

Forum:*Security Council*

Issue: *The Issue of Militarization in the Arctic*  
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1. **Introduction**

Many states are developing interests in the Arctic region especially with its popularity sprout over the past decade. Some countries not directly bordering the arctic believe that its natural riches are the property of all human kind, especially considering that the arctic as a whole cannot be claimed by one nation for its self. Therefor they argue that its resources should be developed in the framework of the broadest possible international cooperation. The Arctic is newly mainly utilized for military enhancements by its bordering nations. The absence of security framework, and the lack of proper land division by arctic nations has led to the uncontrolled advancement of military bases and sea-based technologies. Considering the competition for control over this region, it is undergoing militarization in several areas. The Arctic powers in recent years have seen a substantial rise in the number of vessels belonging to different nations. The issue lies within the ability of these states to co-exist in the arctic and continue with developing their weaponry, in addition to the demands of non-arctic bordering countries for a claim of resources and space to advance their own weaponry and military program. This is even expected to further develop as the ice sheets and glaciers in the arctic are melting away, hence leaving more room for human industrialization and making it easier to do as such.

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1. **Definition of Key Terms**

**The Arctic**

The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of Earth. It is currently an area which many countries are competing for, aimed at various uses and resources.

**Militarization**

Militarization is the process where society organizes its self for military conflict and violence. In this case the Arctic is being militarized by war technologies in the fight for resources, and land.

**Arctic nations**

Arctic nations are the members of the arctic council representing six indigenous populations, this includes:

* Canada
* Kingdom of Denmark [Greenland & The Faroe Islands]
* Finland
* Iceland
* Norway
* Sweden
* Russia
* USA

**Territorial dispute**

Territorial dispute iswhen a country claims sovereignty over a determined part of land, as an example, in the Arctic the bordering nations, and even non geographically correlated countries are claiming the various land sectors and resources.

When there is a disagreement between these countries in their claims for territory, there is a territorial dispute.

**UNCLOS**

The United Nations convention on the Law of the sea is an international treaty concerning the territorial sea, continental shelf, contiguous zones, and the conservation of living resources

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**Battle for the arctic**

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Arctic became a strategic location for the allies (USA, USSR, and Britain) for transport of weapons and supplies, against Germany. As the Cold War emerged in the 1950s, the Arctic became a crucial stage in the stand-off between superpowers. Radar stations were built across the region, with territories of military personnel a permanent fixture in many locations. Aerial surveys developed the most accurate maps yet, fueling wrangles over sovereignty.

With climate changes taking a toll on the region’s protective shield of ice, the lands, sea and natural resources of the Arctic are now being caught in the dispute for the merging frontier. As Arctic states along with few that have no arctic boarders but are angling for access to the regions stores if resources, can’t agree on the division of these trophies a new cold war emerges.

**Sovereignty and Governance**

Most nations beyond and within the arctic will be affected by developments in the Arctic because the region’s shipping, fishing, energy, and mineral production, scientific research, tourism, and other activities affect their security and economic prosperity.

The Arctic is administered according to the domestic laws and regulations of each Arctic state within its territory, but is also subject to regional, bilateral and international agreements. The Arctic Council is the principle international forum for regional collaboration and partnership. The all-encompassing legal framework that governs activities on, over, and beneath the Arctic is the UN convention known as the UNCLOS (1982 UN convention on the law of the Sea). It has settled a number of important issues related to ocean usage and state sovereignty.

By virtue of UNCLOS, each coastal Arctic state is granted control over all living and nonliving natural resources within its limited economic zone, this includes marine life stocks and hydrocarbons, but is not limited to the such.

In 2008, the five littoral Arctic Ocean nations reaffirmed their commitment to the law of the sea in the Arctic with a declaration called the Ilulissat Declaration, but a few sovereignty disputes persist.

The United States, European Union, and others maintain that the Northwest Passage is an international channel with free navigation rights, while Canada asserts that it is an inland waterway over which it upholds exclusive jurisdiction.

The United States also questions the Kremlin’s claims that parts of the Northern Sea Route above Siberia are internal Russian waters. At the same time, Denmark and Canada both claim Hans Island, an uninhabited piece of land in the center of Nares Strait. Finally, several states have laid competing entitlements to the seabed, and any resources beneath it of an undersea mountain range bisecting the Arctic Ocean, mainly due to the presence of fossil fuels and oil.

**The beginning of militarization**

Western nations plan to intensify their joint military cooperation in the Arctic. The most important priorities mentioned by these nations include the creation of multiparty rapid reaction naval forces, an icebreaker fleet, civil defense forces for use in natural and synthetic disasters, and a unified system for training recruits for these amenities.

