok nine miles up the Ningliq River. That was signed into law in 2003, and we are still not complete with that village.

(21:11)
Unfortunately, what we're seeing is much of what was completed, we're now finding to be woefully deficient. We are not prepared to help these vulnerable communities yet in terms of a plan.

Victoria Herrmann (21:31):

I would say that connection of Alaska to the rest of the country, Maturvich is just the first on the Jersey Shore. If we're not prepared in Alaska, we're not prepared in Belmar. All right, we have our first question.

Sydney Freedberg (21:47):

Hi. Thank you very much for doing this and for taking questions, which more and more events don't, but great that you do. Senator, my name's Sidney Freedberg. I'm a reporter from BreakingDefense.com. You've talked about the importance of collaboration writ large. You talked about the importance of icebreakers as a particular piece of hardware we need. Of course, we have a collaboration on ice breakers that's nascent, the ICEpact, with the Canadians and the Finns.

(22:16)
What are your hopes for that? Where is it actually going? How far is it progressing towards those hopes? C, are the remarks by the president about Canada, and for that matter, about Greenland, helpful or harmful in the context of that collaboration?

Lisa Murkowski (22:37):

ICEpact, when it was first announced was like, okay, this is a good idea. Surely we can be collaborating with our friends and our allies, and certainly, we should be collaborating with countries like Finland who are world-renowned with their ability to build icebreakers. What's wrong with this picture? I was enthusiastic about ICEpact, and didn't really see enough come from that. We've seen Canada move forward with their partnership.

(23:13)
That's been good. We are moving on building out greater icebreaker capacity far more quickly. You note in the reconciliation bill, it is pretty aggressive when it comes to support for not only the polar security cutters, but also the medium, the Arctic cutters. That's going to be important. There are, right now, it's not part of ICEpact, but it's effectively bids that are going out to multiple shipbuilding entities. I know that Texas is being viewed as a big hub for Davies Shipyard.

(24:04)
Davies, you'll recall, had partnered with Finland, Canada, and has great interest in doing more here in the United States. I think what you're seeing happening is a very strong movement towards shipbuilding capacity that will help us with our icebreakers, but not necessarily within ICEpact. That's my observation as to where I'm sitting right here. With regards to, again, comments about Greenland and Canada, I am not one who believes that threatening another country is a good diplomatic tool.

(25:02)
It may buy a little bit of media attention, but I think it's important that we view Greenland not as an asset, but as a partner. Again, we've been partnering with them for 80 years. This is not something to go conquer. This is not something to say, "Move over, everybody. We're moving in." That's not how a partnership works. As far as our friends in Canada, again, we have shared military, not only shared military exercises, the whole NORAD concept is this joint cooperation.

(25:47)
When you have strong partners for a host of different reasons, it does not help with that partnership when you use words, and terminologies, and phrases repeatedly that are alarming.

Victoria Herrmann (26:03):

Unfortunately, we have two minutes, so if we could have a brief-

Lisa Murkowski (26:07):

My answers are way too long. I'll go much quicker.

Victoria Herrmann (26:08):

No, they're perfect. They're perfect. If we could have a brief final question.

Victoria Churchill (26:16):

Hi, Senator. Thank you so much for being here. My name is Victoria Churchill. I'm with the Daily Mail. My question, can I just get a straight yes or no? Do you think the Trump administration would still like to buy Greenland? Also, do you have any comment on the repercussions of the vice president's visit to Greenland earlier? Some of the fallout with, I believe, a base commander was let go from their post after that visit.

Lisa Murkowski (26:38):

I don't think the Trump administration would like to buy Greenland once they realize what the price of Greenland would be.

Victoria Herrmann (26:47):

Well, if everyone could please join me in not just giving a warm applause, but also thinking about what words Senator Murkowski shared with us today, and what you'll take with you after you leave this room. These words are important. This moment in history is important for the Arctic, and for our shared planet.

(27:09)
I am continuously inspired, but also really thankful that you are representative of my nation, and continue to share and engage with civil society. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Panel: Arctic Exceptionalism and Climate Crisis

Cynthia Lazaroff (27:24):

Good morning, and welcome back, everyone. My name is Cynthia Lazaroff. I'm the founder of Women Transforming Our Nuclear Legacy, and honored to serve on the board of the Arctic Institute. I'll be moderating our last panel this morning, which is on Arctic exceptionalism and the climate crisis. As temperatures in the Arctic increase four to five times faster than anywhere else on earth, the Arctic has become a global flashpoint for climate change. Our fate and future could well be decided by the choices we make in the Arctic today.

(27:57)
At a time of increasing tensions, strategic rivalry, and great power competition for resources, can Arctic exceptionalism be restored to address the climate crisis, to prioritize human security over military security, to advance peace, and avoid war? Joining me for our conversation on these and other really urgent issues, we have a truly stellar panel of experts on climate change and the Arctic. Pavel Devyatkin is a senior associate and leadership group member at the Arctic Institute.

(28:31)
Pavel is also an American who's been living and working in Moscow for the last three years. Anatol Lieven is Director of the Eurasia Program at the Quincy Institute for Responsible

Statecraft, and he's the author of the powerful and very sobering book, Climate Change in the Nation State: The Realist Case. Jennifer Spence is the director of the Arctic Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and is a member of the Climate Expert Group for the Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program.

