

Committee: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue: The question of the militarization of the Arctic

Chair: Rithwik Reddy

Introduction

With the rapid melting of ice in the Arctic, the long-isolated region is becoming a more accessible zone for commercial fishing, fresh water, minerals, coal, iron, copper, oil, gas, and shipping. As ice pulls back due to rising temperatures and climate change, corporations and governments are moving in, it is spurring talk of a gold rush for the Arctic's abundant natural resources. Seaport facilities, mining operations, oil and gas pipelines — as well as new roads, railways and airstrips to serve them — are arriving in the region at an accelerating pace.

The Arctic stretches from the North Pole to roughly the 66th parallel north, an area of about 20 million square kilometres (almost 8 million square miles) of freezing seas and tree-less lands.

The U.S. Geological Survey has estimated that up to 30 percent of the world's undiscovered gas and 13 percent of oil waiting to be found are inside the Arctic Circle. Even if only a fraction of these fossil fuels are tapped they could be worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

Coal, diamonds, uranium, phosphate, nickel, platinum and other precious minerals also slumber beneath the icy surface of the Arctic, according to Morten Smelror, director of the Geological Survey of Norway. And the growing need for sophisticated batteries to power electric cars and handheld devices likely will drive demand for rare earth elements, lithium and cobalt found in significant amounts in the Arctic regions of Russia, the Nordic countries and Greenland, he said.

Apart from natural resources, the geography of the Arctic also opens up new opportunities. Sailing through the Northwest Passage could potentially cut the distance from East Asia to Western Europe by more than 10,000 kilometres (6,200 miles), compared with the traditional route through the Panama Canal, offering huge fuel savings for shipping companies.

The world's Polar Regions are internationally attractive places because of their rich resources. Although the Arctic (North) and the Antarctic (South) are both rich in natural resources, only the resources of the Antarctic are monitored by the international community in order to maintain peace and security. Antarctica is protected under the Antarctic Treaty, which has proven highly successful among nations that have similar interests as those that are currently militarizing the Arctic. Therefore a solution on the issue of militarization of the Arctic can be modelled after the solutions taken against this issue in the South.

Antarctica, like parts of the Arctic, is one of the few territories on earth that is not part of any jurisdiction nor under any recognized government. Although there have been many claims on Antarctic soil, none of these has been internationally accepted as being lawful, even if de facto some countries exercise power over parts of the continent. Antarctica is a continent without permanent inhabitants, that is to say, all the members of the human population on Antarctica are either part of a research mission to the continent, or tourists visiting the area.

There have been many land claims on the Arctic; most of which have been sustained for a long time. Some claiming countries recognize each other's claims mutually, but no universal acceptance of the claims has been achieved. The greatest fear of the international community during the Cold War was that the parties involved in the claims, would go to war with each other because of the territorial disputes. This is a large fear concerning the Arctic as well. It was mainly for that reason that in 1959, the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) was installed. After the AT was signed, there have not been new land claims on the Antarctic continent, although the land claims from before the AT still exist. The Antarctic Treaty (AT) establishes that Antarctica can only be used for peaceful or scientific purposes, and not for military purposes.

One of the greatest implications of the ATS prohibiting military use of the continent is the prohibition of arms testing in Antarctica, as that was a purpose dreaded by the international community during the Cold War. The ATS ensures that the objectives of the AT are met. These objectives include: the freedom of scientific research; the non-disposal of nuclear waste in Antarctica; the peaceful cooperation on the continent.

The AT is a strategic document, and it is extremely special because it is one of the few treaties the United States and the USSR signed together during the Cold War (this is representative of the Western Block and the Eastern Block signing an agreement together in a time of crisis). The AT is a treaty that has achieved many objectives, but many reasons for dispute are still present in the Antarctic region.

Possible Challenges

Despite its promise, there are several challenges holding back the development of parts of the Arctic and the use of its resources.

The search for fossil fuels above North America has slowed in recent years. One reason is low oil prices, which along with public pressure have made the Arctic shortcut less attractive to shipping firms. The drop in prices has hit Alaska's budget hard, because it relies heavily on oil and gas revenue.

