

McKennaMUN VIII Background Guide



Arctic Council

**April 4-5 2020
Claremont McKenna
College**



**McKENNA
MUN**

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Arctic Council! My name is Kelsey Clarke, and I'll be your chair for this committee. I'm currently a sophomore at Claremont McKenna majoring in International Relations and Economics. I've lived in Jakarta, Indonesia for 18 years. During my free time, you can probably find me curled up with a good book, playing Catan with my friends, or at a MUN conference! Geopolitical developments in the Arctic are at a nascent stage, but the future looks both exciting and scary for this pristine region. The topics we will be discussing, commercialization of Arctic shipping routes and increasing Arctic resource extraction, are no longer future possibilities, but an inevitable reality the Arctic council will have to deal with. The "Cold Rush" is on and nations are scrambling to all grab a piece of the Arctic pie. With so much up in the air and at stake, I am excited to see the creative solutions we come up with as a committee! Come ready and prepared to challenge yourself, learn more about global issues, make new friends - and most importantly - have lots of fun! If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out. I'm excited to meet all of you and hear your ideas during the committee.

Kelsey Clarke

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

What is the Arctic Council?

The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum for addressing issues related to the Arctic Region.¹ It was established in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration after the Arctic countries signed the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991.² The Council's aim is to promote "cooperation, coordination and interaction" among the Arctic states, Arctic indigenous communities, and relevant actors.³ In particular, the council has focused predominantly on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.⁴ Beyond being a forum for diplomacy, the Arctic Council has also conducted research on climate change, Arctic shipping, and natural resources such as oil and gas.⁵ The Arctic Council established a permanent secretariat to increase administrative capacity and institutionalize the work and activities of the Arctic Council.⁶ The Arctic Council secretariat became formally operational in Tromsø, Norway in 2013.⁷ It should be kept in mind that the mandate of the Arctic Council, as expressed by the

¹ "The Arctic Council: A Background," *The Arctic Council*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us>

² Evan T. Bloom, "Establishment of the Arctic Council," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (July 1999): 712-722.

³ "The Arctic Council: A Background."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Ottawa Declaration, does not include military security issues.⁸ Moreover, the Arctic Council does not have a programming budget. As such, all projects and initiatives are sponsored by one or more Arctic states or receive external funding and support.⁹

Membership of the Arctic Council

A prerequisite for being a member of the council is that a state must have territory in the Arctic.¹⁰ As such, there are currently eight Arctic Council members: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, and the United States.¹¹ The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years between member states.¹² Finland currently has chairmanship of the council (2017-2019).¹³ The United States previously held chairmanship from 2015-2017.¹⁴ Iceland will assume the Chairmanship from 2019 to 2021.¹⁵ In addition to these members, six organizations that represent the indigenous people of the Arctic also maintain Permanent Participant status.¹⁶ These six organizations are the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council.¹⁷ The decisions of the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bloom, "Establishment of the Arctic Council."

¹¹ "Member States," *The Arctic Council*, September 10, 2015, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states>

¹² "The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Arctic Council are adopted by consensus among the eight Arctic states and necessitates the active engagement and full consultation of the six Permanent Participants.¹⁸ The Arctic Council is also open to non-Arctic states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁹ Known as Arctic Council Observers, these states and NGOs can only contribute through being involved in Working Groups.²⁰ The Arctic Council hosts Senior Arctic Official meetings every six months and Ministerial meetings every two years.²¹ The last Ministerial meeting took place on 6-7 May 2019 in Rovaniemi, Finland.²²

Working Groups

The Arctic Council is composed of permanent Working Groups and temporary issue-specific Task Forces or Expert Groups.²³ The Arctic Council produces recommendations and resolutions as a result of the analysis and findings of its six Working Groups.²⁴ These six Working Groups are:

1. The Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)²⁵
2. The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)²⁶

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Senior Arctic Officials gather for first meeting during Finland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship,” *Arctic Council*, October 30, 2017, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/474-sao-oulu-2017-01>

²² “Arctic Council Ministers meet, pass Chairmanship from Finland to Iceland, Arctic States conclude Arctic Council Ministerial meeting by signing a joint statement,” *Arctic Council*, August 16, 2019, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/521-arctic-council-ministers-meet-pass-chairmanship-from-finland-to-iceland>

²³ “The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “About ACAP,” *Arctic Contaminants Action Program*, June 5, 2019, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/acap-home>

²⁶ “AMAP and the Arctic Council,” *Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme*, <https://www.amap.no/about>

3. The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF)²⁷
4. The Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Working Group (EPPR)²⁸
5. The Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME)²⁹
6. The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)³⁰

The Task Forces that are currently operating during the Chairmanship of Finland are the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC), and the Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic (TFICA).³¹

Past Agreements

There are three important legally binding agreements passed by the Arctic Council.

1. Signed in Nuuk, Greenland during the 2011 Ministerial Meeting, the Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement (formally known as the *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*) was the first binding agreement ratified by the Arctic Council.³² The Treaty coordinates international search and rescue (SAR) operations in the Arctic regions by establishing the area of SAR coverage and

²⁷ “About CAFF,” *Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna*, <https://www.caff.is/about-caff>

²⁸ “About EPPR,” *Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response*, <https://www.eppr.org/about-eppr/>

²⁹ “About PAME,” *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*, <https://www.pame.is/index.php/shortcode/about-us>

³⁰ “SDWG Mandate,” The Sustainable Development Working Group, <https://www.sdwg.org/about-us/mandate-and-work-plan/>

³¹ “The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder.”

³² “Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search And Rescue in the Arctic,” *Arctic Council*, May 12, 2011, <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/531>

responsibility of each member state.³³ Due to conflicting territorial claims, The SAR regions are distinct from territorial boundaries and do not correspond or reflect sovereign rights or jurisdiction.³⁴

2. The *Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic* was signed in Kiruna, Sweden during the 2013 Ministerial Meeting.³⁵
3. The most recent binding agreement, the *Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation* was signed in Alaska, USA in 2017.³⁶ The agreement facilitates access to research areas, supports transparency and cooperation of scientific data in the Arctic, promotes education and opportunities for “early career scientists,” and many other initiatives that enhance scientific cooperation in the Arctic.³⁷

Topic I: Commercial Shipping Routes through the Arctic Region

INTRODUCTION

³³ Ibid.

