

Regional Conference KhaMUN2017

"Challenges of the 21 century: cooperation for sustainable development"

Security Council

Study Guide

“The Arctic as the Center of Geopolitical Tension”

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Introduction

Due to the Climate Change, the Arctic has become prospective region for the world economy and for military purposes of its stakeholders. As the High North ice melts, the Arctic's minerals, fish stocks, and other natural resources are becoming increasingly accessible

It goes without saying that the Arctic region cannot be isolated from international development however increasing of activity in this region sharpens current contradictions as well as generates new problems. In fact, the international community has been placed in a complex issue - whether the Arctic can be developed sustainably and peacefully.

The primary goal for the Security Council regarding to this agenda is to ensure peaceful operations the in region for the international community by defining a legal frameworks for such activities and for solving disputes.

1 Background Information

1.1 Arctic Region's geographical characteristics

Geographically the Arctic (or the High North) is a polar region located at the northernmost part of Earth. There are several ways to define Arctic's boundaries. In the Study Guide the boundaries of Arctic are limited by the Arctic Circle - an imaginary line of latitude located at 66 degrees 33 minutes North. The territory above the Arctic Circle is about 6 percent of the earth's territory.

There are eight countries which have the territory north of the Arctic Circle: the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. These countries are also officially referred as "Arctic States"



Figure 1 – Arctic's geography

The area pointed on the figure 1 is the Arctic Circle consisting of the Arctic Ocean, the adjacent seas, parts of Alaska (United States), Canada, Finland, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. In this way Arctic consists of ocean that is largely surrounded by land. The dominant surface for the Arctic Basin is sea-ice with thickness 4m approximately.

The High North is known due to its large reserves of natural resources. In accordance with estimation of scientists the Arctic could hold about 22 percent of the world's undiscovered conventional oil and natural gas resources.

The Arctic is the most affected by Climate Change area on the earth. The rate of warming in the Arctic is twice higher than on the rest of the planet.

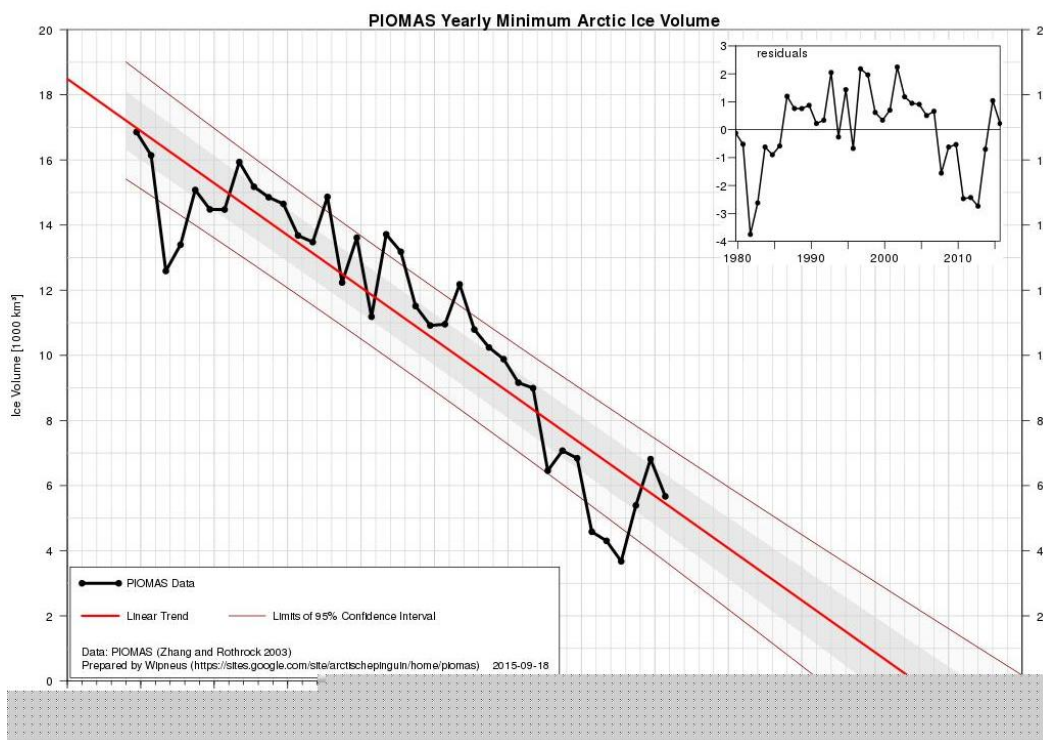


Figure 2 – The Arctic's ice-melting trend

As it can be seen from the data above if the pace of global warming remains to be unchanged the Arctic Ocean will be free of ice by 2035. Noting that there is not a forum to discuss the validity of climate change expectations its necessary to stress that the actual Study Guide is based on the statistical data.

