

Forum: General Assembly 1

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TOPIC 2: The issue of the division of the Arctic territory

LibGuide

I. Introduction to the Topic

The division of the Arctic territory is a complex topic with extensive global repercussions. This vast, frigid region, which encircles the Arctic Ocean and landmasses belonging to Canada, Russia, the United States, Norway, Denmark (through Greenland), and Iceland, is an issue of worldwide concern connecting to the question regarding “How do we ensure sustainability through multilateral cooperation?”. This issue is essentially about territorial disputes, the exploitation of important natural resources (such as oil, gas, minerals, and fisheries), environmental conservation in the face of rapid climate change, and the region's rising accessibility due to melting ice. As the Arctic's ice cover recedes, new shipping routes and resource opportunities emerge, increasing competitiveness and creating environmental, security, and geopolitical concerns that necessitate effective diplomacy and international cooperation to maintain the region's long-term growth and stability.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Arctic territory

An internationally autonomous zone on the Northernmost Global pole.

Territorial disputes (boundary dispute)

A disagreement over the possession or control of land between two or more political entities.

Resource Extraction

The Arctic is rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas, minerals, and fish. Disputes over the division of Arctic territory often involve access to and control over these valuable resources.

Environmental Concerns

The Arctic is particularly vulnerable to climate change, and the melting of polar ice caps has raised concerns about the environmental impact of increased human activity in the region, such as oil drilling and shipping.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), coastal states have rights over the resources in their EEZ, which extends 200 nautical miles from their coastlines. Disputes in the Arctic often involve the extent of EEZs and the resources within them.

Arctic Council

The Arctic Council is a forum for the eight Arctic states and indigenous organizations to discuss and cooperate on issues related to the Arctic, including environmental protection, sustainable development, and security.

Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

States with overlapping claims in the Arctic often seek to resolve their differences through negotiations and agreements. These agreements can be bilateral (between two states) or multilateral (involving multiple states).

III. Key Stakeholders

Russia - Russia has a substantial presence in the Arctic and has made vast territorial claims in the region. It has spent money on military infrastructure and is actively seeking and producing oil and gas reserves in the Arctic.

Canada - Canada has territorial claims in the Arctic and is interested in preserving its sovereignty in the region. It also conducts resource exploration, particularly in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

Norway - Norway has a long history of Arctic exploration and is a key participant in Barents Sea offshore oil and gas development. It has also attempted to strike a balance between economic and environmental concerns.

Denmark (Greenland) - Denmark has territorial claims in the Arctic and is interested in possible mineral resources through its independent territory Greenland.

United States of America - The United States has strategic interests in the Arctic, particularly in Alaska's security and the Northern Sea Route. It also conducts Arctic research and intends to increase its military presence in the region.

China - Due to the possibilities for resource extraction, access to new shipping routes, and geopolitical influence, China has demonstrated increased interest in

the Arctic. China has applied for Arctic Council observer status and has engaged in a variety of economic and research operations in the region.

IV. Key Issues Including Background Information

Recent transformation of the Arctic

The geopolitical environment of the Arctic has been impacted by the renewal of the great power competition. This area is now being viewed as an arena for geopolitical competition among the United States, Russia, and China even though there is continually significant multilateral cooperation on Arctic problems. As a result of the significant ice melting, easier access to natural resources and new maritime routes are now revealed, which increases global attention on a variety of

Political and security concerns

Outside the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allows all states to enjoy the rights of navigation, overflight, fishing, scientific investigation and resource exploitation along with exploration, including in parts of the Arctic Ocean. Despite the fact that a basic legal framework existed, new challenges posed a threat to the Arctic's peace and stability. These issues include: opposing North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russian alliance structures inherited from the Cold War era; Arctic military deployments; bilateral territorial disputes; legal claims concerning the outer limits of continental shelves; disagreements on the legal status of the Northeast and Northwest Passage; nontraditional security issues such as catastrophic oil spills, environmental disasters, and maritime search and rescue responses as well. Along with an increase in the number of geopolitical concerns, even non-controversial environmental protection has developed both national and international security inferences.

Russian militarization of the Arctic continues

Russia, as an Arctic nation itself with a long history in this region, has certain interests there. On the other hand, this nation's growing militarization is posing a threat to the Arctic's security. Russia is also motivated to play such an active role in the Arctic for three reasons: its interests in this region's security aspect, the significant economic potential the Arctic has, and the low-risk promotion of Russian nationalism as well. Besides, Russia shows a series of statement activities in the Arctic territory including releasing a new naval doctrine and undertaking often-aggressive flights.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1920	Svalbard Treaty: The Treaty of Svalbard (also known as the Spitsbergen Treaty) awarded Norway sovereignty over the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard while granting other signatory countries certain rights to engage in economic activity in the territory.
1973	Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR): Despite not being in the Arctic, this convention, which governs fishing in the Southern Ocean, established a precedent for international collaboration in polar regions and sparked talks about Arctic protection.
1982	Adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which established the legal framework for the use of ocean resources, including the Arctic Ocean. It establishes guidelines for territorial seas, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and the continental shelf.
1996	Ilulissat Declaration: Five Arctic coastal states (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States) signed the Ilulissat Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to addressing Arctic concerns peacefully and in accordance with current international law, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
2008	The Lomonosov Ridge Claims: In 2001, Russia presented to the United Nations a claim to extend its Arctic continental shelf based on the Lomonosov Ridge. A Russian submarine raised a titanium flag near the North Pole on the seafloor in 2007, symbolically claiming its claim. This event drew international notice and sparked debate.
2010	Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement: The Arctic Council, a platform for Arctic cooperation, drafted and ratified the Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement.
2013	Arctic Council Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response: Arctic Council member states, including Russia, signed this agreement to strengthen coordination in dealing with oil spills in the Arctic.
2015	United States Assumes Arctic Council Chairmanship: The United States assumed Arctic Council chairmanship in 2015, concentrating on climate change, adaptation, and sustainable development in the region.

