**Issue 3: The issue of preventing Militarization of the Arctic Sea**

The Arctic is a region around the North Pole of the Earth, which includes the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada, Russia, the United States, Greenland, as a territory of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland.

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**Active Militarization**

**Current Situation:**
As of today the Arctic ocean is re-emerging as a strategic area where vital interests of many countries collide. The region’s political and economic significance, combined with its wealth in natural resources, is transforming the Arctic into a subject of future disputes and conflicts.

**Natural Resources:**
It is estimated that the Arctic may contain a fifth of the world’s yet-to-be discovered oil and natural gas reserves. The Arctic’s potential natural gas resources are three times bigger and equal to Russia’s proven gas reserves, which are the world’s largest. Also, beside oil and gas, the Arctic seabed could hold other natural wealth, such as significant deposits of precious stones – gold, silver, copper, iron, platinum, lead, tin, nickel, manganese, zinc and even diamonds. In the current state of global economy, demand for these commodities steadily increases. Furthermore, it has been proven that there are large deposits of methane hydrates located on the deep seabed of the Arctic Ocean. While no technology currently exists that would make extracting them possible, the emergence of this capability seems to be an imminent prospect. Several countries are interested in developing methane hydrate processing as a commercially viable energy source, including the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

**Recent territorial claims:**
The dispute over which country’s continental shelf extends to the Lomonosov Ridge is crucial in determining which country has sovereign rights over the seabed around the North Pole.

In 2001 Russia submitted a claim for an area of 1.2 million square kilometers from the undersea ridge called the Lomonosov Ridge that goes from Russia’s land to the North Pole. The United Nations commission rejected this claim and said they needed more evidence. So in 2007 as a response, Russia sent a team of scientists to gather information. During this expedition Russia also dropped a capsule with their flag onto the seafloor. This symbolic act by the Russians suddenly transformed the question of sovereign rights in the Arctic region from a purely scientific and legal case into an urgent political issue. Russia’s conclusion was that their findings did actually confirm that they had legal rights to the area and tried to announce that part of the North Pole as a part of...
Russia. Many experts challenge this view, however, saying that this doesn’t necessarily mean that the ridge is part of Russia – it could as well be Canadian or Danish.

Meanwhile, scientists from other Arctic nations are looking for evidence to support very different versions of the truth about the Lomonosov Ridge. The Danish are attempting to prove that the ridge is connected to Greenland and the Canadians are searching for connections between the ridge and Canadian mainland. In 2007 the US started to investigate if they had any legitimate claims on territory beyond what they already have. Lastly, in 2006 Norway followed Russia and made claims on the arctic ocean, to extend the Norwegian 370 km zone in three areas. This was accepted by the UN and Norway gained about 235,000 square kilometers.

**Recent Militarization:**
In August 2007, shortly after sending the scientific expedition to the Lomonosov Ridge that placed the Russian flag on the seabed, Moscow ordered regular air patrols over the Arctic Ocean. Strategic bombers as well as the long-range anti-submarine warfare patrol aircraft have flown patrols since then. American newspapers reported that Russian bombers penetrated the 12-mile air defense identification zone surrounding Alaska several times since 2008. Also the Russian navy is intensifying its patrols in the Arctic – this is the first such phenomenon since the end of the Cold War. Moscow’s strategy seems to be to display its military might while invoking international law. Russia has also raised a possibility of war in the Arctic within a decade over control of the regions huge wealth of natural resources.

In response, NATO partners have started re-supply the Thule Air Base in Greenland. Another example of this increased military attention given to the Arctic region is the strategic cooperation between the United States and Canada in strengthening the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). There are also plans in the United States to establish a Joint Task Force–Arctic Region Command and an Arctic Coast Guard Forum modeled after the highly successful North Pacific Coast Guard Forum. Canada joined the trend by announcing that it would build six to eight navy patrol ships to guard the Northwest Passage, as well as two military bases and a deep-water port inside the Arctic Circle.

