Introduction

The Arctic Region consists of the Arctic Region, with parts of Canada, Russian Federation, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and the United States. Geographically, it is the area north of the Arctic Circle, which falls on the 66º 33'N. The climate of the Arctic is characterized by long, cold winters and short, cool summers. The region experiences extremes of solar radiation year round, with variation of climate across the Arctic region.

Historically, the Arctic Region has been inaccessible. However, due to the global climate changes, the Arctic Region has developed into an area of major importance for many nations worldwide. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment estimates that the temperature in the Arctic Region has risen almost twice as fast as temperature in any other region in the world in the last century, resulting in a decrease of polar ice cap. As the world is experiencing climate change, polar ice caps are melting, making marine paths and routes around the Arctic more accessible (Riechmann). According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the Arctic Region has 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas and 15% of the world's undiscovered oil. The marine routes will provide a path from Europe to China that travels 40% faster than previously discovered paths such as the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. An array of resources is available in the Arctic region, including oil and natural gas, which are very appealing to all nations, as these resources are not only essential, but also getting exhausted rapidly, and therefore, have significant commercial value.

The Arctic is not yet a privately owned region by any particular state. Due to its great economic, environmental and military value, several countries have already announced claim over the Arctic, with nations readying their military advances to defend their claims in the Arctic Region. Currently, all territorial claims to the Arctic region are regulated through the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) under international law ("Law of the Sea"). With 160 nations as signatories, the UNCLOS imposes coastal state jurisdiction and control in the Arctic region. It allows coastal states the authority to enforce laws and regulations to their respective maritime territories in the Arctic Region. The UNCLOS allows all bordering nations to maintain an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) that stretches around two-hundred nautical miles outwards their respective Arctic coastlines. In these EEZs, nations are allowed to explore or exploit, and conserve or manage the natural resources in that region. In the Arctic, the coun-
Tries that are in control of the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) are the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark.

The questions of borders are also another active issue. Due to the lack of clear laws, many borders in the Arctic region remain heavily disputed. The United States and Canada have had border issues in the Beaufort Sea; Denmark and Canada have had border issues in the Lincoln Sea; Norway and Russia continue to have border issues in the Barents Sea. These are only a few examples of the many disputes present in the Arctic, which may pose a threat to international peace and security if not solved properly through appropriate diplomatic and legal channels.

The Arctic Council is a forum that has been assembled in order to address issues faced by the governments in the Arctic region and those of the indigenous people of the Arctic (“Arctic Council”). Member states in the Arctic Council includes Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. These are the permanent participants of the Arctic Council since only states with territory in the Arctic can be members of the Council. However, the council has allowed observer states who are invited to most Arctic Council meetings, but have no voting rights. These nations include China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, Spain and the United Kingdom. The council has several subdivisions that focus on different sectors such as wildlife conservation, sustainable development, climate impact, monitoring and assessment, and emergency prevention, preparedness and response. Even though the Arctic Council handles issues in the Arctic Region, it has yet to take on the issues of peace and security in its agenda as of June 2014. However, the Council is often in the middle of security and geopolitical issues.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Militarization**

Militarization is the process in which a society prepares itself for military conflict and violence by putting weapons and military forces in an area.

**The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also known as NATO, is a military alliance organization founded after World War II to improve and strengthen international relations between member states.

**The Arctic States**

The Arctic States are any and all regions bordering the Arctic Region. This includes Alaska (United States), Canada, Finland, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden.

**Climate Change**

Climate Change is a change in global climate patterns. Today, most climate change is due to human activities.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea is an international agreement signed in 1982 in which 157 signatories agreed upon the rights of governance with respect to the world’s oceans.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

An exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is the area of coastal waters and seabed that a country has the rights to conduct economic activities in.

Arctic Five

United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark

Maritime Law

Maritime law governs questions and offences concerning or connected to the sea.

History

Ancient Explorations

Throughout history, the Arctic Region has been explored by nations. The first European marine explorer to travel to the Arctic was the Greek Pytheas in 330 BCE. Around the year 1000 CE, the Vikings occupied and colonized Arctic territories, especially Greenland, Alaska and Canada.

Modern Explorations

Due to the Europeans’ interest in new markets in the Orient - especially in India and China, they launched themselves on expeditions in search of a passage that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans: the Northwest Passage, along the coast of North America and Siberia, through the Arctic Ocean in the 12th centuries. In the following years, many expeditions continued to occur in the Arctic region in order to find, explore and expand these routes. The English, Russians and Finnish were among these explorers during these centuries.

The Arctic During The World Wars

World War I

During the late 19th and early 20th century, technologies from the Industrial Revolution have allowed an increase of production (Spohr et al.). However, the increase in production required an excess amount of new markets and new raw materials. This resulted in an imperialist race among the capitalist countries, which would eventually lead to World War I. The period preceding World War I was a period of colonialism. During this era, most European countries have already set out to create their own empires, looking for an abundance of resources and cheap labor. When these nations had conflicting interests, tension built up, resulting in a great war. During these times, the Arctic exploration was even more critical.
not only in order to control new routes and reach other markets, but also as a military strategy during the war.

