

The Militarization of the Arctic: Political, Economic and Climate Challenges

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1. Historical background

1.1. The Arctic Region

The Arctic is the northernmost area on Earth, covering approximately eight percent of the globe's surface, and is centered on the North Pole. This region is delimited by the Arctic Circle (parallel of latitude 66°33'N) and includes the ice-covered Arctic Ocean and surrounding lands and seas¹. These surrounding lands are parts of the eight arctic bordering countries: Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway (via Svalbard archipelago), the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States (via Alaska). The climate in this zone is classified as polar, with cold and long winters, when the temperature can drop below -50°C.

According to archaeological studies, the Arctic has been inhabited by humans before the last Ice Age, close to 30,000 years ago (Sale and Potapov 2009, 12), but little is known about the people who inhabited the area in the earliest times. The first significant Arctic people of which we are aware of are the Eskimos², who emigrated from Asia to Alaska, crossing the Bering Strait, about 5,000 years ago. The Arctic currently hosts a population of four million indigenous people - descendants of those first Eskimos - which are scattered in small groups within the borders of the Arctic surrounding countries (Sale 2008).

1 The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line that marks the latitude above which the sun does not set on the day of the summer solstice (21 June) and does not rise on the day of the winter solstice (21 December).

2 The word Eskimo is a generalization regarding the inhabitants of the Arctic region. In fact, this ethnic group includes various smaller groups which have their specificities and vary according to the region that they inhabit. The two main groups are the Inuit (northern Alaska, Canada and Greenland) and Yupik (coast and central Alaska and Russia).

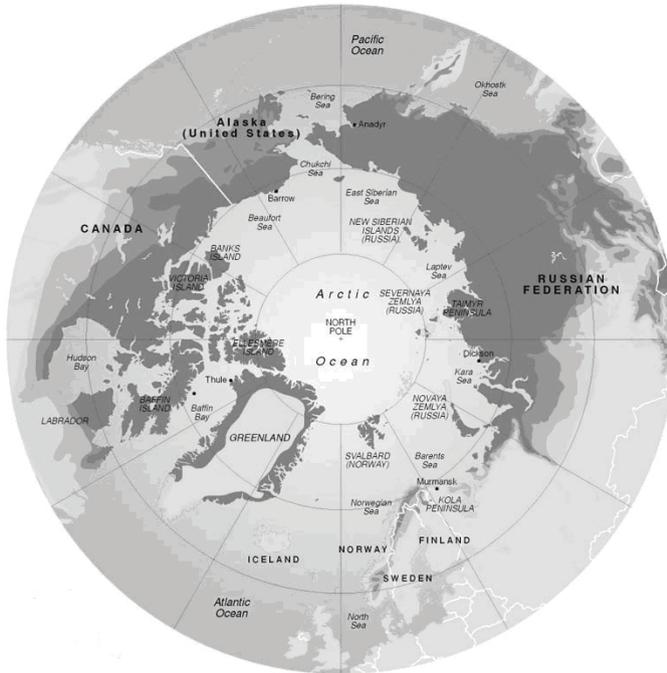


Image 1: The Arctic Geopolitical Map

1.2. Ancient Explorations

Throughout history, the Arctic region was explored by many nations interested in discovering the particularities of that unknown area. The first European marine explorer to travel to the Arctic was the Greek Pytheas, in 330 BC. He was an astronomer who developed a method to calculate the latitude by measuring the shadow of a vertical pillar in the solstice. Due to his research, he made a journey to Icelandic e Norwegian regions and was the first person to describe the Midnight Sun phenomenon and the polar ice (Sale 2008)³.

Around the year 1000 AC, the Vikings – Scandinavian warriors and traders – explored many overseas lands, expanding their domains, in a period known as “The Viking Age”, from 8th to 11th centuries (Byock 2001). During this time, the Vikings occupied and colonized Arctic territories, mainly Greenland, Alaska and Canada. The probable causes for this expansion were the interest in discovering new routes and in developing trade in new areas, together with the possibility of great expansion of the Viking population compared to the extent of the Scandinavian Peninsula (Sale and Potapov 2009).

3 Pytheas made a journey to the Northwestern Europe, circumnavigating a significant part of Great Britain and reaching the Arctic region. He reported his experiences in a document named “On the Ocean”, but only a few fragments of his writings survived. Pytheas related his arrival in an unknown island close to the ice-covered sea. Today, the researchers believe that he was referring to Iceland or to the Norwegian coast (Sale 2009).

1.3. Modern Explorations

Since the 12th century, Europe has undergone a time of changes with the urban development and the trade renaissance. This period was characterized by a population increase and by the increment of trade-related activities (Dobb 1987). In this context, the commercial routes have had a growing importance and the overseas search for alternative routes has become crucial (Dobb 1987). Moreover, Europe was very interested in new markets in the Orient, especially India and China (Lash and Van Kley 1998). Thus, the Europeans launched themselves on a quest for a passage that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans: the Northwest Passage, along the coast of North America, or the Northeast Passage, along the coast of Siberia, both through the Arctic Ocean (Sale and Potapov 2009).

In the subsequent centuries, many expeditions occurred in the Arctic zone - in order to find and explore these routes. The first recorded attempt was John's Cabot trip over North America's mainland, sponsored by Henry VII of England. Cabot had permission to find a route to China, but he failed and landed on the island of Newfoundland, in Canada (Sale and Potapov 2009). In 1576, another explorer, Martin Frobisher, from England, tried to find a passage to Orient, but this time through Russia's northern coast. He organized three expeditions to Greenland, however, did not succeed in discovering a new route (Sale and Potapov 2009, 80). It was just in the 18th century that these explorations brought effective results.

In 1732, the Russian Admiralty organized the Great Northern Expeditions, along the coast of Siberia, to find the Northeast Passage. For the first time, thousands of kilometers of this region were mapped. In 1776, the English naval captain, James Cook, kicked off his last voyage, exploring the American coast and up to the Bering Strait (Sale and Potapov 2009). He is known as the explorer who mapped most of the North American northwest coastlines, determining the extent of Alaska and better defining the northern limits of the Pacific. Already in the 19th century, William Parry, a British Naval officer, organized his expedition in search of the Northwest Passage, in 1819. It was the first time that an explorer commission entered the Arctic Archipelago (Berton 1988). Finally, in 1878, Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, a Finnish geologist who participated in numerous expeditions to search the Northeast Passage, achieved his purpose navigating the northern coasts of Europe and Asia for the first time (Sale and Potapov 2009).

1.4. Contemporary Explorations: the Arctic during the Great Wars

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the global economy went through a period of changes, which modified the international scenario. Technologies developed during the Industrial Revolution have enabled the increase of the production, and, in this sense, the seeking of new markets and new raw material sources had become essential. These needs resulted in an imperialist race - marked by the competition among the capitalist countries - that would lead to World War

I. Under these circumstances, the Arctic exploration was even more important to control new routes and, thus, reach other markets.

Another aspect that impacted international politics and contributed to the interest in the Arctic was the study of an English geographer, Halford Mackinder.⁴ In 1904, he formulated the Heartland Theory, in which he argues that the “geographical pivot of history” is located in the north and center of the Eurasian continent, embracing the Russian territory and extending up to the Arctic Ocean coasts⁵. According to Mackinder (1904), this region contained large quantities of natural resources and the country that controlled it would be able to, in the first place, develop a powerful terrestrial hegemony and, also, canalize means to build a maritime power. It would be the rise of a power with unique capabilities in the International System (Mello 1994). Since then, the Arctic dispute gained a new strategic nature and countries increasingly invested in it.

Although most part of Mackinder’s Heartland corresponded to Russia, other States continued funding expeditions to the Arctic in order to dominate some strategic portion of it. In 1909, Robert Peary, a North American explorer, was the first to reach the North Pole, planting, as he arrived, the USA flag there, making clear the US intentions on that region (Sale 2008). Another explorer, a Norwegian who had succeed in crossing for the first time the Northwest Passage, in 1903, named Roald Amundsen, led the first Arctic exploration by air, in 1925, aboard an airship (Sale 2008).

During World War II, the Arctic emerged as a key strategic area because it constituted an Allies’ supply route. For example, the USSR, allied power that actively participated in the war, received many resources convoys from the United States program named “Lend-Lease” and the Arctic route was the shortest and more direct way to it (Herring 1973).⁶ Moreover, the Soviets had settlements in the Arctic surroundings, specifically in the Kara and Barents seas. Thus, the region became the target of attacks and invasions from Nazi Germany, being the theater of important battles (Sale and Potapov 2009).

In this context, the most important and decisive battle fought in portions of the Arctic was the Battle of the Atlantic (1939-1945). England was known for its maritime excellence and naval dependence on imported goods from overseas markets (White 2008). Knowing this, Nazi Germany outlined a strategy of blocking trade routes, including the Arctic route, through the use of submarines that would hold the ships supplies. It would be the way to weaken England, which would remain without resources, and force them to surrender (White 2008). Furthermore, the blocking of these routes would reduce the U.S. intervention in

4 For further reading: “Democratic Ideals and Reality”, published in 1919 by Halford Mackinder.

5 The Heartland Theory was first developed in the article “Geographical Pivot of History”, submitted to the Royal Geographical Society.

6 “Lend-Lease” was a program signed by the USA in 1941. It ensured that the U.S. would provide weapons and supplies for the Allies. In this period, the U.S. was not officially in the war, but supported the fight against Nazism as a way to stop German expansionism (Herring 1973).

the European war scenario. However, the Nazi plan failed due to England's new radar system, which was able to localize German submarines before an attack (White 2008).

In November 1939, the USSR invaded Finland, beginning the "Winter War" (Sale and Potapov 2009). Although the USSR has encountered resistance, it eventually took advantage in the conflict and Finland was forced to concede part of its territories, including the Finnish coastline of the Arctic Ocean. This episode reflects expansionist pretensions in the region and demonstrates the interest in the Arctic areas (Sale and Potapov 2009). Other Arctic countries were also invaded during World War II, as Norway and Denmark, this time by Nazi Germany. Hence, the war emphasized the strategic and military importance of the Arctic, importance that would increase in the Cold War.

1.5. The Arctic during the Cold War (1945-1991)

At the end of World War II and during the following years down the 1940s, the Arctic region experienced a near total transformation in strategic and political significance. While the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea were hot zones in the confrontation between Nazi Germany (via occupied Norway) and the Soviet Union during that war, the areas above the Arctic Circle were largely unexplored, in a military point of view. Such untouchedness would change dramatically with the polarization of the international system around its two then-new superpowers, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) - the victor powers of the Second World War.

A main factor that accounts for this surge in strategic importance of the Arctic was the feature of presenting the shortest distance between these two newly arisen, antagonistic superpowers. This factor was quickly realized by war strategists - the Alaska-Siberian route (ALSIB), put in operation in 1942 to provide US-manufactured aircraft to the Soviet war effort, made use of the airspace within the Arctic Circle (The Voice of Russia 2008). The utilization of this route exemplifies the potential for transcontinental communication between the Eurasian landmass and the American continent; however, while having been used for anti-Axis cooperation during the Second World War, such potential would turn into fuel for competition for strategic dominance in the bipolar international environment of the Cold War. In other words, the United States and the Soviet Union were virtual territorial neighbors in the Arctic region, with the vast Siberian coast facing or bordering Alaska (United States) and many US political allies (i.e. Canada, Denmark through Greenland, and Norway).

Another important aspect to consider is the significance of the Arctic to the Soviet Navy. Although predated by a civilian flotilla, the Soviet Northern Fleet was founded in 1931 with the goals of supporting the 14th Army, protecting the Soviet northwestern region and maintaining the sea lines of communication (SLOC) (Åtland 2008). With its headquarters in Severomorsk, Kola Peninsula, the fleet

soon became vital for the Soviet Union under the light of the developments of World War II. Therefore, by the end of the war, it was already a large, powerful branch of the Soviet Navy, unrestricted in its access to high, warm seas.⁷ Also, the Northern Fleet could communicate with the Pacific Fleet, centered in Vladivostok in the Far East, through routes in the Arctic Ocean. These two fleets received, respectively, two thirds and one third of all Soviet-built nuclear submarines during the existence of the USSR, which highlights the importance given to these two arms of the Navy (Nilsen *et al.* 1997).

From the 1950s on, the Arctic region became a stage for tight military escalation between the United States and the Soviet Union (Åtland 2008). Through intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) 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 *vis-à-vis* one another. Most prominently, preventive radar systems were built and installed across the region by both Americans and their allies and by Soviets (Åtland 2008).

The Distance Early Warning System (DEW) was developed and built by the United States and Canada between 1954 and 1957; it was comprised of a line of anti-bomber aircraft radars called “the DEW line” crossing Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland (DEW Line History 2011). The Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) was built in 1959 and complemented the DEW line, featuring two anti-missile radars in Thule Air Base (Greenland) and Clear Air Force Station (Alaska) of the United States, and in RAF Fylingdales station (United Kingdom) of the United Kingdom Royal Force (Global Security 2013). A similar system started being built by the Soviet Union in 1963-4, (Podvig 2004) called *Sistema Preduprezhdeniya o Raketnom Napadnii* (SPRK) (Åtland 2008, 3), which featured anti-ballistic missile radars spread around the Soviet territory. Among the first radars to be built, Olenegorsk (located in the Kola peninsula) and Skrunda (in Latvia) had missile-detecting ranges that together covered the whole Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom area - therefore neutralizing its boundary states, coincidentally United States’ strategic partners throughout the Cold War. Both the Americans and Soviets built underwater detecting posts as well (Åtland 2008, 2).

It should also be noted that specific natural conditions of the Arctic environment also provided a cover-up for military attacks via submarine-launched ballistic missiles, once the Arctic Ocean’s deep waters allowed nuclear submarines to stay submerged for weeks or months. Moreover, the creaking noise of the marginal ice zone produced favorable conditions for these submarines not to be detected by the aforementioned early warning systems (Åtland 2008, 2-3). In light of the Cold War

⁷ In the case of the Baltic Sea and Black Sea Fleets, the Soviet Union had to pass straits controlled by Denmark/Sweden and Turkey respectively in order to reach the ocean. The Pacific Fleet is also restricted in the sense that its home port in Vladivostok is surrounded by Japan and South Korea, two important strategic U.S. allies.

international structure, the production of nuclear submarines became paramount to regional dominance in the Arctic. Between 1955 and 2004, the Russian Navy built 249 nuclear submarines (Bellona, 2013); still in 1986, the Northern Fleet alone consisted of 180 nuclear submarines (Åtland 2008, 2). At the same time, the United States Navy disposed of 140 submarines in total. (Naval History & Heritage Command 2011)

Beyond the military build-up, other factors point to the militarization of regional affairs during the Cold War. Under the icy waters, submarines constantly patrolled the Arctic, engaging in mutual espionage (Colley, 1997). Moreover, approximately 265 nuclear tests were conducted by the USSR in the Novaya Zemlya archipelago (north of Siberia); a few underground nuclear detonations took place in the American island of Amchitka, off the Alaskan coast and near the US-USSR maritime border (IAEA, 2004). In sum, throughout the Cold War era, little space was left in the Arctic region for matters other than strategy, the flexing of military might and nuclear deterrence.