While Russia and Norway are pressing ahead with new oil and gas projects along their coastlines, the seas off Alaska and northern Canada are much less accessible and any major spill would be difficult and costly to contain.

Shell relinquished most of its federal offshore leases in Alaska's Chukchi Sea last year, after pouring billions of dollars into exploration efforts over the past decade. Former Shell leases in the neighbouring Beaufort Sea have been taken over by an Alaska Native owned company.

"There are a lot of hydrocarbons in the Arctic, but for them to be economically viable the cost per barrel has to be higher," said David Barber, an expert on the Arctic environment at the University of Manitoba. "Of course it will go higher, and thus the Arctic issue will come to the foreground again."

The rugged nature of the Arctic also slows development. Only 10 percent of the Northwest Passage is surveyed to the highest modern standards, meaning uncharted shallows could pose a serious risk to shipping. Ocean currents are predicted to push polar pack ice into the passage for decades, limiting the route to sturdy vessels with experienced navigators — and keeping insurance costs high.

Environmental concerns and a growing acceptance of the rights of the region's indigenous population also have held back some plans for Arctic exploration.

Cargo hauls to the Baffinland iron ore mine are already restricted to August to mid-October, so as not to disrupt the Inuit's ability to cross the ice to hunt, fish or trade. Such rules recognize the growing assertiveness of the region's original inhabitants for a share of its riches, including the protection of local hunting grounds for seals and walruses.

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.

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 the Sea (UNCLOS):

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.

Current Situation

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.

Major Parties Involved and Their Positions

Canada

Canada planned a deep water "naval facility" at Nanisivik, which lies at the entrance to the disputed Northwest Passage. Canada promised (under former PM Stephen Harper's administration) to build armed ice-breakers, several patrol ships and several vessels in order to proceed towards gripping the Arctic. In 2011, Canada conducted large-scale "military exercises" in the region.

Canada is also exploring ways to make the Northwest Passage a viable commercial shipping lane to the Europe. Already one tanker has made its voyage through the Northwest Passage. As the ice coverage recedes the prospects of regular shipping shipping these routes in the summer brightens. Both Russia and Canada want to control these strategic sea lanes of commerce. Hence the militarization in terms of building capability along the shipping lanes to defend their

interests has become key and that is leading to building of military infrastructures on the Arctic. In a nutshell the access to vast swathe of resources beneath the Arctic, the competing territorial claims and the desire to control the strategic shipping lanes is leading to increasing militarization of the Arctic.

China

China is now attempting to get in on the new trade routes by making it part of its international Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative is a trillion-dollar project that seeks to connect countries across continents on trade, with China at its centre. The ambitious plan involves creating a 6000km sea route connecting China to South East Asia, Oceania and North Africa (the "Road"), as well as through building railway and road infrastructure to connect China with Central and West Asia, the Middle East and Europe (the "Belt").

Earlier this year Beijing issued a White Paper detailing its Northern Sea Route plans. "China is an active participant, builder and contributor in Arctic affairs who has spared no efforts to contribute its wisdom to the development of the Arctic region," it said. Beijing is ultimately wishing to take advantage of the opening sea route as a shortcut to trade with Europe, which would slash travel times, and with that costs. Russia isn't pleased with this, fearing China wants to muscle in on its claims. But the rising superpower is going forward. And as the Arctic ice continues to melt, the value of the region will only increase.

Denmark

Greenland, an autonomous region of Denmark, has staked its claim to the Lomonosov Ridge — a massive underwater feature jutting hundreds of miles beneath the Arctic Sea that would greatly extend Greenland's sea bed continental shelf for possible use in future undersea mining. Russia contests the claim — one of several disputes before the U.N. Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

Norway

Norway ratified the UNCLOS on 24 June 1996 and had through 2006 to file a claim to an extended continental shelf. On November 27, 2006, Norway made an official submission into the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (article 76, paragraph 8). There are provided arguments to extend the Norwegian seabed claim beyond the 200 nmi (370 km; 230 mi) EEZ in three areas of the northeastern Atlantic and the Arctic: the "Loop Hole" in the Barents Sea, the Western Nansen Basin in the Arctic Ocean, and the "Banana Hole" in the Norwegian Sea. The submission also

states that an additional submission for continental shelf limits in other areas may be posted later. Norway and Russia have ratified an agreement on the Barents Sea, ending a 40-year demarcation dispute.

