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Confronting Hybrid Threats in the Arctic: Building Civilian Resilience Against Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference

Whitehorse, Yukon, September 22–23, 2026

This workshop is co-organized by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Canada (KAS Canada), and Pendulum Geopolitical Advisory.

The Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) program of the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) provided support for the civilian resilience consultation.

Canada's Arctic security environment is undergoing a profound shift as interest grows from both domestic and foreign actors in investment opportunities, the development of new infrastructure, the possibilities for scientific exchange, and the establishment of a greater military presence. This growing interest can benefit local communities, but it can also increase threats.

One such threat is foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) through legal, economic, civil society, and informational channels. While communities in the Canadian Arctic have long histories of adapting to change and safeguarding their own governance, culture, and information ecosystems, they may not yet have sufficient access to the resources needed to detect and respond to these threats. As foreign actors increasingly test the resilience of these communities through hybrid tactics, understanding and reinforcing existing strengths will be central to any effective response.

Participants in this workshop will explore how they can work with and support Northern and Indigenous communities in strengthening the guardrails needed to manage the growing international interest in the Canadian Arctic. They will also consider ways to ground the relevant national frameworks in Indigenous knowledge.



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Activities at a Glance

September 22: Plenary and Roundtable Discussions

Full day of expert dialogue, featuring Northern and Indigenous community representatives, defence and government officials, academics and analysts, media, and foreign diplomats.

The agenda includes five panel discussions, a media fireside chat, and a diplomats' roundtable, with the discussion starting with local community priorities, then shifting to recent and anticipated developments, security and economic vectors and FIMI tactics, before returning to local concerns and a consideration of various models of civilian resilience.

September 23 Morning: Tabletop Exercise: “Under the Smoke” (optional)

Three-hour, discussion-based tabletop exercise developed by the European Values Center for Security Policy and tailored to the Arctic hybrid-threat environment. Participants work through a fictional but evidence-informed crisis across Canadian federal and territorial institutions, Indigenous governments and organizations, emergency-management bodies, civil society, critical-infrastructure operators, and Arctic partners.

September 23 Afternoon: Civilian Resilience Consultations (by invitation)

Small-group consultation, led by Pendulum Geopolitical Advisory and held at the Arctic Training Centre in Whitehorse, bringing together Northern and Indigenous community representatives to assess local gaps and needs and to draw on comparative models from the Baltic states, Northern Europe, Taiwan, Japan, and ASEAN in developing concrete recommendations for Canada.

Discussions across Day 1 and Day 2 are intended to inform the community-facing components of the Pendulum Geopolitical Advisory resilience handbook, complementing the expert-led panels with grounded, community-level perspectives.



Objectives and National Frameworks

1. Centre the perspectives of Northern and Indigenous communities through dedicated community-led sessions and consultations, in **a)** identifying gaps in awareness, capacity, and institutional support needed to build resilience against FIMI and disinformation, and **b)** developing recommendations grounded in local governance structures and community priorities.
2. Assess the current landscape of Arctic hybrid competition, including Russia's Northern Sea Route regulatory strategy, Sino-Russian co-ordination, and China's engagement with Arctic multilateral institutions.
3. Identify recent and anticipated security and economic developments in the Arctic, including shifts in defence posture and investment and infrastructure-building activity that could be targets for FIMI in the near term.
4. Examine the mechanisms through which FIMI and disinformation are being employed in the Canadian and European Arctic.
5. Analyze models of civilian resilience to information operations, drawing on evidence from the Baltic and Nordic states, as well as Japan, Taiwan, and other jurisdictions.
6. Contribute to the practical resilience handbook being developed by Pendulum Geopolitical Advisory, providing policy-relevant guidance for territorial governments, Indigenous governance bodies, and civil society organizations on identifying and responding to FIMI and hybrid interference in Arctic contexts.

