

Research Report | 30th Annual Session

First General Assembly

Establishing protocols concerning the militarization of the Arctic



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

Claire Oberle

Forum	General Assembly
Issue:	Enforcing protocols concerning the militarization of the Arctic
Student Officer:	Claire Oberle
Position:	President of the General Assembly

Introduction

Starting in the early 1900's, countries began to make territorial claims for Arctic land. Canada, for example, claimed that all land between Canada and the North Pole were under their control in 1907. However, once the Cold War began, the Arctic served as the perfect place to store and launch intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and other weapons used in war.

Upon the ending of the Cold War and the restructuring of geopolitics, a new political grouping came to exist in the Arctic based upon mutual agreement, respect and understanding. Although the Arctic tends to prioritize the A-5 states (the United States of America, Canada, Russia, Denmark and Norway) it does serve as a global common as the majority of land does not belong to one particular country, rather all of them. With that being said, there have been many claims for land in the Arctic however none have been internationally accepted even if some countries recognize claims mutually. Territorial disputes are very important to discuss when talking about the militarization of the Arctic as they only way countries can legally employ military force is when they have sovereignty over the area, which only happens when the area is theirs and not in a territorial dispute.

During the cold war especially, many feared that these territorial disputes would lead to war. Because of this, the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) was implemented in 1959 and prohibits military activities, nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste. However, this treaty only exists in Antarctica, yet other parts of the Arctic, particularly parts closer to countries and thus have territorial disputes do not have this same treaty. However, the Arctic council was established in 1996 from the Ottawa Declaration which is composed of the United States of America, Finland, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Russia, Norway, and Sweden. This council was formed in order to address concerns relating to Arctic governments and those who live in the Arctic Circle. They are not allowed to discuss the militarization of the Arctic.

Definition of Key Terms

Arctic States

This group includes countries that border the arctic region thus making them the founding members of the arctic council. These member states are the United States of America, Canada, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

This is a military allegiance formed after World War II in hopes to strengthen international relations with countries along the Atlantic Ocean.

Territorial Claim

This occurs when a country claims sovereignty over a certain section of land. Sometimes it can be over land that is already sovereign by another country or it can include claiming sovereignty of land that is unclaimed or belonging to everyone, such as Antarctica. Often, Territorial claims are backed by either law, geography, or history.

General Overview

For the most part, only members of the Arctic Council are involved in territorial disputes due to geopolitics. However, many other countries, most notably China and Japan have tried to militarize in the Arctic Circle. For information about specific country details see section titled “Major Parties Involved and Their Views”