In 1987, however, the international system saw the first major move toward a cooperative framework in dealing with the Arctic coming from one of the superpowers. On October 1st, then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev delivered a speech which came to be known as the “Murmansk Initiative”, outlining objectives to ease the confrontational nature of Arctic international politics, as well as to foster cooperation in scientific development, environmental issues, etc. (Exner-Pirot 2012). In the following years, the Soviet Union also invited observers from Nordic states to watch its military exercises, a request responded with refusal (Issaraelian 1989).

1.6. Military activity since the 1990s

With the dismantlement of the Soviet Union in 1991 into its successor republics and the consequent end of the Cold War confrontation, military activity in the Arctic region underwent significant changes (Åtland 2008). Many of the (now Russian) Northern Fleet submarines were decommissioned; the DEW line sites were handed back to Canada by the United States in 1990, and in 1993 a formal deactivation ceremony was held in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwestern Territories, Canada (Dew Line History 2011). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, cooperation initiatives in diverse fields related to the Arctic mushroomed in the international scene. The most prominent was the foundation of the Arctic Council in 1996.

In spite of that, a deeper analysis should see that the international system restructuring provided a new political framework in which other Arctic actors were able to step up their actions in the region. In other words, with the United States redirecting its attentions to new security threats and the Soviet Union broken up in resource-scarce republics, it would be the time not only for regional cooperation, but also for different kinds of competition. With the prospects of an increasingly ice-free Arctic region looming large, countries are now eyeing

not only the strategic importance of the North Pole surrounding areas, but also its economic profitability due to untapped oil and gas resources and shorter international commercial routes⁸.

Canada has taken some of the stiffest actions toward regional assertion in the Arctic. Under the “Use it or lose it” motto, the Canadian government has restructured its foreign policy to focus in its northern territories, a vast landmass facing the Arctic Ocean⁹. A Canadian Forces Arctic Training Center is planned to be built in Resolute Bay, well into the Arctic Circle. In addition, the numerical expansion of the Canadian Rangers and the building of a \$100 million-worth deep water docking port has also been announced (Smith, 2011).

As the heir state of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation maintained most of the Soviet firepower capabilities under its belt, but lost naval unanimity in the Caspian, Black and Baltic seas with the birth of smaller republics. Therefore, Russia is even more a “northern country” than the Soviet Union was, highlighting Arctic’s historical importance for its political calculations (Åtland 2008). Moscow has created a Federal Security Service Coastal Border Guard and is investing on new double-acting tankers and cargo vessels, while still operating the largest icebreaker fleet in the world (Smith 2011). In 2007, Russia also restarted patrolling the Arctic (BBC 2007).

Russia has military links with Norway (a NATO member), holding their Pomor joint naval exercises every year since 2010 (Zapaday 2010). The two countries settled a 40-year dispute over the border of the Barents Sea in April 27 of the same year, thus beginning to cooperate toward a common goal (Fjaertoft 2011). Oslo moved the headquarters of the Norwegian Armed Forces from Jättå in the south to Reitan, near Bodø, just north of the Arctic Circle, in August 2009. In 2010 the coastguard’s headquarters were also moved north (Wezeman 2012). Another Arctic player, Denmark, has created a unified Arctic Command and an Arctic Response Force, besides investing \$117 million in military upgrades (Smith 2011).

Presently, the United States seems to be the only Arctic country whose defensive goals do not include a manifested priority toward the protection of national interests in the High North. Nevertheless, in April 2011, two US nuclear attack submarines participated in the Ice Exercise (ICEX) 2011, operating in the Arctic, and a camp was established 150 nautical miles (278 kilometres) north of Prudhoe Bay, Alaska (Wezeman 2012).

In sum, the recent military developments in the region shed some light on

8 “Record low extents of Arctic sea ice in 2012 and 2007 have focused scientific and policy attention on climate changes in the High North, and to the implications of projected ice-free seasons in the Arctic within decades. The Arctic has been projected by several scientists to be ice-free in most late summers as soon as the 2030s” (O’rouke 2013, 10)

9 On July 9, 2007, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressed the Arctic issue extensively in a speech at the HMC Esquimalt Dockyard, Esquimalt Harbour, which included the statement that “Canada has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it. And make no mistake, this Government intends to use it.”

the importance of its underlying causes. In other words, issues such as political prominence and territorial sovereignty in the Arctic have become indissociable from the economic prospects to which global warming and the progressive melting ice cap signal, both in terms of resource exploitation and of commercial routes.

2. Statement of the issue

2.1. The Arctic territories under International Law

Territory is a crucial element to create and maintain a State. In order for a State to practice its sovereignty, it must have a territory where its authority is the strongest. However, this State's sovereignty is in theory limited to the territory it owns (Calster, n.d.). The acquisition of territories by States throughout history followed different patterns of occupation, such as settlement, territorial wars, domination of other peoples (and, therefore, their territories), and, in some cases, purchase. However, some territorial questions persist throughout history and are still object of discussion in international forums.

The disputes over sea territories have led to a series of international conventions to define how far the sovereignty of coastal States extends, and the conditions under which other countries may use foreign waters to navigate and develop economic and scientific activities. The first breakthrough in this International Law branch was made in the 1st United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I), at Geneva in 1956. During UNCLOS I, four important conventions were discussed: the Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone; the Convention on the Continental Shelf; the Convention on the High Seas and the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of Living Resources of the High Seas (Santos 2007, 73). These conventions were concluded in 1958 and, afterwards, signed by many countries.

The discussions on this topic continued and a second Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS II) was held in 1960 at Geneva, having no similar results to the first's ones. The matter became once more subject of an international meeting in 1973, when the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea was held (UNCLOS III), in New York. This conference was responsible for the creation of the main international law treaty on the area, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also known as the Montego Bay Convention, a major step to a future international consensual framework that would guide international relations under common rules. UNCLOS III did not reach such an important achievement easily, having lasted for another nine years in order to create the document, which has not yet been approved and/or ratified by many countries (Santos 2007).

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea maintained the validity of the other conventions on the matter, signed in UNCLOS I, commonly known as the Geneva Conventions. It established a common set of terms used to refer to the coastal

parts that comprise a State's territory or are under a State's sovereignty, as well as the rules used to define the ownership of these areas, and the conditions under which other States are allowed to make use of these areas for various purposes. The convention also sets the mechanisms that shall be used to define territorial disputes that concern water bodies (UNCLOS, 1982). The agreement has been signed and ratified by 164 countries and the European Union. Some 15 others have signed it, but no yet ratified (eight of which are landlocked) and another 17 widely recognized countries have not yet signed it (ten of which are landlocked). The only Arctic State who has not yet signed nor ratified the convention is the United States (UN 2013).

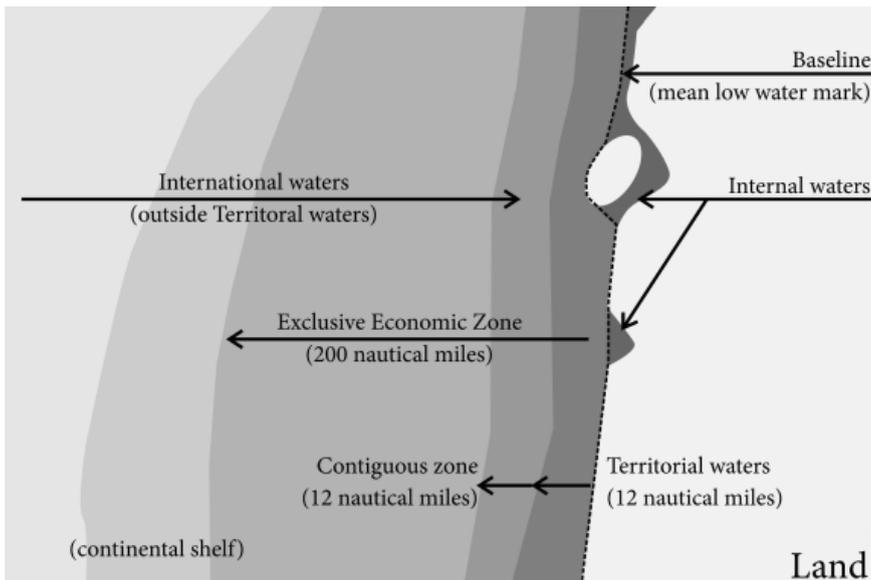


Image 2: UNCLOS sea zones. Source: Wikipedia

To better understand the legal framework that defines the ownership of and the sovereignty over sea territories by coastal States it is important to know the terms used to define the different parts of the seas and oceans, under the UNCLOS:

a) *Territorial Sea* – is the part over which a coastal State's sovereignty is fully extended. The country enjoys full rights of navigation, conduction of economic activities and occupation over this area. A country's territorial sea shall be defined by the same country to which it belongs through an official document. However, the extension of a territorial sea shall not exceed 12 nautical miles¹⁰, measured from baselines determined in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and cannot interfere in the right of other coastal States to their own territorial sea and to their access to higher seas (explained below). Other countries'

¹⁰ Equivalent to 22.224 kilometers.

ships shall be granted the right of free *innocent passage* in the territorial sea of a coastal State (UNCLOS 1982, Part II)¹¹.

b) *Contiguous Zone* – is the zone that is contiguous to a coastal State’s territorial sea. The coastal State has the right to control this area in order to prevent and/or punish activities that may infringe its customs, fiscal, immigration and sanitary laws and regulations within its territory or territorial sea. The country does not possess the right of ownership over this area, which shall not extend 24 nautical miles¹² from the baselines used to define the country’s territorial sea (UNCLOS 1982, Part II, Section 4).

c) *Exclusive Economic Zone* – is an area beyond a coastal State’s territorial sea over which some of the State’s rights are extended. Therefore, the country has

sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds (UNCLOS 1982, Part V, Article 56)

over its Exclusive Economic Zone. This zone can be extended up to 200 nautical miles¹³ from the baselines used to define the country’s territorial sea. Special conditions of exploitation, in order to create joint exploration regimes, might apply if countries in the region are landlocked or geographically disadvantaged¹⁴ (UNCLOS 1982, Part II, Section 5).

d) *Continental Shelf* – is the area that comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance (UNCLOS 1982, Part VI, Article 76, paragraph 1).

The coastal State has rights of exploitation over the natural resources of its Continental Shelf¹⁵. This right is exclusive to the coastal State to whom the Area belongs, unless some arrangement is made between the State and other country, under the UNCLOS’ terms (UNCLOS 1982, Part VI, Article 77). A country’s claim

11 “Passage is innocent as long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State. Such passage shall take place in conformity with this Convention and with other rules of international law” (UNCLOS 1982, Part II, Section 3, Article 19).

12 Equivalent to 44.448 kilometers.

13 Equivalent to 370.4 kilometers.

14 For more information on the conditions applied to the co-administration and exploitation of Exclusive Economic Zones by landlocked or geographically disadvantaged States, read United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Part V, Articles 69 to 71.

15 “The natural resources [...] consist of the mineral and other non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil together with living organisms belonging to sedentary species, that is to say, organisms which, at the harvestable stage, either are immobile on or under the seabed or are unable to move except in constant physical contact with the seabed or the subsoil.” (UNCLOS 1982, Part VI, Article 77, paragraph 4).

for its Continental Shelf has to be made to the United Nations Commission on the Extension of the Continental Shelf within 10 years of signing the Convention.

Part VI of the UNCLOS establishes the criteria under which Parties (ratified signatories) may make “excessive” claims to exclusively exploit the resources of the seabed and subsoil (but not the water column or airspace above it) beyond the 200 nm EEZ. The claims may not exceed an additional 150 nm from the EEZ or 100 nm beyond the point where the depth of the water is 2,500 meters, whichever is greater. In order to validate these claims, extensive research must be conducted to map the hydrography, probe the geology, and survey the geodesy of the Arctic. Evidence to support one’s claim must then be submitted to a Commission established under Annex II of the UNCLOS for adjudication, and all decisions reached are final and binding on all Parties in the dispute. Finally, it is important to note that time is of the essence: a nation has only ten years from the day it ratifies the UNCLOS to submit claims in excess of its respective EEZ for adjudication. In certain areas of the Arctic, the race is on to meet this deadline (Aerandir 2012, 21).

E) *High Seas* – All parts of the sea which do not correspond to a coastal State’s internal waters, archipelagic waters (applicable only to archipelagic States), territorial sea or Exclusive Economic Zone shall remain free to all States, whether coastal or landlocked. This part of the seas and oceans is called high seas, where a special set of rights and duties is applicable to all state aiming to ensure the maintenance of the area’s freedom and its conservation (UNCLOS 1982, Article VII).

Bearing in mind these concepts and the almost universal acceptance of the UNCLOS terms, there is a big and important group of political actors and academics that believe that the UNCLOS should be applied to the Arctic region, considering the composition of its area. This belief is also based on an article of the convention which states that no different treatment shall be given to frozen seas, even though the considered article deals with climatic aspects and the responsibility of environmental conservation and not the ownership of territories (Santos 2007, 84).

The ownership of Arctic territories (either land or ice) and, therefore, the resources there available became a matter of discussion in the beginning of the 20th century, when the form and rights of occupation were an issue treated in both the political and the academic spheres. By then, the common interpretation of the Arctic status was of a *res nullius* region, where no sovereignty was yet applied and, therefore it was available for occupation¹⁶. The discussion went on to state that the principle of *uti possidetis juris* should be used to determine the ownership of some of the territories and that other methods should be used to define the status of unoccupied regions¹⁷ (Santos 2007, 45).

16 The concept of *res nullius* refers to something that is no one’s property, either because it was abandoned by its previous owner or because it was never possessed. It can be possessed by the first to take it.

17 The concept of *uti possidetis juris* defines that the claim of not owned lands is determined by the first occupation

A common theory used to define the division of the Arctic region among the Arctic States was the sectors' theory. This theory states that a country has the ownership rights over a spherical triangular region above its territory (this triangle has as vertex the pole, as sides meridians and as base either a parallel or a natural geographical line) (Costa 1951, *apud* Santos 2007, 46). The theory is based on principles such as the intention to develop the region's occupation, the possibility of extending it in the same patterns of security, integrity and defense of the occupied part, and the control over the adjacent territories (Santos 2007, 46).

The sectors' theory was first discussed in the 1906 Naval Club's meeting in New York. It was first rejected by Canada, but later accepted and applied implicitly by the Canadian and Russian governments. It was commonly accepted by a long time, even though other countries did not apply it. However, its original formulation did not address matters such as the annexation of frozen waters. It was later hardly criticized and it ceased to be used to justify the occupation of territories (Costa 1951, *apud* Santos 2007; Santos, 2007).

As approaches stating that the Arctic was *res nullius* and, therefore, available for occupation became less popular, the concept of *res communis* gained importance¹⁸. According to this principle the Arctic region could not be occupied, remaining an international common territory. The rise of this categorization occurred in a moment when the Antarctic region's status was also debated, resulting in the Antarctic Treaty, which gave the region an international status, where only pacific activities can be conducted, by the signatory countries (even though it allows other countries to sign it and gain the same rights) (The Antarctic Treaty 1959)¹⁹.