The upsurge in the number of military exercises taking place in the Arctic are considered part of such cooperation. Many of these exercises have been carried out and will keep on being performed in the region. For example:

* In 2008, Canada conducted some of the largest exercises in the history of its military presence in the Arctic.
* 2 American submarines participated in an Ice Exercise in 2009, intended to test operations under Arctic circumstances and guarantee the security of scientific research.
* In that same year of 2009, in January a massive exercise of sappers and explosives technicians occurred under NATO’s sponsorship off the northern coast of Norway. This exercise, the “Explosives Ordnance Disposal Exercise”, involved specialists from ten countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Estonia, and Turkey. Where it aimed to train teams of specialists in the extreme settings of the Arctic.

As noted the Arctic Nations have enhanced the modernization of their armed forces through the use of the arctic settings to their advantages, and even tested their technologies in their designated zones. But they will not stop there, since with the evolution of technology and military machineries countries obviously have plans to modernize their armies, especially the navy. The united states as an example has set plans to upgrade their heavy icebreaker fleet, one of the vital instruments for ensuring access to the natural resources the Arctic provides. Which shows that these military advancements are aimed at protecting and improving the quality of research, assets, and territory in the area. Some states such as Norway and Russia are even making further operational use of naval forces to defend their economic interests in the region.

The threatening tendency toward the militarization of the Arctic is clearly evident. It is critical that the whole international community consider finding mutually acceptable solutions to prevent the escalation of negative trends.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**Canada**

Canada involves a great part of the Arctic and has well-characterized plans to mine the region. The Canadian ministry of Foreign Affairs records power over the region as one of their needs in worldwide relations with individual Arctic states. The Canadian state has communicated different entitlements, and Canada's foreign minister has communicated that his nation is examining the conceivable outcomes of scientific (geological) research to see to what degree the Canadian region stretches out into the continental shelf. In the event that the continental shelf from the Canadian territory expands well into the Ice, this could imply that the province of Canada has a legitimate case to the land, and its assets. An issue with this is, regardless of whether the case was real, the other asserting nations could never recognize the claims communicated by Canada.

**Russian Federation**

Another state seeking after interests in the Arctic is the Russian Federation. The Federation has a continental shelf that covers well into the Arctic. This implies that Russia really trusts that the resources and assets of the belong to them. Numerous Russian investigations have been embraced in the zone, and some Russian oil apparatuses are now set up. This has caused a lot of disagreement, particularly since it is regularly reputed that the oil platforms will be joined by military bases. This is viewed as a danger for the security of the other Arctic states, and this is the reason all involved parties have an interest for averting militarization, not only Russian but also any state that is part of the conflict.

**United States of America (Alaska)**

The United States is also involved in the fight for resources present in the Arctic regions. Alaska is a US state which lies in part in the Arctic region, and the continental shelf of the US is thought to extend into the Arctic region relatively far. The US is, in terms of economic and military conflict, an opponent to other powers in the region, and there has been a strain on the relationship between them and the Russian Federation. De-escalation of contentions in the area is of essential significance to prevent further clashes between the nations and future war.

**Kingdom of Denmark (Greenland)**

The Kingdom of Denmark is also part of this conflict, since Greenland is part of the Arctic. Greenland is rich with assets, and under international maritime law, the properties of this land could pertain to Denmark. Although, this is a source of dispute for the other nations involved. Since a stalemate has been achieved, where strife can be an obstacle for really investigating the Arctic district.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| Date | Event | Description |
| September 28, 1945 | US president issues a declaration asserting Jurisdiction over all natural resources of the subsoil and sea bed of America’s continental shelf | In doing so, president Harry Truman reinvents the definition of the notion of sovereignty on the high seas, which was formerly known end three nautical miles from shore |
| April 29, 1958 | A UN conference accepts the Convention on the Continental Shelf, which arranges Truman’s claim in international law. | The treaty, which is later endorsed by every Arctic state except Iceland, permits sovereign rights over continental shelf resources up to a limit of 200 meters deep at which the exploitation of natural resources is technically achievable. |
| December 10, 1982 | A UN negotiation for the signing of the Convention on the Law of the Sea takes place | This convention grants coastal states an exclusive economic zone where they are permitted to assert governance over the territory, even past the 200 nautical mile limit, if they are able to prove that the seabed is geologically an extended part of their continental shelf. |
| 1994 | The Convention on the Law of the Sea is entered into force and is ratified by every Arctic nation except the United States |  |
| August 7-17, 2007 | Canada holds its first series of annual military exercises in the Arctic | According to the commander of Canada Command, “The Canadian forces operations in Canada’s North are an important dimension toward ensuring the protection of Canadian Sovereignty” |
| December 10, 2013 | Russians publically mention paying special attention to military units in the Arctic and intensifying the protection of its security and national interests there |  |
| February 28, 2014 | The U.S Navy issues a road map for enlarging its presence in the Arctic after 2020 |  |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

The UN is majorly involved in the situation in the Arctic, it was the driving force behind the Antarctic Treaty, indicating that it has knowledge and motivation to improve the international concern on this issue. Regarding resolutions, treaties and further UN documents there is not much focusing directly on the issue of the militarization of the Arctic Region. Instead the documents target the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, and the interest of the parties involved, this includes:

* The United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea:

This document describes the different aspects of sovereignty that can be exercised by the member states over the parts of the sea. This includes the maritime law, which as mentioned is part of Denmark’s case for claiming the resources of the Arctic, and in discussing the conflict over vessels and oil rigs.