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. On 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 Lavro 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 Kotelny Island, reflect Russia'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.

United States of America

In April, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order to reverse Obama-era restrictions on oil drilling. Yet industry experts, researchers and veterans of the Far North say there remain many obstacles to reaping the riches once blocked by the ice. Conservationists also oppose the large-scale extraction of Arctic resources, fearing that the fragile environment will be irreparably harmed.

In August 2015, the US permitted Shell to drill for oil in the Chukchi Sea, which falls within the periphery of Alaskan Arctic. The US "Coast Guard" has already

deployed “sophisticated ships, aircrafts and other maritime assets” in the Alaskan Arctic for the duration of Shell’s drilling in the Arctic. Through such presence, the US is not only trying to exploit energy resources of the Arctic region, but also trying to keep its “military presence” deep inside the region.

Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

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 countries that are in control of the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) are the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark.

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.

Ilulissat Declaration

The Ilulissat Declaration was announced on May 28, 2008, by the five coastal states of the Arctic Ocean (United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark), meeting at the political level during the Arctic Ocean Conference in Ilulissat, Greenland to discuss the Arctic ocean, climate change, the protection of the marine environment, maritime safety, and division of emergency responsibilities if new shipping routes are opened.

One of the chief goals written into the declaration was blockage of any "new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean". An additional pledge for "the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims," was expected as the conference invitation originated in 2007 as a consequence of several jurisdictional disputes, including Hans Island and Arktika 2007.

Because the objective of the meeting was to discuss legal regimes and jurisdictional issues in the Arctic Ocean, only the five coastal states of that ocean were invited. The Arctic Council, being the only circumpolar Arctic international forum, which also includes the three Arctic states that do not border the Arctic Ocean (Sweden, Finland and Iceland) was deliberately not used as a forum. These three states are therefore not a party to the Ilulissat Declaration. Likewise, the Arctic indigenous peoples, who have a prominent position within the Arctic Council, were not involved in the Ilulissat negotiations.

Possible Solutions

A static solution is no solution at all for an issue like that of the Arctic. Any solution that is undertaken must be successful in the way that it must be able to respond to rapidly occurring changes in the situation 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.

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.

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.

The most controversial part of the Antarctic region is its enormous wealth in terms of mineral resources. The Arctic has an enormous supply of natural resources, which, if used for military means, can be tremendously dangerous for international security. All the members of a solution should agree to these terms, but there is a problem that awaits these countries. In the future, there will be a major lack of natural resources, due to the demand for them being greater than the supply. In the future, therefore, when all the other resources are almost depleted, the Arctic will hold a massive supply. An incentive to use the resources in the Arctic is therefore potentially larger than the agreements made with the other countries, especially if they are not binding and are not out of free will.

Delegates may also consider that it is wise for the states that have already undertaken measures regarding the issue of the Arctic to come up with a joint Treaty that replaces all the existing treaties with the characteristics mentioned above. If they do so, it is to be recommended that they consider who is going to sign the treaties, if countries are going to sign the treaties, and who becomes responsible for them. The delegates must also consider if creating a completely new treaty will make things more effective, or less effective. These are all things to consider.

Whatever the solution, the delegates must always consider a number of questions that are vital for this issue. Especially since this issue involved international cooperation, a number of questions is very important. These questions will help the delegates in determining if a solution is viable and sustainable:

- Will this solution make the situation in the Arctic more or less problematic?
- Will it cause friction between countries?
- What factors produce friction in the international community?
- How will this solution be amended if another approach turns out to be better?
- Will this solution be one that can be changed easily to cope with direct challenges, or is it static so that it provides a sturdy legal framework to base other options on? Can it be both?
- Why would member states of the United Nations cooperate with this solution? What is in it for them?
- What developments are likely to happen in the future? Will this affect the Arctic?
- What will climate change do to the solution in mind?

It is extremely important that delegates consider the role of the UN General Assembly in this issue, and realize that only the Security Council of the UN can force states to do things.

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