Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to SJPMUN XII! My name is Chris Wilson and I am a senior at St. John's Prep. I have been a part of Model UN for three years and attended several conferences at various schools. Along with Model UN, I run X-C and Track and also participate in the History and Investment Club. I am interested in climate change’s effect on the Arctic Circle because its impacts are far reaching across many different fields including economics, trade, and social issues. I look forward to this conference to meet new people and solve the changing trade and economic impacts as a result of the melting Arctic sea ice. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact me at cwilson18@stjohnsprep.org. See you all in December!

Committee Description

This committee on the Arctic Circle and its effect on world trade and economics will be structured as a UN General Assembly with a simple majority vote. Delegates from each nation will discuss and propose possible solutions, and pass resolutions. The powers of this committee include making recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collabora-
tion in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields. Along with that, this committee can make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among nations.

Statement of the Problem

Most activity in the Arctic is governed under one main body of legislation: the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Under these laws, trade, drilling rights, and development are under the jurisdiction of different countries in their own economic zones in the Arctic. Nations hold sovereignty over their economic zones and are granted permission to harness the resources in their respective zones. Along with that, nations are allowed to expand their economic zones up to 150 nautical miles, but they must first apply to the UN in order to do so (Kirk). Currently, Russia, Denmark, and Norway have submitted claims to the UN and are awaiting approval.

However, UNCLOS leaves the region vulnerable to tension because it allows nations to claim land to expand their economic zones which can lead to conflicting claims between nations. According to Klaus Dodds, a professor of geopolitics at Royal Holloway at University of London, "The Arctic is opening up, and all sorts of flashpoints lie ahead, if the central Arctic Ocean is free of ice for several months a year, who will control the fishing and the dumping of waste?" (McKie 1). For example, Canadian explorers in September 2016 discovered the wreck of HMS Terror, a ship that belonged to
British explorer Sir John Franklin, who explored the Northwest Passage between the Atlantic and Pacific and failed in the process. The ship holds great symbolic importance to Canada because they believe it supports their claim of ownership to the Northwest Passage, a crucial shipping route through the Arctic, while the United States has argued that the Northwest passage is international waters (Keil).

Additionally, UNCLOS is unable to restrict the militarization of the Arctic, which heightens tensions in the Arctic even more. According to Dodds, "The Russians are hell bent on showing the word they mean business here (McKie 1). This sentiment is further echoed by the fact that since the
Crimean indecent in Ukraine, there has been little to no military cooperation in the region, emphasizing Russia’s unwillingness to back down on any front. According to Russia Direct, "the Arctic region is destined to become a new source of Russian natural resources in the future. As a result, Russia's Arctic policy is aimed at gradually establishing political and social economic conditions to realize this goal" (Konyshev 1). In order to accomplish this goal, Russia has adopted a foreign policy focused on establishing territorial borders to explore the resources in the area and use transport routes for international shipping. Additionally, Russia has sent more troops to the Arctic, reclaimed old Soviet bases and is building new ones such as the Trefoil base. According to CBS News, the base is painted in the colors of the Russian flag and can house warplanes and 150 soldiers (Van Efferink). U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis has said that ignoring the Arctic is "not to our advantage" and is planning a strategy to combat Russia's militaristic actions in the Arctic (Van Efferink).

The World Policy Organization states, "some 80 percent of the world's industrial production takes place north of the 30th parallel north, which makes the Arctic Ocean a shortcut between the world most advanced and productive countries" (Østreng 1). Along with that, the Arctic Ocean provides less fuel consumption, less carbon emissions, and faster deliveries of goods than what traditional routes can offer. The three main passages in the Arctic Ocean are the Northeast Passage (NEP), the Northwest Passage (NWP), and the Transpolar Passage (TPP). However, in order for these passages and trade in the
Arctic to be successful, it would require cooperation amongst nations as these passages would go through multiple territory claims and economic zones.

Drilling in the Arctic is very important to the nations with claims in the region. For example, the Chinese, "a near-Arctic state" have begun to focus more heavily on the Arctic and see the melting of the ice as an opportunity to exploit the resources of the region, "The Chinese have made no secret that they have their eyes on the Arctic's fish and minerals” (McKie). With China becoming a new player in the Arctic, they raise the issue of land claims under UNCLOS and potential conflict between China and the Arctic nations. Recently, China moved to invest in mines in Greenland, where the melting of the ice is exposing multiple ores and minerals important to telephone manufacturing. However, China is not the only nation with plans to extract resources from the Arctic, the U.S. Senate voted in October 2017 to pass a bill that sets up plans to drill in the Arctic territory claimed by the United States. According to the New York Times, "Over the last 30 years, Congress had voted nearly 50 times on whether or not to drill" (Leibowitz 1). Countries with interests in the Arctic depend on drilling for economic gains, but
the current legislation of UNCLOS increases possibility of disputes over land claims and drilling in the coming years.

**History of the Problem**

The Arctic is the world’s largest untapped resource: a strategic location containing an estimated 90 billion barrels of oil, used for major trade routes along national coastlines, and serving as a key spot for military development. Trapped in the brutally cold arctic weather, many nations have failed to take advantage of the valuable resources offered by the Arctic until very recently. Before 1910 when Russian explorers charted the northern sea route, the Arctic was neither well mapped nor recognized for its natural resources due to the deaths of various explorers from the harsh climate (The Arctic).