(29:06)
Edward Alexander is the Senior Arctic Lead of the Woodwell Climate Research Center, and represents the Gwich'in indigenous peoples as the co-chair of Gwich'in, and Council International has been appointed by the Chiefs of Alaska for multiple terms. Welcome, you all, and welcome you all back. I want to begin, I want to begin with you, Pavel. You're an expert on Arctic exceptionalism and US-Russia relations. What is the vision for Arctic exceptionalism, and how did it all get started? I'd love for you to share where it all comes from. I've been using this word all morning, but what does it really mean?

Pavel Devyatkin (29:50):

Thank you, Cynthia. Arctic exceptionalism is basically the idea that the region is unique. It has many different iterations, but perhaps the most famous is the geopolitical story that is mostly associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's vision for an Arctic zone of peace. Gorbachev gave a famous speech in Murmansk in 1987, where he called for an Arctic zone of peace, for denuclearization of the region, for the reduction of military naval, especially, activity, for the establishment of an Arctic Research Council.

(30:27)
That last proposal went on to inspire the foundation of the Arctic Council in 1996. Importantly, Arctic exceptionalism is an idea. It's a call to think about the Arctic in a better sense, in a more progressive, optimistic, utopian sense. It's not necessarily a political reality. For example, Gorbachev's idea of denuclearization of the region did not come to fruition. We know from the last panel that Russia still has nuclear weapons in its Arctic region, but the idea of Arctic exceptionalism can be this normative belief, this idea that informs policymaking to look at the region as isolated from the political tensions and geopolitics that we see in other parts of the world.

(31:16)
Russian president Putin's decision to send troops into Ukraine in 2022 has tested this idea of Arctic exceptionalism. Many scholars, experts, policy makers called the Arctic exceptionalism narrative dead, corrupted, or over. Now, it's up to us to think about whether this cynicism, whether the focus on confrontation is still going to inform our policymaking. We're seeing changing developments in the political landscape of the region, especially with President Trump's fixation on Greenland, with the growing calls for US-Russia rapprochement. We'll see the future of this narrative of Arctic exceptionalism.

Cynthia Lazaroff (31:57):

Thank you, Pavel, for taking us on that journey across the landscape from 1987 to the present day. It gives us all a context for the conversation. Jen, you and Edward have written a really compelling piece that expands the definition of Arctic exceptionalism. What does Arctic exceptionalism mean to you?

Jennifer Spence (32:17):

Yeah, I think this is really important, and especially in the current context. As Pavel mentioned, we've had this sort of, or this assumption that Arctic exceptionalism is dead, and with that comes the consequences for the policy community. That assumes that the geopolitical context is all that really drives what is exceptional about the Arctic.

(32:43)
Edward and I and a colleague, Rolf Rodman, wrote a paper and we tried to sort of challenge that that was the only thing that made the Arctic unique, that those were the things that we needed to focus on from a policy perspective, and what it meant for the Arctic to be unique. Yes, there's the geopolitical context, and that sort of attempt to reduce the amount of spillover from Arctic, from other contexts. We heard earlier, the ambassador from the Kingdom of Denmark specifically mentioned, remember that there isn't actually conflict in the Arctic.

(33:20)
What we're looking at is very much that this is a situation where there's spillover effects from tensions in other contexts, although we could argue that the situation with Greenland has evolved that situation. Most importantly, the Arctic is also important because of a long history of science, diplomacy, and scientific research and collaboration, and climate is unique and has a unique role in the world. That is also something that makes the Arctic exceptional. Most importantly, perhaps, is that the Arctic is a homeland.

(33:55)
That what we've seen in terms of governance in particular is a really important role in indigenous leadership, in multilateralism, in multilateral governance in the Arctic that has really established very unique norms and a culture of governance that is fundamentally different than what you see in other regions. I think if we expand that, then the tools we have for advancing issues and continuing cooperation fundamentally change.

Cynthia Lazaroff (34:24):

Thank you, Jen. It's really highlighting the importance of exceptionalism as a possibility to take us where we need to go right now in this moment that's a really challenging moment on so many levels.

Jennifer Spence (34:37):

Thank you.

Cynthia Lazaroff (34:38):

Edward, to you. We most often hear about the impacts of Arctic climate change on other parts of the world, but what about the impact on indigenous peoples who live in the Arctic? What are the impacts of the climate crisis on Arctic life systems, human, animals, plants, species, ecosystems, the Boreal forest?

Edward Alexander (35:00):

Yeah, I think when we think about the Arctic as an exceptional place, often that discussion is framed in these Great Powers discussion, the geopolitics discussion, all of this kind of thing, but framing it back into what about the people in the North? How does exceptionalism affect people in the North, and all of that, I think we have to think about why is the Arctic an exceptional place to begin with?

(35:32)
Not just from a defensive stance position, but not just a military position, but why is the Arctic exceptional at all? I happened to grow up in, our communities are situated in the Boreal Forest, and it's an exceptional forest. It's the largest forest on planet earth, right? That's exceptional to be the largest forest on planet earth. It also stores as much carbon in that forest as has been released by all human sources since industrialization.

