



Committee: GA4 Environmental Committee

Issue: The issue of mining in the Arctic

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Introduction to the Issue

Due to their rich resources, the land on both poles of the world are internationally attractive places. The international community, however, only monitors the South Pole (Antarctic) despite the fact that both North Pole (Arctic) and South are rich in resources. The Antarctica Treaty is what has been protecting Antarctica quite successfully over the years. Antarctica is protected under the Antarctic Treaty, which has proven highly successful among nations that have similar interests as those that are currently militarizing the Arctic. Therefore a solution on the issue of militarization of the Arctic can be modelled after the solutions taken against this issue in the South. Antarctica, like parts of the Arctic, is one of the few territories on earth that is not part of any jurisdiction nor under any recognized government. None of the many claims on Antarctic soil were internationally accepted, even if some countries exercise power over some parts of the continent every once in a while. The only human population on Antarctica are either part of a research mission to the continent, or tourists visiting and discovering the land. Similar to Antarctic, there has also been many claims on the Arctic as well, which were not, again, recognized by the international community, even if some were mutually recognized by the claiming powers. With the fear of states would go into war due to territorial disputes, The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) was installed in 1959. After ATS was signed there have not been new land claims on the Antarctic continent, besides the fact that the land claims from before the AT still exist. As a result of the global warming, the rapid melting of the ice in Arctic has been a serious issue, considering the fact that the region is becoming more accessible for fishing, fresh water, minerals, coal, iron, copper, oil, gas, and shipping, day by day. Having caught the attention of the biggest world powers through the history frequently, nowadays is no exception for the



region. The states which are holding stakes has already been initiating militarization the region, which is believed to hold huge oil and gas resources. Artic states like Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Russia, Norway and the United States are currently key parties on this matter.

Involved Countries & Organizations

Canada

An important actor in this issue is Canada. Canada occupies much of the Arctic region and has well-defined plans to mine the region. The Canadian ministry of Foreign Affairs lists sovereignty over the Arctic as one of their priorities in international relations with fellow Arctic states. The Canadian state has expressed various claims, and Canada's foreign minister has expressed that his country is investigating the possibilities of scientific (geological) research to see to what extent the Canadian territory extends into the continental shelf. If the continental shelf from the Canadian mainland extends well into the Arctic, this could mean that the state of Canada has a rightful claim to the land, and its resources. A problem with this is that, even if the claim were legitimate, the other claiming countries would never recognize the claims expressed by Canada.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has a continental shelf that extends well into the Arctic. Many Russian explorations have been undertaken in the area, and some Russian oil rigs are already in place. This has caused massive controversy, especially since it is often rumored that the oil platforms are/will be accompanied by serious military bases.

United States of America

Alaska lies in part in the Arctic region, and the continental shelf of the United States is thought to protrude into the Arctic region rather far. The United States is, in terms of economic and military conflict, an adversary to other powers in the region, and historically there has been a lot of tension with the Russian Federation.



Denmark

Denmark is also a part in this conflict, since Greenland is part of the Arctic. Greenland is a part of the world with many resources, and under international maritime law, the resources in this land could pertain to the Kingdom of Denmark.

Norway

Norway is the only Scandinavian country that has direct access to the Arctic and because of this it regards the Arctic as its number one priority in foreign policy. The Norwegian Arctic focus is based primarily on maritime support, resource management and the environment. In 2010, the disputed area between Russia and Norway was successfully resolved. Norway seeks to maintain good relations with the Russian Federation as its main ally in the region. The Norwegian Arctic Policy focuses on: “International Cooperation in the area, a knowledge-based business sector, broad-based knowledge development, more reliable infrastructure and better preparedness and environmental protection” (7).

Key Terms

The Arctic Ocean

“Arctic Ocean, smallest of the world’s oceans, centering approximately on the North Pole. The Arctic Ocean and its marginal seas—the Chukchi, East Siberian, Laptev, Kara, Barents, White, Greenland, and Beaufort and, according to some oceanographers, also the Bering and Norwegian seas—are the least-known basins and bodies of water in the world ocean as a result of their remoteness, hostile weather, and perennial or seasonal ice cover. This is changing, however, because the Arctic may exhibit a strong response to global change and may





be capable of initiating dramatic climatic changes through alterations induced in the oceanic thermohaline circulation by its cold, southward-moving currents or through its effects on the global albedo resulting from changes in its total ice cover.” (1)

Territorial Claim

A land claim means a country is claiming sovereignty over a determined part of land. For example, in Antarctica there are seven countries claiming eight different territories. Furthermore, territorial claims can cause or reflect existing or non-existing frictions between countries. The aim of the AT was to prevent any new territorial claims on Antarctica, which means that after 1961 no claims could be made. However, countries may still, under customary international law, recognize claims made by other countries.

