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Security Council

Topic: Addressing the militarization of the Arctic, a region which has become more desirable to implement military occupation but currently lacks ownership, creating numerous disputes.

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was founded on October 24, 1945. Its main objective is to maintain international security and peace. The council seeks to achieve such peace and security through investigations of any conflict or scenarios that could cause international friction; the committee then acts upon these situations imposing sanctions, authorizing the use of force, establishing peacekeepers missions, and fostering negotiations (*United Nations Security Council*, n.d.). The Council is one of the United Nations (UN) six main organs, which consists of five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US), also known as the P-five, which can veto any resolution. Additionally, the General Assembly selects ten non-permanent members for a two-year term (*United Nations Security Council*, 2021). The Security Council meets at any needed time: when conflicts escalate to a point where the committee deems that intervention is necessary to restore peace. The UN Security Council goes through a voting process to implement resolutions. Each member is entitled to a vote, and all procedural decisions are finalized with at least nine votes (*Voting System Security Council*, n.d.).

II. Introduction

Description and Definition of the Topic

Militarization is “the cultural, symbolic, and material preparation for war” (Militarization, n.d.). Currently, the Arctic region is undergoing militarization, where countries implement military operations to increase their territorial power and military capability. The Arctic is a geographical region comprising the northern boundaries of Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, the United States, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden, also known as the eight Arctic states (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). This area can also be referred to as the Arctic circle, the northernmost major circle of latitude (Arctic Circle, n.d.). With many countries’ marine territories overlapping, the exact ownership of the Arctic region is still up to further discussion, which has escalated political tensions.

Currently, economically powerful countries such as Russia and China have invested a large number of their resources into the region to “subtly [install] a larger presence in the Arctic” (Grady, 2022). Both countries have partnered to expand their scientific research, surveillance, and data. Although the Arctic currently has “too much sea ice” to be viable for economic and commercial use, Kay Bailey Hutchison, a former NATO United States representative, stated that

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China “wants a seat in the region’s future,” referring to the country as a “near-Arctic state” (Grady, 2022). Like China, neighboring countries have become aware of the region’s increased value, which has led to the implementation of military bases and the development of marine technology.

After the end of the Cold War, the eight Arctic states handled most regional political issues through multilateral organizations such as the International Maritime Organization and the Arctic Council, which specifically excluded military security from its mandate (Breitenbauch et al., 2019). However, NATO, particularly the United States, has demonstrated interest in the region, especially after Russia’s involvement. The Russo-Ukrainian War prompted the U.S. to respond, promising to “deepen cooperation with Arctic Allies... to manage the risk of further militarization or unintended conflict” (National Strategy for the Arctic Region, 2022). Such demonstrates countries’ deep-seated interest in the Arctic and the risk of possible escalation.

The climate crisis has had a vast environmental impact worldwide and has factored into countries’ interest in the Arctic. Greenpeace predicted that by 2035, the Arctic would be sea-ice-free in summer, allowing ships to sail through the Arctic (Gatopoulos, 2022). Thus, unlike in many other regions, climate change will increase economic opportunities, increasing interest in militarization. Therefore, climate change will “enhance trade, research, and travel opportunities due to increased potential access” (Breitenbauch, 2019). As the ice caps melt, territory and resources become easier to exploit, including deposits of oil, natural gas, and minerals (Gatopoulos, 2022). The Arctic would expand a country’s military, commercial, and economic power, providing many benefits to countries that establish their control of the region.

The Problem

Countries worldwide have demonstrated interest and expanded their presence in the Arctic region by establishing Arctic defense policies, vying for territory, and conducting military exercises. The Arctic states have stated that their main “interest is exercising sovereignty over northern territories and achieving national security interests” (MacDonald, 2015). In addition, instead of deterring the militarization of the Arctic, countries have encouraged it, justifying their involvement as a matter of defense or economic growth: Norway’s Soria Moria Declaration established the Arctic as its national defense strategy, Canada promised to increase its presence in the region, and Russia claimed it was a “primary area for natural resources” which required a military component to be established (MacDonald, 2015). The United States has also become increasingly involved, revamping its Arctic Defense policies to become more active. Although this increase in interest is non-confrontational, Arctic military presence from all countries is predicted to expand, paving the way for a more significant conflict should one arise.