(36:07)
You think about the vast store of that carbon and what it's doing to protect us. Then beneath that vast exceptional forest is a system that's been functioning and storing carbon in the soil, that permafrost in Yedoma and so forth that many of our communities are built on, that stores more than twice as much carbon has been released by all sources since industrialization. That's exceptional. That's an exceptional service, an ecosystem service that's provided the foundation of all that is here.

(36:46)
It connects villages that are having problems with erosion, and permafrost thaw, and so forth, all the way to here, but people don't often think about it until the smoke from that forest starts billowing into Washington DC, the smoke from those forests burning start going into New York City. The last 20 years, 174 million hectares of land have burned in the circumpolar region in the Arctic Boreal zone. That's a number, but how do we contextualize it? How do we understand what that number means to us as communities?

(37:30)
For us, it means 65% of our area burned in my lifetime. What does it mean in the larger global sense? It means it's the equivalent land area of California, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, all burning in their entirety. Those are people's trap lines, those are people's communities. There's 20,000 Manitobans that just got evacuated yesterday from fires in Canada, largest airlift in Canadian history.

(38:09)
The movement of people, the destructions of ways of life, the health impacts that we've felt

acutely, the PM 2.5that we breathe in, and it becomes part of our bloodstream, and it affects our health in the north, is now moving to here, and now it's affecting other people's health. We have an exceptional forest. We have an exceptional ecosystem that's provided these exceptional services to us as humans, and we also need exceptional cooperation to continue protecting these forests and so forth.

(38:48)
The last two years, the Gwich'in Council International has had the honor of co-chairing the Wildland Fire Initiative with Norway during their Arctic Council Chairship to elevate this issue. We're proud to lead, like Jennifer's saying, with thinking about how indigenous communities can work in a multilateral type of way. We're proud to be working with the Kingdom of Denmark now on the formation of a small group to address this circumpolar wildland fire crisis and the accompanying permafrost thaw that can abruptly occur after a wildland fire.

(39:26)
Of course, that opens up the question of how can these states in the Arctic, how can indigenous peoples cooperate in exceptional ways to move forward? That's what we've been dedicated towards working on.

Cynthia Lazaroff (39:45):

Thank you, Edward, for bringing the Arctic exceptionalism home to the place that you and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic live, and to really sharing the importance of focusing on solutions, the projects that you're working on to address the climate crisis in the Arctic, and the way it's not only affecting you, but connecting it to how it comes in, we're all connected. It affects all of us. Thank you.

(40:13)
Anatol, I want to come to you and start with, there's a saying, what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. You sound the alarm on the melting of the Greenland ice cap, and say that the climate breakdown is a bigger security threat to the West than Russia and China. What's at stake with the climate crisis for the Arctic and the rest of the world, and how does this connect to Arctic exceptionalism?

Anatol Lieven (40:40):

Thank you. Well, yes, for me, the main thing by far most important aspect of Arctic exceptionalism is that the Arctic is exceptionally dangerous to the whole of humanity, because if you look at the threat of feedback loops and tipping points, sudden radical changes and accelerations of climate change, three out of the four are concentrated in the Arctic. The Arctic, as we've heard, is warming at almost four times the global average.

(41:17)
This is both a region that generates these threats, the melting of the Greenland ice cap leading potentially to a change in the AMOC and the Gulf Stream. The release, as you have suggested, of methane from the Arctic permafrost, the only region of the world with a threat on that scale is

the Amazon. This gives the whole of humanity, all countries in the world, but especially of course, the most endangered ones, a vital interest in what happens in the Arctic.

(41:54)
Frankly, there's no particular reason why people in Bangladesh, Pakistan, or West Africa should give a damn about security tensions between the West and Russia. Doesn't affect them. A rise in sea level and a shift in weather, a radical shift in weather patterns, will affect them, literally fatally in some cases. This, and as I remarked yesterday, unfortunately, these people are not represented in this room, but this is an issue which renders our security problems with Russia petty, petty by comparison.

(42:43)
As we've heard, as we've indeed heard from the Danish ambassador, these in any case, are not security problems emanating from the Arctic itself. Until America raised the question of annexing Greenland, there were no territorial disputes in the Arctic at all. These are tensions imported into the Arctic from outside, by governments, and in my view, because they are not significant to humanity in general, in comparison to the real threats from the Arctic, we should aim to exclude them from the Arctic.

Jennifer Spence (43:23):

If I might just add a two finger on that, I think the other thing to remember though is that these threats in the Arctic come from outside the Arctic, and so the actions needed to respond to these issues are actually global responses.

Anatol Lieven (43:41):

Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Jennifer Spence (43:41):

No, I think it's important to elaborate on and just emphasize that the actions needed are, we can improve our scientific research, we can improve our understanding of what's happening in the Arctic, but to actually respond to this, the mitigation actions need to come from the globe.

Cynthia Lazaroff (44:01):

Well, listen, Anatol, thank you so much for really centering what really is at stake in the Arctic, and the security, the gravity of what's at stake, the threat to our security being the climate crisis, and Jen, extending that to what we need to do and to think about it globally because of where it actually comes from. Again, going back to that idea that we're all connected, everything we do everywhere is connected.