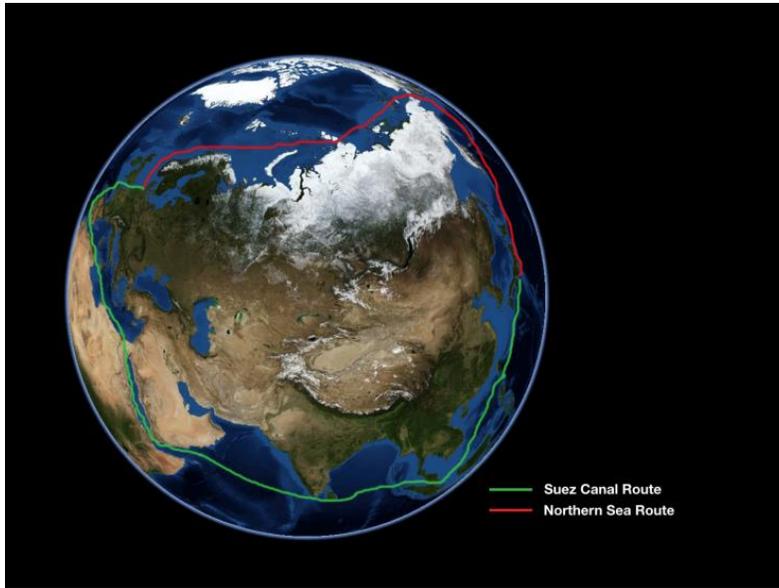
³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic,” *Arctic Council*, May 15, 2013, https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/529/EDOCS-2067-v1-ACMMSE08_KIRUNA_2013_agreement_on_oil_pollution_preparedness_and_response_in_the_arctic_formatted.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y

³⁶ “Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation,” *Arctic Council*, May 11, 2017, <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1916>

³⁷ “Scientific Cooperation Agreement enters into force,” *Arctic Council*, June 21, 2018, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work/8-news-and-events/488-science-agreement-entry-into-force>

Due to investments in ports and icebreaker fleets by Arctic countries, Arctic shipping has risen continuously since the 1980's.³⁸ While Arctic shipping is still largely between Arctic ports,



climate change has led to increased interest in the possibility of using the Arctic Ocean as a shortcut between Pacific and Atlantic ports.³⁹ As ice continues to melt in the Arctic, expectations have risen for a commercially feasible Arctic shipping route.⁴⁰ An

Arctic route has the potential to cut down shipping time between Asia and the West by 10-20 days.⁴¹ The Northern Sea Route is estimated to be around 40% faster than the same journey using the Suez Canal route.⁴² This has the potential to reduce fuel costs by hundreds of thousands of dollars, and could also potentially cut carbon dioxide emissions by 52%.⁴³

³⁸ David A. Welch, "The Arctic and Geopolitics," *McGill-Queen's University Press* (2014).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Albert Buixadé Farré, Scott R. Stephenson, Linling Chen, Michael Czub, Ying Dai, Denis Demchev, Yaroslav Efimov, Piotr Graczyk, Henrik Grythe, Kathrin Keil, Niku Kivekäs, Naresh Kumar, Nengye Liu, Igor Matelenok, Mari Myksvoll, Derek O'Leary, Julia Olsen, Sachin Pavithran, Edward Petersen, Andreas Raspotnik, Ivan Ryzhov, Jan Solski, Lingling Suo, Caroline Troein, Vilena Valeeva, Jaap van Rijckevorsel, and Jonathan Wighting, "Commercial Arctic shipping through the Northeast Passage: routes, resources, governance, technology, and infrastructure," *Polar Geography*, Vol. 37 No. 4 (June 11, 2014): 298-324.

⁴¹ Nastassia Astrasheuskaya and Henry Foy, "Polar powers: Russia's bid for supremacy in the Arctic Ocean," *Financial Times*, April 27, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/2fa82760-5c4a-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

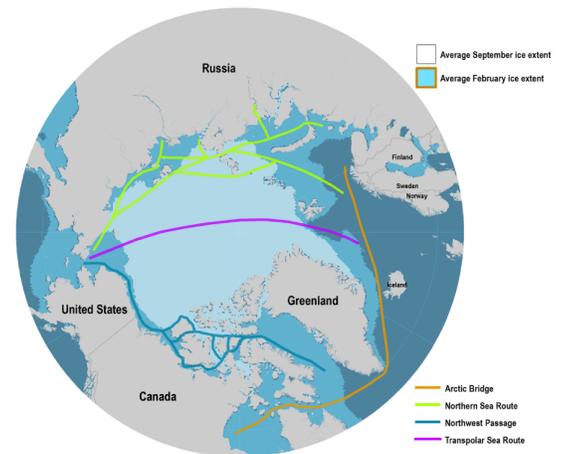
Key Concepts

Shipping Routes

The four major shipping routes in the Arctic are the Arctic Bridge, the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage (also known as the Northern Sea

Route), and the Transpolar Sea Route.⁴⁴ The Northern Sea Route, which runs along Russia's Siberian Arctic coast, is the shipping route that has the highest potential for commercial shipping due to its likelihood to completely melt first.⁴⁵ While the Northern Sea Route runs through Russian-claimed internal waters, the

Northwest Passage runs through Canadian-claimed internal waters, which is defined as extending from Baffin Bay to the Beaufort Sea.⁴⁶



HISTORY

Investigation for a navigable Northwest Passage and possible shipping routes in the Arctic started as early as 1497 by British and Dutch explorers.⁴⁷ The aim was to find a more direct route to the East to maximize the lucrative trade prospects Spain and Portugal monopolized due to their control of the Cape of Good Hope route.⁴⁸ Despite these high hopes, the search was a