As a result of these policies, several countries have increased their military involvement in the Arctic, including their military training, employment, and capability development (MacDonald, 2015). Breitenbauch, a senior researcher at the University of Copenhagen’s Center

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for Military Studies concluded that increased access and involvement in the Arctic will lead to “further pressure on bilateral and multilateral relations in the Arctic” (2019). This pressure has only continued to increase, especially after Russia’s attack on Ukraine.

Russia has been among the most present in the Arctic, and its involvement in the region has presented a potential conflict ever since it planted the Russian flag at the North Pole in 2007 (MacDonald, 2015). Russian President Vladimir Putin sees the Arctic as Russia's chance to return to great power. Consequently, in recent years, Russia has re-prioritized the militarization of the Arctic, planning on using the unclaimed Arctic land to guarantee a safe economic future for itself and gain military power and advantage. Russia's development of new missiles effectively reduces distances and brings the United States closer to Russia's militarized zone, leading to potential insecurity. These newly tested Arctic-based weapons include nuclear-powered undersea drones and hypersonic cruise missiles. As a consequence, the Baltic and Norwegian Seas can be the targets of attacks from the Barents Sea, and these missiles' range, speed, and precision make it more challenging to differentiate the North Atlantic and the Arctic as distinct theaters of operations. Russia recognizes that NATO is its “biggest challenge” in the Arctic region, paving the way for future conflict (Grady, 2021). In addition, land, submarine, and air-launched cruise missiles challenge NATO's ability to defend mainland Europe and the North Atlantic.

Furthermore, US-China tensions have also risen due to China’s expanding presence in the Arctic. However, China and Russia are not the only countries that are increasing their Arctic involvement. As a defensive alliance, NATO has recognized rising tensions in the Arctic due to a “rapidly warming climate and rising global competition” (NATO, 2022). After claiming that authoritarian nations regimes are willing to use military force, NATO has established a need to expand its vigilance and presence in the Arctic to protect its “values and interests,” and to “keep its people safe” (NATO, 2022).

III. History of the Topic Chronological History of the Topic

Militarization in the Arctic has been present for many decades; however, with advancements in shipping, technology, and global warming, this militarization has increased. The Arctic exploration began after WWI. In the 1920s, many nations, including Norway, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, the US, Canada, and Denmark, started claiming ownership of the new Arctic trade routes to expand their market reach.

After WWII, Arctic waters became a critical supply route for the United States. The "Lend-Lease" initiative among nations, which acknowledged the Arctic as the quickest route for goods exchange, led to the distribution of supply and exchange of products. The USSR also had vast territorial interests in the Arctic, which created various opportunities for possible conflict

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between the involved countries. Hence, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas designated the areas of the sea that belong to each country under the categories of Territorial Waters or Exclusive Economic Zones. This treaty has raised concerns in the Arctic regarding the allocation of the resources found within the region.

Furthermore, in September 1996, the Arctic Council was created to address the issues that command the attention of Arctic states and create a means of dialogue and diplomacy to deal with cross-border issues. In 2007, Russia began an expedition called Arktika in which Russia planted a flag near the precise location of the North Pole. The flag has kept a military outpost there ever since. China has also demonstrated interest in the Arctic by investing significantly in this area, increasing its research efforts and Scientific Arctic Institute. Afterward, in 2014, Russia declared its intention to prioritize the Arctic. Following Russia's actions, The U.S. has demonstrated comparable objectives by competing for control over portions of the Arctic with military and scientific objectives in mind. Conversely, Canada has also built two military facilities in its Arctic territory (Bandi, 2020).

Additionally, in 2021, the United States Military published its new and updated Arctic military strategy. As the White House states, it plans to “deter threats to the U.S. homeland and our allies by enhancing the capabilities required to defend our interests in the Arctic while coordinating shared approaches with allies and partners and mitigating risks of unintended escalation” (National Strategy for the Arctic Region, n.d.). Subsequently, over time the importance of the Arctic in geopolitics has dramatically increased.