World War II

During the World War II, the Arctic region turned into a supply route for the United States and Russia, which made it a key strategic area. The Russian Federation (USSR, then), received many arms and resources from the United States via the “Lend-Lease” program for war through the Arctic route, which was the shortest and most direct way to it.

In addition, the Soviets had settlements in the Arctic seas, specifically in the Kara and Barents seas. Then, the region became a target for the Nazi Germany.

In the Battle of the Atlantic from 1939 to 1945, Nazi Germany strategized to block trade routes, including the Arctic route, through the use of submarines, in order to weaken England by stripping them of their resources and forcing them to surrender. This, however, failed due to England’s radar system.

Key Issues

Why is the Arctic Region Important?

The Arctic Region is considered to have a geographical advantage, due to its abundance of untapped natural resources. It may contain an approximate of one-fifth of the world's undiscovered oil and natural gas resources. It is also believed to be rich in other resources, including platinum, gold, silver, iron, zinc, copper, and deposits of methane hydrates, which is the potential future energy source. The evident effects of climate change and global warming will allow these untouched resources to be made available to any nation that owns the rights to this region.

Current Military Activity

The nations that have been responsible for the military buildup and operation in the Arctic are Canada, the Russian Federation, the United States, Norway, and Denmark. In 2007, Russia placed a flag at the exact base of the North Pole, and since then, Russia has maintained a military presence.

Canada is currently the president of the Arctic Council. Since the nation accepted this role, Canada did not hesitate to make clear that it intends to firm up its claim to the Arctic region through military means, if necessary.

In 2009, President George W. Bush issued a U.S. Presidential National Security Directive that indirectly argued against Canada's claim of sovereignty over a portion of the Beaufort Sea. The Directive 66 called for the Northwest Passage to be regarded as “international water” as well. It has also established its military presence in scientific and geographic investigations.

Three members of the Arctic Five are members of the NATO. These nations are obligated under the organization’s mutual agreement to provide military assistance and protection if a member comes
under attack. Therefore, while the US and Canada have their disputes, they have also conduct joint military operations and expeditions because they are both NATO members, which leaves Russia out and excluded.

**Territorial Claims of the Arctic**

![Map of Territorial claims in the Arctic Region](image)

**Recent Activity in the Arctic Region**

The most significant recent activity outside of military practice concerning the Arctic region is the growing interest of non-bordering states in the region. In May of 2013, the Arctic Council admitted China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Singapore into the Council as “observer nations”. Even though observer nations do not have voting privileges, they are permitted to oversee its proceedings. Because they are in the Arctic Council, they have some control over decisions upon the Arctic, even though it may be minimal.

China has held the most intense interests towards the Arctic region. It has begun to invest heavily in the Arctic, expanding its research and scientific polar institute to collaborate with already existing institutes.

In December, 2013, Russia announced that it intended to make the Arctic a priority region for its navy in 2014. The United States has followed suit. It is only a matter of time before the other nations in the Arctic Five make similar public statements, building up the military bases and exercises in the Arctic.

The United Nations Security Council must arrive at a suitable set of guidelines and regulations that will bind the international community to peace.

**Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**Russian Federation**
The Russian Federation wishes to utilize the Arctic's natural resources, protect its ecosystems, use the seas as a transportation system in Russia's interest, and ensure that it remains a zone of peace and cooperation. The Russian Federation has been taking major military advances to increase their presence in the Arctic Region. It also has plans to strengthen it.

The Russian Federation has territorial claims to the Arctic since April 15, 1926 on the lands between 32°04′35″E and 168°49′30″W applying to islands and lands within this region. On March 12, 1997, Russia ratified the UNCLOS, which allowed countries to make claims to extended continental shelves. In August 2007, a Russian expedition named Arktika 2007, led by Artur Chilingarov, planted a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole. Concerning this action, the Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov stated that “The aim of this expedition is not to stake Russia’s claim, but to show that our shelf reaches to the North Pole.”

Currently, Russia has ongoing construction and development of several permanent bases in the region. Two bases - one of Alexandra Island and another on Kotelnny Island, reflect Russian’s intentions of looking to establish a monitoring outpost and stake a symbolic territorial claim. But, it has yet to be built up into a full-blown combat presence. However, it is evident that these bases are not built with military tactics in mind. The bases are symbolically painted white, blue and red, which are the colors of the Russian flag. The Russian Federation has now finished equipping six new military bases throughout the Arctic in an attempt to recreate the country’s military presence in the Arctic Region.