⁴⁴ Linda Sturgis, Joel Smith and Isaiah Reed, "The Arctic's Changing Landscape Addressing New Maritime Challenge," *Center for a New American Security* (March 2014): 2-13.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," *Oceans & Law of the Sea United Nations* https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_historical_perspective.htm

⁴⁸ Ibid.

fruitless endeavor as it was not until 1906 that a vessel successfully completed the Northwest Passage.⁴⁹ In contrast, shipping along the Northeast Passage, has been used by the Russians for five centuries.⁵⁰

Existing International Frameworks

1. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

As oceans started to generate sovereignty disputes and nations began making claims to ocean resources, the need for a comprehensive regime emerged. To discuss this issue, the United Nations General Assembly convened three different times for conferences on the Law of the Sea from 1956 to 1982.⁵¹ The most important result of these conferences was the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in December 1982.⁵² UNCLOS Not only does UNCLOS define the right and responsibilities of nations in their use of the world's oceans, it also establishes guidelines for marine business and commercial activity, the environment, and the preservation of marine natural resources.⁵³ UNCLOS represented an unprecedented global attempt to regulate the resources and uses of the marine realm and remains one of the most comprehensive international agreements on appropriate marine behavior.

2. International Maritime Organization (IMO)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) was established in 1958 as the United Nations Agency responsible for the safety and security of maritime shipping and the prevention of pollution by ships.⁵⁴ In 2014, the IMO passed the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, or more commonly known as the Polar Code, which specifically outlines regulations for shipping in the Arctic.⁵⁵ Its aim is to protect the polar environment and safeguard the lives of people who live and work in the Arctic.⁵⁶ In particular, the Polar Code created mandatory standards for design and construction, equipment, operational training, and environmental protection that all ships operating in Arctic waters must comply with.⁵⁷ The Polar Code entered into force on January 1, 2017, and has been praised for going above and beyond existing IMO conventions such as MARPOL and SOLAS.⁵⁸ However, many critics believe that the Polar Code is still insufficient at properly protecting the Arctic from the inevitable anticipated increased levels of shipping activity.⁵⁹ Firstly, the code fails to address the need to phase out the use of heavy fuel oil (HFO), which has been attributed as the biggest risk posed by maritime shipping.⁶⁰ Secondly, while the code contains regulations that ships may only enter ice that corresponds to the appropriate capability of their ship to resist ice pressure, concerns still remain that non-ice

⁵⁴ “IMO adopts mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters,” *International Maritime Organization*, November 21, 2013, <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/38-nmsc94polar.aspx#.Xhi1fJNKjfZ>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Karine Langois, “IMO In the Polar Environment: The Polar Code Explained,” *The Arctic Institute*, May 16, 2017, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/imo-polar-environment-polar-code-explained/>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Polar Code too weak to properly protect polar environments from increased shipping activity,” *Seas at Risk*, November 21, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20150317014759/http://seas-at-risk.org/news_n2.php?page=704

⁶⁰ Ibid.

strengthened ships will continue to operate in these waters.⁶¹ Finally, the code fails to consider the livelihood and protection of several marine animals such as seabirds.⁶²

ISSUE

1. *Environmental & Safety Risks*

The possibility of increased ice-free Arctic shipping lanes does not only create a formidable geopolitical issue between states, but also poses several

environmental and security risks for the pristine Arctic environment. Firstly, the rise in ship traffic will increase pollution in the region and has the potential of increased oil spills.⁶³

Increased shipping and traffic through these Arctic shipping routes also leaves the potential for

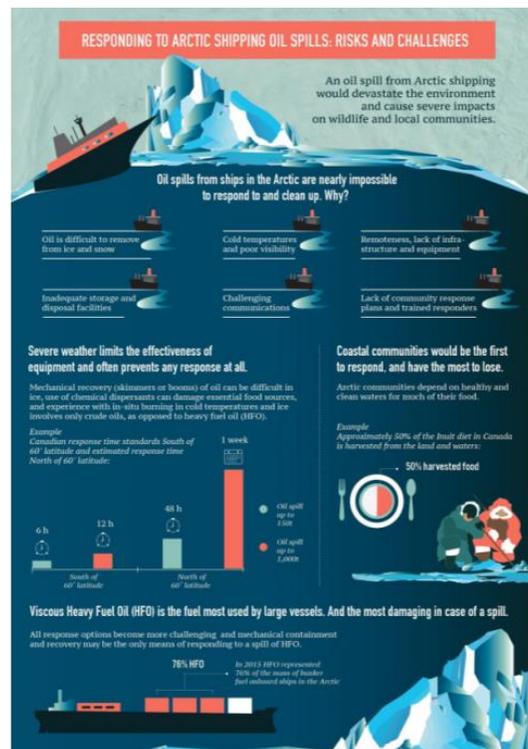
⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Frederic Lassere, "From the Panama Myth to Reality," *International Journal*, Vol. 66 No. 4 (Autumn 2011): 793-808.

military threats as terrorists could begin to infiltrate North America through this new poorly monitored Arctic “back door.”⁶⁴

of the
While the
strategic region
and the
the Cold War,
importance
fall of the
1991.



1. Militarization

Arctic

Arctic was a
for the Russians
Americans during
its military
declined after the
Soviet Union in
However, climate

change and the increasing prospect of unexploited Arctic resources has catalyzed another

⁶⁴ Ibid.

military build-up and arms race in the Arctic. Since 2007, Russia has resumed Russian bomber flights over the Arctic and has also sent two army brigades up North.