Historical Case Studies

Korea's Demilitarized Zone

After WWII ended, Korea's demilitarized zone (DMZ), also known as the border separating North and South Korea, was established. The First Korean War started in 1950 when North Korea, aided by the USSR and China, invaded the south. Conversely, South Korea was supported by the United States. After over a million casualties, the fighting ended with a cease-fire in 1953. However, Korea remained divided (Millett, 2022). After the end of the war, a group of US soldiers remained in Korea to assist the Republic of Korea Army (ROK) and help defend the DMZ (The Forgotten DMZ, n.d.). Although there have been minor conflicts over the past years, North and South Korea have remained mostly at peace. However, once littered with landmines, the DMZ is now the most heavily fortified border in the world and serves as a reminder that North and South Korea technically remain at war. Thus, both sides continue to develop military technology in preparation for a potential conflict, with the United States aiding South Korea with a \$100 million security assistance grant (Demilitarized zone, 2022). Overall, Korea's DMZ demonstrates how demilitarization can help to reduce and prevent more significant conflicts from breaking out.

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The Space Race and the Possible Militarization of Space

Throughout the Cold War, Russia and the United States placed great importance on winning the Space Race. The Space Race started in 1955 after the Soviet Union responded to the US goal of launching artificial satellites. On October 4, 1957, Russia launched Sputnik, its first satellite. Soon after, the US launched Explorer 1 on January 31, 1958. Both nations kept developing strategies and devoting their resources toward reaching space first (RGM, n.d.). These satellites sent new and astonishing data back to each country, which hastened the space battle, so both countries continued developing and launching new, improved satellites. In the 1960s, the US and USSR decided to prioritize a lunar landing, and the US reached its goal in 1969, with Commander Neil Armstrong successfully leading a crew to land on the moon. From launching satellites to ‘conquering’ the Moon, the US and Russia went head to head for twenty years to see who could go the farthest in this Space Race. However, this also prompted recent questions regarding the militarization of outer space, mainly because there is no explicit prohibition against doing so. In fact, many countries currently employ satellites for military use (ICRC, 2017). As countries continue to develop technologies for use in space, the militarization of space and a potential bid for resources has been a subject of concern for international organizations, who have called upon a specific treaty to prevent this militarization, demonstrating how a fight over space territory and the development of military technologies in space could prove to be consequential (Singh, 2021).

Kenya-Somalia Maritime Border Dispute

Kenya and Somalia are both East African countries that border the Indian Ocean. However, their maritime borders are in dispute. The leading international treaty that governs maritime borders is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas, and both countries have signed and ratified it (UNTC, n.d.). Article 3 of the treaty states that “every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention” (United Nations, 1982). Most countries follow this definition of territorial waters; however, Somalia argued otherwise.

During 2014, Somalia formally filed a lawsuit against Kenya, asserting that the maritime border should follow the same line as the land border. Under this proposal, Somalia would gain greater jurisdiction over the Indian Ocean. However, Kenya defended that the border should stay the way it currently is, and granted resource exploitation permits to multinational companies in the disputed waters. Somalia, in the meantime, denied Kenya’s ability and power to grant those permits because it is still an evolving matter in the eyes of the international community. In 2021, The International Court of Justice (ICJ) sided with Somalia and ruled that it has ownership over most of the disputed maritime area, delimiting the territory by drawing a median line along the mainland coasts (Schofield et al., 2021). As expected, Kenya refused to accept the court’s legal jurisdiction and their ability to make such rulings. This process is all too

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common with ICJ rulings, despite them being binding and unable to be reversed. With that said, the ICJ itself does not have the means to enforce its ruling and instead refers the case to the United Nations to be dealt with.

When analyzing this case, it is essential to consider the importance of this dispute to both countries, as it is believed that large oil and gas reserves could be found deep beneath the waters of the Indian Ocean. In addition, the territory provides access to commercial fishing and other potential economic and military purposes. Despite their bid for more maritime territory, Somalia and Kenya have not been directly involved in militarization in the Indian Ocean. However, Japan, India, and China have displayed an increased naval presence (Nagao, 2018). East Africa is one of the world's most rapidly growing and industrializing regions and control over its plentiful resources has proven to be a significant dispute, straining the bilateral relationship between Kenya and Somalia and preventing cross-border cooperation.

