



Security Council

Student Officer: Salma Abdel Samie

Maintaining International Security in the Arctic Circle Region

1. Introduction

1.1 The Region

The Arctic is a polar region in the northernmost part of Earth and it mainly consists of the Arctic Ocean, 14 million km². Moreover, the region has a total of 18.5 million km² of mainland and 7.9 million km² of islands. An approximate population of 4 million people are currently living the area, out of which only 400,000 are indigenous. The Arctic Circle Region is marked as one of the five major circles of latitude on maps of our planet. Furthermore, due to the Earth's shifting axial tilt, which is a result of the Moon's orbit, and other manmade factors such as global warming, the Arctic Circle is drifting north about 15 kilometers per year. The Arctic Circle passes through a total of seven countries: the United States of America, Greenland, Canada, Russia, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

1.2 Conflict

1.2.1 The Cold War Past

During the 1950s, the Arctic region was put in the spotlight as militarizing super-powers such as the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in an extensive scientific and arms race. Submarines came into the focus of military strategists as it

served in helping navies with hit-and-run tactics, using the waters beneath ice caps as shelters. After the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik satellite and exploded the Vanguard rocket, the United States decided to catch up through the Arctic seeing that it enabled the Americans to operate in the influence zone of the Soviets unless they created something similar to the American Nautilus mission. Four years later, the Soviet Union did so and as a result, both sides engaged in a prolonged game of cat and mouse in order to prepare for a war that never came.

1.2.2 Ongoing Tensions

Seeing that the Arctic circle is significantly resourceful and would potentially provide a given controlling country extensive symbolic power over the North Pole and various other additions, a number of conflicts concerning territorial claims rose over the years. For example, Canada and Denmark both claim the Hans Island and so far, both governments regard the conflict as a long-standing issue with negotiations still taking place. Moreover, another conflict concerns three different countries: the Russian Federation, Canada, and Denmark over the Lomonosov Ridge. Finally, serious conflicts may rise between two NATO-nations, Canada and the US, over the part-time ice free North West passage.

2. Definitions of Key Terms

Militarize |'milətə,rīz|:

1. give (something, especially an organization) a military character or style: *militarized police forces.*
2. equip or supply (a place) with soldiers and other military resources: *a militarized security zone.*

Climate Change |'klīmit CHānj|:

a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

The Arctic Circle |THĒ 'ärktik 'særkəl|:

The Arctic Circle is the largest network of international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic. It is an open democratic platform with participation from governments, organizations, corporations, universities, think tanks, environmental associations, indigenous communities, concerned citizens, and others interested in the development of the Arctic and its consequences for the future of the globe. It is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization.

Cold War |'kouɫ(d) 'wɔ(ə)r|:

a state of political hostility between countries characterized by threats, propaganda, and other measures short of open warfare, in particular:

- (the Cold War) the state of political hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the US-led Western powers from 1945 to 1990.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Climate Change

One of the most prominent global issues of the 21st century is the climate change that resulted of various human activities that pollute and contaminate Earth and its natural resources. The security challenges relevant to the Arctic Region are naturally linked to climate change processes, in particular, global warming. In the High North most of the threats are of a non-military character. As a result of the climate change phenomena, the ice covering the Arctic is melting at a rapid rate. Also, due to the ice-albedo effect, global warming has an even greater impact on the Poles than other regions on Earth. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) assumes the warming is twice the usual speed; a similar estimate was made by the Royal Society.

3.2 Resources

In 2008, the United States Geological Survey conducted a comprehensive analysis of the region that noted a total oil and natural gas resource of 412 billion barrels of oil equivalent. Moreover, the survey concluded that the Arctic holds about

22% of the world's undiscovered conventional oil and natural gas resources in total. Furthermore, these riches are not distributed evenly between Eurasia and North America: Eurasia is estimated to hold about 63% while America holds just about 36% in total of all resources available. Despite the significant difference in control of the resources, one must bear in mind that the Eurasian percentage is divided amongst five different countries and the American is divided amongst only two.

3.3 Tensions and Militarization

Ever since the decline of the Soviet Union, various territorial claims were solved through the usage of international law yet, some conflicts were left unsolved. A conflict of such kind exists in both Canada's and Denmark's claim over the Hans Islands. The continental shelf treaty of 1973/74 between Canada and Denmark enlists a number of points determining the maritime border between Greenland and Canada. The Hans Island, however, is located exactly on the line between two such points. In March 2004, both governments regarded the conflict as a long-standing issue, but both governments do not take the issue too seriously. Still, negotiations continue whether the island will be divided or become a condominium.