Russia also planted a titanium Russian flag in the seabed under the North Pole as a symbolic bid for control and influence in the Arctic region.⁶⁵ This symbolic act had a significant impact on



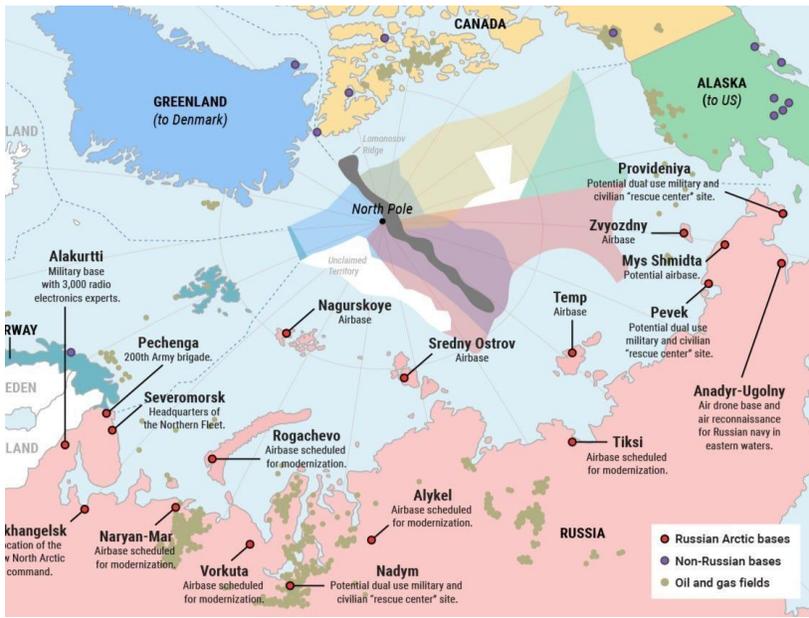
other Arctic stakeholders and is seen by many as the starting signal and *de facto* beginning to the Arctic resource race.⁶⁶ “This isn’t the 15th century,” Canada’s foreign minister says in response to the Russian “flag planting” episode. “You can’t go around the world and just plant flags and say,

“We’re claiming this territory.””⁶⁷ As Arctic nations vvy for military dominance and seek to protect the coastlines of the increasingly vulnerable region, military exercises have become more frequent, and both the US and Russia have even begun reopening Cold War-era military bases.

⁶⁵ Foy, “Polar powers: Russia’s bid for supremacy in the Arctic Ocean.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ McCormick, “Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History.”



KEY ACTORS

1. China

In 2018, China unveiled its plans to extend its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to the Arctic.⁶⁸ The initiative, commonly referred to as the Polar Silk Road, seeks to find new sources of energy and a faster shipping route through the Arctic.⁶⁹ At the end of 2018, China also launched their first polar research vessel and icebreaker “Snow Dragon” in an effort to boost Beijing’s polar research and expedition capabilities in the Arctic.⁷⁰ The vessel began operations in 2019.⁷¹

2. The United States of America

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “China Launches First Homemade Polar Icebreaker Xuelong 2,” *Straits Times*, September 11, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-launches-first-homemade-polar-icebreaker-xuelong-2>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s description of the Arctic region as “an arena for power and competition” in a speech in Finland in May highlights the US’s evolving national policy in the Arctic.⁷²

3. *Russia*

Russia has announced plans to connect its Northern Sea Route with China’s Maritime Silk Road to develop a shipping channel from Asia to northern Europe.⁷³ In the Northern Sea Route, Moscow has unlawfully demanded that other nations request permission to pass, required foreign ships to allow Russian maritime pilots aboard for supervision, and has threatened military force on any nation or ship that refuses to comply with their demands.⁷⁴ Russia has nearly 40 heavy icebreaker ships in service, compared to the US’s five.⁷⁵ Russia also fields a far larger fleet of light and medium icebreakers than any other nation.⁷⁶ Russia’s fleet of icebreakers are also younger than American ships.⁷⁷

4. *Canada*

⁷² Michael R. Pompeo, “Looking North: Sharpening America’s Arctic Focus,” *U.S. Department of State*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>

⁷³ Foy, “Polar powers: Russia’s bid for supremacy in the Arctic Ocean.”

⁷⁴ Atle Staalesen, “Russia sets out stringent new rules for foreign ships on the Northern Sea Route,” *Arctic Today*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.arctictoday.com/russia-sets-out-stringent-new-rules-for-foreign-ships-on-the-northern-sea-route/>

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

In an attempt to lay symbolic claim to the Northwest Passage, the Canadian House of Commons voted in favor of a controversial resolution that renamed the “Northwest Passage” to the “*Canadian Northwest Passage*” in December 2009.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Topic II: Natural Resources in the Arctic Region

INTRODUCTION

The Arctic contains 13% of the world's undiscovered oil, 30% of its undiscovered gas, and millions of square miles of natural resources such as uranium, gold, and diamonds.⁷⁹ It is believed that more than \$35 trillion worth of natural resources and a quarter of the world's untapped fossil fuel resources are hidden beneath the glacial ice and permafrost.⁸⁰ While resource extraction in the Arctic is still in its nascent phase, it is expected to increase rapidly as new discoveries are made, traditional sources global sources of energy are depleted, and climate change decreases the geological difficulties that once rendered resource extraction in this region impossible or unprofitable.⁸¹ As the ice recedes, corporations and countries alike are advancing to secure their share of the resources. As such, infrastructure such as seaport facilities, mining operations, oil and gas pipelines, ports, and railways are being developed in the region at an accelerating pace.⁸² Currently, there are approximately 900 planned and in-progress projects in the Arctic region, an ambitious feat that requires a total of \$1 trillion in investment.⁸³

⁷⁹ Abhijit Singh, "The Creeping Militarization of the Arctic," *The Diplomat*, October 16, 2013, <https://thediplomat.com/2013/10/the-creeping-militarization-of-the-arctic/>

⁸⁰ Clay Dillow, "Russia and China vie to beat the US in the trillion-dollar race to control the Arctic," *CNBC*, February 6, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/06/russia-and-china-battle-us-in-race-to-control-arctic.html>