The Militarization of the South China Sea

The South China Sea is a maritime region that borders the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and, most importantly, China. This area accounts for a significant percentage of the world's crude oil and natural gas reserves; in addition, 60% of the world's maritime trade goes through the South China Sea (*The Militarization of the South China Sea*, 2021). This region has two small, but crucial islands in its center: the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands. China only began to occupy the Spratly Islands in 1988. Nonetheless, as the country regained power at the beginning of the 21st century and the United States became more interested in its involvement in Asia, China's activity in the Spratly Islands became more significant. This activity increased further after Xi Jinping became president of the People's Republic of China in 2012 (*The Militarization of the South China Sea*, 2021). Under his rule, China began to build artificial islands close to the Spratly Islands, which are home to military bases that contain heavy weaponry and can host full-time military personnel, hospitals, and administrative buildings. Since 2013, the country has created over 3,000 acres of new land, and although China promised against militarizing the islands in 2015, it has since claimed they are "necessary defense facilities" (Stashwick, 2019). China does not formally own the Spratly Islands, so the country is breaching the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which states that the exclusive economic zone of a country ends once the ocean surrounding it is 200 nautical miles from its border (*The Militarization of the South China Sea*, 2021).

Nevertheless, China claims that it owns the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands, so it is equipping the region with military supplies and personnel that it plans to use if another country comes near the area. As a result of China's intimidation tactics, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia have reduced their activity around the islands. China has continued to illegally claim the islands as its territory. Thus, it has also been threatened by the United States due to its increased presence in the region and its recent public declarations, which establish that the Asian superpower is illegally claiming ownership of the islands and the South China Sea

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(*The Militarization of the South China Sea*, 2021). At the moment, the dispute over the South China Sea has not concluded, with tensions only rising among neighboring countries as China continues to illegally expand its military involvement in the region.

Ethiopia's Military Occupation of Eritrea

In 1998, the Ethiopian occupation of 1,000 kilometers of Eritrean territory led to a conflict between the two countries that escalated quickly, resulting in the loss of thousands of citizens from both countries (*Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, n.d.). Despite international efforts to prevent the conflict, both countries spent millions on military equipment, despite Eritrea's demands to demilitarize the disputed areas (BBC, 2020). It was not until 2000 that the conflict came to an end. A 25-kilometer-wide Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) was established in Eritrea and patrolled by UN peacekeeping forces from over 60 countries (*Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, n.d.). Then, in 2002, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission reached a verdict. It awarded territory to both countries, but Badme, one of the most contested territories, was given to Eritrea. While Ethiopia was dissatisfied with the ruling, it withdrew its military forces from the Eritrean border in the "interests of peace," prompting the UN to also remove some of its peacekeepers from Eritrea (BBC, 2005).

Since then, both countries have re-established their military along the border, adding tensions between both countries. Rumors of Ethiopian troops surrounding the border have been denied by the government, which brushed it off as normal troop routine. The Eritrean-Ethiopian War has had a widespread impact, displacing and impoverishing over 1.9 million people (*Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, n.d.). Consequently, this conflict serves as an example of the importance of international cooperation and remediation when solving these conflicts, and most importantly the use of an internationally-backed organ or commission to settle border disputes.

Past UN Actions

The United Nations created the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, and since then, 167 nations have ratified it. The UNCLOS states that each country has territorial sovereignty that extends 12 nautical miles off its coast and can have an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that extends 200 nautical miles off its coast (Churchill, 2022). As a result, a country can exploit natural resources and conduct research in a region within 200 nautical miles of its coast. However, if a country's EEZ overlaps with another country's, both parties must establish an agreement to designate zones to avoid conflict (Churchill, 2022). This particular condition applies to the problem at hand, as the eight Arctic states have the right to establish their own EEZ; nevertheless, EEZs in the arctic often overlap, meaning that they have not been fairly established and agreed upon. This makes it complicated when establishing a country's jurisdiction over the Arctic territory.

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A forum known as the Arctic Council, made up of the eight Arctic states, was established to address conflicts that indigenous populations and territories face (Arctic Council, n.d.). The Arctic Council invites other countries such as China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, Spain, and the United Kingdom to most sessions but these do not have voting privileges. The council has several subdivisions that focus on sectors such as wildlife conservation, sustainable development, climate impact, and emergency prevention. The council is often amid security and geopolitical issues, including militarization.