Territorial Dispute

When countries do not agree with territorial claims, there is a territorial dispute over a certain territory.

Militarization

Equipping or supplying (a place) with soldiers and other military resources. (2)

Continental Shelf

“The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.” (UNCLOS Part 6) The continental shelf does not include the deep sea or the deep sea bed. As many countries try to lay claims to continental shelves in the Arctic, its definition plays a large role within the scope of this debate. Although many definitions have been presented, it is strongly recommended that delegates read the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea itself.



Detailed Analysis of the Issue

Underneath the arctic, lies over a fifth of the world's undiscovered fossil fuels, including 90 billion barrels of oil, and 47 cubic meters of natural gas. (3) For a long time, the Arctic was a region in the far north of the world, which did not draw too much attention to itself. Recent technological advances and many new economies in the North (especially the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China), have led to a great interest in these regions. Due to the many rich resources said to be present in the region, the Arctic is very attractive for nations to claim parts of the Arctic in order to be able to profit from all that wealth. Making these claims is for these countries not very difficult, since their continental shelves extend from their shores to the regions of discussion, and there are major population centers that surround the Arctic. The included map shows the major population centers in the Arctic region. Many initiatives have been in place to prevent conflict, since conflict is something that would stand in the way of every nation's profit. One of these solutions is the Arctic Council, an organization that includes all eight Arctic Countries and provides a platform for international cooperation. This approach was unfortunately not a perfect solution for the disputes. First things first, not all the states in the Arctic region have signed and ratified the UNCLOS, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the treaty that outlines several protocols for the claiming of land and sea by member states of the United Nations. This is a significant problem, thus some of the Arctic Countries are bound by the treaty, while others are not. Secondly, some uses of the Arctic are allowed by the Arctic Council, while many are not. For instance, scientific



Large population centres in the Arctic Region, Wikimedia Foundation



exploration is allowed, while exploitation of the natural resources is not. What happens very often is that countries claim to use the land for scientific purposes, while the real intention of the endeavor is very different. This leads to the final and biggest problem regarding the international cooperation concerning the Arctic region: that fact that there is always a risk of war. In the Arctic region, there are so many incentives for countries to pursue their own interests, that international cooperation receives a second place in the priorities of the countries' policies. Any solution in the past, present or future has been, is or will be focusing on this problem.

Understanding The Past Events And Their Connection With The Future Of The Arctic Ocean

The expeditions to explore Antarctica began in the 19th century. The vast documentation that was made in that time led to the governments of the European powers that had sent the explorers to become interested in claiming the territories. Territorial expansion and control was one of the priorities of the countries that claimed Antarctic sections. As the time went by more and more nations started showing their interest in the Antarctic. This is in essence not very different from the situation in the Arctic, where large explorations from Western powers started in a similar time period. By the start of the 20th century, the territorial claims were the agenda of the international community more than ever. The negotiations were so severe that the AT was produced in order to settle the disputes. On the other hand, the lack of indigenous populations has made the exploration of the continent much easier. The AT is designed as an instrument of peace in a time when political tensions jeopardized the peace in the region. After the AT came into force, in 1961, most of the problems that had surrounded the continent of Antarctica seemed to have been solved. This means that all states party to the AT had resolved not to pursue military interests on the continent, and not to dump nuclear fuel. Also, new claims have not been expressed since the AT. However, one problem remained: the exploitation of the mineral resources in Antarctica. As a consequence of a long process trying to solve the issue the Madrid Protocol was drafted and signed in 1991. The Madrid Protocol is a legally binding system that regulates the mining in Antarctica and installs many more environmental measures, as does the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The most important features of the



Madrid Protocol is that it states that all mineral mining is prohibited except for scientific purposes, it prohibits the entry of any species (except for humans), and it commits member states to consult the environmental impact of its actions. These are all very important aspects, though they were not included in the original Treaty. This shows that the Treaty must be revised constantly in order to cope with recent developments. However, the next review of the Treaty will be in 2048, thus a revision is not possible followed by the recent events in the world. At this point the function of International Maritime Organization is quite crucial and critical. Whether the AT must be revised, who must review a possible new treaty and what happens in case of a discord, are important points to be discussed by this committee.