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Key Concepts

Exclusive Economic Zones

Disputes between states over sea territory have resulted in a series of international conventions that define how far the sovereignty of a state's coastal waters extend and specify the conditions under which countries may use foreign waters to develop economic and scientific activities.⁸⁴

The most important of these international conventions is the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that was ratified in 1956.⁸⁵ The only Arctic state that has not signed and ratified the Convention is the United States.⁸⁶ An understanding of UNCLOS is imperative as all eight Arctic states also have exclusive economic zones (EEZ) within the Arctic as outlined by UNCLOS.⁸⁷ This resolution affirms that a state has special rights over the water that stretches up to 200 nautical miles from its coast.⁸⁸ However, it should be noted that the difference between a territorial sea and EEZ is that the former gives a state full sovereignty over the waters, whereas

⁸⁴ Alexandre Piffero Spohr, Jessica da Silva Horing, Luiza Gimenez Cerioli, Bruna Lersch, and Josua Gihad Alves Soares, "The Militarization of the Arctic: Political, Economic, and Climate Challenges," *UFRGS Model United Nations Journal*, Vol. 1 (2013): 11-70.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "Part V: Exclusive Economic Zone," *The United Nations*, https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm

⁸⁸ Ibid.

the latter only gives a state rights below the surface of the water but the water is still referred to as international.⁸⁹

Historical Timeline of Notable Events

1. February 20, 1907:

Canadian Senator

Pascal Poirier

makes the first

claim to national

sovereignty over

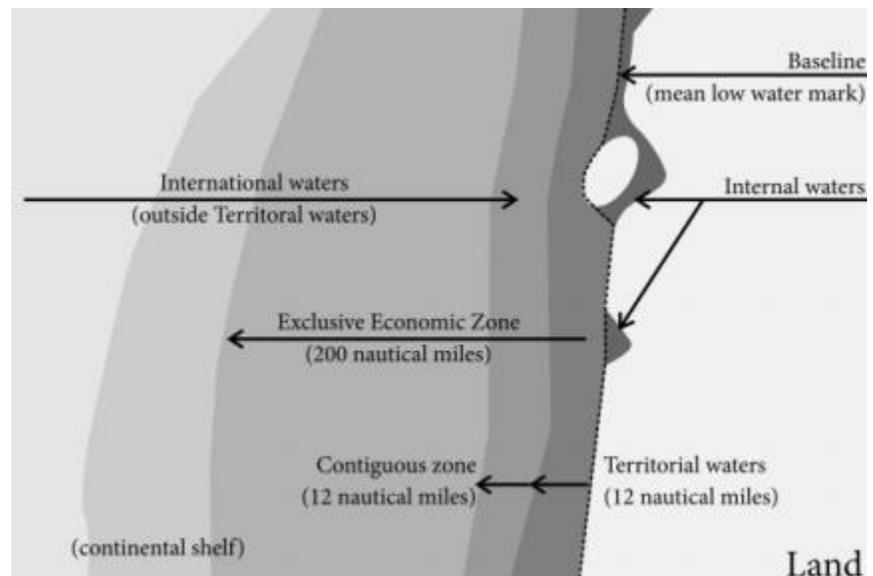
Arctic territory.

The senate

dismisses his

resolution on the grounds that there is no advantage in claiming the barren area.⁹⁰

2. April 6, 1909: American explorer Robert Peary is the first person to set foot on the North Pole. He formally claims the region in the name of the President of the United States of America.⁹¹
3. November 1916: Norwegian company Store Norske begins mining coal in the Arctic.⁹²



⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ty McCormick, "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

4. June 1, 1925: In an attempt to claim *de facto* sovereignty over its sector of the Arctic region, Canada amends its *Northwest Territories Act* to require all foreign scientists and explorers in the Arctic to obtain government permits. The Soviet Union follows Canada's example and decides to claim the region between its borders and the North Pole one year later.⁹³
5. September 28, 1945: US President Harry Truman issued a proclamation claiming jurisdiction of all the natural resources in the US's Arctic continental shelf. This action was a precursor to the eventual Convention on the Continental Shelf that states that nations have sovereign rights over continental shelf resources up to a depth of 200 meters.⁹⁴
6. April 29, 1958: A UN conference codifies Truman's notion into international law by ratifying the Convention on the Continental Shelf.⁹⁵ The treaty was ratified by every Arctic nation except Iceland.⁹⁶
7. December 10, 1982: The United Nations signed the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which grants Arctic states a 200-nautical-mile "exclusive economic zone" and also allows nations to claim territory beyond that limit if they can prove that the seabed is a

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

geological extension of their continental shelf.⁹⁷ The treaty was ratified by every Arctic nation except the United States.⁹⁸

8. August 2, 2007: Russia plants a titanium Russian flag on the seabed of the North Pole to represent a symbolic claim to the Arctic region.⁹⁹
9. August 7-17, 2007: The Canadian armed forces conduct Operation Nanook, their first annual military exercise in the Arctic.¹⁰⁰
10. May 10, 2013: US President Barack Obama publishes the *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* which outlines American security interests in the Arctic.¹⁰¹

ISSUE

2. Environmental Concerns

As Arctic resource extraction increases, oil spills and irreparable environmental damage is becoming an increasingly viable reality. Non-governmental organizations such as Greenpeace have expressed concerns that the drilling industry is incapable of cleaning up a major Arctic oil spill.¹⁰² These concerns are echoed by scientists who have consistently pointed out the Arctic does not have enough infrastructure to appropriately manage environmental disasters that result from resource extraction and the nearest response stations are thousands of miles away from

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Drilling in the Arctic - What is the environmental impact?" *Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/02/drilling-arctic-environmental-impact-greenpeace-piracy>

Arctic drilling sites.¹⁰³ Moreover, challenging operating conditions, precarious weather, and fragile Arctic ice increase the likelihood of an oil spill.¹⁰⁴ In the event of an oil spill, the US geological survey believes that it will be impossible to contain or clean up oil trapped underneath large bodies of ice, and approximates that only 1-20% of oil could be recovered.¹⁰⁵ Despite these environmental risks, critics believe that the vested interests of Arctic nations in the fossil fuel industry has prevented the Arctic council from taking substantial measures to safeguard the Arctic from environmental



Greenpeace activists demanding an end to Arctic drilling in the Barent Sea

harm.¹⁰⁶ While international law provides a detailed framework regulating oil spills that occur from Arctic shipping, it is both vague and lenient in regards to spills from drilling projects.