IV. Key Players and Points of View

Russia

Although Russia has always demonstrated interest in the Arctic, its military presence and involvement in the region has continued to increase. Russia owns 53% of the Arctic coastline and approximately 2 million Russians are living in the region. As of 2022, one of Russia's main priorities is to assert its dominance in the Arctic (Brennan, 2022). According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Russia has “opened hundreds of new and former Soviet-era Arctic military sites,” which include airfields and deep water ports (*NATO chief warns about Russia's Arctic military build-up*, 2022). Russia is currently using its Arctic territory to develop and store military technology; for example, they have developed the Belgorod submarine, which allegedly contains a “drone equipped with a nuclear bomb” that can generate a 1600 ft radioactive tsunami (Hagstrom, 2022). Yet, as Russia continues to invest more into its militarization of the Arctic, it also becomes more involved.

A senior diplomat at NATO asserted that the organization “does not expect Russia's costly war in Ukraine to prove a long-term distraction from Moscow's plan to dominate the Arctic” (Brennan, 2022). Therefore, other Arctic states in NATO also intend to increase their military presence in the Arctic to counter Russia's involvement. In addition, the Ukraine war has “frozen multilateral Arctic cooperation” and suspended Arctic Council meetings, further straining relations between the Arctic countries (Brennan, 2022). Although the Arctic had previously fostered cooperation between NATO countries and Russia, the Russo-Ukrainian war has prevented collaboration between the Arctic nations, leading to mistrust. James Appathurai, NATO's deputy assistant Secretary General believes that “alliance nations will likely increase their focus on the high north as part of a long-term strategy to counter Russia,” speeding up the Arctic's militarization (Brennan, 2022). Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that Russia would be willing to halt its military investments in the Arctic. Thus, NATO military presence will also increase accordingly.

China

The Chinese government has embarked on numerous Arctic expeditions since 1999 in order to gather information on the sea, atmosphere and the region's biological and geological

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systems (*China's Arctic Policy*, 2018). In 2004, Chinese researchers built their first research base, the Yellow River Station, on Svalbard Island, a Norwegian archipelago between Norway and the North Pole. China's current Arctic policy is largely based on researching the region while maintaining control of the Arctic Ocean and ensuring it is used, protected, and preserved. The country built a polar research institute in 2009 and since then, it has invested over \$90 billion in the region (Morello, 2019). In addition, China has maintained that it wants to keep the international community's common interests in mind and encourage long-term growth in the region by working with them to “safeguard and promote peace and stability in, and the sustainable development of the Arctic” (*China's Arctic Policy*, 2018).

China is also carrying out economic activities in the Arctic and has cooperated with Russia towards energy production. The 3,000-kilometer "Power of Siberia" natural gas pipeline that runs from Russia's Siberian fields to northeast China was inaugurated in December 2019. The pipeline was created as part of Beijing's efforts to reduce its reliance on coal power and improve energy security. In addition, China's partnership with Russia to build a global transportation corridor via the Northern Sea Route (NSR), also referred to as the Polar Silk Road, has recently garnered attention. This route would be 40% quicker than a similar excursion through the Suez Waterway, essentially cutting fuel costs and making shipping quicker and more efficient (Oxford Analytica, 2018). The possibility of opening international Arctic shipping via the NSR increases as global warming opens up ice-free periods during warmer months.

However, China's economic interests have largely defined its strategy in the Arctic. The country's large investments despite only being a “near-Arctic state” with observer status in the Arctic Council have alarmed the US (Morello, 2019). In 2019, US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, warned of the dangers posed by Chinese investment in the Arctic at the meeting of ministers from the Arctic Council. Although the Pentagon has expressed concern due to China's involvement in the Arctic and a possible military presence through submarines, China is unlikely to back down. Overall, China holds a multi-faceted interest in the Arctic region, which currently, is mostly related to economic development. However, it is likely that over time, China will develop a greater military presence in the Arctic.