Thus ice-melting process along with negative environmental consequences offers great opportunities for the region exploration making accessible significant stocks of mineral resources and suitable in the nearest future for commercial navigation shipping routes through the Arctic Ocean: the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route.

1.2 Sovereignty, Governance and Diplomacy

Acknowledging the importance of the region for international development (as it has made the international community) it is necessary to review existing documents and organizations that empowered to govern the activities (resources exploration, navigation and etc.) in the Arctic.

The documents can be divided into 3 groups:

1. Domestic laws and regulations of each Arctic state;
2. Bilateral, regional, and international agreements – most of them focused on environmental issues and can be considered insignificant regarding the agenda;
3. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea III (UNCLOSIII) – the principal UN document that governs activities on, over, and beneath the Arctic - as with all the world's oceans.

The given above classification do not exclude usage of some other UN documents (UN Charter especially), however it is important to give a brief overview of the UNCLOS.

The UNCLOS regulates a number of important issues related to ocean usage and state sovereignty:

1. Territorial sea boundaries and Exclusive Economic Zones. According to the convention 12 nautical miles from the land is considered territorial waters, 24 nautical miles from the land is the contiguous zone. 200 nautical miles from the land is considered the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – in these waters a country holds the exclusive rights for exploration of natural resources but cannot enforce laws in this area outside its territorial waters. The EEZ can be extended past the 200 nautical mile zone if certain criteria are met.

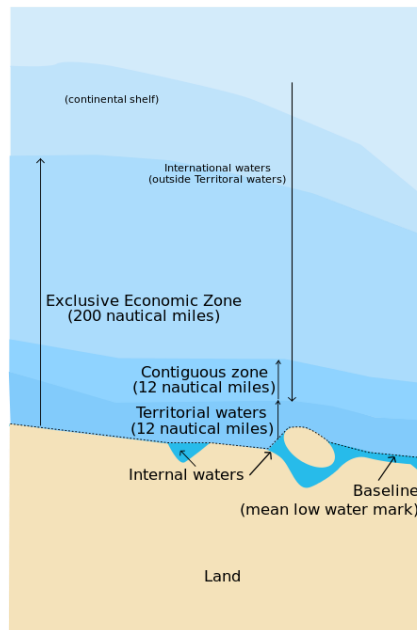


Figure 3 - Definition of off-shore water bands

2. Rules for extending continental shelf rights up to 350 miles offshore. If the continental shelf of any country extends past 200 nautical miles, it is possible to extend the EEZ to encompass the extended continental shelf. This is important because these areas can be rich with untouched resources. If any country can provide evidence and have ratified the UNCLOSIII treaty, they can petition for an extension. Such issues are subject to be addressed to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

3. Guarantees freedom-of-navigation rights. Countries that are either next to the ocean or are surrounded by land are allowed navigate through territorial seas of other countries if it is doing so in a continuous and expeditious fashion. This point does not guarantee passage through internal waterways or the ability to stop at a port.

Despite of being a quite comprehensive legal basis for setting disputes over issues related to the Arctic the Convention has not been accepted yet by the United States as it fortifies U.S. interests. At the same time the US subscribes to most of the UNLOS.

The main platform for the international cooperation in the Arctic is The Arctic Council. The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and the indigenous people of the Arctic. There are members and observer states. Only arctic states can be members of the Council. It has eight member countries: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

As the warming of the Arctic Ocean opens a new maritime space, it is inviting commercial and strategic competition from non-Arctic states in Asia. In 2013 the Arctic Council granted “permanent observer status” to China, India, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea. At first Russia resisted this move, but it reluctantly consented once these non-Arctic states pledged to recognize the territorial sovereignty of the eight members as well as the application of UNCLOS to the Arctic Ocean.