KEY ACTORS

1. *Russia*

¹⁰³ “Arctic Oil Drilling,” *Greenpeace*, <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/arctic/issues/oil-drilling/>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ed King, “Arctic Council decision leaves region open for oil and gas drilling,” May 15, 2013, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2013/05/15/arctic-council-decision-leaves-region-open-for-oil-and-gas-drilling/>

Of all the Arctic states, Russia has the greatest interest and the most to gain in the Arctic.¹⁰⁷ More than half of all Arctic coastline belongs to Russia and the Russian North accounts for 20% of Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) and 22% of all Russian exports.¹⁰⁸ Arctic resources are a matter of strategic importance for Russia because they play a crucial role in determining Russia's political and economic power on the global stage.¹⁰⁹ As such, it is no surprise that the country has long sought both economic and military dominance in the region. The official Russian Arctic strategy, *The Foundations of the Russian Federation's State Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond* emphasizes the importance of the Russian Arctic as a resource base to catalyze and finance socio-economic development.¹¹⁰ According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), Russia's Arctic oil and gas potential amounts to approximately 216 billion barrels of oil, and accounts for 52% of the estimated total hydrocarbon reserves in the Arctic.¹¹¹ Russia is at the forefront of Arctic infrastructure development, and has invested upwards of \$300 billion in proposed, in-progress, and completed projects.¹¹² One-tenth of all Russia's economic investments are currently in the Arctic region.¹¹³ Russia's goal is to have offshore Arctic oil account for 20-30% of Russian production by 2050.¹¹⁴ The Arctic's outstanding importance to

¹⁰⁷ Dillow, "Russia and China vie to beat the US in the trillion-dollar race to control the Arctic."

¹⁰⁸ Kathrin Keil, "A New Region of Conflict? The Case of Oil and Gas," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 49 No. 2 (June 2014): 162-190.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Foy, "Polar powers: Russia's bid for supremacy in the Arctic Ocean."

¹¹⁴ Leo Paul Jacob, "Understanding Russia's Arctic Policy," *NATO Association of Canada*, May 9, 2017, <http://natoassociation.ca/keys-to-understanding-russias-arctic-policy/>

Russia should be understood not only from an economic and strategic standpoint, but also from an ideological one. Russia is interested in the potential of the Arctic for resource exploitation because it represents Russia's greatest chance to restore Russia's political standing internationally and increase its power and prestige on the world stage. Russia seeks to become an "energy superpower" and believes that the Arctic will play a pivotal role in its return to great-power status. Moreover, Russia's fixation on being hegemon of the Arctic is largely symbolic and a natural byproduct of the nation's long cultural history with the North.¹¹⁵ For example, the Soviets were the first to land an aircraft on the North Pole in 1937.¹¹⁶ The memory of these grand successes and expeditions has served to tie Russian national identity with the Arctic and consolidated the Russian belief that the Arctic is first and foremost a Russian preserve.¹¹⁷ As such, many Russian Arctic policies are largely shaped by emotional and symbolic factors.¹¹⁸ Because Russia's desire to gain dominance in the Arctic is rooted in a cultural narrative that transcends mere economic considerations, all long-lasting and effective resolutions to this issue must seek to understand and incorporate the cultural and historical complexities that underlie the Arctic.

2. *United States of America*

According to the US Geological Survey, the USA has the second highest estimated Arctic oil and gas potential with 20% of the total.¹¹⁹ The US views Arctic oil reserves in Alaska as a crucial

¹¹⁵ Keil, "A New Region of Conflict? The Case of Oil and Gas."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

untapped resource that would allow the US to become more self-reliant as approximately 49% of US petroleum is currently imported.¹²⁰ The Prudhoe Bay oil field in Alaska is the highest-yielding oil field in the USA, and Alaska is the second biggest producer of petroleum after Texas.¹²¹ In January 2018, the Trump administration has announced its intention to expand offshore drilling along the north shore of Alaska.¹²² In 2008, Shell spent \$2.1 billion for exploration rights in the Chukchi Sea off Alaska's coast.¹²³ The US's desire to decrease its dependence on petroleum imports has become an increasingly important priority on the national agenda given the current political turmoil in OPEC countries, as well as recent geopolitical tension with nations that make up a majority of US petroleum imports. Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Iraq, and Russia are all in the top 5 countries that export the most oil to the US.¹²⁴ The US is also under pressure to reduce dependencies on petroleum imports and increase domestic production as the Obama administration set a target of reducing foreign oil imports by a third by 2025.¹²⁵ While exploiting untapped Alaskan resources is seen as a viable option to reduce oil dependencies, it is currently not of utmost national priority for the US. Unlike other Arctic

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Steven Mufson and Juliet Eilperin, "Trump administration opens huge reserve in Alaska to drilling," *The Washington Post*, September, 13, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/trump-administration-chooses-most-expansive-approach-to-oil-gas-exploration-in-alaska-wildlife-refuge/2019/09/12/cfac63cc-d597-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c_story.html

¹²³ Keil, "A New Region of Conflict? The Case of Oil and Gas."