One of the earliest groups to explore the Arctic were the Paleo-eskimos in Serbia around 5,000 years ago. Following this group were Thule and Inuit about 1,000 years ago. These groups originated in Alaska, moved into Canada and settled there. In the 10th Century, the Norse first ventured into the arctic, becoming the first European group to explore the North American Arctic, searching for new land and trading partners (The Arctic).
In the late 1500’s under Queen Elizabeth I, English explorers attempted to find a northern shortcut to Asia called the Northern Passage. However, the English never found such a route. Years later in 1851, John McClure found the Northwest passage on his journey to save a past expedition crew from death. In 1906, Roald Amundsen, using an internal combustion engine was the first human to make it from Atlantic to Pacific through the Northwest passage (The Arctic).

After its initial discovery the Northwest passage experienced an upsurge in the volume of trade. However, over the past few years, the amount of trade on the Northwest Passage and the Northern sea route have been decreasing as seen in charts 1 and 2, due to risky weather, isolated locations, and the coast guard's difficulty rescuing stranded ships. In addition, these Northern routes are only valid during the summer months when the ice has melted enough for ships to travel along the Arctic coasts. Arctic transportation, in many cases is so far from the targeted areas that it is circuitous to travel along these northern routes (Leibowitz).

Article 234 section 8 of “Ice covered Areas” in UNCLOS permits “regulation for the prevention of pollution and safety of navigation in ice-covered areas”. The article states that “Coastal States have the right to adopt and enforce non-discriminatory laws and regulations for the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas within the limits of the exclusive economic zone” (Kirk). This was created to limit the amount of pollution in Arctic waters. However,
by leaving the regulation of pollution up to the whims of individual nations, the UN fails to impose meaningful universal standards. Professor Michael Byers of the University of British Columbia states that “Arctic environmental protection is currently determined by individual nations… they have very different levels of commitment to protecting the environment — with Russia at the bottom and the Nordic nations at the top” (Rainwater).

Due to climate change, trading routes are becoming more accessible because the melting ice opens up large areas through which boats can travel. The total mass of ice in the arctic is rapidly decreasing, potentially opening up vast aquatic passageways in the near future. Because of these factors, journeys on these Arctic routes will become quicker and safer than they have been in the past, opening up new economic opportunities. Despite the swiftly changing climate, Arctic shipping will most likely not become very economically practicable until 2040. However, according to professor Chris Rapley, in anticipation of these new trade routes, “The Arctic nations are jostling for advantage, and the economic and ecological consequences of new trade routes have yet to unfold… an increasingly ice-free Arctic is a geopolitical game changer” (Rainwater). Most recently, Canada has been using its claim to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as defined under the UNCLOS, to bar other nations from passing through the Northwest passage, an extremely new and potentially highly profitable trade route that passes through their EEZ (Keil). However, the legality of this claim is still disputed.
In addition to the promising trade routes, large amounts of oil are covered by the arctic ice. Approximately 90 billion barrels worth of oil exist within the Arctic Circle. Arctic oil drilling began during the 1950’s with British Petroleum Oil in the Northwest Territories. Since then, the oil industry has grown quite a bit and today, the Arctic is one of the prime drilling areas, containing about 13% of the world undiscovered oil (Leibowitz). More recently, Russia has come to dominate the arctic drilling industry, most recently building the biggest nuclear powered icebreaker in the world as an addition to its massive fleet of 37 ships equipped to plow through arctic ice, opening it up for drilling (Cullenn). Most arctic legislation addresses preventions of oil spills. Ships, according to the Polar Code need to meet “Mandatory standards that cover the full range of design, construction, equipment, operational, training and environmental protection matters for ships making polar voyages”. In addition, they must “have the capability to predict, track, report, and respond to ice conditions and adverse weather events; effectively manage and oversee contractors; and develop and implement an oil-spill response plan designed and executed in a manner that accounts for the Arctic operating environment, and is supported with the necessary equipment, training, and personnel for oil-spill response on the Arctic OCS” (Kirk). These laws, though hard to enforce, are the right step in the directing of cleaning up the Arctic.

During the Second World War, Allied strategists quickly realized that arctic routes could serve as a quick and easy way to send US manufactured aircraft and supplies to the USSR under the Lend
Lease Act. However, once the war ended, and the earlier cooperation between the two global super-powers deteriorated, the Arctic transformed into another stage for military escalation in the Cold War, as “through intercontinental ballistic missile development and placement, production of nuclear powered attack submarines, and the threat of cruise missiles carried by bomber planes, the two countries poured resources into building up their capabilities in the area” (Cullenn).

This military development generally ceased after the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, preceded by Soviet Premier Gorbachev’s “Murmansk Initiative” speech, which called for de-escalation of international tensions in the Arctic (Van Efferink). However, very recently, “Russia [has been] taking advantage of the thaw to ramp up its military footprint in the region,” according to Foreign Policy magazine. Furthermore, over the last few years, Russia has developed “a new Arctic command, four new Arctic brigade combat teams, 14 new operational airfields, 16 deepwater ports, and 40 icebreakers” (Cullenn). These recent military developments by Russia dwarf the developments of any other nation; the US only owns a single working icebreaker. Due to concerns over militarization of the Arctic, many nations are currently attempting to curb this militarization, which is currently left up to individual states to regulate. While the increasing availability of Arctic trade routes presents new opportunities for all arctic nations, conflicts over territorial claims, drilling privileges, and arctic militarization have undermined the possibility for a comprehensive solution.
Questions to Consider

• How should territorial claims be respected as to prevent conflict?

• How should trade through the Arctic be managed so that it respects sovereignty?

• How do Arctic and Non-Arctic Nations view the Arctic?

• In what way should military endeavors in the Arctic be regulated?

• How should the extensive natural resources be allocated fairly to the rest of the world?

Bloc Positions

• Arctic Nations: Focused on territorial claims, control over trade and resources, and military situation in Arctic. Examples: United States, Russia, Canada, etc.

• Non-Arctic Nations: Focused on trade and passages through the Arctic and the development of the region. Examples: China, India, United Kingdom, etc.


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