(44:29)
Staying on the issue of security, I'd like to stay with you, Jen. Many frame Arctic security in terms of military security, and the need to prioritize this above everything else. You've said that

the Arctic is more than a chessboard for great power competition. It's home for millions of people. What would prioritizing human security look like in the Arctic?

Jennifer Spence (44:52):

Well, thank you. Yeah, I think one of the things that concerns me as someone who spends a lot of time, and I've drunk the Kool-Aid, the Arctic is exceptional, I buy into that, is that so much of our conversations in a broader context, that the way we hear about the Arctic being discussed in the general public, in the media really does focus on this question of sort of military security, military buildup, tension, and conflict.

(45:24)
I think that what could really ground, and what we really need to remember is, again, that a lot of these are narratives, and they don't sort of represent the day-to-day lives. We heard that from Senator Murkowski, that that nuance is missing in the dialogue. We really need to extend that, and recognize that there are so many opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in the current context.

(45:51)
There are a broad range, from wildfires, to permafrost thaw, to mental health issues, to demographic issues, and infrastructure deficits. There's a long list of things that there's many opportunities for collaboration on. When we limit it down to a conversation about strategic military and defense issues, we lose that. Those are the issues that really can continue, they can be both the means and the end.

(46:23)
By working and focusing on those things, we can sustain multilateral cooperation on really important issues that need to be advanced, and they become a mechanism for track to diplomacy that keep the lines of communications open during a time of tension.

Cynthia Lazaroff (46:43):

Thank you, Jen. Senator Murkowski talked about the importance of diplomacy and showing up, and so you've brought really home how we, through our own actions, can actually do something in the Arctic that's bigger than where we are right now, and connect and cooperate for the benefit of all. Thank you.

(47:06)
Edward, I wanted to come back to you and the article that you and Jen wrote. Again, you all say that the engagement of indigenous peoples is that the heart of Arctic exceptionalism. I'd love for you to speak to the engagement and leadership of indigenous peoples and the evolving story of governance involving indigenous peoples in the Arctic.

Edward Alexander (47:33):

Sometimes states will come forward or observers will come forward and want to partner, and that engagement will be right there off the bat, and other times, we sort of have to chase them down a little bit. The wildland fire discussion, that was something that Gwich'in Council International kind of chased the states down a little bit. People didn't really understand that this was an issue that was profoundly affecting our people and that we wanted to talk about it.

(48:04)
We went to meeting after meeting, EPPR with proposals, and trying to get people to listen to it. There would always be some sort of objection, because we have to operate by consensus. I think when other people started to realize that it too can affect their homeland, then we started to get traction. There was a big fire season in Sweden during the middle of all of this, and immediately, people started to listen.

(48:40)
I think that the empathy that the Swedes felt for the Gwich'in at the time, I think really changed the kind of understanding of the experience of having to evacuate communities, of not being able to breathe from intense wildland fire smoke, losing your home, or losing a community to wildland fire. These are things that have obviously impacted Gwich'in. I think one of the things that we're trying to do is to instill this sense of empathy between us as peoples and the states, so that we can actually understand these core issues in a way that is more deeply felt and understood, so that we can actually have some meaningful engagement on them.

(49:35)
Empathy is not the end of that road, though. Without this tool of engagement, without being pragmatic, without being predictive, without... That empathy doesn't get you very far. Just sit around and feel for each other. We actually have to have deliverables. In that sense, this cooperation, these dialogues that we have, we learn from each other about what's important. A lot of times, what happens is that people who are tasked with these issues aren't from the Arctic, have never lived in the Arctic, those kinds of things.

(50:22)
Our part of the narrative here for the Arctic Council is to what meaningful policy actually looks like. What are the actual changes that are occurring? Trying to get people to understand the kind of level of change that we've seen, which we could say it's four times more warming in the Arctic, but what does that mean? It means that when I was a kid, the winters in Fort Yukon used to be minus 70 for about a week every year, and then now, it's minus 30 for that same week.

(51:03)
It might register as four times more, or 10 times more, or 8.8 degrees more Fahrenheit in the winter warming months, but what it looks like is a 40 degree change in our maximum cold temperature. What it looks like is a food crisis on the Yukon that's creating a diaspora of Gwich'in that we haven't seen since the Gold Rush, as people leave our communities and so forth.

(51:30)
We have to kind of tell that part of the story of what's actually occurring on the ground, so that the Arctic Council, international bodies, even nation states, stay grounded in actual truths and the realities of the Arctic.

Cynthia Lazaroff (51:46):

Edward, I really appreciate the way you've connected story, to empathy, to dialogue, to cooperation, to action, and that's really the story of the Arctic, and where we're at today in terms of what's needed.

(52:00)
Anatol, I want to come back to you on the question of cooperation and take the aperture, widen the aperture back out to the geopolitical space, and ask what are the impacts of the US and Russia not cooperating right now on climate change? Do you think it's possible to restore cooperation between the two countries in the Arctic before the end of the war in Ukraine?

Anatol Lieven (52:28):

Well, of course, at present, the US has suspended at the national level, at the federal level, much of its own action against climate change in general. Russia, of course has made very little progress indeed on that. There is a wider problem here when addressing climate change. Of course, in the Arctic, there is also the question of joint monitoring of what is happening.