List of Important Events

1903	Canada sets up the North-West Mounted Police in the Yukon territory in an attempt to claim rights to the western Arctic. (4)
February 20th, 1907	The Canadian senator drafts a resolution, which claims control over the lands between Canada and the North Pole.
July 1st, 1909	A plaque claims the Arctic Islands under Canada's sovereignty.
April 15th, 1926	The USSR made the Arctic Decree, which contrast to the Canadian act of claiming territory of land in the region, and it states that all lands between USSR and the Arctic were under the control of the USSR.
December 17th, 1973	Canada and Denmark sign a bilateral agreement on the delimitation of the continental shelf, however enters into force on three months later.
December 10th, 1982	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is signed and states are free to join the convention. 60 signatures are needed as in order to be used.
November 16th, 1994	As the UNCLOS' first official act, a document is drafted from four



	previous conventions to set a framework for areas that are beyond a state's jurisdiction.
September 19th, 1996	The Arctic Council is formed from the Ottawa Declaration (1996).
December 20th, 2001	Russia submits an application to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) claiming jurisdiction of the Lomonosov Ridge.
7 November 27th, 2006	Norway submits an application to the CLCS to extend its continental shelf to the Loop Hole in the Barents Sea, the Western Nansen Basin in the Arctic Ocean, and the Banana Hole in the Norwegian Sea.
August 2nd, 2007	Russia places a deep-sea flag on the Arctic Lomonosov Ridge.
May 28th, 2009	Ilulissat Declaration drafted after debate held in Greenland.
8 October 27th, 2010	The United Nations Environmental Programme publishes Protecting Arctic Biodiversity: Limitations and Strengths of Environmental Agreements.
December 31st, 2012	Shell's oil Conical Drilling Unit (CDU) runs aground during tow – environmentalists take this as evidence that oil companies should not be allowed to explore the Arctic. (5)
9 December 6th, 2013	Canada submits an application to the CLCS claiming an area of around 1.2 million square kilometers to be added to its east coast offshore boundaries.
10 December 15th, 2014	Denmark submits an application to the CLCS claiming an area of approximately 900,000 square kilometers beyond the coast of Greenland. (6)

Past Resolutions and Important Documents

Concerning treaties, resolutions, and other UN documents, there is rather little to the direct issue of the militarization of the Arctic Region. There is however, more on the well-being of the inhabitants of the region, and the sustainable development of the settlements, which is in



the interest of the parties involved. The most relevant international legal documents are listed and explained below:

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of the most important legal document on this issue. It describes what sovereignty can be exercised by a member state over which parts of the sea. It also includes maritime law, which makes this document relevant when discussing issues of conflict over vessels and oilrigs for instance.
- Sustainable development of Arctic human settlements, 20th April 2007, (HSP/GC/21/5) this resolution stresses the bad living conditions of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The threads of climate change and unrest due to possible conflict are also included in this document.
- General and complete disarmament, 15th December 1989, (A/RES/44/116 L) This resolution handles the resolution of disputes between member states. It seeks to include a better way for member states to come to agreements over territorial claims.
- The issue of the peaceful settlement of disputes is discussed in Chapter VI of United Nations Charter itself.

Possible Solutions

As the committee board we strongly believe asking some certain question will lead you to find the best proposals of solution in your written documents. Therefore here is a list of critical question you may consider while doing your research.

- Is your state an artic country? If not, are they allies with those who are in fact artic countries? What is your delegations stance on the matter?
- Is UNCLOS sufficient enough to ensure the peace and stability in the artic region?
- How exactly can the involved parties demilitarize the area and what is the role of International Maritime Organization in that?



- Should Arctic be owned by states, should it only belong to international community, or should there be a combination of both?
- In the long run, what body should oversee and maintain the demilitarization acts?
- Which rules must cover the scientific research and studies in the arctic region? Should it be similar to the Antarctic Treaty?
- What are the economic consequences of the major the committee be taking, bot for your country and the international community?
- What will climate change do to the solution in mind?
- Why would member states of the United Nations cooperate with this solution? What is in it for them?

Useful Links

- the British Antarctic Survey's page that answers the most frequently asked questions about the Antarctic Treaty:

http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_antarctica/geopolitical/treaty/faq.php

- A study about territorial claims:

http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/conflict_resolution/Solving_Territorial_Conflicts.pdf

- UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)

http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

- The Article "*Rising militarization in Arctic will bring nothing but war*"

<http://www.atimes.com/rising-militarization-arctic-will-bring-nothing-war/>

- AT (The Antarctic Treaty)

<https://www.ats.aq/e/ats.htm>



- Russia's Arctic Militarization: A Reality Check (Article)

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/russias-arctic-militarization-a-reality-check_us_58da6233e4b0f805b323b5c0

- Putin's Russia in biggest Arctic military push since Soviet fall (Article)

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arctic-insight/putins-russia-in-biggest-arctic-military-push-since-soviet-fall-idUSKBN15E0W0>

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