2019	Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement: Negotiations between Arctic coastline states and other stakeholders resulted in an agreement to prohibit unregulated commercial fishing in the central Arctic Ocean's high seas until more about the region's ecosystem is known.
Ongoing	Territorial Claims and Disputes: Several Arctic states, including Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, and Russia, have continuing territorial claims and disputes over Arctic regions and continental shelves, which are subject to UNCLOS proceedings.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Territorial Disputes:

Territorial disputes in the Arctic can lead to military posturing and tensions among Arctic states. Possible solutions include: Diplomacy and negotiations that encourage Arctic states to settle territorial issues peacefully and diplomatically, in accordance with international law and UNCLOS, and third-party mediation to think about bringing in impartial third-party mediators to help encourage discussions and find equitable solutions to disagreements.

Military Presence and Buildup:

Several Arctic states have strengthened their military presence in the region, increasing fears of arms races and conflict. Possible solutions include: Arctic states taking confidence-building measures such as notifying each other of military exercises and sharing information to minimize misunderstandings and tensions and Investigating the potential of regional arms control treaties or conventions to limit military operations in the Arctic.

Search and Rescue Coordination:

As the Arctic becomes increasingly accessible, better search and rescue coordination in a vast and isolated area is required. Possible solutions include: establishing bilateral and multilateral agreements among Arctic states for search and rescue operations, ensuring quick emergency response and developing international cooperation, providing standardized rules for search and rescue operations, and sharing best practices.

Non-Arctic State Involvement:

The security environment may become more complicated due to non-Arctic powers' interest in the area, especially in terms of military involvement. Possible solutions include: Non-Arctic states desiring to participate in Arctic security debates can be granted observer status in existing venues such as the Arctic Council, provided they respect Arctic states' sovereignty and interests and eliminate mistrust and sustain regional stability, encourage transparency and collaboration between Arctic and non-Arctic states.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing Including Research

The chairs highly recommend the delegates to do deep research on their countries' positions on the issues before writing a resolution in order to have a general view of their country's stances and write operative clauses respectively. In addition, cooperating with other delegates with similar viewpoints on the issues is another way to create a clear, coherent, and strong resolution. If you need help writing a proper resolution or feel confused about the whole concept, the chairs would like to strongly recommend delegates check out the resolution manual on the [UNISMUN website](#). Lastly, please do not hesitate to reach out to any chair if you are still lost and want further support after reading the manual!

VIII. Bibliography

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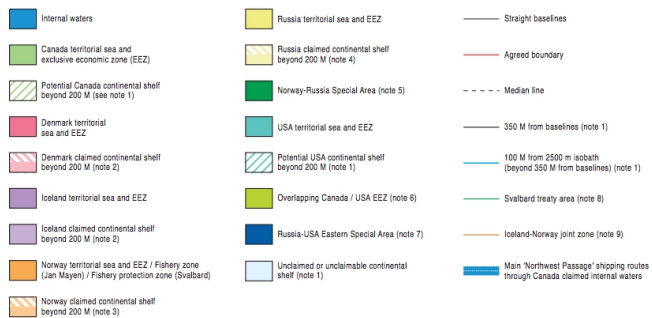
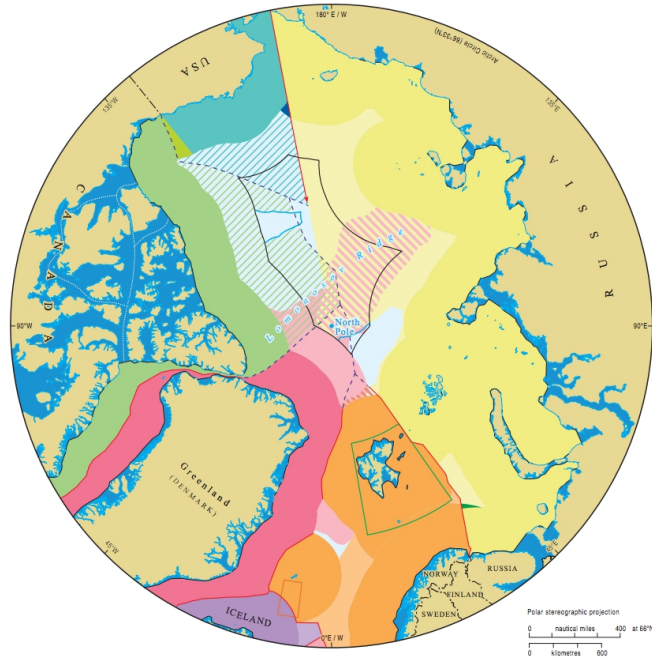
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IX. Additional Resources



All the claims on the Arctic sea floor