This workshop is informed by several federal commitments:

- [Indo-Pacific Strategy](#) (2022): Recognizes the North Pacific as part of Canada's Arctic and notes that several Indo-Pacific states already look to the Arctic as a region of opportunity and engagement.
- [Arctic Foreign Policy](#) (2024): Underscores sovereignty, partnerships, and rules-based governance in a rapidly changing North — released, as coverage at the time noted, in explicit acknowledgment that the North American Arctic is [no longer free from tension](#).
- [Our North, Strong and Free](#) (2024): Canada's renewed defence policy, which places Arctic and northern security at the core of national and continental defence and emphasizes deterrence, domain awareness, and allied interoperability.



- [An Act Respecting Countering Foreign Interference](#) (Bill C-70, 2024): Bolsters Canada's ability to detect, disrupt, and counter foreign interference threats, including through a new Foreign Influence Transparency Registry.
- [Canada Strong](#) (Budget 2025): Commits to Arctic defence, infrastructure, and Northern development, and recognizes that sovereignty, security, and economic resilience in the North are inseparable.
- [Defence Industrial Strategy](#) (2026): Commits to working with provinces and territories, Indigenous rights-holders, and Northern and Arctic partners in building the infrastructure and industrial base needed to assert sovereignty and respond to emerging threats in the North.

Why Hybrid Threats and FIMI Matter for the Arctic Now

A Widening Threat Landscape

Documented trends across the Western Arctic states (Canada, U.S., Nordic countries) indicate that Russian cyber activity, critical-infrastructure interference, espionage, and information-influence campaigns are increasing. China, meanwhile, is expanding its dual-use scientific activity and infrastructure investments. Concern about such activities is not attributable exclusively to Russia or China: following reports of covert operations by individuals connected to the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, Denmark's intelligence service, for example, confirmed that influence campaigns had been carried out in Greenland to sow discord between Denmark and Greenland.

Such threats generally operate below the threshold of armed conflict, target non-military vulnerabilities, and are designed to remain ambiguous — posing a growing governance challenge, especially as the acceleration of climate change opens new sea routes and exposes new resources faster than existing regulatory and alliance frameworks can adapt.

In response, Canada and its allies have announced new defence spending and renewed their prioritization of Arctic security. Developments such as new military capabilities, resource and infrastructure projects, and shifting alliance commitments widen the range of assets that Arctic states and communities must defend against exploitation.

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) is a particularly well-documented hybrid threat vector. Russia and China both conduct co-ordinated information operations targeting Arctic communities, public opinion, and Canadian



sovereignty. The structural characteristics of Canada's North — dispersed populations, limited local media capacity, and communities navigating significant socioeconomic pressures — create conditions that foreign actors can exploit to amplify divisive narratives around Indigenous rights, resource development, military presence, and governance legitimacy. Recent research from the Nordic and Baltic states, as well as Japan and Taiwan, have documented the mechanisms by which such campaigns operate and the forms of institutional resilience that can mitigate their effects.

Northern and Indigenous communities bear a disproportionate share of the threat. They bring deep Indigenous knowledge — not only familiarity with local circumstances, but a distinct approach to problem-solving and strategic thinking that these communities bring to discussions of diplomacy and security, longstanding governance structures, and demonstrated adaptability to challenges, but frequently have less access to the analytical and institutional resources needed to identify and respond to hybrid threats at scale.

It is also worth acknowledging that the agendas of Indigenous and other Northern (sub-national) governments are often crowded by more immediate priorities — health care, food security, infrastructure, and access to other basic services — and that hybrid-threat and national-security discussions are, understandably, often less pressing for these governments than they may be for actors working in better-resourced contexts.

Effective resilience therefore requires not only national-level policy frameworks and alliance co-ordination, but the active engagement of territorial governments, Indigenous governance bodies, local civil society organizations, and communities themselves.

What Recent Assessments Show

Officials from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service ([CSIS](#)) have told Parliament that while Russia's military interests in the Arctic remain strong, China is now the more pressing day-to-day concern from an economic-security standpoint, particularly because of the potential for predatory investment and Beijing's interest in access to critical minerals. That assessment aligns with an [RCMP](#) environmental scan warning that foreign-actor interference is a growing risk to the Arctic, especially around critical-minerals projects.