If the principle of *res communis* is applied to the Arctic, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea becomes the main juridical body applied to the region. This approach would then imply that no matter what physical state the water is in, either solid or liquid, the same set of rules shall apply (Santos 2007). Even though no special treaty has been created to define the Arctic region's status (like the Antarctic Treaty), the discussion on the region has been taken to international forums. In 1996, a special international body was created in order to defend the Arctic States interests and rights. This body is the Arctic Council, composed by eight countries, namely Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States. Its main objective is to promote the sustainable development of the region, through environmental, economic and social regulations (Arctic Council 2013).

of the territory. Therefore, the parts of the Arctic which were already occupied by Arctic States should remain so, gaining that status and international recognition for that.

18 The concept of *res communis* applies to things or territories which have no single owner, being instead property of a group of parts, which can be either people, or states, (or other forms or human organization). No part has a stronger claim to it than the others, being its use defined by the group.

19 The Antarctic Treaty signatory countries with consultative rights are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italia, Japan, Korea (ROK), Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay (SECRETARIAT OF THE ANTARCTIC TREATY 2013).

The discussion on the Arctic ownership situation can be historically defined by the opposition between its interpretation as *res nullius* territories and as a *res communis* land, whose exploration shall be decided through international forums. The second interpretation has been gaining strength since the second half of the 20th century. This trend contributes to the enhanced use of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to settle disputes in the region. There has been a strong movement by the Russian government to redefine the sea limits to its sovereignty through an interpretation of the UNCLOS (Zisk 2010). This situation shows that the definition of the territorial division in the region is not yet finished and has much to be discussed with the climate changes' effects to the Arctic. The resolution of this discussion is a very important matter that involves a series of interests (especially if the resources available in the region are considered) and that can represent a major challenge to maintenance of peace and stability in the Arctic.

2.2. The Arctic's resources

Throughout the Cold War, Arctic played an important role in the bipolar theater due to its strategic location, serving as headquarters for the Soviet sea-based nuclear deterrence, centered in the Northern Fleet. This geopolitical importance may have diminished after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the strategic importance of the region remains, also because of its geo-economic importance which is expected to growth with the increasing tightening of the global energy market. The Arctic has a significant mineral wealth, being home of a substantial share of the world's oil and gas reserves and of deposits of many valuable minerals, such as gold, copper, iron, tin, manganese, diamonds, among others (Cohen 2011). Even though there are many onshore platforms and mines in the Arctic today that profit from those resources (Gautier *et al.* 2009), the potential gains of the region are yet, in their majority, to be obtained, due to the geological difficulties that are naturally imposed to their exploration. However, that situation is rapidly shifting with the changes to the climate in the region and making it more attractive to explore than others traditional global sources of energy that are almost exhausted or considerate instable.

Studies of the United States Geological Survey estimate that the Arctic has as much as twenty-five percent of the world's undiscovered sources of oil and gas (Titley and St John 2010; Gautier *et al.* 2009; Mellgren 2007). It has a ten percent share of the world's known petroleum reserves (Kenneth *et al.* 2008, *apud* Titley and St. John 2010). Therefore, we can state that the Arctic already plays a not ignorable role in the energy theater and that this role has an incredible potential of growth due to its untouched deposits. To better understand the greatness of Arctic's hydrocarbons share, its ten percent is equivalent to more than four hundred oil and gas fields, containing forty billion barrels of oil, 1.136 trillion of cubic feet of natural gas or eight billion barrels of natural gas liquids (Gautier *at*

al. 2009). It is needless to say that the exploration of those resources rests mainly in the hands of the so-called Arctic Five: Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.

Approximately sixty-one large oil and natural gas fields have been discovered within the Arctic Circle in Russia, Alaska, Canada's Northwest Territories, and Norway. Fifteen of these sixty-one large Arctic fields have not yet gone into production; eleven are in Canada's Northwest Territories, two in Russia, and two in Arctic Alaska. Forty-three of the sixty-one large Arctic fields are located in Russia. Thirty-five of these large Russian fields (thirty-three of natural gas and two of oil) are located in the West Siberian Basin. Of the eight remaining large Russian fields, five are in the Timan-Pechora Basin, two are in the South Barents Basin, and one is in the Ludlov Saddle. Of the eighteen large Arctic fields outside Russia, six are in Alaska, eleven are in Canada's Northwest Territories, and one is in Norway (Budzic 2009, 4).

The Arctic region is divided in nineteen geological basins where many had passed through the process of sedimentary rocks associated with petroleum and gas formation (Gautier *et al.* 2009). Among these nineteen basins, some have already experienced oil and gas exploration; the first field explored was the Tazavskoye, in 1962, by Russia, and the second was the Alaskan Prudhoe Bay field, in 1967, by the United States (Budzic 2009). Also Canada and Norway profit from the exploration of petroleum and gas in their share of the Arctic today, mainly through state-owned companies (Conley 2012). However, less than half of these basins are explored up to their potential, mainly because of the high prices of developing the necessary infrastructure, technology, transportation and maintenance. One good example is that "5.4 trillion cubic feet (6.3 billion barrels of oil equivalent) of the discovered Alaska North Slope natural gas resources remain unexploited due to the absence of transportation infrastructure" (Budzic 2009, 3). Thus, today, most of the exploration of Arctic oil and gas takes place on land, and there are well-known deposits in the region that are not yet explored due to the difficulties that are naturally imposed (Conley 2012).

The results of the US Geological Survey (USGS) for the Arctic cannot be ignored²⁰. The USGS Arctic assessment estimated a total oil and natural gas reserves of 412 billion barrels of oil. Seventy eight percent of those resources expected to be natural gas and natural gas liquids (Budzic 2009, 6). The Arctic States are already taking measures to increase their exploration in the region, as we can see in the Russian plans of expanding oil production to the Pechora Sea and drilling the Prirazlomney oil fields in early 2012, or the accords between Obama's administration and the Royal Dutch Shell for offshore drilling in the Beaufort Sea expected to start in 2012 (Conley 2012).

The majority of the undiscovered hydrocarbons is located in the West Siberian,

²⁰ It is important to notice that the study excluded from consideration any sedimentary provinces that were less than three kilometers deep (Budzic 2009).

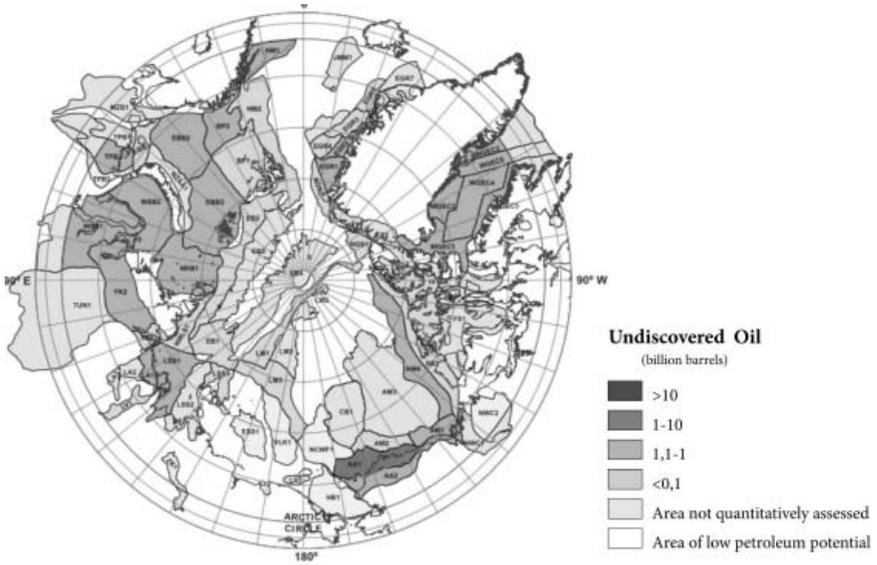


Image 3: Arctic's Undiscovered Oil. Source: Gautier *et al.* 2009 2009

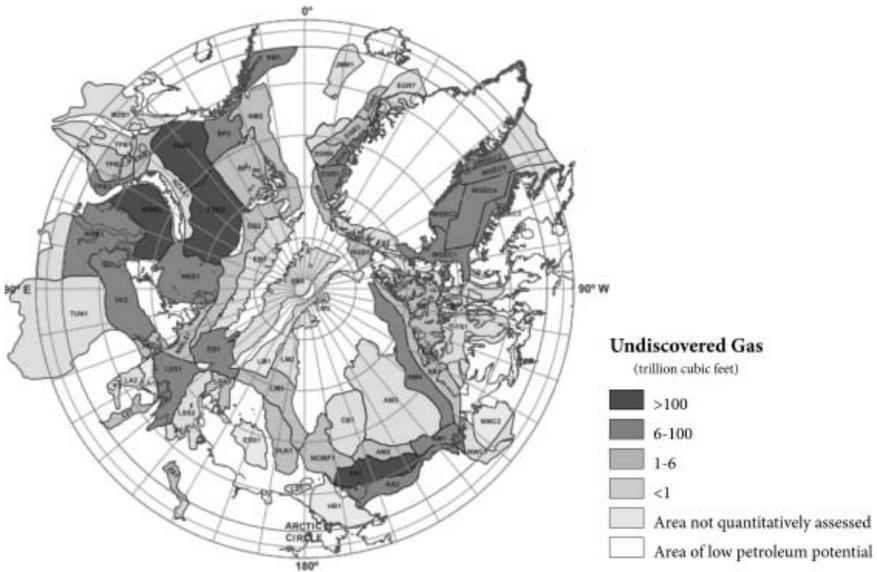


Image 4: Arctic's Undiscovered Gas. Source: Gautier *et al.* 2009 2009

the Arctic Alaska and the East Barents basins²¹. The Arctic Ocean touches the Eurasian and the North American continents, and it is important to notice that the distribution of resources is not equal between those two: 36 percent of the resources are located in North America and it is composed mainly of oil deposits; on the other hand, the other 64 percent are located in Eurasia, where they are composed mainly by natural gas (Budzic 2009). Such great amount of natural gas deposits – almost three times the expected oil deposits – is concentrated mainly in Russia, and the Russian gas production in the Arctic composes ninety percent of its total gas production (Conley 2012). However, the exploitation and transportation of natural gas is considered more expansive in comparison to oil, due to the large capital cost required to build the liquefaction facilities needed to comport the gas (Budzic 2009). It is believed that the Arctic may constitute one of the world's largest remaining prospective areas for energy obtainment, but, until now, remoteness and technical difficulty, coupled with still abundant low cost petroleum, have ensured that little exploration – of gas or oil – occurred offshore (Gautier *et al.* 2009).

Besides the frenzy of the undiscovered gas and oil, other important natural resources are present in the Arctic region. Still in the field of energy sources, deep in the Arctic Ocean there are large methane hydrate deposits. Methane hydrates are a solid form of natural gas with 3,000 times the concentration of methane found in the atmosphere (Cohen 2011). However, up until today, there are no technologies able to extract it with security yet (Cohen 2011). Also, the region contains a large scale of different minerals available for extraction in the region, which includes manganese, copper, cobalt, zinc, and gold (Titley and St.John 2010). In present day, one cannot say for certain which are all the minerals that compose Arctic's natural reserves, neither their full extension. However, each of the Arctic countries has already started the processes of extraction of minerals such as nickel, cooper, tin, uranium, and phosphate (Conley 2012). For example, in the Norilsk Nickel Plant is the largest mine in the Russian Arctic and produces nearly one-fifth of the world's nickel and exports tons of metal and coal to Asian countries; as Norway, that ships iron ore to great part of Europe (Conley 2012). Nevertheless, as happens to the exploration of energy sources, many natural and technical obstacles are imposed to the full profit of those resources' extraction (Titley and St.John 2010).

2.3. Climate Change and the Arctic

Global warming is a phenomenon that presents itself as one of the main international questions of the 21st century. In fact, the world is getting warmer and warmer due to the so-called greenhouse effect and, despite the willing of

21 The West Siberian basin contains 3.66 billion barrels of crude oil and 651.50 trillion cubic feet of natural gas; the Arctic Alaska, 29.96 billion barrels of crude oil and 221.40 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and the East Barents basin presents 7.41 billion barrels of crude oil and 317.56 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Budzic 2009).

those that are searching for ways of controlling this process, most projections are not positive²². Among the consequences of such phenomenon, one region that is particularly affected is the Arctic, where indicators show that the fastest and most dramatic climate change on Earth is occurring (Alexandrov 2009). A report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) affirmed that the Arctic ice cap is warming faster than the rest of the receding planet's ice, due to the emissions of greenhouse gases (Mellgren 2008). The melting of the Arctic is a trend that must be observed with high awareness, since it can – and has already – provoke changes not only to region's environment, but also to its politics.

The Arctic is particularly affected by the greenhouse effect due to the sharper angle at which sun rays strike the polar region during summer, and because the melting ice is turning into open ocean, which absorbs far more solar radiation (Borgerson 2008). In other words, the summer sun's heat melts the Arctic sea ice, and so more solar energy is absorbed by a bigger ocean, which can make the air temperature warmer all year long. Thus, even if it is normal for the Arctic to heat in summer, winter is not being able to freeze it back in the same intensity. This dynamic is creating, thus, a vicious melting cycle known as the ice-albedo feedback loop (Borgerson 2008).

This vicious melting cycle is shrinking the Arctic icecap. Scientists are observing retreating of the sea ice, melting of glaciers, less snowing and the diminishing of the permafrost areas²³ (Tittley and St. John 2010). In 2007 alone, more than one million square miles of ice melted – the highest record ever reached – leaving the region with only half of the ice that existed in 1950 (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Another global warming consequence is that the Arctic multiyear ice – that is, the ice that do not melt even in the summer – is, in fact, getting smaller and being replaced by a first-year sea ice that is considerably weaker and thinner (Borgerson 2008, 66). This multiyear ice, due to its thickness, plays an important role in the ocean circulation, providing space for the solar energy to go back to the space by reflection. With a thinner and weaker icecap, the solar energy may melt it and will not be reflected back. In fact, the numbers are betting the records of a lower multiyear icecap every year (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009).

Such multiyear icecap is the main reason for which the access to the Arctic is so difficult and, in many cases, impracticable: the harsh environment, the almost unbearable low temperatures and the deep layers of ice made the Arctic a place where some maritime operations – mostly the commercial ones – were hazardous (Tittley and St. John 2010). However, this traditional comprehension of the Arctic as

22 The greenhouse effect is a “process that keeps the Earth's temperature above the -18°C temperature it would have if greenhouse gases in the atmosphere did not absorb the sun's heat and reradiate it back to the surface” (Tittley and St. John 2010, 36). However, this process has been accelerated by human action, especially after the Industrial Revolution, when an extrapolated load of greenhouse gases were further added to the atmosphere. Therefore, scientists explain that, since the 1880s, a massive amount of greenhouse gases is being retained into the atmosphere, and, in consequence, the Earth is heating faster than expected (Tittley and St. John 2010).

23 Permafrost is defined as a ground (soil or rock, covered by organic or ice material) that remains at or below 0°C for at least two consecutive years (IPA, Arctic Portal 2012)

a non-navigable region is changing due to the effects of global warming. Between 2004 and 2005, the Arctic lost fourteen percent of its perennial ice, a huge obstacle to shipping, and, in the last twenty-three years, forty-one percent of this hard, multiyear ice has vanished (Borgerson 2008, 66). Today, studies vary upon which year the Arctic first experience an summer ice-free conditions shall occur, but the consensus among most models is that the Arctic will experience such conditions for a portion of the summer by 2030 (Titley and St.John 2010). This means that, with the decomposition of the multiyear ice, the Arctic will be like the Baltic Sea, that is covered only by a thin season ice in the winter and navigable not only in the summer, but in the winter as well, with icebreakers²⁴ (Boergerson 2008; Smith, 2011).