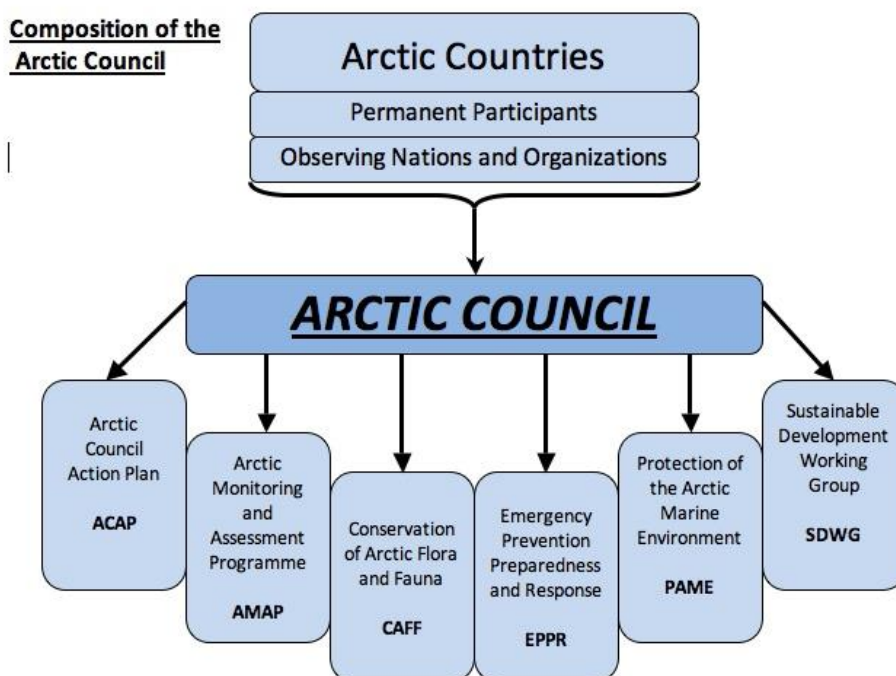


Figure 4 – The Arctic Council and its bodies

When the Arctic Council was founded in 1996, peace and security concerns were left out of its mandate. However, changes in the arctic environment and

participants of the Arctic Council have led to a reconsideration of the relationship between geopolitical matters and the role of the Arctic Council.

In addition to the documents and organizations mentioned above the shipping through the Arctic is regulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The IMO's primary purpose is to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit today includes safety, environmental concerns, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.

2. Key issues

2.1 Resources exploration and territorial disputes

The Arctic is one of the last frontiers of natural resource discovery, and underneath the Arctic Ocean are vast amounts of undiscovered oil, natural gas. It's estimated that the Arctic has 90 billion barrels of oil that is yet to be discovered. That's equal to 5.9% of the world's known oil reserves – about 110% of Russia's current oil reserves, or 339% of U.S. reserves.

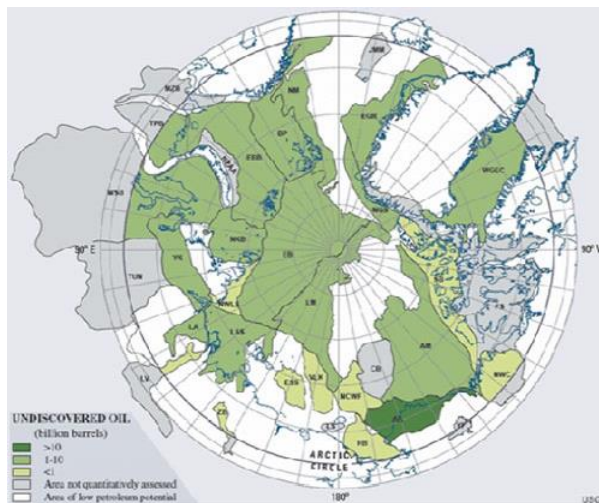


Figure 5 – Undiscovered oil map

For natural gas: the Arctic has an estimated 1669 trillion cubic feet of gas, equal to 24.3% of the world's current known reserves. That's equal to 500% of U.S. reserves, 99% of Russia's reserves, or 2736% of Canada's natural gas reserves.

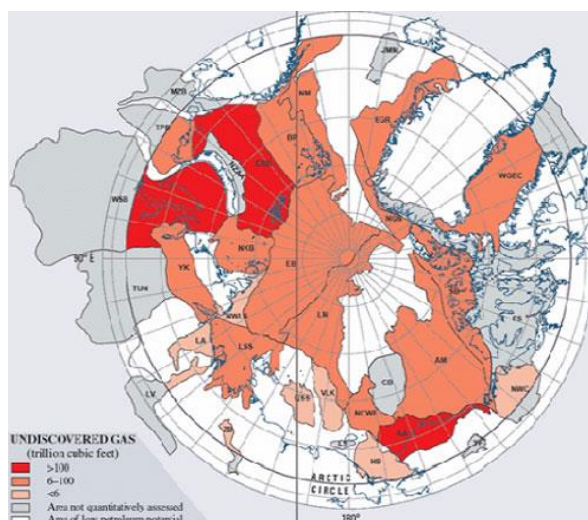


Figure 6 - Undiscovered gas map

Most of these hydrocarbon resources, about 84%, are expected to lay offshore. It gives the reason for Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States to rival for domination in the Arctic.