The United States

The United States officially became an Arctic nation in 1867, when it purchased Alaska. Although Alaska is the least populated state in the US, the national government has varied interests in the Arctic, including homeland security, cooperation with other Arctic nations, and scientific research while establishing a “region that is free of conflict” (Arctic Council, n.d.). The United States started militarizing the Arctic during the Cold War in the 1950s due to concerns about future geopolitical conflicts, and the other Arctic nations followed soon after (Palu, 2022). As a part of NATO, the United States implemented air, naval, and research bases in the Arctic. In addition, the US has created several agreements with the eight Arctic States to maintain a balanced system to continue researching the Arctic. Moreover, the US has also established

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strong connections, communication, and cooperation with many of the Arctic nations, including Denmark. Alan Leventhal, a US ambassador based in Denmark, stated at the 2019 Annual Security Policy Conference that the United States is focused on “open lines of communication and wide-ranging collaboration” with other Arctic Nations (*The US view on the Arctic*, n.d.).

The US has been among the most involved with carrying out military operations in the Arctic, and has sent several submarines into the Arctic ever since the USS Nautilus ship made its first transit in 1958. In addition, the United States has established many air bases near the Arctic (Baker, 2022). As a result, they have started to develop their military resources in the Arctic and will continue to do so in response to the growing Russian presence in the Arctic, especially since Russia launched its attack on Ukraine and heightened tensions with NATO. In October 2022, the White House released an updated Arctic strategy that aims to “deter aggression in the Arctic, especially from Russia” (*National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, 2022). Therefore, the United States will increase its military presence in the region as it plans to improve its aerial and naval capabilities in the Arctic so that it can “deter threats and anticipate, prevent, and respond to both natural and human-made incidents... through cooperation with Arctic Allies” (Harris, 2022). Thus, China and Russia’s increased interest and presence in the Arctic has increased the potential for the region’s militarization, especially as the United States and its allies double down on their efforts to protect themselves and their Arctic interests, rapidly increasing the militarization of the Arctic.

Canada

In recent years, Canada has taken a more active role in Arctic affairs, which is unsurprising considering that around 40% of Canada’s territory lies within the Arctic Circle, including Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon (Arctic Council, n.d.). The hard terrain, extreme cold, and isolation hindered the development of Canada’s northern territories. Recently, there has been increased awareness about the possible uses of the region's natural resources, including oil, natural gas, rare earth metals, glaciers, and wood. However, Canada’s northernmost territory is mainly inhabited by its indigenous population; out of its 150,000 inhabitants, over half are indigenous (Arctic Council, 2022). Hence, it is important to consider how the sovereignty of these populations will be impacted by the area’s possible militarization.

In addition, several countries have tried to designate the Northwest Passage, a sea route that goes through several Canadian islands, as international waters (*Northwest passage*, 2021). The United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia, among others, have protested Canada’s claim to the Northwest Passage. Thus, Huebert, an Arctic expert from the University of Calgary asserts that to maintain its claim to the sea route, Canada “should be investing more in infrastructure — both military and civilian — to reinforce its control over the region” (Brewster, 2022). However, Canada has been against holding a NATO military drill in its territory despite China and Russia’s increased Arctic involvement. Yves Broedeur, a former Canadian ambassador to NATO disagreed, believing that hosting a military exercise would send an

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“important signal to Russia and would serve as a big asset to the organization” (Brewster, 2022). Canada has a lot at stake in the Arctic, especially when considering its proximity to the north and the country’s large amounts of Arctic territory; however, Canada has been hesitant to expand its presence and cooperate in light of recent political tensions.

Sweden

Like Canada, Sweden is one of the eight Arctic nations, and thus, it is a part of the Arctic Council. Sweden’s Arctic territory comprises its two northernmost counties, which are among its most densely populated (Arctic Council, n.d.). Sweden has emphasized the importance of climate-related Arctic research and has several environmental research stations. According to the Arctic Council, Sweden has also led ice-breaking operations, as well as Arctic sea and land surveillance, to promote maritime safety, accessibility, and commercial trade (n.d.). Therefore, Sweden is heavily involved in the Arctic region and has stated that it aims to “ensure that the Arctic remains a region where security policy tensions are low” (Arctic Council, n.d.).