Similarly, Arctic security [analysts](#) argue that Canada's own intelligence capacity in the North has not kept pace with the threat and [researchers](#) argue that the most urgent threat to the Canadian North is not a direct military incursion but exactly this kind of grey-zone activity, designed to undercut Canada's strategic interests without crossing into open



conflict. Russia, for its part, has publicly warned that Western militarization of the Arctic risks producing unintended incidents — a framing that doubles as a legitimizing [narrative](#) for its own posture in the region.

Panel Descriptions and Guiding Questions

Panel 1: Northern and Indigenous Communities: Needs, Capacities, and Priorities

This session will invite Northern and Indigenous community representatives to assess their current exposure to hybrid threats, identify gaps in institutional support and community capacity, and contribute to the development of practical resilience recommendations.

A recent [report](#) by the China Strategic Risks Institute warned that these communities are often not given the resources or China-specific expertise to fully evaluate investment offers from Chinese state-linked entities, leaving them exposed to an incremental, relationship-building strategy for extending influence in the Arctic. Another report by KAS Canada describes Northern and Indigenous communities as operating within small, tight-knit “[micro-media systems](#)” distinct from those of larger societies — a lens increasingly used to understand both community vulnerability to disinformation and the resilience these same communities already bring to the problem.

Guiding Questions

- As the Arctic receives more attention and interest from others — for example, investments, infrastructure and other development projects, military presence, scientific and cultural exchanges — what do you hope to see in terms of opportunities for your communities and how they can benefit (e.g. education and skills-training, business and employment opportunities, secondary benefits like more investments in health care, etc.)?
- What concerns you/your community about this increase in international attention?
- The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami’s [2025 Vision for Arctic Sovereignty, Security, and Defence](#) describes Inuit harvesters as already serving as “the eyes and ears” of the Arctic, providing in-kind support to the Canadian Coast Guard and Canadian Armed Forces. What would it take to build that existing role into a more formal part of Canada’s Arctic monitoring and domain-awareness system — and what would communities need in return?



- What would it take to use the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee mechanism specifically for hybrid-threat and FIMI-related decisions, rather than only for broader socioeconomic priorities?
- Community members may primarily picture a security threat in terms of a direct, conventional attack. What would it take to broaden the conversation to include the less visible, hybrid threat environment that communities are already navigating?

Panel 2: Scene-Setting: Recent and Anticipated Developments

This session describes the current landscape of hybrid threats and geopolitical competition across the Arctic, from Russian cyber activity and information operations to China's expanding dual-use scientific and infrastructure presence, framing these as part of a broader pattern of grey-zone competition designed to resist easy attribution. It bridges the community perspectives raised in Panel 1 to the panels that follow.

Guiding Questions

- What recent international interest and activity are we seeing in the Arctic — in Canada and in other Arctics — that appears to be largely positive?
- What recent international interest and activity should be a cause for alarm or at least heightened awareness?
- Where does the legal and regulatory contest — Russia's Northern Sea Route strategy, UNCLOS continental shelf claims, China's engagement with Arctic multilateral institutions — fit into this picture?
- Where is there overlap between the Canadian and European Arctic experience, especially regarding Indo-Pacific engagement, that Canada and Europe — including at a civil-society and local-government level — could use to share tactics and lessons learned?
- Sino-Russian Arctic co-operation is [described](#) as pragmatic and project-driven rather than a unified alliance — and Chinese firms have reportedly [structured new, privately-held entities](#) specifically to limit their exposure to a sanctioned partner when transiting the Northern Sea Route. Does this suggest the relationship is more conditional than "co-ordination" implies — and if so, should Canada and its allies expect it to be less durable and calibrate their response accordingly? Or does the practical effect on Arctic governance look the same either way?



- Does a materially thinner Russian military presence change Moscow's FIMI calculus? Is it more likely to lean on FIMI tools specifically because its physical footprint is stretched thin elsewhere?

Panel 3: Security and Economy

This panel considers the major security and economic developments that have shaped the Arctic over the past year as well as developments that seem likely to be significant in the coming few years. This includes, for example, defence spending commitments and the renewed prioritization of Arctic defence by Canada and its allies and recent momentum in investment attraction and infrastructure — with a specific focus on which of these developments might be especially vulnerable to FIMI.