2.4. Climate Change effects to the geopolitics of the Arctic

The Arctic region is getting warmer. In Alaska and western Canada, the average winter temperature has increased seven degrees Fahrenheit in the last sixty years (Borgerson 2008) and the icecap is melting. This means an increasingly accessible Arctic, and, even if the international community manages to slow the pace of global warming, the expectative is an Arctic more open to human activity in a near future. By human activity one can understand a vast range of operations, such as traffic from commercial shipping, tourism, oil and gas exploration, soot emitted by maritime vessels and operations in land, ice or sky (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). For the first time, in August 2009, two German commercial ships, unaccompanied by ice-breakers, were able to traverse the Northern Sea Route - long time impenetrable - from Vladivostok to the Netherlands (Conley 2012).

Great access means that the Arctic will have to be adjusted to take on new roles in the international scenario. The perspective of profit from those yet untouched resources, mainly oil and gas, is already being reason of disagreement between the Arctic Five and also other countries that are willing to manifest their interest in the matter (Borgerson 2008). With this new perspective, problems, challenges and opportunities will arise not only for the countries in the Arctic region, but also for the international community, to deal with it. Questions about environmental impact, allocation of natives, international commerce, sovereignty and governance will tend to rise with this change of conjuncture in the region.

2.4.1. The Impact on the Environment and among Locals

The damages of global warming to the environmental balance are troubling ecologists and the case of the melting of the Arctic may be one of the most visible

²⁴ According to Smith (2011), it is impossible to imagine an Arctic as free of ice as the Atlantic Ocean. In the most extreme point of view, the Arctic Ocean would be ice-free only a few days or weeks in the summer. From the autumn to the spring, there will be an ice cover that will always difficult the passage, even for icebreakers and, in the winter, the Arctic will, as further notice, always freeze (Smith 2011, 134-135).

examples of those drastic effects of climate change. According to Borgerson (2008), the environmental impact of the melting Arctic has been dramatic and has already affected many issues of the region's ecosystem. The melting of the icecap is increasing the water temperatures and, by so, provoking a change in the sea distribution, and, in consequence, having a straight effect on the fauna and flora that are ice-dependent (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Also, the melting ice is directly affecting the traditional way of life of those natives of the region: communities that were once isolated and had their habits concentrated in this complicated environmental are now being exposed to new commerce, oil and gas companies and international attention. It is already a consensus that those impacts to the Arctic environment and to the local community must be closely analyzed. However they are not yet quite fully comprehended, especially due to the lack of specialized technologies and satellite access and to the harsh climatic conditions that the region exposes scientists to (Titley and St.John 2010).

According to Titley and St. John (2010), the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the globe. This warming is leading to a retreat of all iced areas, causing an augmentation of the sea level, changing the ocean acidity and heightening its temperatures. A more radical approach can already predict that those changes in the acidity and temperature of the Arctic Ocean had – and will further have even more–ecological effects to the North and Northwest Atlantic Ocean, even provoking a future regime shift and stratification of the water's circulation patterns between those oceans (Greene *et al.* 2008). With warmer waters, fishes are moving further northwards.(Borgerson 2008). This new dynamic may cause some contentious among the traditional and local fisheries in the Arctic countries since fishes from a traditional region are migrating to others. Local governments are already aware of those changes: an example is that, in August 2009, the Obama administration approved the Arctic Fishery Management Plan to prevent the expansion of commercial fishing into Arctic waters exposed by ice melting (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Its also important to remind that the fish migration is also changing the ecological niche of others animals of the region and affecting all of the equilibrium of its fauna²⁵.

Not only the Arctic fauna is passing through a great amount of change, but also the flora is experiencing situations never seen before. The thawing tundra, the furthest north biome in the world, is being replaced by a new type of temperate forest (Titley and St.John 2010). Places that were considered inhospitable and unproductive are now being considerate for certain kinds of plantation. Greenland, for example, is experiencing a farming boom, as once-barren soil now yields broccoli, hay and potatoes (Borgerson 2008). However, this changing of vegetation from tundra to large plant growth will liberate more greenhouse gases,

25 With some species moving north, native animals are watching their traditional sources of protein disappear. The polar bear, for example, is passing through enormous risks of extinction, affected not only by the changing of the marine populations that serve as its breeding, but also the floating ice, that is vital to its habitat and hunting ground (Titley and St.John 2010).

among them is the black carbon, that will further darken the landscape, provoking more heat and melt of the icecaps (Chance and Andreeva 1995).

The changes in the fauna and flora of the Arctic have implications to the native system of living. Communities from the region, like the Inuit and the Nunavut, have their subsistence strategies centered in the traditional hunting and fishing, which is being altered as a result of the climate change (Ford and Smit 2004). On the other hand, those communities that have, up until today, a lack of access to some of the most basic amenities of modernity by virtue of geographic location, geophysical terrain and neglect of central governments, may now benefit from a more accessible and lucrative Arctic (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). With the region being more attractive to commerce, exploitation of resources, maritime routes and others lucrative activities, it will be necessary to call for more governmental and international attention. This attention will be necessary especially due to the implications that the thawing of the ice-rich permafrost, the coastal erosion and the retreat of the multiyear ice have on the infrastructure of those natives: many locals, in consequence of those alterations in the ecosystem, will need to be allocated to a more stable site (Ford and Smit 2004). Moreover, it is important that, in all plans of drilling or exploring the Arctic resources, the interest of the locals will be considered²⁶. There must be a consensus approval from the indigenous people for exploring the fields: the company Shell, for example, had to pay eighty million dollars to an indigenous community for leases to access the Beaufort Sea, in the Alaska's northern coast (Borgerson 2008).

With a greater human access to the region, scientists are becoming increasingly concerned over the environmental damage that could be caused by petroleum, mining and other large scale development projects (Chance and Andreeva 1995). Not only those projects may cause apprehensions due to the natural risks of offshore drilling, oil-spilling and mining, but also because they can transform the Arctic in a depository for organic pollutants and heavy metals derived from those operations. According to Chance and Andreeva (1995), a massive oil development project at Prudhoe Bay has already destroyed thousands of acres of wild life habitat, caused decline in wildlife populations and left hundreds of open pits containing millions of gallons of oil industry waste (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 1987 *apud* Chance and Andreeva 1995). In consequence, activists are contesting projects of new oil fields adjacent to wildlife refuges, as is the case of Beaufort Sea, and raising the question of the dangers of offshore oil drilling under the fragile Arctic conditions (Chance and Andreeva 1995).

The rapid climate change in the Arctic is causing concern among scientists and ecologists due to its disquieting effects to the fauna, flora and ecosystem of the

²⁶ The Arctic's indigenous people are not excluded from the decisions of the Arctic Five in the matters of the region, and, in fact, the Arctic Council recognize as its permanent participants six organized groups of natives: Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Aleut International Association (AIA), Gwich'in Council International (GCI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and Saami Council (Arctic Council website 2012)

region. Also, many natives are being exposed to vulnerability and risks to their safety and to their traditional way of living, as their main way of subsistence is drastically changed. For example, in July 2000, 52 natives, living in the Arctic Bay, in Nunavut, broke loose from land fast ice abruptly and, even as they were all rescued alive, the incident highlighted the difficulty and the need for adaptation under the region's changing conditions (Ford and Smit 2004). There are still many doubts about the negative effects of the warming of the sea waters, the shifting of the ocean's regime, the modification of the Arctic flora and fauna. However, regional organizations, governments and communities are already stressing the need to further develop knowledge and mitigation and adaptation options (DSD, 2003, *apud* Ford and Smit 2004).

2.4.2. Resource Rush

The Arctic is melting, making the region more and more open to human activity, and, in consequence, transforming the image of the region as an inhospitable and marginal place in a region that is, once more, becoming a major ground for contemporary geopolitics. In fact, the numbers confirm the excitement: the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources estimates that the Russian fraction of the underwater Arctic could hold as much as 586 billion barrels of oil reserves (Cohen 2011). Not only could the proven oil deposits have up to three billion barrels, the proven gas reserves could reach 7.7 tcm²⁷ (*ibidem*). The possibility of exploring those resources in the Arctic is thrilling, due to the further tightening of the energy market. The global energy market is expected to remain tight over the long term as crude oil prices reach alarming levels as the demand also tends to rise constantly (Alexandrov 2009). Moreover, the region is not surrounded by any of kind of political instability that is present in many contemporary oil-supplying countries, so it is not inclinable to create international crises with an unexpected rise of oil prices. Developing oil deposits in the Arctic is strategically important because, even if that are political matters of territorial delimitation, the region is not beset by religious, ethnic or social strife and resource-nationalism that are present in oil-producing countries in the Middle East, West Africa and Latin America (Cohen 2011). Therefore, making the Arctic a new pole of energy source would lower the prices in the international oil market and also give the Arctic Five rich oil and gas deposits to guarantee the national energy supply.

While the region may have a large potential in the long run to contribute to the global energy supply, in a short term the expectations should not be overestimated, especially because there are others areas that are much cheaper and less technologically challenging to exploit oil and gas fields (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Furthermore, there are many obstacles that make the development of any kind of oil and gas exploitation project in the region more expensive than others. In fact, it is estimated that the offshore drilling oil in the Arctic is up to one and a

²⁷ Trillion of cubic metric.

half or two times more expensive than in Texas, United States, if the same amount of oil is considered in both cases (Budzic 2009). Among those difficulties, there are, first, natural obstacles: the harsh weather that requires specially designed equipment, the poor soil conditions, that demand additional site preparation, and the icepack in the seas that can easily damage offshore facilities, making any kind of shipping tricky for long periods.

Second, technology is a key barrier to the Arctic access, as there are not only transport limitations and overly long supply lines to overcome, but also the necessity of icebreakers, many nuclear powered ones, that are very expensive to build: it takes eight to ten years, and cost approximately one billion dollars each (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). The Arctic countries have very different capacities in the region: while Russia has twenty icebreakers, and Canada, twelve, the United States have just one functioning (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). Furthermore, building the facilities' infrastructure would demand high outlays of capital, since new roads, railroads, harbor facilities, air fields, electric power generation, and living quarters would be necessary. It is worth to remind that natural gas pipelines are more expensive and complex than the oil due to the necessary liquefaction infrastructure. Another major factor that must be dealt with in the infrastructure matter is that, due to the region's extreme climate conditions, there is a lack of satellite coverage, that causes not only difficulties with the weather forecasting, but also makes the Arctic a hard environment for any kind of operation (Conley 2012). The development of oil and gas fields is governed by market-based economics, so fields would only be developed when they are expected to generate sufficient profits, and this is the main reason why there are fifteen large Arctic oil and natural gas deposits fields, discovered in the 1970s and 1980, that are still waiting to be developed (Budzic 2009).

Finding large Arctic oil and gas deposits is already difficult and expensive, but developing them as commercially profitable is even more challenging (Budzic 2009). Nevertheless, energy resources exploration in the Arctic is moving at full speed: Russia is developing its vast Shkotman natural gas fields, Norway has plans to start tapping gas from its offshore in Snoehvit, Canada is investing in the development of high technology drilling, and others countries and oil companies are already revealing their interest in profiting from those resources (Mellgren 2007). Despite such technological and environmental challenges, the Arctic Five find major obstacles for furthering exploring the region's resources in the political and security field, since many of those resources deposits are located in contested areas (Aerandir 2012).

2.4.3. The Arctic Routes

The use of the Arctic routes for transportation, of either goods or people, has to be considered when analyzing the opportunities the region presents and the new situations global warming might create. However, the use of the Arctic routes for

these purposes has not showed any stronger development so far because of the lack of interest of Western market-based economies (Östreg 2010). This position is based on the difficulties this routes present to their regular use, such as the “lack of regular sailing schedules, limited length of sailing seasons, costs of icebreaker assistance, high insurance premiums, limited sailing speeds and cargo capacity, and cost in building ice-reinforced freighters” (ibidem, 4).

Route	Panama Canal	Northwest Passage	Northeast Passage	Suez and Malacca
London - Yokohama	23 300	15 930	13 841	21 200
Marseilles - Yokohama	24 030	16 720	17 954	17 800
Marseilles - Singapore	29 484	21 600	23 672	12 420
Marseilles - Shanghai	26 038	19 160	19 718	16 460
Rotterdam - Singapore	28 994	19 900	19 641	15 750
Rotterdam - Shanghai	25 588	17 570	15 793	19 550
Hamburg - Seattle	17 110	15 270	13 459	29 780
Rotterdam - Vancouver	16 350	14 330	13 445	28 400
Rotterdam - Los Angeles	14 490	15 790	15 252	29 750
Gioia Tauro - Hong Kong	25 934	24 071	21 556	14 093
Barcelona - Hong Kong	25 044	23 179	20 686	14 693
New York - Shanghai	20 880	17 030	19 893	22 930
New York - Hong Kong	21 260	18 140	20 982	21 570
New York - Singapore	23 580	20 310	23 121	18 770

Table 1: Distance in km between harbours using various southern and northern routes | Source: Christensen, 2009

The Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route (Northeast Passage) are the two important routes that, even though are not so often used, have a great potential for the reduction of transportation costs. According to climate change predictions, these two routes will gain navigability in the near future for greater periods during summer (Titley, St.John 2010). The two routes will bring closer together North America, Europe and Asia, and even shorten the distance between these regions and the Southern Hemisphere, clearly competing with other contemporary routes, like the Suez Canal, the Malacca Straits and the Panama Canal (Smith 2011). The savings propitiated by the use of the Arctic routs are huge. For example, Russian ships travelling to Southeast Asian ports could save up to one million dollars in fuel by using the Arctic instead of going through the Suez Canal (ibidem). The different nautical distances among many important ports in the world can be seen in the table below, comparing the use of conventional routes to travelling through the two Arctic routes.

However, obstacles still remain to the use of these routes. It will still take some

time for the route showed above to be a viable possibility, as the costs to turn it into reality are still very big (Christensen 2009). Two points that have to be tackled are which rules shall be used to define the passage conditions in these areas and whose sovereignty shall apply over these seas. This matter, together with the exploration rights over the region's resources, has already been the center of territorial disputes among Arctic States, as will be analyzed in the next subtopic.



Image 5: The Arctic Routes | Source: Christensen, 2009

2.5. Territorial disputes among the Arctic-coastal states

Bearing in mind the evolution of the discussions over territorial issues in the Arctic region, one must acknowledge the primacy of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in defining it. This trend has been more evident since the XX century, assuming the principle of *res communis* which, as previously noted, regards the evolution of a territorial matter under the framework of international forums and international treaties. This aspect has been prominent since the Arctic countries have adopted more assertive actions in order to guarantee their sovereignty in this strategic area²⁸. Even though the United States is the only Arctic State which has not yet ratified the UNCLOS, it usually follows its provisions as Customary International Law (Aerandir 2012, 21). Therefore, the Arctic States, in theory, have only two options to win a territorial dispute in the region: through

²⁸ This trend became evident with the adoption of the Ilulissat Declaration by the Arctic-five – United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark – in May 2008. Such declaration establishes that a new comprehensive treaty regarding the legal status of the Arctic Ocean is not necessary; at the same time the declaration recognizes the UNCLOS legal basis as a solid foundation for responsible management by the Arctic coastal states (Aerandir 2012).