**Russian Federation**

![Map of Russia’s Militarisation of the Arctic](Image)

*Caption #1: Map of Russia’s Militarisation of the Arctic*

**North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)**

In 2013, NATO rejected the idea of establishing a strong direct military presence in the Arctic High North. However, because NATO is a collective security organization with five members that are also Arctic countries and two close allies (Finland and Sweden) with Arctic territory, they are being pressured...
into considering the implications of Russia’s recent aggressive military behavior. The national interests of NATO and allied actors would be best served by a consistent, cohesive NATO policy on the Arctic.

**The United States of America (USA)**

The USA is entering the scientific and military race for sovereignty over parts of the Arctic as it recognizes the economic advantages that the Arctic region may provide for the nation. However, the USA is supporting the need for freedom of navigation in the Arctic Ocean.

**China**

China has achieved a permanent observer of the Arctic Council since May 2013. Even though it is not a bordering nation of the Arctic Ocean or the North Pole, China is trying to position itself not to be excluded from access to the Arctic. There is an increased number of Chinese researchers in the Arctic Region.

In March 2010, Chinese Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo stated that “The Arctic belongs to all the people around the world, as no nation has sovereignty over it. . . . China must plan an indispensable role in Arctic exploration as we have one-fifth of the world’s population. However, China is unlikely to achieve the status of an EEZ.

In 1996, China joined the International Arctic Science Committee that aids in Arctic Research. It is documented that China spends much more time than the United States on Arctic research. Two Chinese vessels have traversed the Northeast Passage in 2012 and 2014.

**Canada**

The creation of two military bases in the Canadian Arctic has been announced by the Prime Minister, also in an attempt to strengthen Canada’s presence in the Arctic. Canada believes that the passage of water in the Arctic Region is part of its internal waters, and therefore, should be regulated by the Canadian National Laws.

**European Union (EU)**

The European Union’s main interest in the Arctic region is to keep the balance between the preservation of Arctic environment and the need for sustainable use of potential resources. Three nations of the European Union- Sweden, Finland, and Denmark- are Arctic States. Therefore, the EU claims for a permanent observer status in the Arctic Council.

**Denmark**

Denmark is currently engaged in a territorial dispute with Canada over the Hans Island in the Kennedy Channel. It ratified UNCLOS on 16 November, 2004 to file a claim to an extended continental shelf. Greenland, which is owned by the Kingdom of Denmark, has the nearest coastline to the North Pole.
Norway

Norway is the only Scandinavian country with direct access to the Arctic Ocean. It focuses on the issues of resource management, environmental impact, and maritime transport, while expressing concern for Russia’s increasing military presence in the region. Norway and Russia have ratified an agreement of the Barents Sea, which ended a 40-year long dispute.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

| Date          | Description of event
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<td>November 1994</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), establishing Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of 200 nautical miles beyond a country’s baseline, goes into effect. <strong>Establishment of the Arctic Council (Ottawa Declaration)</strong></td>
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<td>September 1996</td>
<td>Establishment of the Arctic Council under the Ottawa Declaration. Its member states include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation and United States <strong>Oil Discovery</strong></td>
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<td>January 2004</td>
<td>Researchers find evidence of oil deposits just 200 miles from the North Pole. <strong>The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment</strong></td>
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<td>November 2004</td>
<td>In order to monitor the climate in the Arctic Region, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment is released by the Arctic Council <strong>Arktika 2007</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2007</td>
<td>Russia symbolically renews its 2001 claim to the Lomonosov Ridge by planting a Russian flag on the seabed of the Arctic Ocean. <strong>The Ilulissat Declaration Signed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>May, 2008</td>
<td>The five Arctic States - Canada, Russia, USA, Norway and Denmark - signs the Ilulissat Declaration</td>
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Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

UNCLOS
The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is currently the only piece of international legislation that currently governs the rights and responsibilities of all states regarding to world seas and oceans. It authorizes coastal states to develop and administer special regulations dealing with human activities in ice-covered waters.

**The Ilulissat Declaration**

Announced on May 28, 2008, the Arctic Five met at the political level during the Arctic Ocean Conference in Ilulissat to discuss the Arctic Ocean, climate change, the protection of the marine environment, maritime safety and division of emergency responsibilities if new shipping routes opened. One of the chief goals in the declaration was blockage of any new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean and the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims. However, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and the Arctic indigenous people were not involved in the Ilulissat negotiations.

**Possible Solutions**

**Increased presence and involvement of the United Nations** may improve the situation of the Arctic Region. Currently, the only United Nations presence in the Arctic Region is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is the only piece of international legislation that governs the rights and responsibilities of all states in regards to the Arctic Region. However, beyond the UNCLOS treaty of 320 articles in total, the UN has not made any further document concerning the militarization of the arctic.

**Amending the Arctic Council’s agenda to include the discussion of security issues** in the Arctic Region. The Arctic Council has full representation of not only the Arctic States, but also the indigenous people of the Arctic Region. If the Arctic Council establishes a common ground for all nations represented, the question of the militarization of the Arctic Region may be improved.

**Creating a common ground for all nations** to reside to will provide all nations an equal voice, opportunity and outcome in the resolution of this issue.

**Bibliography**