Territorial claims in the Arctic have been taking place since 1935. Adoption of the UNCLOS has made a significant effort in territorial disputes settlement over the water areas. Increased interest in developing offshore resources in the Arctic has sparked efforts by nations bordering the Arctic Ocean to map the extent of their continental margins beyond the 200-mile EEZ limit in accordance with the mechanism set in the UNCLOS. However there are two main obstacles for the implementation of this mechanism: the first one is that the US (one of the claimants) has not ratified the convention yet; the second obstacle is that the extension of continental margins of several claimants can be crossed. Nowadays there are ten territorial claims. They are portrayed on the figure below:

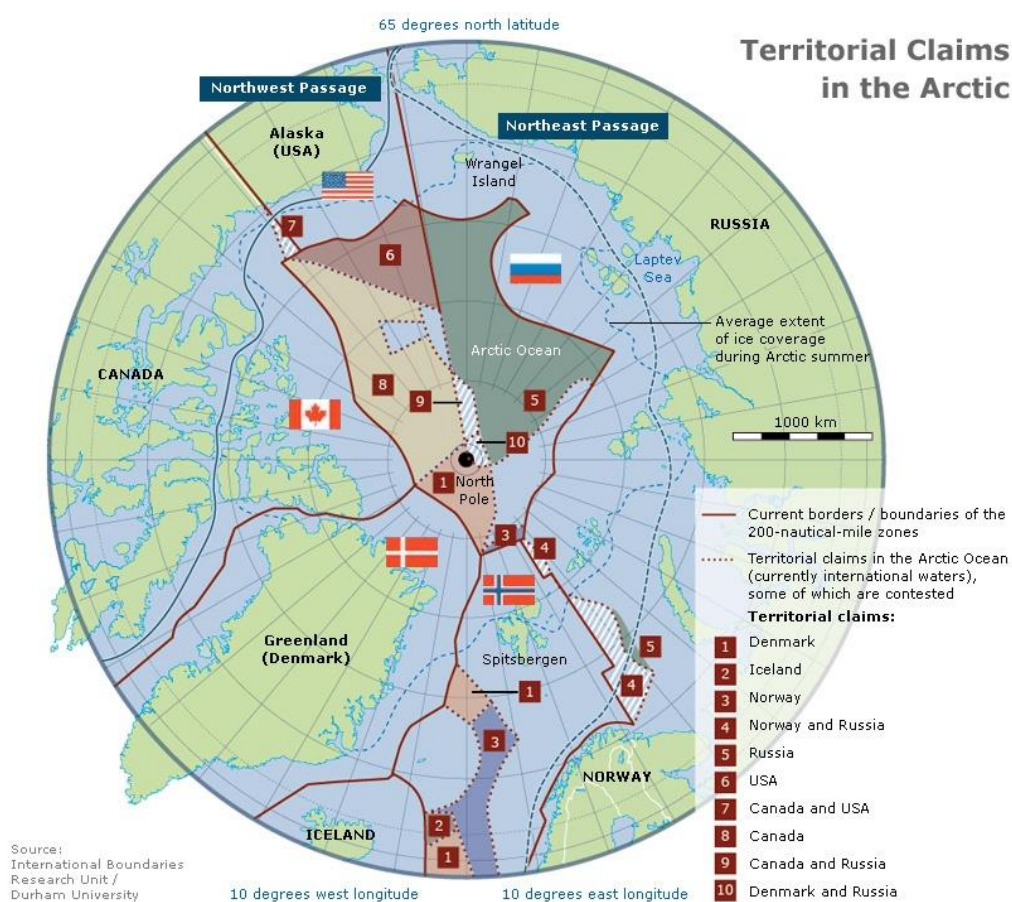


Figure 7 – Territorial claims in the Arctic.

If we compare the map given above with the physical map we will be able to identify the nature of the disputes. In this way the most disputable area is the Lomonosov Ridge.