International Law, to which the UNCLOS framework applies, or by the means of power. According to Laurence Smith (2011a), States seem to be following the first option, although the militarization level may increase as the countries' interests are threatened, since "in an anarchic system wherein national leaders tend to view conflict and competition through a realist lens, it is not international law, but military might that functions as the ultimate guarantor of security" (Aerandir 2012, 41).

Russia was the first country to establish a claim under UNCLOS, in 2001, concerning the Lomonosov Ridge area (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1226). However, the Commission demanded more data, resulting in the Russian Expedition to the North Pole in 2007 (Blank 2011a, 15). Moreover, Norway has submitted a claim in 2006, concerning the Loop Hole in the Barents Sea, the Western Nansen Basin in the Arctic Ocean and the Banana Hole in the Norwegian Sea, which was approved by the Commission (UN 2009). Others coastal States are still in the research-process phase: Canada will present its claim in 2013, while Denmark, in 2014, both regarding the status of the Lomonosov Ridge (Aerandir 2012, 26).

Aerandir (2012) emphasizes that there are, in the present, five great territorial disputes in the Arctic with conflict potential. Regarding these possibilities, at least four may involve a level of confrontation between the United States and Russia, the two major military powers of the region. Such pattern is due to the fact that all countries involved in such claims are NATO members – in other words – allies, with the exception of Russia. The disputed resource-rich areas and the strategic position of many Arctic islands and straits create a connection between economic gains and increased militarization (Blank 2011a).

Meanwhile, the real interests at stake may be questioned, since, despite some authors have established a close relation between conflict potential and the existence of gas and oil resources, "most of the energy wealth is located in economic zones subject to the unquestioned national jurisdiction of the Arctic Ocean states" (Blank 2011a, 105). In other words, 97% of those gas and oil deposits lie within the already recognized Arctic States' EEZs (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1221; Nicoll 2012). However, the political perceptions matter: in making new claims and asserting its interests, States are considering the possibility of reaching new resource-rich areas. Furthermore, control over more territory means more power, and possibly, strategic points in the Arctic Ocean (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009; Nicoll 2012). In addition, one may consider the role played by extra-regional States, such as European and Asian countries that would be interested in the region due to the benefits that would arise from a new energy frontier and the new commercial routes.

Japan, China and South Korea have active polar research programs and icebreaker facilities to navigate in the Arctic (Manicom and Lackenbauer 2013). These countries recognize the Northern Sea Route, in particular, as an international

strait which may be an alternative to world's more volatile areas, such as the Malacca and the Hormuz Strait²⁹ (Manicom and Lackenbauer 2013; Rainwater 2013; The Diplomat 2013a). China, in particular, has a well-founded presence in the Arctic since the mid 1990s, and more recently, through its research basis in the Svalbard archipelago³⁰ (Rainwater 2013, 2). Since the country needs foreign energy supply, new sources of oil and gas are fundamental to the development of its economy. The perspectives of a new commercial route are very important to the country also, especially with growing tensions regarding the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait. Some aspects that reaffirm the trend that the Arctic is gaining importance to China are the country's plans to upgrade its icebreakers' fleet and the investments in technologies for the Arctic Ocean natural resources' exploitation, such as deepwater oil drilling³¹ (Rainwater 2013, 69).

In this sense, if these countries become dependent on Arctic resources, any disruption in its energy supply or in the utilization of the commercial routes facilities may characterize a justification for a military dispute. This trend has become even more evident with the recent inclusion of China, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore and South Korea as observer states of the Arctic Council in the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, in Sweden. In accordance to Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, this aspect means a broad acceptance of the permanent countries sovereignty in the Arctic, "because by being observer, these [...] states, they accept the principles and the sovereignty of the Arctic Council on Arctic issues" (The New York Times 2013). However, at the same time this development corroborate a direction of the Arctic toward the centre of the world, as stated by Kuupik Kleist, a former prime minister of Greenland (The Economist 2013), and of a reaffirm in the Arctic Council legitimacy, it also opens a way to more foreign actions in the region. Even though permanent observers cannot speak of vote, they are able to influence decisions in the six Arctic Council's working groups, suggest projects, and with their expertise and money, finance them (The Economist 2013). In the future, overlapping interests may increase tensions in the region, especially due to a growing foreign presence in the region; above all, as the developments concerning territorial disputes, commercial routes rules and natural resources exploitation unfold this trend may be of cooperation or conflict.

29 A major concern of States as China, Japan and South Korea is their dependency on unstable Sea Lines of communication. Areas such as the Malacca Strait and the Suez Canal (through the Gulf of Aden) are considered not immune to piracy, and also, by hostile States' disruption (the Strait of Malacca, especially, is viewed by China with concern, because of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia). These States are worried about being dependent on politically volatile regions, as the Middle East, whose energy supplies came from the Hormuz Strait, considered the world's most volatile choke point (Manicom and Lackenbauer 2013; Rainwater 2013).

30 The most recent manifestation of China's interest in the Arctic was the voyage of its icebreaker, *Xuelong* to Iceland in 2010.

31 "By 2014 China intends to launch the first of a series of new icebreakers to join *Xuelong*, thus enabling the CAA to conduct more frequent polar exploration and research missions. When the 1.25-billion-yuan (\$198 million), eight-thousand-ton vessel sets sail, China will possess icebreakers that are larger than and qualitatively superior to those of the United States and Canada" (Rainwater 2013, 69).

2.5.1. The Lomonosov Ridge

The Lomonosov Ridge is considered the most problematic issue involving territorial claims in the Arctic (Aerandir 2012; Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009; Smith 2011b). The conflict potential has emerged as the three countries involved decided to establish their sovereignty over this area: Canada defines it as an underwater extension of its Ellesmere Island, while Denmark argues it is an extension of Greenland's landmass, and Russia wants to evidence it as an extension of its own continental shelf (Nicoll 2012). In this matter, particularly, the United States has been following its discourse over territorial conflicts in the Arctic, stating that the Lomonosov Ridge is an oceanic ridge and cannot be claimed by any country (Nicoll 2012).

The Lomonosov Ridge is an underwater mountain chain, which practically divides the Arctic Ocean, and extending itself from the New Siberian Islands off the North central coast of Russia to Ellesmere Island, which belongs to Canada (Aerandir 2012, 22). Even though this area contains energetic and mineral resources, in comparison to other regions this does not seem to be of fundamental interest: "the United States Geological Survey [...] estimates that there is likely only about 2.5 billion barrels of oil equivalent in that area (vice the approximately 35 billion barrels in the Russian estimate)" (Aerandir 2012, 24). However, the region has a strategic and political importance, since it enables the control of the Northern Sea Route, the shortest course between North America, Europe and Asia, and also the control of the High North (Blank 2011a, 48; Nicoll 2012; Smith 2011).

From 2007 to 2011, a Russian scientific expedition travelled to the ridge in order to collect more data to prove it as an extension of its continental shelf, as required by the CLCS (Smith 2011a). While competing for the same territory, Canada and Denmark created a joint venture starting in 2011 to survey, map and collect data to support their respective claims in the area (Aerandir 2012, 26). A new Russian claim will not occur before 2013 (Blank 2011a, 48). Canada has until November 2013 and Denmark until November 2014 to submit their respective claims (Aerandir 2012, 26; Smith 2011a). Norway has a fundamental interest in controlling this area, since it aims to profit from the Northern Sea Route and from cooperation with Asian and European countries regarding energy supply and its shipbuilding industry, which holds the technology for Arctic-weather ships (The Diplomat 2013).

2.5.2. The Bering Strait and the Beaufort Sea disputes

Another fragile area in the Arctic is the Bering Strait, located between the United States and Russia in the Chukchi Sea. An agreement on this maritime delimitation was reached when the Soviet Union was in collapse, at the end of the Cold War, but the Russian Duma has not ratified it yet (Aerandir 2012, 27).

The reason for this lies in the feeling that the United States got an advantage in relative gains, since the United States was granted more territory, and in this sense, more resources, such as oil, gas, fisheries, and space to move its submarine fleet (Aerandir 2012, 27). However, it seems that Russia is following that agreement, notwithstanding frequent violations, especially from Russian fishing trawlers entering U.S. waters (Aerandir 2012).

The dispute regarding the United States and Canada, on the other hand, concerns the maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea, which “involves a 6250 nm² wedge of water space off the coast of Alaska and the Yukon Territory” (Aerandir 2012, 29). The dispute arises over the two countries’ different interpretations of

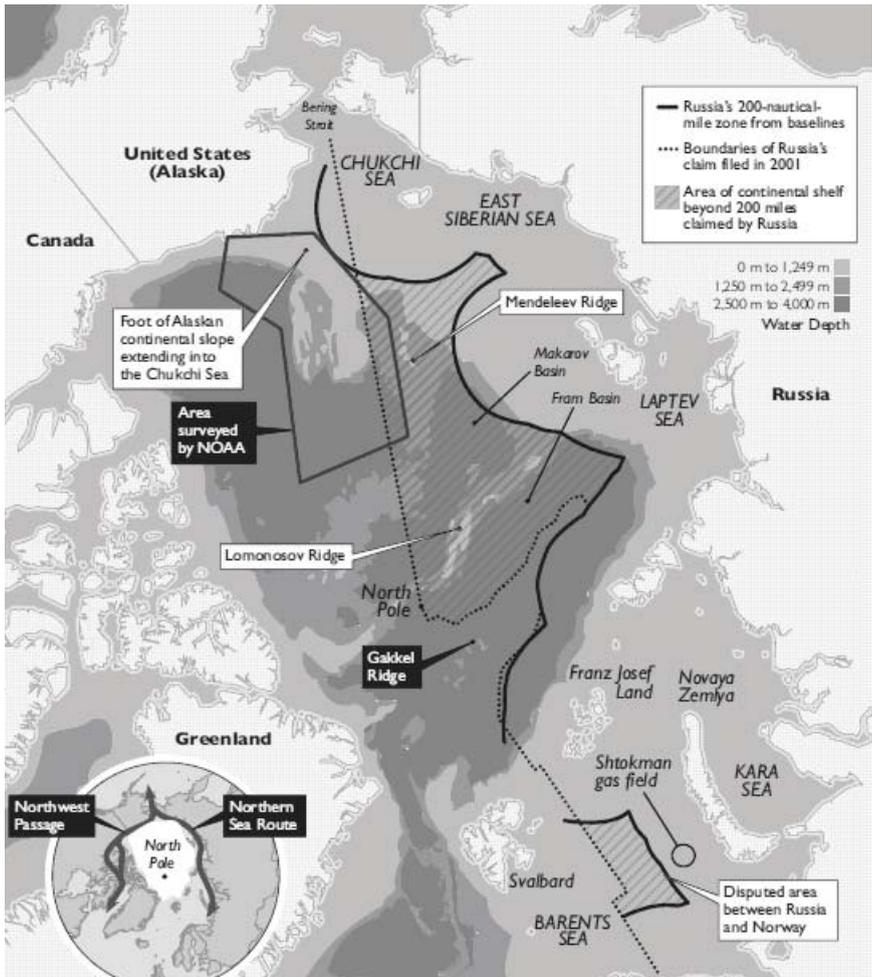


Image 6: The Lomonosov Ridge | Source: Cohen, Szaszdi, and Dolbow 2013, 2

how far their borders from the land into the sea extend³². Even though the tension in the region is still low and remains relatively limited by both parties (Aerandir 2012), this scenario may change, because “there is believed to be tremendous oil potential off the shore of Alaska” (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1229). Both countries have license for exploration in the disputed area, but Canada has led orders prohibiting activities in it, what has concerned the United States, since oil companies do not feel comfortable in investing in a region of uncertain boundary and legal framework (Aerandir 2012).

2.5.3. The Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route

The controversy involving the Northwest Passage is caused by differences in the recognition of the straits that cross the Canadian Arctic archipelago. While Canada claims it as internal waters (over which it exercise sovereignty and other states should need to ask for permission to navigate), the United States considers the Passage as international waters. In this dispute, other players are involved, such as the European Union that also stresses the internationality of the Strait which connects two high seas (Aerandir 2012). In the end, the status of international waters means that “foreign-flagged ships are entitled to transit passage through such waters without providing advance[d] notice to the State regulating them” (Aerandir 2012, 35). However, the chances of an escalation to a military conflict are low, once the United States and Canada, for a long time, have been partners in security and economic issues (Aerandir 2012).

Following the same, Russia stresses the national status of the Northern Sea Route, of fundamental importance to the Russian government. In this sense, the Russian Arctic policy of 2008 or the “Fundamentals of Public Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond” reinforces this position, since the Northern Sea Route would link the Russian territory to the Arctic, and establishes it as a national interest to the country (Blank 2011a, 26).

Russia defines the NSR as a national transportation route under Russia’s jurisdiction. Navigation through this sailing channel, which must comply with Russia laws, also includes passage through straits within and between the four Russian Arctic archipelagos, *Vilkitski*, *Shokalski*, *Dmitri Laptev*, and *Sannikov*. Russia designates the straits as part of its internal waters, while the United States has explicitly labeled them as international (Blank 2011a, 108).

This Route will largely cut the distance between Northern Europe and North-east Asia (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1221) and, in this sense, may emerge as an alternative to the Suez and Panama Canals (Rainwater 2013). The strength position Russia has taken over this question has been raising the attention of

32 “Canada maintains that the land border between Alaska and the Yukon Territory constitutes the corresponding prolongation of the land border (along the 141°W) into the Beaufort Sea out to the 200 nm EEZ limit. Meanwhile, the U.S. asserts that the border is established by an equidistant line from the coast where the two states meet” (Aerandir 2012, 29).

countries as Japan and China, which could profit from this sea line (The Diplomat 2013).

2.5.4. The Svalbard archipelago and the Hans Island disputes

Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard archipelago was granted by the Spitsbergen Treaty in 1920. The treaty also established that all signatory countries had equal right of access over the archipelago's resources and development of economic and research activities in the region³³ (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228). At that time the UNCLOS had not been designed yet and the countries had sovereignty rights extended up to three miles from their coasts (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228). However, bearing in mind the creation of UNCLOS in 1982, Oslo now claims its rights over a 200-mile EEZ, following UNCLOS terms. In this sense, Norway established a 200 nautical mile Fishery Protection Zone (FPZ) around the Svalbard archipelago in 1977 (Blank 2011a, 107). Nonetheless, other signatory countries disagree with such position, since they affirmed that the archipelago's legal framework is still that of the 1920 Treaty (Blank 2011a, 107).

Russia plays a great role in this dispute, as its position is a reaffirmation of the Treaty of 1920, despite the new rights granted by UNCLOS (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). This decision is based on Russia's great settlement and level of economic activity in the region. Even though some tensions still occur, Russia has respected Norwegian jurisdiction over the archipelago (Blank 2011a, 107). The point is that "both states are interested in preserving the status quo in the region since revision of the archipelago's legal regime may throw open Pandora's Box to other claimants, threatening Russia's privileged position, as well as Norway's jurisdiction in the questioned area" (Blank 2011a, 107). This concern is due to the region strategic importance to Russia, as, since the Soviet era, Russia regards the Svalbard gap as the only passage to its Northern Fleet from Murmansk to the North Atlantic, in case of a war with United States (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1228).