Canada's Ocean Supercluster's 2026 Arctic Insights [Report](#) finds that infrastructure gaps, workforce shortages, and fragmented federal funding remain the biggest constraints on Arctic economic development. That is the case even as fisheries, potentially worth up to C\$200 million in Nunavut alone, and tourism (already generating C\$823 million annually) as the strongest near-term opportunities, alongside dual-use ports and defence-linked infrastructure.

[Analysts](#) have separately flagged the risks of underregulated foreign investment in Arctic ports, noting that “dual-use” remains a loosely defined concept in Canadian policy that can leave openings for foreign actors to gain a foothold under commercial cover. [CSIS's](#) testimony to Parliament identifies clandestine or deceptive investment as its primary concern in the Arctic economic space.

Guiding Questions

- For 'friendly' countries wanting to invest in the Arctic, including Japan, South Korea, and European Union nations, how can investors manage communication about their intentions in a way that builds trust? What steps can they take to increase transparency and communication and help inoculate their activities from misinformation and disinformation?
- Does this extend beyond traditional partners as well, given that BRICS+ and Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states are also showing greater interest in Arctic investment and shipping?



- What recent shifts in Arctic defence postures and presence — Canada's and those of its allies and competitors — do you see as the most likely near-term targets for foreign information manipulation?
- NAVRES and the Naval Reserve draw heavily on local and community relationships in the North and West. How does that community-facing role shape your sense of where the Canadian Armed Forces are most exposed to, or best placed to counter, disinformation about military presence and activity?
- Track II (expert-led, non-official) science diplomacy has been identified as a channel through which influence can be built alongside formal government relations. How should this value of open scientific exchange be weighed against the risk that research partnerships become a vector for dual-use activity?

Media Fireside Chat

This lunchtime conversation considers the role of local and community media in strengthening information resilience across the North. This includes the relationship between the localization of news and public trust, the vital role of Indigenous news, the civic function of community journalism in sustaining local governance and advocacy, the emergence of community news start-ups, and the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) for the Arctic's information ecosystem.

Guiding Questions

- How does the localization of news shape public trust in the North? What happens to that trust — and to the local information ecosystem — when local outlets shrink or disappear? How is public trust being impacted by the scope and scale of AI when it is used to amplify misinformation?
- Do you believe access to local and community news in The North should be considered critical infrastructure? (If yes) What would it take to achieve that?
- How important is it to have documentary photography and visual storytelling that represent Northern and Indigenous communities through their own lens, rather than outside narratives?
- What role can visual journalism play in countering narrative manipulation? What is needed for journalists to continue doing that work?



- How does AI impact the Northern information ecosystem — both as a tool that could support under-resourced community journalism and as a risk that could further amplify misinformation?
- How could AI tools and other resources be used to support under-resourced community journalism?
- In practice, how do youth in the Arctic get their information? Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, which many younger community members rely on, may not carry Canadian news (or credible news) — what does that mean for reaching younger audiences with trustworthy information?

Panel 4: Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

This panel examines FIMI in the Arctic— the methods, actors, and objectives of documented information operations targeting Arctic communities, public opinion, and Canadian sovereignty; the ways Arctic conditions create particular vulnerabilities around Indigenous rights, resource development, military presence, and governance legitimacy; and how the Arctic FIMI landscape compares with analogous cases in the Baltic, Nordic, and Indo-Pacific contexts.

Guiding Questions

- What can we learn from 'frontline' jurisdictions — such as Taiwan and the Baltics — about effective ways to detect and respond to FIMI tactics before they take hold?
- How are FIMI tactics evolving in the European and Canadian Arctics? Are actors deploying different tactics, or using the same playbook in these various theatres?
- In the case of Greenland, a confirmed influence campaign not attributable to Russia or China suggests the field of actors is broader than the usual frame. How does that change how we think about attribution and partnerships?
- [Doublethink Lab](#) attributes much of Taiwan's resilience to an organic, civil-society-driven response rather than a government-led one. Does the Canadian Arctic have the civil-society density — local media, fact-checkers, Indigenous organizations — to support a similar bottom-up model, or does its smaller, more dispersed population point toward a different, more government-anchored approach?
- A recent [report](#) by the China Strategic Risks Institute advanced a number of recommendations related to the theme of this workshop. Which of these do you see as



realistically implementable in the near term, and which face the steepest political or legal obstacles?