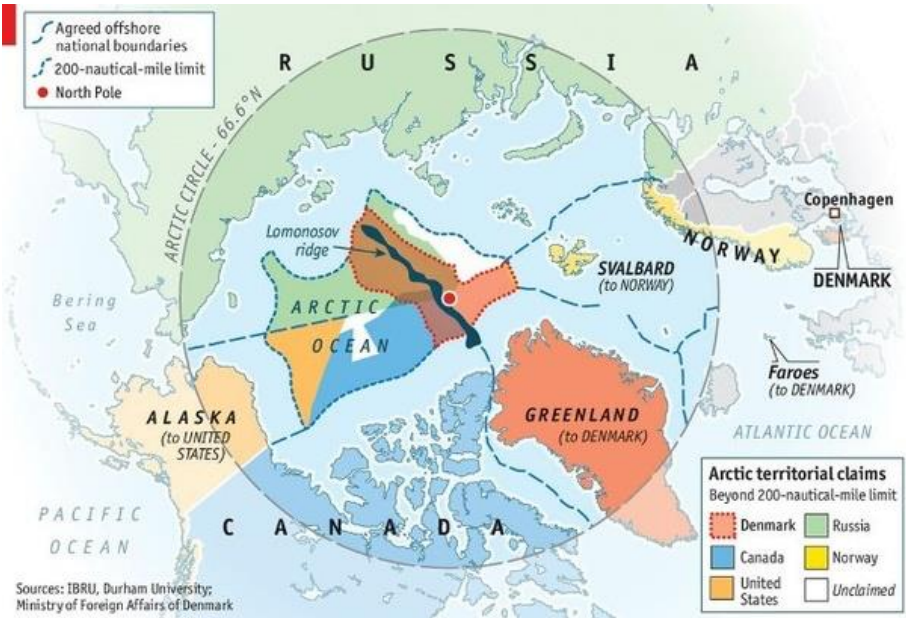


Figure 1: Map of Territorial Claims in the Arctic

Lomonosov Ridge Dispute

This dispute has become more prominent as it began recently and it involves three Arctic states: Canada, Russia and Denmark. In the early 2000's, Russia claimed that the Lomonosov Ridge which reaches all the North Pole is an extension of Russian soil on Eurasia and therefore has the ability to exercise sovereignty. Although this ridge is underwater, if they countries have it as their own they also gain harvesting rights and the ability to build artificial islands. In 2013 and 2014, Denmark and Canada made similar claims to Russia saying that this ridge was extensions of their continental shelves. No clear consensus was made about who the Lomonosov Ridge belonged to as not enough research was made. Other countries such as the United States believe that this land is simply an oceanic ridge and thus cannot be claimed by anyone.

Hans Island Dispute

Hans Island is a 1.3 square kilometer island located in the Kennedy Channel, a crucial route in the Northwest Passage. Although the Danish flag has been placed there previously, Canada formally protests that as they believe the island is their territory. Negotiations have been going on for almost 8 years however the results are still inconclusive and will most likely lead to the island being split in half.

Military presence

When a country has control over the Arctic region, they are in complete control of the region's resources and future. Many countries want this control so they can use the Arctic airways for military aircrafts in case of war. Russia, Canada and Denmark are among three of the countries to recently increase military activity in the region.

Russia equipped six new military bases in the Arctic in hopes to regain the military presence it had during the Cold War. Russia also planned in 2016 to move hundreds of military service men to these bases, all of which lie on the northern shore of the country or outlying islands. They also aggressively planned for 10 Arctic search and rescue stations, 16 deep water ports, 13 airfields and 10 air defense radar stations. Russians continuously use the Arctic airspace during the summer as training for the military as well

Alongside Russia, Canada also has increased its military presence in the arctic recently. The country has 13 ice breakers alongside multiple patrol vessels. Alongside the US and Denmark, Canada



conducts military exercises in the arctic airways. For information about specific military operations look into Operation Nunavut and Operation Nanook

Denmark has also increased military activity in the Arctic circle, largely because of its sovereignty over the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Denmark has combined the separate commands of these islands to create the Arctic Command which primary mandate is to maintain Danish sovereignty in both Greenland and the Faroe Islands. However, this command also conducts search and rescue and environmental inspections in the areas and the waters surrounding.

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

UNCLOS is a major aspect of legislature as it is one of the few that discussed what countries are allowed to do when it comes to oceans and seas. This convention gives a set 12-mile territorial zone and 200-mile economic zone where other member states are not allowed to extract or drill.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

China is one of the few countries who has no geographical relations to the region yet is very involved in the militarization. Since 2013, China has served as a permanent observer of the Arctic council even though it can not vote. Chinese research teams have increased drastically over the past two decades mainly due to China's joining of the International Arctic Science Committee in 1996.

Canada

Although Canada's military presence was previously discussed, their role in the militarization of the Arctic is still important. As they occupy a large section of the region (40%), they have a lot of control over the future of the Arctic. Military bases have also been created in the Canadian Arctic. Canada often takes a more cultural approach to territorial disputes and regulations as they house 2 million Inuit people. Canada often collaborates with the United States as both have similar geographical territorial claims around Alaska. Regarding the previously mentioned Operation Nanook, this operation has been held annually since 2007 and takes place across the Yukon and other northern territories. The goal of the operation is to exert Canadian influence and sovereignty in the region while



maintaining strategic foreign relations by training American, British and Danish armed forces alongside Canadian armed forces.

Norway

As Norway has direct access to the arctic ocean, they focus more on environmental impact while showing concern from Russia's heavy military approach. Although Norway moved their military command into the Arctic circle in 2010, their military presence is still not strong partly due to the passive nature of the country.

Russia

As explained previously, Russia not only makes aggressive territorial claims but also has the strongest military presence in the region. Many other nations, particularly those in NATO, are extremely concerned by this increasing presence. The many bases and oil rigs are very controversial for those who want to demilitarize the Arctic.



