



FORUM: Sixth Committee to the General Assembly (LEGAL)

QUESTION OF: Solving the territorial disputes in the Arctic Sea

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POSITION: Deputy-Chair

INTRODUCTION:

The Arctic is a region in which there are many territorial disputes due to the claims by countries such as the USA, Canada, Russia and Denmark. As the arctic ice melts, there is potential for the discovery of natural riches which are now accessible. These include natural gases and oils as well as reserves of metals such as gold, zinc, nickel and iron. Therefore, these claims to the Arctic are of great financial and political importance in the upcoming years. The claims are based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which gives member states the right to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from the country's shore to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from it, in which it has exclusive economic rights, provided the EEZ does not conflict with another country's limits. In circumstances where there is scientific evidence about a country's continental shelf, an application can be made for an extension of the EEZ to 350 nautical miles. Due to the melting of the ice, the Arctic Council (which consists of the USA, Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland and Sweden) has become tense as interests in the region increase.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM:

Hans Island: Hans Island is a small, uninhabited Island situated in the Nares Strait. It is 1.3 square kilometres in size and is in between Canada and Greenland. Canada and Denmark have both claimed the Island and have had negotiations about a border, however the dispute has yet to be solved. Denmark has placed flags on the Island in the past to the protest of Canada. Both access to fishing routes and possible access to the Northwest Passage in the future are reasons for disputes. Joint sovereignty has been considered as a possible solution to the dispute.

Beaufort Sea: The 21,436 square kilometre section of the Beaufort Sea about which there is a dispute between the USA and Canada is an area in which there is suspected to be a large

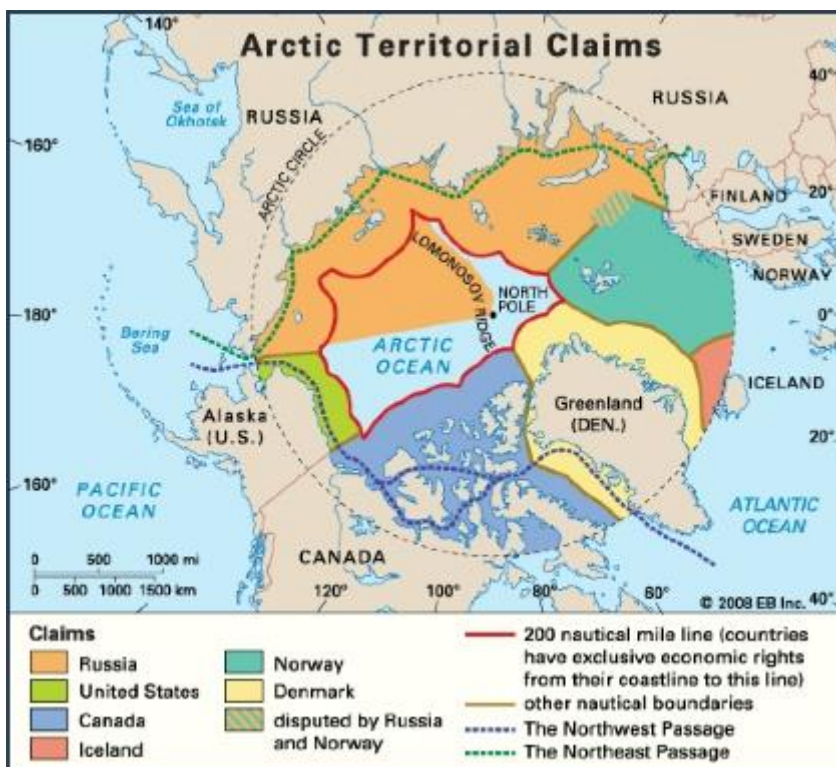


amount of crude oil. The two countries argue two different borders in the region: the USA argues that the boundary should extend along an equidistant path from the shores of the two nations, whereas Canada argues that the maritime border should follow the land border.

Northwest Passage: The Northwest Passage is a passage which Canada claims as Canadian waters. The passage is considered to be an international strait by most maritime nations. The dispute is of importance as a solution would define Canada's rights in those waters, most importantly whether it has the right to close the passage.

Northeast Passage: The Northeast passage is considered by Europe the shipping route to the Pacific Ocean. Disputes in this passage are due to the overlapping claims with Russia, which considers parts of this route to pass through its waters.

Lomonosov Ridge: The Lomonosov Ridge is argued by Denmark, Canada and Russia to be part of their continental shelf, or in Denmark's case land mass, which would give them material rights over parts of it as their EEZ. Both nations have claimed that the origin of the ridge should play a part in the decision to be made about ownership of the territory.





HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT:

1925: Canada is the first country to extend its maritime borders toward the North Pole. The claim is still not universally recognised.

1926: Soviet Russia claims the sector between lines from Murmansk to the North Pole and the Chukchi Peninsula to be its territory.

1933: Greenland is recognised to be part of Denmark by an international court.

1970: Queen Elizabeth takes a tour of northern Canada to demonstrate Canada's claims on Arctic Territories.

1973: Denmark and Canada sign an agreement on the delimitation of the continental shelf between them and submit it to the UN.

1974: The *Agreement on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark* enters into force.

1982: UNCLOS is signed by 157 countries.

1991: Russia is the first country to submit an Arctic claim in accordance with UNCLOS. It claims 1.2 million square metres of territory which includes the North Pole.

1994: UNCLOS enters into force.

1996: The Arctic Council is created.

2006: Norway releases its *High North Strategy*

2010: Russia and Norway sign the *Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean*.

2011: Denmark releases *Kingdom of Denmark: Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020*, in which it discloses its intentions in the Arctic for the next years.



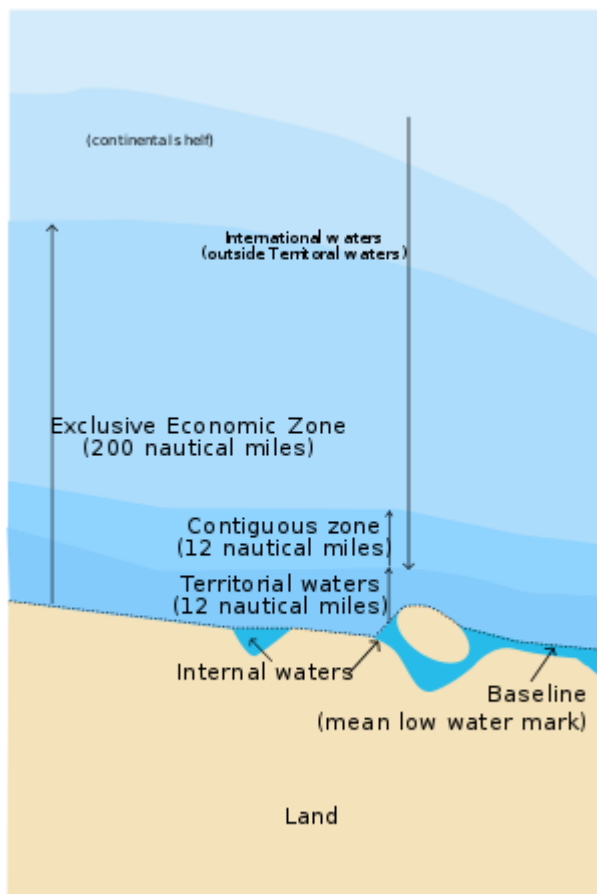
KEY TERMS:

-*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*: UNCLOS is a UN treaty which defines the rights and responsibilities of nations' use of the world's oceans. It was signed by 157 states on the 10th of September 1982.

-*Arctic Council*: The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum which addresses issues concerning the Arctic. It was founded in 1996 and has its headquarters in Tromsø, Norway. It also has six permanent participants, all of which are indigenous communities.

-*Arctic Five*: The Arctic Five are the five members of the Arctic Council which have borders on the Arctic Ocean: the USA, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark.

-*Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)*: An EEZ is a UN prescribed zone in which a state has special rights concerning resources. The zone extends 200 nautical miles from its coast. In some cases, this includes the continental shelf.





EXPECTATIONS FOR POSITION PAPER:

You are expected to write a Position Paper that is a minimum of two pages long. The Position Paper should contain general information on the issue in relation to your country and specific policies your country introduced to act upon this issue.

Further questions you could also consider during your research:

USEFUL LINKS/SOURCES:

https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/rival-claims-to-the-changing-arctic#gs.ep_Re7c

<https://www.stimson.org/content/evolution-arctic-territorial-claims-and-agreements-timeline-1903-present>

http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

<https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>

Marshall, Tim. *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything about the World*. New York: Scribner Book Company, 2016.

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/7d/Zonmar-en.svg/450px-Zonmar-en.svg.png>

http://p5.storage.canalblog.com/59/76/1087175/105662572_o.jpg

<http://cimsec.org/introducing-new-column-changing-arctic/26332>