- Norway has been tightening environmental and research regulations under the Svalbard Treaty, prompting China and Russia to advance increasingly creative reinterpretations of the treaty and accusations that Norway is acting against the spirit of science diplomacy. What does this dispute suggest about how legal and regulatory ambiguity is being used as a FIMI vector elsewhere in the Arctic?
- China has promoted a “near-Arctic state” narrative, reinforced by recent senior-level diplomatic visits to Nordic capitals and a rising tempo of science diplomacy and targeted Arctic engagement. How should this narrative-building be read alongside China's more concrete economic and scientific activity in the region?

Panel 5: Civilian Resilience

Informed by discussions on international models, the focus of this panel will be on civilian and civic resilience — the capacity of individuals and communities to anticipate, withstand, adapt to and recover from disruption and manipulation. Discussion will examine the models that have proved effective in terms of the resilience of individuals and civic organizations (including civil society, democratic institutions, community organizations, and the private sector). This extends to the broader capacity of Arctic communities and Canadian society to withstand sustained efforts to exploit divisions, undermine trust, or disrupt essential systems.

The panel will also consider the conditions under which these models transfer to different governance environments, and the specific implications for the Canadian North and Indigenous governance. This session also places particular emphasis on the human security dimension of resilience, situating emergency-management perspectives alongside civil society, institutional, and private-sector responses.

Guiding Questions

- Which institutional or legislative resilience mechanisms from the Baltic, Nordic, and Indo-Pacific experience have proven effective? What conditions need to be in place for those models to transfer to a different governance environment — and where does the Canadian North currently fall short of those conditions?



- What characteristics of Canada call for a distinctive approach to resilience, or present vulnerabilities? Where do societal trust and cohesion function as critical infrastructure — and what would it take to protect and fortify the sources of trust an adversary would seek to weaken?
- Circling back to Panel 1, which of the community-identified risks and gaps map most directly onto the resilience models discussed here — and which don't yet have a strong comparative model to draw on at all?
- What should territorial governments, Indigenous governance bodies, the private sector, and civil society each specifically be doing that they aren't doing now? And which existing Canadian capabilities should be strengthened, connected, or scaled over a two-to-three-year horizon?
- Finland links government, schools, libraries, media, and civil society through a co-ordinating body that embeds media literacy across its national curriculum. Canada has comparable but fragmented pieces — the Digital Citizen Initiative, MediaSmarts, civics education — that are not unified or tailored to Northern or Indigenous contexts. What would a more co-ordinated, locally led equivalent look like in the Canadian North, and what role could Indigenous governments play in leading it? Underlying this is a trust deficit: with trust in Parliament and the media each below majority levels nationally, what would it take to address that before layering resilience efforts on top?
- The Canadian Rangers do not have a direct equivalent in the Baltic or Nordic states, combining a defence role with a trust-building presence embedded in communities. What makes this model distinctive, what would it take to formalize or extend it further, and what is Canada's own experience that other states — including Sweden and Denmark, both reportedly developing similar programs — could learn from?

Diplomats' Roundtable

This roundtable brings together diplomats from the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the U.S. to discuss how like-minded states can co-ordinate in response to shared hybrid threats.

Guiding Questions

- From different governments' vantage points, what kind of Arctic engagement from Indo-Pacific or European partners is most welcomed?
- Where are the clearest openings for deeper co-operation with Canada on Arctic security, governance, and resilience over the next two to three years?



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- How well-co-ordinated are like-minded states' responses to Arctic hybrid threats today? What would meaningfully improve co-ordination among like-minded states?
- Is there anything your government has learned — from the Arctic or from hybrid-threat experience elsewhere — that could usefully inform Canada's approach to Northern community resilience?