Like Finland, Sweden has an important role to play in the Arctic Council. Finland, Sweden, and Russia are the only non-NATO members in the Arctic Council. Although Finland and Sweden were previously opposed to joining NATO, Russia’s attack on Ukraine has made them reconsider their stance, something that worries Russia; if Sweden and Finland joined NATO, all countries on the Arctic Council, except for Russia, would be a part of NATO. Russia is especially against this, and the country’s foreign ministry believes that Sweden and Finland joining NATO would accelerate the militarization of the Arctic. Although the Arctic Council is not a military alliance, spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stated that “It cannot be ignored that once these countries join the alliance, all member states of the Arctic Council apart from Russia will be members of the North Atlantic bloc” (Reuters, 2022). Thus, although the militarization of the Arctic is not Sweden’s main focus because it is more focused on the Arctic’s environment, Sweden has a large role to play in the future of the region’s militarization because of its potential NATO membership. Russia has warned both Finland and Sweden against joining NATO and threatened the countries with “serious military and political consequences” (Roth, 2022). However, Sweden has chosen to pursue NATO membership, potentially exacerbating NATO’s strained relationship with Russia and speeding up Arctic militarization.

V. Possible Solutions

As the Arctic is facing increased militarization, there must be solutions to the different threats awakening. One possible solution is the creation of a comprehensive Arctic Treaty. This treaty would establish a legal framework for defining the scope and extent of Arctic regional governance, including military operations, surveying, and other concerning issues. Given that the Arctic is a region of strategic importance and the home of 4 million people, advisory roles in any Arctic governance mechanisms should consider the indigenous population’s interests

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(*Arctic People*, n.d.). Another solution is the implementation of a comprehensive cooperative surveillance system; one possible approach to such a solution can be the implementation of an intensive surveillance system that takes data from satellites and holds records of what goes in and what goes out of the Arctic. This recording system could reduce the number of unknown countries going in and out of the Arctic.

Furthermore, a regional arms limitation agreement would serve to reduce threats to national security in the Arctic states. This limitation will decrease the militarization of the Arctic, decreasing nuclear threats and preventing possible wars originating from this region. The situation in the Arctic may also improve with the United Nations' increased presence and involvement in the issue. Currently, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the only international law governing the rights and responsibilities of all states concerning the Arctic Region and accounts for the entirety of the UN's presence in the Arctic. However, the United Nations has yet to produce any additional documents regarding the militarization of the arctic other than the UNCLOS treaty.

VI. Current Status

Currently, NATO has taken initiative and started to invest in the Arctic region. Additionally, Finland and Sweden have also been working to join NATO, cementing Russia as the only Arctic Nation without NATO membership. This action was taken in order to improve the militarization exercises like the previously mentioned Cold Response designed by NATO. All of this aims to provide aid to the militarization goal that NATO has to gain control over most of the Arctic Circle. Canada has also boosted their military in the Arctic, investing 13 billion into NORAD, an early warning system invented by NATO that was specifically created for Arctic use. (*Dark Arctic*, 2019). Furthermore, in April 2022, 35,000 soldiers participated in NATO's Cold Response military exercise, which was made to strengthen soldiers' experience in the cold weather. However, there are several concerns surrounding the Cold Response training and Russia-NATO relations. On the other hand, in February, Russia conducted a similar training exercise which was deemed as a warning to the west because a week later, Russia invaded Ukraine.

Because NATO has started to create military bases, they are currently under threat due to Russia's presence in the Arctic. At the moment, Russia has more Arctic territory than NATO by about a third (*Dark Arctic*, 2019). Russia also plans to take over the Northern Sea Route, which is located in the Arctic Ocean close to the North Pole (Yermakov, 2022). Furthermore, although NATO has 22 submarines capable of sending nuclear power, Russia has 11 submarines, creating more tension between NATO and Russia. As a result, many countries, such as the United States, feel threatened by the amount of nuclear power held by Russia in the Arctic. China has also shown interest in the Arctic. Beneficial factors that China seeks in the Arctic are its natural resources, such as minerals and potential geothermal energy. These factors have become the

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Chinese's primary focus on the Arctic since the country has a direct connection through the Chinese sea. Also, China could make a significant profit from the extraction of these resources.

Overall, the Arctic is a location that has been very strategic for many countries. Therefore, the committee needs to address the continued increase of militarization in the Arctic and the possible tensions that overlapping territories may produce. It is also essential for delegates to consider that military presence is not the only reason for a country's involvement; often, countries' economic interest in the region has led governments to establish a military presence. Despite current conflicts, it is essential to establish collaboration and communication between Arctic nations to designate parameters for a country's Arctic involvement and avoid escalating tensions and future disputes.

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