(52:59)
With a view perhaps, and we discussed this yesterday, and I say this with deep reluctance, I would have rejected this idea myself only a few years ago, but I would say the likelihood that in future we will have to look at geoengineering in the Arctic, because we are failing, in part because of the failures of US policy over the past generation, or the refusal to take this issue seriously. Humanity as a whole is failing adequately to limit emissions.

(53:33)
Last year, we passed the 1.5 degree barrier, whatever you want to call it, which the UN had stated was the limit of safety 10 years, at least, before it was previously predicted that we would do so. We are heading fast for a two degree rise, and the risk is, of course, but once again, especially in the Arctic, that this rise will not be incremental, that it will trigger a runaway climate change, at which point, we won't be able to control it at all. We may have to resort to geoengineering. That means two things.

(54:16)
One is we have to start researching this now, not implementing it, but researching it and experimenting on it. This has to be cooperative. Geoengineering is dangerous, competitive. Independent national geoengineering would really, really risk disasters. My hope is that therefore, but as it's only a hope, that as in the past, geopolitical rivalries and tensions will no longer be allowed to affect scientific cooperation and research in areas obviously outside those of national security in the traditional sense.

(55:12)
I think we need to recognize that this business of having, in the past, you were at war with the country or you were not at war with a country. If you were at war with the country, of course, all contact broke down. If you were not at war with a country, you might have many tensions and problems, but when it came to scientific, academic cooperation, intellectual cooperation, travel, and so forth, that remained normal. The problem about this kind of state of war that is not a war is that it can go on forever.

(55:52)
There is no peace treaty that ends it. I think we must get away from that. I'm not, I have to say, very optimistic, but I hope indeed, and not just with Russia, with other countries as well, that in areas of critical scientific research for the benefit of both countries and of humanity, that these will, in fact, be or can be walled off from wider geopolitical tensions.

Cynthia Lazaroff (56:21):

Thank you. The importance of insulating some of these things from these geopolitical tensions is critical right now. Our survival, we depend on it. Thank you for highlighting that. Pavel, I want to come to you now, and just say that recently, President Putin and President Trump started talking about joint investments to develop the Russian Arctic. What is your take on the potential of the possibility of this potential, and where it might go, where it might lead?

Pavel Devyatkin (56:53):

Thank you, Cynthia. Yeah. At first glance, cooperation between the US and Russia can be good for trust building, for diplomacy, but we've only really heard opportunities in the areas of oil and gas, natural resources, rare earth minerals. That raises a lot of concerns that the climate crisis and common interest over thawing permafrost, wildfires in both the Russian and American Arctic regions, are going to be forgotten.

(57:24)
There is no reason that the US and Russia can't include climate change in its collaborative platform. The US and Russia have perhaps even a centuries-long history of working together in the Arctic in scientific collaboration, especially. Some historians think that Benjamin Franklin wrote to his Russian polymathic counterpart in 1765, Mikhail Lomonosov, asking for Lomonosov's account of his journey to the Russian Arctic, to ask for his scientific discoveries on that journey that was funded by Peter the Great.

(58:00)
Even in the Cold War, we had high levels of agreements on environmental protection, conservation of polar bears. There is no reason that climate change should not be included in. In fact, it's crucial for American scientists to understand what's happening in the Russian Arctic. One geophysicist in the University of Alaska said that trying to understand Arctic climate change without having data from the Russian sector of the Arctic is like taking two wheels off your car and trying to drive home. It doesn't work.

(58:35)
You don't have a full model of how climate change is affecting the region. Cynthia mentioned that I'm an American. I've been living for the past few years in Moscow, and from the Russian side, we do see some interest in including climate change in the US Russia cooperation in the Arctic. Just in March of this year, Putin's envoy, Kirill Dmitriev, at the International Arctic Forum in Murmansk in the Russian Arctic, gave an interview to BBC News, where he emphasized that climate change will need to be a key part of US-Russia Arctic cooperation.

(59:15)
Kirill Dmitriev had before focused on the opportunities for economic cooperation, but the fact that Russian side is mentioning climate change as a part of US-Russia cooperation should be considered. I'm not sure how that's going to be received, given the current administration, but it's something that we can consider. In terms of science diplomacy, to the credit of our diplomats in the US, diplomats in Moscow, Norwegian diplomats, I've been invited to speak with diplomats in the US Embassy, the Norwegian Embassy.

(59:49)
These diplomats have been very interested in hearing about all sorts of cooperation, that when I was speaking with them about celebrating our common cultural heritage on both sides of the Bering Strait, on oil and gas, on scientific cooperation, Diplomats would be taking notes and taking notes and taking notes. I had similar meetings with American businessmen in Moscow, where they would take notes when I was speaking about oil and gas, and shipping. When I mentioned celebrating common heritage of indigenous peoples, or thawing permafrost, that their pens were lifted off the paper.

(01:00:26)
Then when I started to talk about rare earth minerals, the pen continued to take notes on there in their notebooks. It's going to take a lot of activism. It's up to civil society, to indigenous peoples, representatives, to NGOs, to scientists, to journalists, to emphasize how the commonalities between the US and Russia go beyond exploitative industries, and go very far in many areas of common interest.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:00:54):

Thank you, Pavel, for giving us some hope here in terms of where we could go with Russia, and also for really highlighting the strategic imperative of cooperating and having all the data, that you can't have a solution to climate if you're missing a core part of the data from anywhere. Thank you for that. We're moving close to the Q&A.