Figure 2: Russia's Militarization of Arctic

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
February 20 th , 1907	Canadian senator drafted a resolution that gave Canada control of all land between Canada and the North Pole.
April 15 th , 1926	The Soviet Union created the Arctic Decree which went against the previous Canadian resolution by saying all land between the USSR and the North Pole were under USSR control,
March 13 th , 1974	A bilateral agreement between Canada and Denmark on the continental shelf (a largely disputed area) went into force.
November 16 th 1994	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is implemented after 60 signatures. This document allowed for a framework on how to handle areas that are beyond a states sovereign area.
September 19 th , 1996	The Ottawa Declaration forms the Arctic Council which is composed of 8 countries who have land bordering the Arctic Circle.
December 31 st , 2012	Shell Oil's Conical Drilling Unit (CDU) drills from Arctic land, helping environmentalists prove their point that oil companies should not be allowed in the Arctic.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The biggest UN involvement in this issue would be the creation of the UNCLOS which has been previously discussed. However, this convention still doesn't set clear framework for international waters, militarization and the use of airways. The resolutions passed by the UN are either extremely outdated as they were discussed during the Cold War or pertaining to the environment/human rights which will not be discussed in this committee.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The biggest problem with the current attempts to solve the issue is that there has never been a clear consensus. Even with the territorial disputes that plague the region, very few have been solved and are internationally recognized. As countries are focusing on small areas of land, take the Hans island for example, they do not step back and see the bigger picture. It



also doesn't work in the issues favor that this only concerns 8 or so nations. The lack of international pressure or even acknowledgment makes governments believe they can still do whatever they want with few repercussions. The Arctic council was a necessary coalition, however the fact that they are not allowed to discuss militarization makes them almost useless in this case as they cannot hold each other accountable.

Possible Solutions

If the Arctic is ever to be demilitarized, the territorial disputes must come to an end. The years and years of petty negotiations take attention away from the main issue at hand. Naturally, this isn't as easy as it sounds. However, framework needs to be introduced to make this process move along.

In order to fully focus of the security of the region, the Arctic council must renew its agenda and allow for militarization to be discussed. The lack of discussion about this topic is hindering peace and security and countries are under no scrutiny to disclose their plans which could result in another Cold War.

For beneficial action, this issue needs to engage more than the 8 neighboring countries. This would most likely happen once territorial disputes are settled however framework needs to be introduced to ensure a full global collaboration. This could possibly relate to increasing the number of permanent observes in the Arctic council or even giving other nations the right to vote on decisions. After all, the future of the Arctic effects all of us, not just those in the circle.

Bibliography

" Polar Powers: Russia's Bid for Supremacy in the Arctic Ocean ." *Financial Times*, Financial Times, www.ft.com/content/2fa82760-5c4a-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40.

Elizabeth Buchanan Mathieu Boulègue. "Russia's Military Exercises in the Arctic Have More Bark Than Bite." *Foreign Policy*, Foreign Policy, 20 May 2019, www.foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/20/russias-military-exercises-in-the-arctic-have-more-bark-than-bite/.

Lanteigne, Marc. "The Changing Shape of Arctic Security." *NATO Review*, Nato Review, 28 June 2019, www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/06/28/the-changing-shape-of-arctic-security/index.html.



“Militarizing the Arctic.” *GERMAN*, 15 Nov. 2010, www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/news/detail/5078/.

Overthecircle. “Militarisation in the Arctic: Views from the United Kingdom.” *Over the Circle*, 25 Aug. 2018, www.overthecircle.com/2018/08/25/militarisation-in-the-arctic-views-from-the-united-kingdom/.

“Overview - Convention & Related Agreements.” *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm.

Problems of Militarization of the Arctic in the Modern Period, 2015, www.csef.ru/en/politica-i-geopolitica/501/problemy-militarizaczii-arktiki-v-sovremennyj-period-6440

Singh, Abhijit. “The Creeping Militarization of the Arctic.” – *The Diplomat*, 27 Nov. 2019, www.thediplomat.com/2013/10/the-creeping-militarization-of-the-arctic/.

