Welcome to our special issue of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum: The Icelandic E-Journal of Nordic and Mediterranean Studies (NoMe)* on the theme of "IR Theory, the Arctic System, and the Individual Theorist in Perspective." It includes papers submitted to and/or inspired by our Spring 2020 class on Arctic security through the lens of IR theory that I taught at the University of Akureyri while I was a visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Polar Law Centre.

Among this special issue's contributions are a selection of papers written for the class during a semester like no other, when the Covid-19 pandemic spread around the world, transforming all of our lives. Several of the papers included here directly address this theme, as part of our collective efforts to understand Arctic security through an IR-theoretical lens, with each of our authors serving as a bridge between the Arctic system and the world of theory, or what IR luminary Kenneth Waltz described in 1959 as the "first image," the individual's level of analysis:

Front Matter

- *Special Guest Foreword: Our Home the Arctic* by Friðrik Jónsson, Iceland's Senior Arctic Official, November 2019 – June 2021
- *Guest Editor's Note: Welcome to Our Special Issue on IR Theory, the Arctic System, and the Individual Theorist in Perspective* by Barry Scott Zellen

Section I: IR Theory, the Arctic, and Me: Individual Perspectives on Arctic International Relations

- *The Pandemic, the Arctic and Me: A Levels of Analysis Discussion of Arctic Security Focusing on the 2020 Global Pandemic* by Soazic Dacal
- *Schrödinger's American: A Self-Reflection of One Person's Role in Iceland's Nordic and Arctic Discourse* by Jonathan Wood
- *Understanding the Role of Arctic States, Non-Arctic States and Indigenous Peoples in Arctic Affairs Through the Lens of International Relations Theories* by Thomas Viguier
- *Climate Change, the Arctic and I* by Martin Binachon

Section II: Greenland and its Future

- *The Greenlandic Question: An International Relations Analysis of a Post-Independence Inuit Nation* by Jonathan Wood
- *High Stakes in the High North: Alternative Models for Greenland's Ongoing Constitutional and Political Transformation* by Barry Scott Zellen

Section III. Arctic Geopolitics and the Future

- *Singapore and the Arctic: Is the Gibraltar of the East Going to Materialize its Geopolitical Ambitions?* by Thomas Viguier
- *Geopolitics, Indigenous Peoples, and the Polar Thaw: Sub- and Transnational Fault Lines of the Coming Arctic Cold War* by Barry Scott Zellen

Two of our papers in **Section I** ("*The Pandemic, the Arctic and Me: A Levels of Analysis Discussion of Arctic Security Focusing on the 2020 Global Pandemic*" by Soazic Dacal; and "*Schrödinger's American: A Self-Reflection of One Person's Role in Iceland's Nordic and Arctic Discourse*" by Jonathan Wood) provide a first-person perspective on the challenging issues and events directly associated with the pandemic, and its impacts on the Arctic, including the transformation of our lives after the pandemic arrived in Iceland; while the other six articles across **Sections I-III** consider the profound effects of climate change on Arctic international relations and geopolitics (these include **Section I**'s "*Understanding the Role of Arctic States, Non-Arctic States and Indigenous Peoples in Arctic Affairs Through the Lens of International Relations Theories*" by Thomas Viguier and "*Climate Change, the Arctic and I*" by Martin Binachon; **Section II**'s "*The Greenlandic Question: An International Relations Analysis of a Post-Independence Inuit Nation*" by Jonathan Wood and "*High Stakes in the High North: Alternative Models for Greenland's Ongoing Constitutional and Political Transformation*" by Barry Scott Zellen; and **Section III**'s "*Singapore and the Arctic: Is the Gibraltar of the East Going to Materialize its Geopolitical Ambitions?*" by Thomas Viguier; and "*Geopolitics, Indigenous Peoples, and the Polar Thaw: Sub- and Transnational Fault Lines of the Coming Arctic Cold War*" by Barry Scott Zellen).

Of the eight papers published here, six are student papers illustrating the remarkable insights, theoretical elegance, and creativity that defined the cohort of students I had the privilege of teaching during this most unusual and challenging of semesters. Two of the papers included herein are contributions, with much humility, from myself: one of the two

("*High Stakes in the High North: Alternative Models for Greenland's Ongoing Constitutional and Political Transformation*"), was inspired by our other paper on Greenland ("*The Greenlandic Question: An International Relations Analysis of a Post-Independence Inuit Nation*") by my colleague and former student, Jonathan Wood. Jonathan presented his paper on a panel on Greenland that he chaired at the first global webinar of the International Small Islands Studies Association (ISISA), and kindly invited me to join him as a discussant. My other contribution ("*Geopolitics, Indigenous Peoples, and the Polar Thaw: Sub- and Transnational Fault Lines of the Coming Arctic Cold War*") is a theoretical working paper on Arctic geopolitics; it was originally conceived to be a "bonus module" on geopolitical theory for our class in response to widespread student interest in my adding a module on Arctic geopolitics to its curriculum. But with the closure of campus, and shift from in-person to on-line teaching at the semester's midpoint, it was a challenge enough to complete the course's original curriculum without adding a new lecture – so my notes for this hoped-for additional lecture evolved during those long, worrisome weeks of lockdown into the working paper included here today. In this way, all of the papers were either written for, or inspired by, our class together.

In addition, I am greatly appreciative that Friðrik Jónsson, who served as Senior Arctic Official at Iceland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs from November 2019 to June 2021, has generously provided a Special Guest Foreword to this special issue, "*Our Home the Arctic,*" providing context for these papers and their discussion of IR theory as it applies to the contemporary Arctic. With my additional thanks to the contributors to this special issue and their fellow students who journeyed with us through the world of Arctic IR theory during the Spring 2020 semester; my colleagues at the University of Akureyri, with a special thanks my faculty mentor, Dr. Rachael Lorna Johnstone, and the editor-in-chief of *NoME*, Dr. Giorgio Baruchello; the Fulbright Commission of Iceland, with a special thanks to its executive director, Belinda Theriault; and my colleagues at the United States Coast Guard Academy — with particular thanks to Academic Dean, Dr. Kurt Colella; Humanities Department Head, Dr. Richard Zuczek; and Executive Director of the Center for Arctic Study and Policy, Ms. Cara Condit — for for their encouragement, enduring support, and warm wishes during my time in Iceland.

Barry Scott Zellen, PhD
Class of 1965 Arctic Scholar

Center for Arctic Study and Policy (CASP)
United States Coast Guard Academy