(01:01:23)
I have one final quick question if you all could answer it before we go to inviting all of you to share your questions, which is, what is your number one urgent priority in the Arctic, and what is the policy recommendation you would want to take to Congress and to the Trump administration to address it?

Pavel Devyatkin (01:01:46):

Should I start?

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:01:49):

We can start with Edward.

Edward Alexander (01:01:49):

Okay.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:01:50):

Okay.

Edward Alexander (01:01:51):

Surprise. I think that the number one concern is the circumpolar wildland fire crisis and accompanying permafrost thaw, and abrupt Yedoma thaw, particularly if you don't know about abrupt Yedoma thaw and its climate implications for the world, thawing as methane instead of as CO2, it's a world-changing amount of methane, basically 14 times the warming equivalent of all CO2 that's currently in the atmosphere is present in Yedoma.

(01:02:32)
It's very important that this ancient permafrost stays frozen, and it's very important that we have monitoring around that. This crisis and permafrost, those things need to be included in the IPCC AR7 that's coming up. Right now, they're not included. Climate projections don't include any of this data. The things that you are seeing in the media, the things that we're seeing in journals and so forth, are not reflective of the reality of what's actually occurring in the north.

(01:03:08)
That reality needs to be squared with policy. I hope that the Arctic Council can reach a point where collectively, we're able to take action through the small group, hopefully through a binding task force, binding agreements of some kind, maybe. Then the AR7. Yeah. Thank you.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:03:26):

Thank you, Edward. Jen.

Jennifer Spence (01:03:29):

For better or for worse, maybe not for necessarily all the right reasons, the Arctic is now sort of part of the common attention, but what we see is it's become a conversation about security, and mostly that translates into military and defense spending. What I would propose is what's incredibly important, not just, but from a security perspective, is investment in infrastructure.

(01:03:54)
I mean basic infrastructure, the security and the safety, whether if there's an increase in ship traffic, if there's emergencies, those types of things, the Arctic is generally not prepared. It is not coordinated. I think we need to expand what we mean by infrastructure, and really spend the time to work on infrastructure investments in the Arctic.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:04:19):

Thanks, Jen. Anatol.

Anatol Lieven (01:04:22):

I agree with Edward. The melting of the permafrost is the greatest and most urgent threat there. Well, the Arctic Council should address this, and as Pavel said, it is simply impossible to address this and to research it without including Russia. You do need to bring Russia back into the Arctic Council to discuss these issues. Now, the only thing though is of course, there are local reasons, but the most important reason for the melting of the permafrost is the increase in the global climate.

(01:05:02)
There is unfortunately nothing that well, very little of the Arctic nations themselves can do about that. This is a matter for the great industrial or industrializing states of the world. Once again, if we want to have any security of stabilizing the permafrost and preventing a disastrous release of methane, then we are either going to have to reduce our overall carbon emissions, or at some stage, we are going to have to resort to geoengineering. There is no other way than these two.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:05:43):

Thank you, Anatol. Pavel?

Pavel Devyatkin (01:05:46):

Yes. I've emphasized that Russia is still interested in Arctic cooperation. Maybe folks in Washington don't want to work with the current Russian government in Arctic cooperation, but it's important to think about the future of the country, and think about working with the youth of Russia, or actors that are not right now involved in the government's policy. Students who care about climate change, who have very modern views on international politics, don't necessarily support the policy of their government, are shocked to see that so many opportunities have been closed to them.

(01:06:24)
That programs like the Fulbright Arctic program, different student exchanges, the severing of many different ties have had lots of negative consequences for ties not at the official government-to-government level, but at informal local, regional, sub-national, and other levels. It's worthwhile thinking about how to maintain contacts with the circumpolar community when

we're talking about this resurrection of the ice curtain, especially between the Russian side and the Western side and the Arctic.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:06:57):

Thank you so much. We'd love to hear from you all in the audience. If you have questions, if you want to line up at the mic, we'd be delighted to answer. Please.

Rafe Pomerantz (01:07:17):

Can you hear me okay?

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:07:18):

Yes.

Rafe Pomerantz (01:07:19):

Good. My name is Rafe Pomerantz. I guess I have been the state department and climate negotiator in the past during the Clinton years, actually. I wanted to make a suggestion of something to talk about here. We're in a pivotal moment if we took advantage of it, and Trump has made it possible. What is it? It's the focus on Greenland. Why is that? The Greenland ice sheet is a catastrophic event underway, and it's catastrophic globally, but also, of course, to the United States.

(01:08:01)
What we're doing is ignoring our own national interests by not focusing on the ice sheet. Well, what's different now than it's been? Well, Trump has made Greenland a global issue. Somebody mentioned Bangladesh a little while ago? You got it right. Bangladesh has an interest in the fate of Greenland, because Greenland will take it out. The whole world has an interest in what happens to the Greenland ice sheet, and Trump has put it front and center if we take advantage of that.

(01:08:42)
My, is it a question, a comment, a suggestion, make the Greenland ice sheet a central part of this debate now.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:08:54):

Anatol, please.