* Sustainable development of Arctic human settlements, 20 April 2007, **(HSP/GC/21/5):**

This resolution targets the living conditions of the indigenous tribes and their people who live in the Arctic. This includes the changes undergoing the environment especially in the climate and the ice sheets in the region.

* General and complete disarmament, 15 December 1989, **(A/RES/44/116 L):**

This is a resolution that deals with the disputes between the member states over the territory and the resources that accompany the territory, since the economic zones of each Arctic state don’t include the seabed, which is the essential asset in the harvesting of oil, within the region.

* The United Nations charter also discusses this issue, in chapter VI which mentions the Pacific settlement of disputes:

Articles 33 to 38 in the United nations charter address the disputes and the interference of the Security council in their freedom of investigating these issues.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Previous attempts to solve the issue can be considered both successful and unsuccessful in preventing and stopping the militarization of the Arctic. Some are pivotal in the slowing down of these advancements and different nations overstepping territories for resources. Despite this, tensions remain unsolved since the development of military technologies and the improvement of armed forces are a vital for the defense of the economic zones in the Arctic. The existing measures have been effective to limited extents, but not durable as tensions will indeed continue to rise.

The most effective of these attempts is the UNCLOS, as it has settled the issue of territorial claims, and somewhat eliminated the threat over land disputes, not includes the seabed.

1. Possible Solutions

One of the route problems to the militarization of the Arctic is the available mineral resources, and the struggle to decide on the division of the seabed for the extraction of oil. Which is why the rationing of the resources should be considered for solving this issue. Knowing that the seabed cannot be equally divided between the Arctic nations, and have the same mineral wealth in each sector, it is only reasonable that an agreement is signed where none of the nations have jurisdiction over the seabed, and can take action in the extraction of fossil fuels. In the case where a nation refuses to sign, it is under the UNCLOS to prohibit them of the economic zone granted which allows control over all living and nonliving natural resources including fish stocks, and more.

To prevent a war at sea between 6 different nations, there should be restrictions set that limit the advancement of basing any fleets from any of the Arctic states in the Arctic. This should be done through a treaty which states that: each nation entitled to an economic zone or any nation correlated with the United Nations should be prohibited to situate any military base or fleet within the Arctic region under the privilege of owning an economic zone, or any privileges provided by the UN. If there are any present military bases or fleets then they should be relocated to areas not pertaining to the Arctic region or any restricted areas for that certain nation. This will be enforced through a series of restrictions and consequences that will apply to any non-enforcing nations of this agreement.

In addition to that, any more restrictions to the development of the militarization of the Arctic can be included in the UNCLOS treaty through a reunion conference where amendments are made to the treaty under the supervision of UN regulators and generals.

1. Guiding Questions

* How do non-Arctic nations play a role in escalating or deescalating the militarization of the Arctic?
* Will this solution improve the situation in the Arctic or escalate in in terms of resulting in other disputes behind its implementation?
* Are there any loop holes in the UNCLOS that some nations could circumnavigate their way around? If so, what are they and how can we prevent this?
* What factors in a treaty produce friction in the international community?
* Is a territory under an international framework the most suitable?
* Why would Arctic nations oblige by the UNCLOS if they have the power to take over the economic zones of other nations and claim the seabed?
* What is the significance of the militarization of the Arctic region in specific and are there any alternative locations which this can take place?
* What future developments can be foreseen in the arctic region that can affect the militarization?
* Could the Arctic potentially surface the grudges of the cold war between the USA and Russia?
* What are some of the limitations that the UN pertains to as the international central facilitator?
* What measures might interfering parties take to claim the resources in the Arctic and how can they be prevented from interfering by the UN

1. Appendices and useful links
2. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vi/index.html>
3. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275805303_The_Arctic_at_the_Crossroads_of_Geopolitical_Interests>
4. <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/emerging-arctic?cid=otr_marketing_use-arctic_Infoguide%2523!#!/emerging-arctic?cid=otr_marketing_use-arctic_Infoguide%2523!>
5. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-russia-should-not-be-feared-the-arctic-18192>
6. <https://newint.org/features/2009/07/01/arctic-history>
7. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275805303_The_Arctic_at_the_Crossroads_of_Geopolitical_Interests/download>
8. <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2018/10/24/militarization-arctic-issue-incredible-importance-not-given-due-attention-to/>
9. <https://thediplomat.com/2013/10/the-creeping-militarization-of-the-arctic/>
10. <https://www.iucn.org/theme/marine-and-polar/our-work/international-ocean-governance/unclos>
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