The Lomonosov Ridge is an underwater mountain range which bisects the Arctic Ocean almost directly under the North Pole, and extends for 1800km from the New Siberian Islands. to Ellesmere Island of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. For a pictorial overview of the area around the Lomonosov Ridge, please refer to Figure 6.



Figure 8 - Geographical Overview of the Lomonosov Ridge

The significance of the Lomonosov Ridge lies in the potential for any successful claimant state to essentially possess exclusive rights over the vast economic resources in the vicinity.

The claimant states' dispute over the Lomonosov Ridge takes place on the basis of Part VI of the UNCLOS. Article 77 of the Part VI of the UNCLOS states that: "The coastal State exercises over the continental shelf sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources." As such, the key for all claimant states to the Lomonosov Ridge is to prove that the Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of the respective continental shelves upon which the respective states reside upon. In order for this to be proved, seabed surveys need to show that the Lomonosov Ridge is a natural extension of their respective land masses,

which is the key criterion used by the UN to decide the sovereign claims by states over all continental shelves.

Currently, the Lomonosov Ridge is claimed by the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Denmark and Canada.

The Russian Federation's claim to the Lomonosov Ridge is that it is a natural extension of the Siberian continental platform upon which the Russian Federation currently resides. In support of its sovereign claim over the Lomonosov Ridge, the Russia Federation submitted the details and justifications for its claim to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UN CLCS) on the 20th December of 2001. The UN CLCS eventually ruled that the claim submitted by the Russian Federation requires further scientific substantiation.

In opposition to the Russian Federation's claim over the Lomonosov Ridge, Canada claims the Lomosonov Ridge on the basis that it is an extension of Ellesmere Island. Given the geographical location of Canada, the Arctic polar region has always been an area in which Canada sees an opportunity to assert its presence.

The Kingdom of Denmark's claim over the Lomonosov Ridge is founded on its possession of Greenland as part of its sovereign territory. Specifically, the Kingdom of Denmark argues that the Lomonosov Ridge is actually an extension of Greenland's land mass. The Kingdom of Denmark's reliance upon Greenland as a platform upon which it can assert sovereign claims in the Arctic polar region should be carefully considered in the context of Greenland's move towards greater self-governance and possibly eventual independence. The Kingdom of Denmark has been pushing forth with efforts to table a submission to the UN CLCS by deploying Danish scientists with the explicit end in mind of gathering evidence that the Lomnosov Ridge is an extension of the Greenland land mass.

2.2 Polar navigation

As the Arctic ice melts, many shipping lanes are opening that many trading nations hope could compete with or complement conventional routes at least during summer months. The lower shipping costs could be advantageous for China, Japan, and South Korea (which consider themselves as “near arctic states”) because their manufactured products exported to Europe or North America could become less expensive relative to other emerging manufacturing centers in Southeast Asia, such as India.

There are three main shipping routes in the Arctic:

1. The Transpolar Sea Route via international high seas.
2. The Northeast Passage along Russia’s northern border;
3. The Northwest Passage along the Canadian Arctic Islands;



Figure 8 – The main Arctic shipping routes

As seen on the figure above the Transpolar Sea Route in contrast to the Northeast Passage and the North-West Passage lies in international high seas. The route is currently only navigable by heavy icebreakers. However, due to the increasing decline of Arctic sea ice extent, the route is slated to emerge as the predominant Arctic shipping route by 2030. The TSR passes outside the exclusive

economic zones of Arctic coastal states making it of special geopolitical importance to countries looking towards to Arctic as a future trade route. The People's Republic of China, in addition to the European Union (EU), is arguably the most important non-Arctic actor and will be instrumental to the development of the TSR. Its economic potential will allow to enhance Iceland's strategic location at the entrance and exit of the Arctic Ocean but also will contribute to the continuous shift of political power towards Asia.

The Northeast Passage along Russia's northern border from Murmansk to Provideniya, is about 2,600 nautical miles in length. This route would be applicable for trade between northeast Asia (north of Singapore) and northern Europe. In the summer of 2013, about 50 laden cargo ships transited the NSR. It lies solely within territorial waters of Russia and Finland making it less debated.