Anatol Lieven (01:08:54):

All I can say is I agree entirely, and I think that's a brilliant suggestion, that we should turn this otherwise, I think most of us would agree, very negative, well, rhetoric by the Trump administration into something actually positive. Edward and I both mentioned the melting of the

Arctic permafrost, but you are, of course, absolutely right. The melting of the Greenland ice sheet is another potentially absolutely cataclysmic event for humanity.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:09:33):

Thank you. Please.

Rachel DeWitt (01:09:36):

Hi, my name's Rachel DeWitt. I am a Government Relations Manager with Ocean Conservancy, and my issues cover Arctic climate, deep sea mining, clean ocean energy issues. I just wanted to take a moment and say thank you all for being here and sharing your perspectives. It's been really great to hear from you all, and I really appreciated the analogies and the comparisons that were made. I wanted to expound a little bit more on the car missing two wheels.

(01:10:07)
Speaking from experience, my dad is a car mechanic, and he has told me a story about a car coming in, missing a one wheel, and the car was able to get to the mechanic shop, and he went out to the lot when she said, "Yeah, it's making a weird noise." He told her it was missing a wheel. I just wanted to say, I think we're at the one missing wheel point in this conversation. The car is getting to the shop, but it's giving warning signs. The ice is melting. We're seeing the impacts.

(01:10:39)
I just feel like we're not making that next jump from, Edward, your point, going from story, empathy, dialogue to action. I feel we're at the dialogue stage, and we're continually making that dialogue point. How do we get to that next piece where we jump to action? That's my question. Thank you.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:11:01):

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Edward Alexander (01:11:03):

How do we make the jump to action? I think it's kind of like a fatal flaw in humans that we think they're going to take care of it. Somebody else going to take care of it. There's somebody working on this, I'm pretty sure. The government's got somebody doing this, I'm sure. They must be concerned. They're going to do something. You see these social experiments where you fill a room with smoke and see what the people in the room do, and they all sit there, until the room fills with smoke.

(01:11:42)
Then they come in and say, "This is a psychological experiment. You failed." This is kind of how we think and how we work with others, and how we work with youth, and how we think about ourselves as leaders. The transformational process from being somebody who thinks they're

going to take care of it, to, "I'm going to do my part as inadequately, as humbly, as incorrectly, as embarrassingly bad as I sometimes do it. I'm going to do my part and endure whatever that is."

(01:12:23)
If we can get people to actually take up those parts of it and say, "Well, we need to do something about this wildland fire crisis. We have to do something about the black carbon deposition onto the Greenland ice sheet from the fires in Canada." Who is it? It's not they. There's no they that's going to take care of any of these issues for you. I think probably, my background as a wildland firefighter quite a number of years ago, about 30 years ago, taught me that there's no they coming to save you.

(01:13:00)
There's no they coming to make that fire line. It's, "I'm going to cut this fire line and I'm going to do this stuff. Sometimes it gets messy. I just think you have to be willing to do that. I think that's why I always try to challenge people, "What are you going to do to address this wildland fire crisis in the circumpolar Arctic? You see what I'm trying to do. You see what Gwich'in are trying to do, but what are you going to do? How do you take ownership over it? We can't do it on our own." I think that's powerful when they becomes I.

Jennifer Spence (01:13:36):

If I can just add, I would say, change that to we, in the sense of the institutions. If there's anything we've learned in the current context with the pause of the Arctic Council, with the geopolitical tensions, it is going to take a community. Oceans Conservancy is going to be there, and we need to use all the levers that we have and not wait for someone else to take it, but also recognize that in partnership, we can be much more powerful.

(01:14:06)
Not to work in our silos, but take a much more collaborative approach to these things, to think about the connections between institutions. The Arctic Council doesn't survive on its own. It is not a single institution. It depends on a broad network of experts, and institutions, and organizations that choose to use it as a conduit. When we start to think about that in a sort of a more networked approach, and we think about the, it's not they, it's not I, it's we, then I think we get a lot further, and have a lot more options.

Edward Alexander (01:14:40):

That's even better.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:14:42):

Did you want to say something?

Anatol Lieven (01:14:43):

Well, yes, I read a whole book, because I came to the whole issue of climate change through a couple of perhaps somewhat unusual paths. I've been a journalist, war correspondent in South Asia, and then a professor of international relations and security studies.

(01:15:05)
I was nothing in that that would professionally take me to climate change, except that of course, especially if you have lived in South Asia, you become acutely aware, at least if you've got eyes, to the danger of climate change to these societies, and not directly to Western societies, but to other much more vulnerable societies around the world, but whose collapse would, of course, then have a direct and disastrous knock-on effect on us.

(01:15:41)
This isn't just a question of, it is a question of human empathy, but it's also a question of national self-interest. I totally pointlessly, to date, as I say, attempted to reach out to, if you like, my own community, which is the security community, to try to argue to them that this is a security threat of a new kind, not a classical kind, but still, it is a security threat that endangers our states.

(01:16:15)
As a result, especially since the Ukraine war have been reduced to near despair, by the way in which the security community, and of course, absolutely in Russia as well as in the West, but has treated climate change in the Arctic as a security threat, because some more Russian and Chinese ships can sail around, as indeed can American, and British ships, and so forth. It really doesn't matter compared to the permafrost, the melting of the Greenland ice cap.