Another of such unsolved conflicts includes a very serious dispute over the Lomonosov Ridge, an underwater ridge separating the Eurasian Basin from the Amerasian Basin. Canada, the Denmark, and Russian Federation all claim the ridge as an extension of their continental shelf. This ridge would enable them to extend their harvesting rights as well as aids them in the development of various artificial islands. Moreover, there is a more significant importance to claiming the ridge as it is located near the North Pole which symbolically allows the one to claim the ridge to exercise a certain influence over the North Pole.

Finally, other tensions include one between two NATO-nations, the US and Canada, as they hold different views on the territorial rights of the North West passage. While Canada regards the Passage as internal waters due to the Canadian Arctic Archipelago and thus deny all other countries passage, the US and the EU regard it as an international strait granting Canada only fishing and environmental regulations and all other countries transit passage.

4. Major Parties involved

4.1 The Arctic Council

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 by the Ottawa declaration as an International organization. It was designed as a forum for coordination and cooperation amongst its member states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation and the US) with the involvement of indigenous people.

As of recent concerns, the council deliberately left security out of its Mandate and chose to focus on environmental and scientific issues, encouraging a prolonged period of global peace. Furthermore, any agreement reached within the Council is not legally binding. But still, the Arctic Council is currently the best tool at hand when it comes to conflict prevention in the region. Conclusively, a major weakness lays within their intergovernmental obligation for a consensus reached amongst the Council's members.

4.2 UNCLOS 1982

UNCLOS is considered to be the predominant legal regime governing the seas, but it remains doubtful among scholars whether it has already become customary law. UNCLOS determines the legal status of seas as following. Although the list lacks completeness, it contains all legal aspects relevant for the Arctic.

- Base line: the low-water-line along the coast, except where the coastline is unstable and deeply indented or cut into and where islands are located in the immediate vicinity of the coastline, a straight baseline is applied. Hence, all the following terms are measured.
- Internal waters: all waters on the landward side of the base line. Here, the coastal state is free to exercise its sovereignty and no rite of passage is granted.

- Territorial waters: 12 nm into the sea from the base line. Innocent passage is allowed; this does not include fishing and military practice. Military ships may pass and underwater vehicles are required to navigate on the surface.
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): from the edge of the territorial waters to 200 nm from the baseline. The coastal state has the sole exploitation rights of any resources in the area.
- Continental shelf: the natural prolongation of the land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nm from the baseline, whichever is greater. It may not exceed 350 nm from the baseline or 100 nm from the 2500 isobaths. The coastal state has the sole harvesting rights of minerals, not living material and living material attached to the seabed.

4.3 UN Shelf Commission

Considering UNCLOS, any signatory to UNCLOS can make a claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf which would then allow coastal nations to identify and solidify the outer limits of its continental shelf and so, preventing further negotiations and conflicts over territories and unclear nation borders.

5. Evaluation of Previous Attempts

Most to all previous attempts to resolve the problems at hand were militant and often violent attempts which only ignites a worse flame between conflicting nations.

Looking at Canada, it takes a whole-of-government approach towards the area, using all resources available and accepting all possible consequences - including the estimated costs of increased military spending (\$8.6 billion). This makes Canada an aggressive nation in the area which further increases political tensions. This attempt would be somewhat effective if the conflict were between them and a single other less powerful nation however, this conflict is against leading nations and those that

are part of the NATO, meaning that any 'accidental' violence in the area would lead to severe consequences.

6. Possible Solutions

The facts above show that the Arctic is a hot Topic but not a hot spot. Due to the recent conflict in Ukraine, a cooling down of relations between Russia and the NATO can be noticed which results in a race to increase one's influence. It is necessary to distribute responsibility among the Arctic states and a cooling down of emotions and nationalist approach, especially by Russia and Canada is inevitable for a sustainable solution. Vital is a coherent link of each nation into the regional security architecture.

A resolution should recommend either a change of the Arctic Council's mandate or propose a new regional security architecture, and provide an answer to the military movements.

It could also answer specific territorial claims, define NATO's role in the Arctic, and set the environment for a consensus on the Northwest Passage and the resources.

7. Bibliography

- <http://www.arcticcircle.org/about/about>
- <http://www.universetoday.com/41636/the-arctic-circle/>
- <http://hir.harvard.edu/the-arctic-a-place-apart/>
- <https://www.ufrgs.br/ufrgsmun/2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Militarization-of-the-Arctic-Political-Economic-and-Climate-Changes.pdf>
- <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/security-arctic/id2351274/>
- http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/0039.html
- http://www.srcf.ucam.org/cumuns/joomla/documents/study_guides/1%20DISEC%20-%20Topics%20A%20&%20B.pdf
- New Oxford American Dictionary