The Svalbard archipelago is also believed to be rich in oil and gas, and it is of Norwegian and European Union interest to develop such resources (Grätz 2012). Moreover, the presence of natural resources can encourage military incursions from other signatory States regarding the status of the 1920 Treaty (Grätz 2012, 3). In spite of not being an European Union member, Norway's presence in the region has been of particular interest to the bloc, once this new energy frontier could be used as a means to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian energy supply (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1227). As a result of such geopolitical matter, it is possible that Norway be instigated to adopt a more assertive position over the territorial

³³ Currently there are 42 signatory countries of the Treaty: Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Venezuela.

claims related to this archipelago (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009).

The disputes among Arctic States transcend the economic field and concern the strategic position of some areas, as in the case of the dispute over Hans Island between Canada and Denmark. Its localization is important because the State which controls the Nares Strait near the island will also control the access to “the gates of the Arctic in a key choke point” (Aerandir 2012, 38). The Hans Island is settled between Canada’s Ellesmere Island and Greenland and is also a potential site for resources exploitation (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009). On December 17, 1973, Denmark and Norway reached a decision under the delimitation of their continental shelf, which was ratified by the United Nations, but did not fully solve the question of the island (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1229). It is highly unlikely that the dispute will result in a military conflict, since the United States and Russia are not concerned with the dispute (Aerandir 2012).

2.6. Recent Militarization and its Consequences to Regional Cooperation

The military presence in the Arctic has been increasing since the Russian Polar Expedition in 2007, when a Russian flag was planted in the Arctic seabed (Blank 2011a; Smith 2011). This event alarmed the Arctic countries and also other States with economic and energetic interests in the region (Blank 2011a). This circumstance has been defined as the Russian Factor by Katarzyna Zysk, in reference to the militarization process in the Arctic as a result of stronger actions taken by Russia (Blank 2011a).

The dynamics in the Arctic can also be associated with the Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008, which clearly showed a return to a posture of strength by the Russian Federation in the international system (Blank 2011, 14; Haas 2011). After the Georgian War, it is possible to say that Russia changed its policy towards questions of threats and border security. The Russian commitment with defense policy and military power (leaving the questions of International Law to a second plan) are increasing worries among Arctic States, due to the Russian increasing military presence in the region and its military developments, especially those related with the Northern Fleet (Blank 2011a; Haas 2011, 30).

In theory, relations among states are relations of power, surrounded by the shadow of war (Mearsheimer 2007; Waltz 2002). Since the International System is anarchic and States are not subordinate to any legal structure, “because some states can at anytime use the force, all states have to be prepared to do it – or otherwise live at the mercy of its neighbors militarily stronger” (Waltz 2002, 144-145). In this sense, the States can never be certain of the others’ intentions, as the causes of an aggression are plenty and could change rapidly (Mearsheimer 2007, 45). The primary objective of a state is survival, thus it seeks security and maintenance of its territorial integrity and political autonomy. Therefore, when States are threatened, they have great incentives to use military power and pursue their interests through violence (Mearsheimer 2007; Waltz 2002). Looking at the International System by

this bias, Aerandir (2012) analyses the Arctic conflict potential through the lens of the perceptions involving the decision-making process in the States.

When key decision-makers seek to understand and interpret world events and the actions of their neighbors and competitors, perception is everything. [...] If the conclusions of their decision-making process lead to perception of a threat, then the potential for conflict increases. Depending on the magnitude of ambiguous input into this process (for present purposes, the disparity between words and actions), the potential for a miscalculation of the threat also increases, and presents the opportunity for a conflict of interests to escalate into a conflict of arms (Aerandir 2012, 33).

Following the 2007 events, the increased military presence in the Arctic is remarkable, in order to guarantee each country their lawful sovereignty in their respective Exclusive Economic Zones and internal waters, especially (Blank 2011a). Despite this higher degree of militarization is noticeable, countries have also invested in cooperation and perspectives of a real conflict are smaller by now. The preference given to the Arctic Council and to the UNCLOS legal framework exemplifies this trend. Until now, the disputes have been resolved under pacific means and the NATO overlapping seem to dilute the possibilities of military confrontation. The question, however, is that “the militarization implies a greater risk of incidents”, since any upgrade in military capabilities or in the development of exercises can be understood as an attempt to emulate the others’ forces (Smith 2011a, 126).

2.6.1. The Arctic Five Actions regarding Militarization

Even though any military conflict is currently noticeable in the Arctic, the tensions concerning territorial disputes and economic gains may create friction among the Arctic Five – Norway, Denmark, Russia, Canada and the United States. Such a conflict may even have foreign interferences, since benefits from the Arctic may transcend the region borders and reach other countries, in Asia and Europe, especially. Bearing in mind that the international system is anarchic and all States are sovereign, with any power over them, the recent actions that have been taken by the Arctic countries may be seen as possibly provoking “risks of incidents”, which, as already noted, can lead to military confrontation.

The Russian Federation is seen as “the most determined and assertive player in the [region]” (Smith 2011b, 120) and “plays an important role in the strategies and policies of all the other Arctic actors [...] much of the interest in the Arctic has been generated by Russia’s increased military activity in the region” (Blank 2011a, 112). Following the 2007 Polar Expedition, Russia has sought to establish a physical sea, ground and air presence in the Arctic (Cohen, Szaszi and Dolbow 2008, 9). Arctic strategic importance for this country has two great aspects, besides the economic one: i) it is through the Arctic that Russia has access to the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean (Grätz 2012) and ii) it is from the Arctic that Russia can

commission the submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) *Bulava*, through the *Borei*-class submarine, at least for now, the only means by which Russia may undermine the challenge posed by the U.S. *National Missile Defense*³⁴ (Piccolli 2012).

In August 2007, then President Vladimir Putin ordered the resumption of regular air patrols over the Arctic Ocean: this action involved the utilization of strategic bombers such as *Tu-95 (Bear)*, supersonic *Tu-160 (Blackjack)* and *Tu-22M3 (Backfire)* and the long-range anti-submarine warfare patrol aircraft *Tu-142* (Blank 2011a, 21; Cohen, Szaszi and Dolbow 2008, 10). In 2007, Russia has launched more flights of its Long Range Aviation (LRA) than in the entire period after the end of the Cold War; this pattern increased in 2008 and since then has continued at the same level (Blank 2011a, 112). Also in 2007, “Russian bombers penetrated the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) 12-mile air defense identification zone surrounding Alaska 18 times (Blank 2011a, 21).

In respect to the strategic level, Russia has been developing its Navy capabilities for the first time since the end of the Cold War³⁵ (Blank 2011a). The Northern Fleet, based in the Kola Peninsula, is the most important component of its military presence in the Arctic, and its capabilities have been improved mainly through upgrades in its submarine fleet, which is the basis of Russian naval nuclear deterrence³⁶ (Blank 2011a, 21; Nicoll 2012). On July 14, 2008, the Russian Navy announced that its fleet had resumed a warship presence in the Arctic, and during 2008 and 2009 its icebreakers were constantly patrolling the region (Blank 2011a, 22-23). Such naval patrols include the area of the Spitsbergen archipelago, which, as previously noted, is a territorial area claimed by Norway, but in dispute. Russia has even deployed to this area an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) destroyer followed by a guided-missile cruiser armed with 16 long-range anti-ship cruise missiles designed to destroy aircraft carriers (Blank 2011a, 22).

To protect important lines of transportation and communication, the most important being the Northern Sea Route, Russia is going to improve its military capabilities in the Arctic (Smith 2011b). Currently, Russia has the largest icebreakers fleet in the world, counting with eighteen operational icebreakers³⁷.

34 The United States’ *National Missile Defense* concerns the creation of a missile shield in service of NATO’s bloc, which would undermine Russian second strike capacity. Such project is an extension of the 1983 Reagan’s Administration *Strategic Defense Initiative* (SDI), in clear disagreement with the MAD concept and the 1972 ABM Treaty. At the end, the primary objective is the nuclear primacy, once the shield would impede a Russian retaliation under an attack (Piccolli 2012). For further information, please read: Piccolli, Larleciante. “*Europa enquanto condicionante da política externa e de segurança da Rússia: o papel da defesa antimissil*” (Masters diss., Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2012).

35 The Northern Fleet is the most important component of Russian Navy, comprising two thirds of it (Grätz 2012).

36 Nuclear deterrent is a key element in Russian defense policy, once it is under these means that it keeps holding the status of Great Power (Haas 2011).

37 “Russian fleet has seven rapidly-aging nuclear icebreakers that facilitate navigation along the Northern Sea Route. [...] The *Arktika* has practically exhausted its service life; the *Rossiya* is also in its death throes; the *Taimyr* may last until 2013; the *Vaigach* and the *Sovietsky Soyuz* until 2014; and the *Yamal* until 2017. The *Fifty Years of*

Among these, is the largest icebreaker in the world, the *50 Years of Victory* and the seven nuclear ones (Blank 2011a). The country has sought to build new nuclear-powered icebreakers starting in 2015, but budget restraints are a great challenge in fulfilling this objective (Blank 2011a). Since 2008, the Russian Navy has been patrolling near Norwegian and Danish defense zones (Blank 2011a, 66). The stakes are important since the Russian fleet cannot enter the Atlantic except by passing through specific choke points, such as the junction of Greenland, Iceland, and Norway (GIN Gap) and the junction of Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom (GIUK Gap) (Global Security 2013).

In September 2008, the Russian Security Council adopted “the Fundamentals of Russian State Policy in the Arctic up to 2020 and beyond”, the national strategy for the Arctic, including the deployment of military, border and coastal units (Blank 2011a; Zysk 2010). In this context, also, the Russian National Security Strategy of May 2009 recognizes the Arctic as Russia’s most important arena for international and military security in relations with other countries (Blank 2011a, 46). The Strategy also establishes plans to constitute the Arctic Special Forces, through the creation of a coast guard unit of the Federal Security Service (FSB), and the establishment of an intelligence network to provide security to the region (Blank 2011a, 46). Recently, the FSB press announced plans to deploy four new warships by 2020, and also the construction of eleven new border protection facilities and deployment of automated surveillance systems in order to protect Russian Arctic zone (Ria Novosti 2013). These plans have been in accordance with the project to regroup the military districts of Leningrad, Siberia and the Far East into an Arctic district (Blank 2011a, 67).

In response to Russian increased military presence in the Arctic, other States, especially the other four countries in the Arctic region (Canada, Denmark, Norway and the United States) have also looked for strengthening their presence, through “infrastructure improvements, fleet expansion [and] increased military presence” (Smith 2011b, 119). All these states have sovereignty rights over the Arctic, Denmark via Greenland and Norway via the Svalbard archipelago.

Alongside Russia, Canada has certainly emerged as one of the most active players in the Arctic. The country has made investments in order to turn its deep-water docking port into a naval base on Baffin Island at Nanisivik and has sought to improve its defense capabilities (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009; Smith 2011b). Currently, Canada has twelve icebreakers, which included the acquisition of a new one in 2010 costing \$675 million, and it is seeking to establish a Canadian Forces winter fighting school in Resolute Bay, near the Northwest Passage, and has also perspectives of building six to eight ice hardened offshore patrols vessels, the first to be delivered in 2014 (Smith 2011b, 119). Canada has also been cooperating in

Victory icebreaker that the Murmansk shipping line commissioned in 2007 can just barely be considered a new one, since its construction at the Baltic Shipyards in St. Petersburg, Russia, dragged on for almost 20 years” (Blank 2011a, 51).

matters of defense, enhancing its military presence in the region through three annual exercises, such as the joint and combined Operation *Nanook*, which includes air, land and maritime forces and the participation of the United States and Denmark (Smith 2011b).

As a result of its internal matters concerning Greenland, since this territory is seeking for more autonomy over the Danish government, Denmark is adapting its military forces. In accordance to Smith (2011b), recent military investments sum \$117 million, the Danish Greenland and Faroe Commands will be combined into a joint service Arctic Command, and an Arctic Response Force is well planned too. The country is using combat aircraft for surveillance and sovereignty missions, and has established a larger maritime presence in the region, through RDN *Vaedderen*, one of the few frigates in the world capable of operating in Arctic ice conditions (Smith 2011b, 120).

When analyzing Norwegian military upgrades, it is noticeable the transference of part of its forces to the north, such as its modern frigate fleet, its jet fighter forces and the army staff (Smith 2011b, 120). Norway had the initiative to buy forty-eight F-35 fighter aircrafts – “designed to be the next-generation, radar-evading fighter for U.S. forces and their allies”³⁸ (Reuters 2013) – and has been negotiating the acquisition of advanced air-to-sea missiles to be commissioned in those aircrafts (Smith 2011b). The country government has posed an important role to the region: in 2005, the High North was designated as a strategic priority and, in 2006, a comprehensive strategy was created for the region (Blank 2011a, 94). In accordance to this strategy Norway seeks to maintain a low level of tension in the region, foster cooperation with the other, and benefit from a sustainable development of the region³⁹ (Norway 2013). Norway has made recent claims regarding its sovereignty over the Gakkel Ridge, as an extension of its continental shelf, through Svalbard Island, and, in response, Russia has made naval maneuvers in the region, which have disrupted Norwegian air traffic in offshore areas (Ebinger and Zambetakis 2009, 1227).

Even though the United States has made advances with the approval of its Arctic roadmap, it has many challenges to overcome in order to provide for its interests (Blank 2011a; Smith 2011a; Smith 2011b). Apart from not having ratified the UNCLOS, which prevents its desire to establish the outer limit of its continental shelf, the United States was called by Rob Huebert – political scientist at The University of Calgary – as the “reluctant power” in the Arctic (Smith 2011a), since the necessary upgrades of its military forces were not achieved. Currently the U.S.

38 The Arctic poses a military challenge, since it is not full covered by satellite. F-35 kind of technology applies to the Arctic region, since, through its system of radio and satellites, it would be possible to have command over the most remote parts in northern Norway, that is to say, inside the Arctic itself. (CBC News 2011).

39 Such strategy also establish seven main political priorities: “exercising authority in a credible, consistent and predictable way; developing knowledge; stewardship of the environment and natural resources; development of petroleum activities; safeguarding the livelihoods of indigenous peoples; developing people-to-people cooperation; and strengthening cooperation with Russia” (Norway 2013). For further information, please see: <http://www.norway.org/aboutnorway/government-and-policy/The-High-North/strategy/>

Coast Guard has only three icebreakers, two of which are out of service. Bearing in mind that it takes eight to ten years to get an icebreaker into service, even though the U.S. Congress would approve the funding allocations, it would not be interesting to the United States to enter a war in which its capabilities are smaller (Blank 2011a, 12). However, it is important to stress that the United States have interest at stake in the Arctic, such as the developments of the Russian *Borei*-class ballistic missile nuclear submarine, to be commissioned with the *Bulava* missile, in the High North – which may undermine the U.S. missile shield in Europe –, the perspectives of natural resources in the Beaufort Sea and the choke points disputes arising in the region.