¹²⁴ "How much petroleum does the United States import and export?" *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=727&t=6>

¹²⁵ Keil, "A New Region of Conflict? The Case of Oil and Gas."

stakeholders, the Arctic ranks rather low on the US national agenda and is not regarded as a vital geopolitical realm.¹²⁶

3. *Canada*

According to the US geological survey, Canada has an estimated total of 22 billion barrels of oil and gas reserves in the Arctic.¹²⁷ This accounts for 5% of total oil and gas reserves, which is one of the lowest amounts among the Arctic stakeholders (This is because Canada's main gas and oil reserves are actually outside of the Arctic region).¹²⁸ It should be noted, however, that there is limited knowledge and data about potential resources in the Canadian North. For example, it is theorized that the Amerasia Basin, shared by Canada and the USA, holds the second biggest undiscovered oil share in the Arctic.¹²⁹ Canada views the Arctic as an issue of critical importance on its national agenda, and the "Canadian North" has been a central matter in many government policies.¹³⁰ In 2009, Canada published its *Northern Strategy and Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy: Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada's Northern Strategy Abroad* which introduced the overall aim of Canada's Arctic strategy. In essence, Canada seeks to realize the "enormous economic potential of the North" and "exert effective leadership both at home and abroad in order to prosperous and stable region responsive to Canadian interests and values."¹³¹

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

The three main issues which Canada identifies are Arctic sovereignty, social and economic development in the Canadian North, and environmental protection in the Arctic.¹³²

4. *Norway*

Norway's share of Arctic gas and oil reserves is estimated to be 11%, placing Norway as the third biggest beneficiary of Arctic gas and oil after the USA and Russia.¹³³ Norway considers the Arctic an issue of central importance as industries such as minerals, petroleum, and fisheries contribute a significant portion to the Norwegian economy.¹³⁴ Norway's petroleum industry is its largest industry, amounting to 21% of its total GDP.¹³⁵ As such, Norway has a huge stake in ensuring continued extraction of Arctic resources. However, according to the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, it is estimated that approximately 43% of discovered Norwegian petroleum resources have already been extracted. Norway's depleting resources and reliance on its petroleum exports has led the nation to invest heavily in finding new undiscovered locations of oil and gas reserves.¹³⁶ In 2006, the government released the *High North Strategy* and followed it up with *New Building Blocks in the North* in 2009. The two documents outline Norway's Arctic policy, stating that Norway seeks to "take advantage of the opportunities in the High North" and wishes to continue its "tradition of responsible management of resources."¹³⁷

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Norway is currently the only nation that has successfully settled an agreement with the UN on extending the limits of its continental shelf.¹³⁸

5. *China*

While China is not an Arctic nation, the government has recognized the potential of economic growth in the Arctic and has been an observer member of the council since 2013.¹³⁹ Between 2012 and 2017, China invested nearly \$90 billion in the Arctic.¹⁴⁰ One notable example would be Russia's Yamal liquified natural gas (LNG) project, which is expected to supply China with four million tonnes of LNG annually.¹⁴¹ In 2018, China published its first Arctic policy white paper, *China's Arctic Policy*, which states that China would like to invest in the development of oil, gas, mineral resources, non-fossil energies, fishing, and tourism in the Arctic.¹⁴² It also affirms that China is committed to "respecting traditions and cultures of Arctic residents including the indigenous peoples and conserving natural environment."¹⁴³

LOOKING AHEAD

The evolving landscape of the Arctic, both physically and geopolitically, necessitates new innovative policies, international laws, and global frameworks that facilitate cooperation and

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "China unveils vision for Polar Silk Road across Arctic," *Reuters*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-arctic/china-unveils-vision-for-polar-silk-road-across-arctic-idUSKBN1FF0J8>

¹⁴⁰ John Grady, "Panel: China Investing in Infrastructure Near the Arctic," *USNI News*, April 27, 2018, <https://news.usni.org/2018/04/27/panel-china-investing-infrastructure-near-arctic>

¹⁴¹ "China unveils vision for Polar Silk Road across Arctic."

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

responsible behavior in the region. Moreover, the renewed interest in the Arctic as an avenue for maritime transport and resource extraction is not merely fueled by climate change, but also geopolitical and economic factors. As such, delegates should look beyond the environmental changes in the Arctic to understand how underlying economic and geopolitical changes in the global political landscape also exacerbate the issue.

Questions to consider

1. What are the environmental implications and consequences of a commercial Arctic shipping route and increased Arctic resource extraction?
2. What are the cultural implications and consequences of a commercial Arctic shipping route and increased Arctic resource extraction?
3. How should these new Arctic shipping routes and drilling projects be regulated? Should international regulation play a role in the mediation of this issue?
4. Are existing legal frameworks and international agreements sufficient to deal with the opening of these new Arctic shipping routes and their potential consequences? If not, how should these international laws and agreements be updated or replaced?
5. How do underlying economic and geopolitical considerations influence your country's position and behavior?
6. How do cultural narratives play a role in shaping a nation's Arctic policy? What are the cultural and historical complexities that underlie Arctic territorial disputes?

7. Are disagreements between countries in the Arctic intertwined and influenced by broader geopolitical conflicts?
8. As the accessibility of the Arctic continues to increase due to climate change, how can future conflicts be prevented?
9. Is it possible to find a compromise between maximizing the commercial interests of countries and reducing the environmental risks exacerbated by climate change and increasing resource extraction? If so, how can the Arctic Council balance these conflicting interests? If not, which should be prioritized?
10. What are the different perspectives on this issue? What is your country's perspective on the issue?
11. What does your country or organization hope to achieve through the Arctic Council?