**Past UN Actions:**
With the Arctic ice melting, an increased interest in the Arctic’s natural resources and navigation, and a recent phenomenon of many nations piling up arms and planting flags in the region, calls have emerged for a comprehensive Arctic Treaty to govern the ‘lawless’ Arctic region. Many non-governmental organizations and some politicians are arguing for an international agreement that would adopt a legal framework for dealing with issues of Disarmament and International security.

**Arms Limitations:**
Even if a political Arctic treaty should not be adopted, there is still a possibility of establishing an arms limitation agreement for the Arctic region. For example, an extensive cooperative surveillance system could be established for the area, in which many states could work together to assure that there are no national security risks for any nation. A naval arms limitation agreement could thus be adopted, and also include terms establishing a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Arctic Ocean, to prevent any unnecessary tensions in the region.
Key Actors and Positions

The Russian Federation: Arctic region is of crucial significance to the country’s economic and strategic interests. In the strategic aspect, the Arctic gives Russia an access to three oceans, and its military bases there are crucial for protecting the country’s extensive borderline. The Russian Federation strongly opposes the internationalization of the Arctic. Russia’s claims to sovereignty rights over the areas and believe they will eventually be able to back their assertions and to begin oil exploration in the region. Russia plans to deploy special military forces to protect its national interests in the disputed Arctic region, to ‘guarantee military security under various military and political situations.’ The government in Moscow is likely to suggest that military threats could be used to resolve problems that would devastate the balance near Russia’s borders.

The United States: The Obama administration supports the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with the United States Secretary of State Hilary Clinton known to be its strong proponent. The Obama administration also indicated its commitment to ratifying the Convention. The United States government emphasizes the necessity of international cooperation and stresses the role of the Arctic Council. However, the United States does not wish to empower the Arctic Council to deal with Security issues, and believes it should stay neutered and operate within its limited mandate. The United States has also always supported the need for freedom of navigation in the Arctic Ocean.

Canada: On the occasion of announcing the creation of two military bases in the Canadian Arctic, prime minister Stephen Harper remarked that his country has only two choices regarding its position in the Arctic: ‘either we use it or we lose it.’ He then continued: ‘and make no mistake, this government intends to use it.’ For Canada to maintain its sovereignty in the Arctic, Harper also announced that eight patrol vessels would be built and deployed in this region. Canada resents the calls from the US and the EU for freedom of navigation in the Arctic, does not want to see this happening and claims that it should be regulated by Canadian national law.

Norway: Norway differs from its Nordic neighbors, Finland and Sweden, because it is the only Scandinavian country to have direct access to the Arctic region. Norwegian territories in the high Arctic include the Svalbard archipelago and the island of Jan Mayen in the Norwegian-Greenland Sea. In consequence, Norway’s Arctic focus is devoted mainly to issues such as resource management, the environment, and maritime transport, uncommon for other European countries. Norway is also committed to developing the Arctic cooperation further, and welcomes the EU’s involvement in Arctic governance. On the issue of militarization, Norway is aware of Russia’s increased military presence in the Arctic region, and observes with concern Russian bombers flying near the Norwegian coast.

Questions to consider:

- Should the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea remain as the single source of international legislation concerning the Arctic region, or is there a need for a new, region specific international agreement: an Arctic Treaty?
- How should claims for territorial sovereignty rights in the Arctic region be handled? Should priority be given to the past claims, or should any new claims be accepted?
- What should be the status of the Arctic Ocean? Should it be regarded as international waters in its entirety, or should any national restrictions be considered legitimate?
- What should be done in regards to military presence in the Arctic? Should any particular nations be allowed to station weapons in the Arctic?
- What can further actions can the international community undertake to ensure peace, environmental stability, and security in the region?
Further reading and information:

Preventing militarization of the Arctic - http://www.thearticinstitute.org/2012/01/1213-arctic-council-security-agreement.html


Arms race in the Arctic - http://www.arcticsecurity.org/?p=287

Steps toward Arctic cooperations - http://www.arcticsecurity.org/?p=346

Past research paper from UCLMUN on the same issue, could be useful - http://www.google.no/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&ved=0CFYQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.uclmun.co.uk%2FDISEC1.pdf&ei=eoktUJDaA3P4QSk5oDoDw&usg=AFQjCNENrJs4ifdIisHr_rEqmzAH7096YQ