Although cooperation seems to be the pattern in the relations involving the Arctic-Five, the levels of potential conflict are high and, as previously noted, the government decisions can change rapidly, and sometimes a spark is enough to light the fire. In February 2009, for instance, “Canadian fighter jets scrambled to intercept an approaching Russian bomber less than 24 hours before U.S. President Barack Obama’s visit to Ottawa” (Blank 2011a, 44). The *Cold Response* – a 15-country exercise held in northern Norway and Sweden in March 2012, which involved 16.300 troops, was understood by Russia as a threat, and in this view, it “reacted with an exercise involving its 200th motor rifle brigade from Murmansk, including T-80 tanks with gas-turbine engines suited for the Arctic climate” (Nicoll 2012). Another potential conflict event occurred in August 2009, when two Russian attack submarines of Project 971 Schuka-B were sent to patrol near Canadian sovereign areas (Blank 2011a, 44).

Despite the territorial claims among NATO states, they have showed commitment to cooperation, instead of conflict. One may see cooperation in the U.S. Air Force base in Thule, Greenland, under bilateral agreements between the United States and Denmark. The United States and Canadian Coast Guard also resupply in Thule Air Base, which is fundamental in case of conflict. Although there are some divergences regarding territorial delimitation, U.S. and Canada have made advances on military cooperation through the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), region with higher relevance since Russia resumed its bombers incursions (Blank 2011a, 28-29). Another important evidence of regional cooperation is the agreement between Russia and Norway under the delimitation of the resource-rich Barents Sea, in March 2010 (Blank 2011a, 91).

The nature of the international system may define some patterns in the relations among States. Since its framework is not hierarchic, in other words, is characterized by the absence of a sovereign power ruling the countries, it is said that this system is one of self-help, in which the States must seek for their security and interests by themselves (Waltz 2002). Therefore, analyzing the dynamics involving the Arctic, it is possible to see cooperation efforts and some tensions that may lead to military confrontation. Even though, relations have, until now, been centered

in cooperation, any disruption in the interests of any Arctic State – or even of an extra-regional State – can change the perceptions of decision-makers concerning the great prospects involving the region, be in the economic, commercial or strategic domain. Thereby, it is necessary to comprehend this intricate dynamic by the bias of power and relative gains, besides the existence of an International Law framework regarding the States concerns. A conflict potential may be lesser by now, but any miscalculation can generate a new cat and mouse game in the region.

3. Previous international action

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several organizations related to the Arctic region were established. Appearing in different fields, the foundation of international organizations of both government-sponsored and non-governmental nature signaled a new era of cooperation in the region, no more bounded by the Cold War split. A few notable examples are the Northern Forum (founded in 1990), which congregates provincial and state governments from different Arctic States; the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA, f. 1990); and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMC, f. 1992). These efforts for multilateral coordination in the Arctic culminated in the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996. However, the absolute inexistence of a regional security arrangement and/or an arms control mechanism from these new organizations did little to eradicate the possibility of renewed *realpolitik* competition in the region.

3.1. The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) and the Arctic Council

The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) was initiated by Finnish efforts in October 1988, roughly a year after Gorbachev's "Murmansk Initiative" speech. Consultations started in September 1989, in Rovaniemi, Finland, and a non-binding "strategy" was signed in June 1991 (Keskitalo 2004). The AEPS was a unique organization at the time for its symbolic image as a departure from the Cold War divide, and also because it included the participation of indigenous peoples from the outset (Gordon Foundation 2012), setting the structure for its future daughter organization, the Arctic Council. As the first top-level multilateral initiative dealing with broad Arctic issues, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy focused on non-confrontational issues such as environmental protection, monitoring system, and radiation safety (Keskitalo 2004, 55).

In parallel with the Finnish initiative, Canada was also making a move towards a new stance over the Arctic region. In November 1989, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney visited the Soviet Union to conclude Arctic-related bilateral agreements. During a speech at the Arctic and Antarctic Institute in Leningrad, he urged for the establishment of a "council of Arctic Countries" to coordinate

and promote cooperation. In the Canadian viewpoint, emphasis should be put on the participation and protection of indigenous peoples. An Arctic Council Panel sponsored by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee CARC, the indigenous NGO “Inuit Circumpolar Conference” (ICC) and the Canadian Arms Control Center, was established (Keskitalo 2004, 67). In a 1991 Framework Report produced by this council, considerations of military issues were included in the plan (ibidem, 68). However, the inclusion of military affairs in the Council was rejected by other states (ibidem, 71). Also, the United States blocked the issuing of a preliminary declaration, because it disagreed with Canada’s focus in the participation of indigenous peoples in the Council (ibidem, 72). In this process, controversies over whether to focus on environmental issues or the protection of indigenous populations would be delayed until the establishment of an actual multilateral organization for the Arctic in 1996 (ibidem, 74).

The Arctic Council was formally established in September 19, 1996 in a meeting held in Ottawa by representatives of the Arctic States - Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States. In accordance with its founding Ottawa Declaration, the Council is vested with the purpose of providing a means for promoting interaction and cooperation among its member states in issues of environmental protection and sustainable development. As evident, the initial Canadian proposal had been watered down to exclude any security-related topics in the establishment of the organization. Following its focus on environmental issues, the Council was structured to include not only non-Arctic states but also regional and global intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations with observer status in its broad composition.

Working groups assessed by expert and technical groups are the main subdivisions of the Arctic Council, organized around themes such as conservation of fauna and flora, protection of marine environment, emergency assessment and response, among others. Chairmanship, which is now held by Canada (2013-2015), rotates every two years; with the absence of a permanent secretariat, the work of the Arctic Council seems to be heavily influenced by the priorities the chair-States lay out for their two-year chair period, at the end of which a ministerial meeting is organized (Koivurova 2010).

Provided its decentralized and rather complex structure, the absence of security concerns in its objectives and the non-binding character of its decisions,⁴⁰ the Arctic Council faces many challenges given the fast-changing geopolitical landscape of the region. The Council is becoming increasingly complicated, as new projects are being adopted with no clear relationship to already existing programs (Koivurova 2010). Such an apparent lack of internal coordination might prove

40 Only two legally-binding agreements were ever adopted by the Council members: one in 2011 (in Greenland) to coordinate search and rescue operations in the Arctic, and one in 2013 to coordinate responses to potential oil & gas (New York Times 2013).

the Council unable in its current structure to deal with climate change and the prospects for the hiking of natural resource exploitation in the Arctic. A possible new surge of militarization, a threat that could jeopardize consolidated efforts to preserve the Arctic, is completely excluded from the Arctic Council as an issue for debate. This dire outlook may be aggravated by the admission of six new non-Arctic Observer States to the Council at the 8th Ministerial Meeting held in May 14-15, 2013 in Kiruna, Sweden. Those were China, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea (New York Times 2013). It remains to be seen whether the Arctic Council will be able to undergo a self-strengthening reform to include a wider array of issues for debate and remain seated as the main regional organization for debate over the Arctic.

3.2. The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

The Disarmament and International Security Committee is the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Its scope includes topics from security to international law and that's why the militarization of the Arctic appears as an important issue to be discussed.

Although the Arctic region has not been objectively discussed yet, the Antarctic issues have a growing importance in the committee and, for being very similar, could be used as jurisprudence to the Arctic case. In this sense, the DISEC emphasized the significance of Antarctic to the international peace and security, to the environment and to scientific research (A/RES/60/47). The demilitarization of the continent, provided by the Antarctic Treaty, has been reaffirmed by the committee, as well as the freedom of scientific information (A/RES/60/47). The position of DISEC is based on the conviction that the Antarctic should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and not become the scene or object of international discord (A/RES/60/47).

The DISEC also deals with environmental issues that could be applied to the Arctic dispute. The committee calls upon States to adopt bilateral, multilateral and regional measures to contribute to ensuring the application of scientific and technological progress, without detriment to the environment (A/RES/60/60). In the Arctic case, it is important to enforce the environmental norms and aspects which should be respected in the context of search for Arctic resources by the countries.

3.3. The Iluissat Declaration

The Iluissat Declaration was signed in May, 28, during the Arctic Ocean Conference, in Iluissat, Greenland, in 2008. The signatories are the five coastal States bordering on the Arctic Ocean: the United States, the Russian Federation, Denmark, Canada and Norway. The declaration reaffirms the sovereignty and the legal jurisdiction of these countries in the Arctic region and addresses them the

possibilities and challenges of this area (Iluissat Declaration 2008).

The document appears as an important previous action on the Arctic issue, in terms that it enforces the Law of the Sea – rejecting the need for a new comprehensive legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean - and advises the five States to implement and apply the provisions of it. The Declaration also emphasizes that the Arctic States have a stewardship role in protecting the polar ecosystem and its resources. In this sense, cooperation among the coastal States is essential to implement appropriate measures, according to International Law, in order to take care of this region (Iluissat Declaration 2008).

The increasing importance of the Arctic Ocean as a maritime route for tourism, shipping and research development requires the strengthening of norms about safety of maritime navigation and prevention of the risk of ship-based pollution in the ocean. The Arctic States, working together with the International Maritime Organization, promote life safety at the sea in the Arctic Ocean through scientific cooperation and exchange of data and analyses (Iluissat Declaration 2008).

Thus, the Iluissat Declaration expresses the Arctic States' intentions in making clear their predominant role in the territory and in the causes related to Arctic resources. As put by Braune,

Although the Iluissat Declaration is primarily a defensive document, it does not rule out new management arrangements in the Arctic. In fact, it starts with recognition of the impending change to the Arctic associated with global warming, and makes clear that the need for strengthened management efforts in certain areas is accepted by the five Arctic coastal states. However, its central message is a pre-emptive one, designed to deter efforts by non-Arctic nations to interest themselves in a domain which is conceived to be primarily the affair of the A-5. In fact, the declaration implicitly recognizes that the success of the A-5 in defending a predominant role in the Arctic over the long-term will depend to a great extent on the efficacy with which they address the concerns of a broader international community regarding the management of the Arctic Ocean and the protection of Arctic marine resources (Braune 2008).

3.4. International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The International Maritime Organization is an UN specialized agency founded in 1943. Its main intention was to institute an intergovernmental collaboration system about issues related to international navigation. The IMO encourages its 168 members to adopt standards concerning maritime safety and the protection of environment around the two poles. As the prospects indicate an increase in polar shipping, the need of official norms about navigation has become indispensable (International Maritime Organization 2012). Thus, IMO created a special set of regulations for ships operating in polar water, called Polar Code, which defines recommendatory guidelines in order to protect the two polar regions from maritime risks (Oysten 2007). The code covers the full range of design,

construction, equipment, training, search, rescue and environmental matters (International Maritime Organization 2012).

Arctic shipping can be split into many categories as: commercial vessels, tourism vessels, scientific research vessels, ice-breakers and offshore exploration vessels (Oysten 2007). The Polar Code emphasizes that the Arctic environment imposes additional demands on ship systems and the safety condition requires special attention. Measures such as the obligation of carrying protective clothing and thermal insulating materials for all people on board and the need of automatic identification and communication systems which work at low temperatures are required (Ibidem). A documentary evidence of the Ice Navigator's approbation in training program is equally essential. Finally, the Polar Code regulates the procedures for the protection of the environment either in the ship's operating manual or in an emergency plan for accidental conditions (Ibidem).

The Polar Code represents a major element in Polar environments, because it is a precautionary approach to the shipping expansion at the poles in order to prevent damages from happening (Christian 2013). Imposing environmental regulations on commercial sectors presents a challenge to the governments (Ibidem). The countries that are interested in the Arctic resources or in the maritime routes through the Arctic Ocean should make clear their motivations in the area and should adequate their practices according to the code. The result is a greater rigidity and control over activities in the poles.

4. Bloc positions

Although the geopolitics of the Arctic Ocean is mainly regional, it affects the whole international system, as it involves the relationship between the Great Powers. In this sense, it is possible to analyze such a regional issue in the global lens through the evaluation of two great groups: the first one covers the countries directly related to the Arctic, while the second group involves those countries whose regional issues make them relevant to this debate. Therefore, the positions of the countries are presented in such a manner that may be possible to link similar issues to the Arctic involving countries located in other regions – such as the Antarctic continent and EEZs disputes – to better understand the position of non-regional countries, especially.

A major Arctic country, **Canada** has 40% of its landmass in the Arctic, accounting for fourth of the whole region (Arctic Council, 2011a). The Canadian interests in the region, therefore, are various and target of a positive foreign policy. The main body through which Canada develops this foreign policy is the Arctic Council, an international organization whose first chairmanship was held by Canada in 1996. The year of 2013 sees for the second time Canada as the Arctic Council's chair, a position through which Canada aims to use to enhance its projects to the region (Canada, 2013a). Considering Canada's good relations with all the other Arctic Council members, the country now aims to

strengthen the body's primacy in deciding over Arctic matters and protecting the region's populations and environment (Canada, 2013c). The Canadian Northern peoples are an important share of its total population and it is one of the country's objectives to defend these citizens and help promote a sustainable development of the region (Canada, 2013b).

The **Kingdom of Denmark** is composed by Denmark, Faroe Island and Greenland and all of the three parts of the realm are considerate equal, each with a degree of self governance and sharing values, interests and culture (Degeorges 2013). It is due to Greenland that Denmark is among the Arctic Council members and, due to the growth of the attention in the Arctic Region, the Kingdom published in 2011 an own strategic policy for the Arctic. The document affirms that the Kingdom will work for a peaceful, secure and safe resolution to the region, with self-sustaining growth, cooperation with the indigenous people and attention to the climate change (Heininen 2013a). Being part of the Arctic Five, Denmark is willing to make policies that focus on its priority areas: maritime safety, sustainable development focusing in the indigenous people and peaceful resolution of conflicts (Ibidem 2013). The policy clearly shows the importance of international law, especially the UNCLOS, to solve divergences, like its unresolved issue with Canada over the sovereignty of the Hans Island. Even though the country's new defense plan (2011-2014) has a great focus on the Arctic, showing a higher military budget and plans for strengthening of Greenland, like flight jets for monitoring operations and sovereignty protection (Barents Observer 2009). Also, Denmark highlights the importance of NATO and the cooperation among the Arctic Five and others partners (Heininen 2013a). With the policy of protecting Greenland and its self-government entity, the Kingdom of Denmark wants to strengthen its status in the Arctic Five group as a global player (Ibidem 2013).

Finland also drafted an Arctic Policy Strategy in 2010 that focuses on seven priority fields: security, protection of the environment, defense and inclusion of indigenous people, European Union, institutionalization of the Arctic Council, infrastructure for the region and economy (Arctic Portal 2013). The strategy gives a great importance to the economic sector, emphasizing economic activities and the benefits of using the country's know-how technology and expertise for exploitation of the Arctic's natural resources (Arctic Portal 2013). In addition, security is a great focus for Finland because of its geographic location, bordering Russia, where any conflict can acquire catastrophic dimensions. Therefore, Finland insists on the need for peaceful resolution of conflicts and regional cooperation (Barca 2012). Even though Finland is fortifying its military sector, modernizing it, and, despite of its carefully balancing policies between NATO and Russian interests, it has recently engaged in military cooperation with its Nordic neighbors (Staalesen 2013). Moreover, Finland defends the European Union's proposition of entering in the Arctic Council, being so an advocate of the EU in Arctic affairs in order to promote itself as an Arctic player (Barca 2012).