Bibliography

“About ACAP.” *Arctic Contaminants Action Program*. June 5, 2019. <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/acap-home>

“About CAFF.” *Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna*. <https://www.caff.is/about-caff>

“About EPPR.” *Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response*. <https://www.eppr.org/about-eppr/>

- “About PAME.” *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*.
<https://www.pame.is/index.php/shortcode/about-us>
- “Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search And Rescue in the Arctic.”
Arctic Council. May 12, 2011. <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/531>
- “Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic.”
Arctic Council. May 15, 2013. https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/529/EDOCS-2067-v1-ACMMSE08_KIRUNA_2013_agreement_on_oil_pollution_preparedness_and_response_in_the_arctic_formatted.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y
- “Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation.” *Arctic Council*. May 11, 2017. <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1916>
- “AMAP and the Arctic Council.” *Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme*.
<https://www.amap.no/about>
- “Arctic Council Ministers meet, pass Chairmanship from Finland to Iceland, Arctic States conclude Arctic Council Ministerial meeting by signing a joint statement.” *Arctic Council*. August 16, 2019. <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/521-arctic-council-ministers-meet-pass-chairmanship-from-finland-to-iceland>
- Bloom, Evan T. “Establishment of the Arctic Council.” *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (July 1999): 712-722.
- “China Launches First Homemade Polar Icebreaker Xuelong 2.” *Straits Times*. September 11, 2018. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-launches-first-homemade-polar-icebreaker-xuelong-2>
- Dillow, Clay. “Russia and China vie to beat the US in the trillion-dollar race to control the Arctic,” *CNBC*, February 6, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/06/russia-and-china-battle-us-in-race-to-control-arctic.html>
- “Drilling in the Arctic - What is the environmental impact?” *Guardian*,
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/02/drilling-arctic-environmental-impact-greenpeace-piracy>
- Farré, Albert Buixadé, Scott R. Stephenson, Linling Chen, Michael Czub, Ying Dai, Denis Demchev, Yaroslav Efimov, Piotr Graczyk, Henrik Grythe, Kathrin Keil, Niku Kivekäs, Naresh Kumar, Nengye Liu, Igor Matelenok, Mari Myksvoll, Derek O’Leary, Julia Olsen, Sachin Pavithran, Edward Petersen, Andreas Raspotnik, Ivan Ryzhov, Jan Solski,

Lingling Suo, Caroline Troein, Vilena Valeeva, Jaap van Rijckevorsel, and Jonathan Wighting. "Commercial Arctic shipping through the Northeast Passage: routes, resources, governance, technology, and infrastructure." *Polar Geography*. Vol. 37 No. 4 (June 11, 2014): 298-324.

Foy, Henry, and Astrasheuskaya, Nastassia. "Polar powers: Russia's bid for supremacy in the Arctic Ocean." *Financial Times*. April 27, 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/2fa82760-5c4a-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40>

Grady, John. "Panel: China Investing in Infrastructure Near the Arctic." *USNI News*. April 27, 2018. <https://news.usni.org/2018/04/27/panel-china-investing-infrastructure-near-arctic>

"How much petroleum does the United States import and export?" *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=727&t=6>

"IMO adopts mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters." *International Maritime Organization*. November 21, 2013. <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/38-nmsc94polar.aspx#.Xhi1fJNKjfZ>

Jacob, Leo Paul. "Understanding Russia's Arctic Policy." *NATO Association of Canada*. May 9, 2017. <http://natoassociation.ca/keys-to-understanding-russias-arctic-policy/>

Keil, Kathrin. "A New Region of Conflict? The Case of Oil and Gas." *Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 49 No. 2 (June 2014): 162-190.

King, Ed. "Arctic Council decision leaves region open for oil and gas drilling," May 15, 2013, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2013/05/15/arctic-council-decision-leaves-region-open-for-oil-and-gas-drilling/>

Langois, Karine. "IMO In the Polar Environment: The Polar Code Explained." *The Arctic Institute*. May 16, 2017. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/imo-polar-environment-polar-code-explained/>

McMormick, Ty. "Arctic Sovereignty: A Short History." *Foreign Policy*. May 7, 2014. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/07/arctic-sovereignty-a-short-history/>

"Member States." *The Arctic Council*. September 10, 2015. <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states>

- Mufson, Steven, and Eilperin, Juliet. "Trump administration opens huge reserve in Alaska to drilling." *The Washington Post*. September, 13, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/trump-administration-chooses-most-expansive-approach-to-oil-gas-exploration-in-alaska-wildlife-refuge/2019/09/12/cfac63cc-d597-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c_story.html
- "Part V: Exclusive Economic Zone." *The United Nations*. https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm
- "Polar Code too weak to properly protect polar environments from increased shipping activity." *Seas at Risk*. November 21, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20150317014759/http://seas-at-risk.org/news_n2.php?page=704
- Pompeo, Michael R. "Looking North: Sharpening America's Arctic Focus," *U.S. Department of State*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>
- "Scientific Cooperation Agreement enters into force," *Arctic Council*, June 21, 2018, <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/488-science-agreement-entry-into-force>
- "SDWG Mandate." The Sustainable Development Working Group. <https://www.sdwg.org/about-us/mandate-and-work-pla>
- "Senior Arctic Officials gather for first meeting during Finland's Arctic Council Chairmanship." *Arctic Council*. October 30, 2017. <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/474-sao-oulu-2017-01>
- Singh, Abhijit. "The Creeping Militarization of the Arctic." *The Diplomat*. October 16, 2013. <https://thediplomat.com/2013/10/the-creeping-militarization-of-the-arctic/>
- Spohr, Alexandre Piffero, Horing, Jessica da Silva, Cerioli, Luiza Gimenez, Lersch, Bruna, and Soares, Josua Gihad Alves. "The Militarization of the Arctic: Political, Economic, and Climate Challenges." *UFRGS Model United Nations Journal*. Vol. 1 (2013): 11-70.
- Staalesen, Atle. "Russia sets out stringent new rules for foreign ships on the Northern Sea Route." *Arctic Today*. March 8, 2019. <https://www.arctictoday.com/russia-sets-out-stringent-new-rules-for-foreign-ships-on-the-northern-sea-route/>
- Sturgis, Linda, Smith, Joel, and Reed, Isaiah. "The Arctic's Changing Landscape Addressing New Maritime Challenge." *Center for a New American Security* (March 2014): 2-13.

“The Arctic Council: A Background,” *The Arctic Council*, September 13, 2018,
<https://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us>

Welch, David A. “The Arctic and Geopolitics.” *McGill-Queen's University Press* (2014).