The Northwest Passage runs through the Canadian Arctic Islands. The route is potentially applicable for trade between northeast Asia (north of Shanghai) and the northeast of North America. The contested sovereignty claims over the waters may complicate future shipping through the region: The Canadian government considers the Northwestern Passages part of Canadian Internal Waters, but the United States and various European countries maintain they are an international strait or transit passage, allowing free and unencumbered passage. Both America and Canada have an argument that can be backed based on the UNCLOSIII. In addition, if Canada is able to hold its argument that the Northwest Passage is not a straight it could cause other countries to make the same claims. Canada has some vital concerns. One of which is security. Keeping the Northwest Passage secure and ensuring that the ships traversing the passage adhere to International Maritime Organization standards demand significant resources. The United States, the main player that is pushing that the Northwest Passage be declared a straight, has significant benefits that can be made. An

alternate route between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans can relieve the pressure already on many chokepoints throughout the globe such as the Panama Canal.

2.3 Militarization of the Arctic

During the Cold War, the Arctic was an arena of military competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, with both countries. The end of the Cold War greatly reduced this competition and led to a reduced emphasis on the Arctic of the Arctic states military planning. However the increasing economic importance of the Arctic, recent tensions (Ukraine especially) have made the U.S., Canada, Russia and some other states to renew their military activity inside the boundaries of the Arctic Crile.

Russia, the only non-NATO littoral Arctic state, has made a military buildup in the Arctic a strategic priority, restoring Soviet-era airfields and ports and marshaling naval assets.

In this response the USA military forces are beginning to focus more on Arctic operations. Besides , the Secretary of Defense stated that “the Arctic is going to be a major area of importance to the United States, both strategically and economically in the future.” Canada and the Nordic countries are taking or contemplating steps to increase their own military presence and operations in the region.

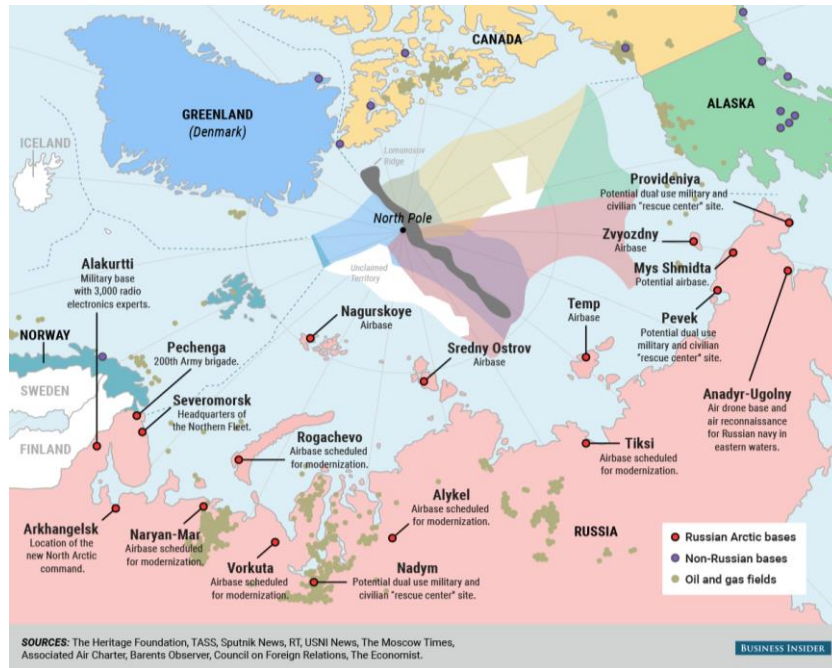


Figure 9 – Militarization of the Arctic map

Some Chinese leaders also have voiced concern over perceived emerging security issues in the Arctic. In 2010, a Chinese admiral stated that China had to “make short and long term ocean strategic development plans to exploit the Arctic because it will become a future mission for the navy.” however until now China still follow wait-to-see approach. China is believed to be keen on resolving through diplomacy the national interests of both littoral and non-Arctic states in the high north.

The military presence of Russia, Canada, the U.S. or other states may not be considered as a direct threat for peace but further it can be a taugt argument in rival for taking favorable position in this area.

Questions for discussion

1. Taking into attention the intention of the Arctic Council to distance itself from security issues and the growing military presence of stake holders:
 - a) In what ways can the militarization of the region be prevented?
 - b) Is there any need of security treaty over the region?
2. Considering the importance of territorial claims over the Arctic and over the Lomonosov Ridge especially:
 - a) Will parts of the Lomonosov Ridge be open for countries to utilize?
 - b) If so, how will the resources be allocated among interested parties?
3. Recognizing the role of the Arctic shipping routes significance:
 - a) Arctic navigation through the Northwest Passage must be considered - will the passage be declared part of Canada's inland waterway? Which state or states will have administration power of over the passage?
 - b) How to ensure the security through the Transpolar Sea Route?

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