(01:16:52)
It is still shocking that you can have people making their entire careers, not just writing on security studies and never mentioning climate change, but even working on security in the Arctic, and only mentioning climate change as if this was because you have one or two more ships wandering around. There are deeply, deeply rooted cultural, institutional, personal interests involved in this, which will take a huge amount of shifting.

(01:17:31)
My fear is that the only thing that will shift it is when the situation becomes absolutely catastrophic. That is what we are heading for, if we do not change our mindset and behavior.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:17:48):

I just want to say, want to come back to the we, and say that we are all in this together. That's really brought out here. If we don't all come together, then we're going to be where Anatol is. We don't want to go there. Do we have time for...

Victoria Herrmann (01:18:09):

We can take the last two questions.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:18:11):

Okay. We'll take the last two questions, and then we're going to wrap up.

Andreas Raspotnik (01:18:14):

All right, thank you very much. My name is Andreas Raspotnik. I'm with the Arctic Institute's Leadership Team, and in my day-today job, I'm the director of the High North Center for Business and Governance in Bodø, Northern Norway. My question is a bit similar to the previous one, and it's a practical question. We know very well that the Arctic is very much about traditional security issues in the public domain. How do we break that on a practical level?

(01:18:41)
How do we better explain the complexity of the Arctic to stakeholders in the south, in Washington, in Brussels, in Canberra, wherever, that the Arctic is not only about traditional military security, but it's much more complex? How do we actually reach those stakeholders? What we experience at the Arctic Institute is that media is very much and only interested in traditional military security, and not in the complexity.

(01:19:11)
We know the complexity. Edward knows it very well, but how do we better sell that story, create a narrative that actually reaches people? Climate change doesn't reach the people. That narrative, what could we do better on a practical level here in the capitals, to tell the Arctic is a complex story?

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:19:34):

Thank you. Thank you, Andreas.

Jennifer Spence (01:19:36):

Did you want to take the other question?

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:19:37):

Yeah, I'll take your question as well. We'll take them together.

Audience Member (01:19:41):

I have a question about a rhetorical choice that's been made several times over the course of the morning. People have said that America has done something when it's Trump. It seems to me that we have to name Trump consistently in order to make clear that Trump is not America. Just a question about that.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:20:00):

Thank you. Thank you. Who would like to go first?

Anatol Lieven (01:20:05):

Well, on that point, he is, whether we like it or not, the President of the United States, the elected president. We probably wrongly, but we regularly use Putin and Russia's interchangeable governments and states. No, of course, Trump does not represent the whole of the United States, but he is the president, that's true. On the question of how to change people's minds, this is not a totally self-interested point, though it could be said to have that element.

(01:20:36)
You could buy a million copies of my book and distribute it to all these people, because if I may say so, it does make a very strong argument about climate change as a mortal threat. In general, what can we do? I would love to be president of the world and implement the necessary changes, but as it is, all we can do is talk and write, which is what we're doing already.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:21:04):

Thank you. Edward.

Edward Alexander (01:21:06):

Yeah, Andreas, your question. I think one of the things that is central to us just as human beings is relationality. Before we even know our own name, we know who our mother is. We have to form relationships with people, in this case, people in the north, and with the land itself. If we invite people to come up to the north, to experience the north, to walk the land, to sail the ocean in the north, and then they start to feel like a kinship to it, you have a memory formed of yourself in that land.

(01:21:49)
You have people in that land that you care about, you're much more likely to take actions, or go back and talk to people where you're from about caring about the Arctic and all of that. I think getting policy leaders from places that may not seem like the Arctic person, the Senator from Alabama, the representative from Florida, the other people from other places, giving them a chance to come and see how exceptional the Arctic really is, will give them the impetus to do exceptional actions in its defense.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:22:34):

Jen? Jen.

Jennifer Spence (01:22:34):

This one's very practical, to Andreas's point about the various calls you get. I think it's to not fall into the demand for those simple narratives, and to resist that. I get lots of those calls too, and I just won't... It means they're less interested in talking to me, but at least we have a responsibility as people who have the expertise, who have the nuanced perspective, to really emphasize what those are, and to tell those other stories, and to do that.

(01:23:11)
I think there's always a danger, when you've worked in a space that probably is on the periphery of a lot of public interest, that we choose to try and make it more sensational, because that's what sells in the media. We have a responsibility to nuance these things, and to bring in the other issues, and to not buy into the simple narratives.

Cynthia Lazaroff (01:23:37):

Thank you for sharing your wisdom, your insights, your brilliance, and really your hearts too in this session. I want to thank the audience, all of you, for caring to show up. Going back to Senator Murkowski, you talked about the importance of showing up and you've all shown up. In the spirit of being a we for these issues, I would just invite you to think about what your biggest takeaway is, and maybe talk to one person.

(01:24:07)
Even if you just talk to one person and start there, that's already acting, and we all have to act in whatever way we can now, if we're going to actually move the needle on this, and be able to leave the world that we want to leave to the future, for those of us who have children and grandchildren. Thank you all, and thank you to the Quincy Institute and the Arctic Institute for making this possible, and for all of you who helped to make this a wonderful time.