The government of **Iceland** sustains that it should be recognized as a major player in the matter of the Arctic: all political parties agreed that the region is a priority in Iceland foreign policy (University of Iceland 2013). However, the Arctic Council does not consider this country as a coastal state and in formal meetings Iceland is not recognized as an Arctic Five equal (Dodds and Ingimundarson 2012). In 2011, Iceland's parliament approved an Arctic strategy that focuses in environmental issues, natural resources, maritime routes, the questions of natives and the cooperation with other states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland 2011). The relationship with other non-Arctic states is especially important for Iceland because, since after its economical breakdown in 2008, it has been receiving foreign investments from countries like China that, in returns, obtain the possibility of profiting from the geostrategic location of Iceland (Barca 2012). It is also interesting to note that the Iceland President Ólafur Ragner Grimsson announced in 2013 the formation of the Arctic Circle, and organization that will bring together many international players in the Arctic– not only states, but organizations, indigenous people, institutions, think tanks, etc – to further discuss the issue (Alaska Dispatch 2013).

Norway recognizes the Arctic as its main priority in terms of foreign and defense policy (Norway 2013). In accordance to its High North Initiative, adopted in 2006, the Arctic, the Barents Sea and its neighboring areas are in the core of Norwegian foreign policy (Fjaertoft 2013). This Initiative has three main pillars, the extraction of natural resources, knowledge accretion and its relationship with Russia, which is recognized as the main actor in the area (Fjaertoft 2013; Norway 2013). Norwegian main economic interests are the development of its merchant fleet and its shipbuilding industry, one of the most consolidated in the world, which may approximate it to the Asian countries (The Diplomat 2013a). As the country possesses the technology for oil and natural gas exploration in the Arctic, Statoil⁴¹ will profit greatly, having already projects to drill nine wells in the Barents Sea in 2013 (American Security Project 2013). Norway is a major proponent of UNCLOS framework to the resolution of disputes and it is of its interest to avoid a major dispute concerning the Svalbard archipelago⁴². One of the challenges to its cooperation with Russia is Norway's attempt to bring NATO to the Arctic, which goes against Russian defense policy (Blank 2011b; Koptelov 2012).

The **Russian Federation** has the most assertive role in the Arctic. In accordance to its 2008 Arctic policy, *“Fundamentals of state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond”*, the Arctic and the NSR are priorities to Russian policy, especially its economic development as an energy producer (Zysk 2010). The perspectives of profits from the region came from the natural resources and maritime routes, mainly. The decision to reactivate the

41 Norway's state-owned oil and gas company.

42 Norway's demands were attended by UNCLOS in 2009 and the resolution of a dispute with Russia concerning the Barents Sea in 2010 is viewed as one of the main steps in regional cooperation.

Northern Sea Route was announced by the President Putin in 2012, and recently it has approved a law regulating the Northern Sea Route as a national passage, which goes against the interests of many other countries (Russia & India Report 2013a; Zysk 2010). When it comes to regional cooperation, Russia's main partner is Norway. These two countries execute regularly a joint naval exercise, *Pomor*, which in 2013 was launched from the Barents Sea (Russia & India Report 2013b), and has ties in natural resources business. One of Russia's military concerns in the Arctic is related to the NATO missile shield (Martins 2013; Piccolli 2012), since "key strategic BMD installations are in the Arctic – currently 26 US interceptor missiles at Fort Greely, Alaska and early warning radars at Clear, Alaska and Thule, Greenland" (Regehr 2013) and there is the possibility of the United States deploying its ships with missile defense capabilities in the region (Regehr 2013). Russia may also take advantage of Arctic's melting to establish another launching platform in order to keep its second strike capability over NATO missile shield (Piccolli 2012)⁴³. Of great relevance to Russia is the delimitation of its continental shelf, to be accomplished in the period of 2011 to 2012, and the establishment of a comprehensive security system in the area and combat readiness (Zysk 2010). At the same time Russia has adopted a power discourse, it has sought its national interests in accordance to the international legal framework, and, although its Arctic policy does not mention any direct threat, it does not deny the possibility of a rush for the natural resources to develop in the future (Zysk 2010).

From all the Arctic countries, **Sweden** was the last to make its own strategic policy, in May 2011. Its strategy is based on three fundamental points: climate and environment, economic development and living conditions for people in the region (Barca 2012, p. 49). Sweden craves for a wider approach to the question of economic sustainable development of the natives, especially the Sámis, with which the country has cultural bounds (Heininen 2013b). The economic factor is recurrent in the document, as Sweden is willing to promote a very wide array of economic activities, but also highlights the importance of respecting international law when exploring natural resources (Idem 2013b). Even if Sweden is a strong defender of the need for peaceful resolution and demilitarization of the Arctic, it has been providing training ice fields for NATO and US and has also been cooperating military with other Nordic states (G.Michael 2011).

The **United States of America** is the sole Arctic country which has so far not yet signed the UNCLOS because of divergent opinions in the US Senate. However, there has been a recent struggle in the US State Department to join the Convention (US Department of State, 2013a). Considering the location of one of its states, namely Alaska in the Arctic region, and the proximity and influence of the Arctic water body to the United States, the US is strongly concerned with the

43 "In contrast to Vladivostok, vulnerable to Japanese missile defense system, or ground-based missiles in the European part of Russia, vulnerable to anti-aircraft missiles located in Poland, the *Borei*-class submarine could act almost unpunished [in the Arctic]" (Piccolli 2012, 40).

conduction of policies to the region by international organizations. The United States defend the role of the Arctic Council in the conduction of such policies. The environmental change's effects to the region are a matter that deeply concerns the US, mainly because of the consequences of such changes to the development of economic activities by the US people (ARCUS, 2013). The maintenance of the region's security is an important point of the US agenda to the Arctic (US Department of State, 2013b).

According to a 2011 parliamentary resolution, the **European Union** is willing to organize an united and coordinated Arctic policy for all its members, with a clear and well defined strategy that shows its priorities (European Parliament 2011). The European Union is demonstrating a growing interest in the Arctic, especially in three areas: environmental security, maritime policy and energetic security (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). Considered a leader in sustainable environmental technology, research and policies, the EU places itself as an important player in the Arctic matter (Barca 2012). For the EU, to protect and preserve the Arctic in unison with its population and to promote the sustainable exploitation of its resources are the two points that must be considered as priorities in any activities taken in the region (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). Besides, the EU is also concerned with the need for international regulation of the free access to new commercial routes, energy resources and fishing (Ibidem, 7). Finally, the EU applied for an Arctic Council's membership in order to better defend its strategic interests, however, this seat has been so far denied. Nevertheless, many European countries are in the Arctic Council as permanent observers and the EU strongly supports the addition of Iceland as a permanent member, for further legitimization of the Council (European Parliament 2011).

Even if **France** does not have any territory in the Arctic, it is the only non-Arctic country that has an ambassador charged of the issues in the Arctic (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). The ambassador Michel Rocard affirmed that the country does not have an own Arctic police and sustains that it is a great voice of the EU's position and it is willing to participate in all negotiations in the Arctic Council (Radio Canada 2010). In the same statement, he stressed that the issue is an international matter, where not only Arctic States should be involved, above all if the debate is about the environmental threat (Idem 2010). Nevertheless, not only the climate change and its implications motivate France in becoming more diplomatically involved in the subject, but also maritime security, major business interest and, most important, fortification of the country's position as a voice of the EU's geopolitical interests (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). Furthermore, France is a NATO member with an army able to operate in extreme weathers and is also a nuclear power, which provides the country an important international role in case of a crisis in the Great North (Collin 2010).

Germany is one of the European Union countries that are in the Arctic Council as permanent observer and has multiples economical and ecological interests in the region (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). German navy is considered one of the largest in the world and the prospect of new maritime routes, especially the opening of the Northwest Passage, are attractive because it means economical savings and travel time cutbacks; for that reason, Germany endorses the need of maritime freedom (Germany Embassy in Canada 2013; Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). In 2009, a German merchant ship was the first non-Russian commercial vessel to sail the Northern Sea Route and the German companies are showing their interest in investing not only because of the benefits of new routes, but also because of the new access to Arctic's resources (Ibidem 2013). Through technological and military cooperation, Germany wants to fortify the EU's position and, for this matter, has already signed agreements for joint military maneuvers in the High North with Nordic states (German Foreign Policy 2010).

Also a permanent observer of the Arctic Council, the **United Kingdom** is devoted to sustain the European Union position in the matter. The British government has officially stressed that the country has a strong environmental, political, economic and scientific interest in the region and that it is willing to assist with technology and expertise (Macalister 2012). Even if the United Kingdom does not have any territorial interests in the region, it is clearly interested in the new shipping routes, new sources of energy and also in the opportunity to influence in the international scenario (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011, 9). Not only the government is interested in the far north, but also British-based oil companies are already showing great curiosity in this new economic frontier (Macalister 2012).

The **Netherlands** has an important position in the matter of protecting the Arctic environment and further studying the consequences of climate change in the region (Meeting of the Senior Arctic Officials 2002). The country sustains that exploitation of any energy resource must be done with a high level of prevention and responsibility, and for this matter it has already called for international binding rules to prevent environmental damage (Government of Netherlands 2012). However, it is also clear that the country has direct interests in the Arctic in consequence of its oil and gas activities, fisheries, new shipping routes and mineral exploitation (Imares 2012). Dutch Shell is a major partner with the Russian Gazprom, and together they had made planes for further developing the oil exploitation in the Chukchi Sea, East Siberian Sea, and the Pechora Sea (Ibidem 2012).

The others European permanent observers of the Arctic Council are Italy, Poland and Spain. Those three countries follow the European Union common position in the matter. **Italy** is the most recent observer of the Arctic Council, being added in May 2013. This new membership is considered the recognition of

Italy's longtime participation in studies and researches in the region, as well as the perception of many Italian companies' interest in the commercial benefits of the region (Myers 2013).

Poland is determined to contribute with the European Union in order to fortify its position (Szpunara 2012). The main Polish objective in the region is to further participate in scientific research, cooperating with infrastructure and human resources in the research activities in the Arctic (Ibidem 2012).

Spain is one of the European countries most affected by climate change and, for this reason, it has an important research center for environmental studies and it is willing to cooperate to further the discussions on the Arctic matters (Méndez 2010). Withal, Spain does not have yet an own policy for the Arctic, following, therefore, the EU's.

China, Japan and South Korea – all Permanent Observers of the Arctic Council – perceive the Arctic similarly, especially when it comes to bypassing volatile chokepoints, such as the Malacca and the Hormuz Straits through Arctic commercial routes (Manicom and Lackenbauer 2013). In the last five years **China** has taken measures concerning its main priorities in the region, that are capability to answer climate change effects in its territory, access to routes, and its ability to enjoy the resources and fishing of the Arctic (Jakobson and Lee 2013). After being accepted as a Permanent Observer in the Arctic Council, it is programming an expansion of its polar scientific institute, reaffirming its commitment to the region⁴⁴. Even though China does not have an official Arctic strategy, it is committed to UNCLOS legal framework and it is looking forward to accomplish its interests in navigation and fishing in the area (Rainwater 2013). The Polar Research Institute of China began its Arctic studies in 1999, and in 2003 the country established its research centre, *Yellow River Station*, in Svalbard. China has a research icebreaker, *Xuelong*, and plans to construct a second, smaller research icebreaker⁴⁵ (Rainwater 2013). China is dependent on foreign oil supply and fears that a disruption in it may affect its economic pattern. In this sense its plans are to diversify its suppliers and avoid volatile areas, such as the Middle East, the Malacca and the Hormuz Strait and Suez Canal (Rainwater 2013).

The main interests of **Japan** in the Arctic are related to scientific research on climate change and marine species, new commercial routes and natural resources (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). After the Fukushima disaster in 2011, the access to new energy sources became crucial to the country (Jakobson and Lee 2013). At the same time, the NSR would be interesting to the country, since it may profit from its northern ports, it may revive controversies

44 Besides that, China National Offshore Oil Corporation has recently announced an agreement with Icelandic Eykon Energy firm to explore Icelandic resources; similar agreements were also conceived with Gazprom and Rosneft to explore Arctic fields (Blank 2013).

45 Since 1999 China has developed five Arctic research expeditions with *Xuelong* and is planning three more expeditions until 2015 and an increase in its icebreakers fleet, which will be larger and superior than Canada's and US' icebreakers (Rainwater 2013).

involving its neighbors, especially China, South Korea and Russia, while the prospects of a militarized area should be avoided by the country (Jakobson and Lee 2013)⁴⁶. Japan is involved in Arctic research since 1990, when it became member of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). Currently, as a signatory of the Svalbard Treaty, it has two observatories in Svalbard archipelago (Tonami and Watters 2012a). In order to conduct its polar research, Japan has three icebreakers, *Shirase*, *Soya* and *Teshio* (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011).

The **Republic of Korea** is committed to the Arctic due to its desire to enhance its political capital as a *player* in the international community and in order to prospect economic gains related to its industry. As a resource-poor country and dependent on volatile *slocs*, the country may benefit from Arctic natural resources and commercial routes (Jakobson and Lee 2013). As the world largest ship builder, a stable Arctic is essential to its business (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011) – some important firms converging to the Arctic are Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering and Samsung Heavy Industries, which produce many of the world icebreakers, being pioneers in ice-capable oil and LNG (liquefied natural gas) tankers (Jakobson and Lee 2013). Another priority of the government is climate change research; in this sense, since 2002 the country is operating the Dasan Arctic research station in Svalbard and has launched *Araon* icebreaker in order to conduct it.

India's interests in the Arctic are related to energetic security, natural resources concerning food security, new commercial routes and international competition (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). India recognizes itself as an Arctic stakeholder and, as a member of the Spitsbergen Treaty it has a research station, *Himadri*, in Svalbard since 2007. However, it is still a new *player* in the region: its first expedition to the region was in 2007 and it does not possess any ice-capable ship, even though it has placed an order for an ice-class vessel to its polar research (Canadian International Council; Gordon Foundation 2011). It is of vital importance to India to understand how climate change occurs, and, as a developing giant, its hydrocarbons needs approximate the country to the Arctic, having some of its industries already engaged in resource extraction, especially in cooperation with Russia (Aruliah 2013). The NSR may be a challenge to its military doctrine, which involves the control of the Malacca Strait as an important bargain element (Indian Express 2013). Its acceptance in the Arctic Council may be a strategy of the Council to counterbalance China's interests in the region. As both countries have divergences in regional matters, these issues may unfold to the Arctic.

Angola is a strong defender of the maintenance of a peaceful environment in the seas. This intention was confirmed by its participation in both the UNCLOS

⁴⁶ Although the Northern Sea Route may be beneficial to the country, its industries are cautious about the benefits it may bring (Tonami and Watters 2012; Jakobson and Lee 2013).

and the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS), contributing to the exploration of the Angolan offshore oil reserves (Jane's, 2009a)⁴⁷.

Argentina has a claim over a part of the Antarctic continent, having signed both the UNCLOS and the Antarctic Treaty (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2013). However, the maintenance of a peaceful environment in the South Atlantic Ocean is also part of Argentina's foreign policy as it can be proved by it joining the ZOPACAS, showing its compromise to keeping current sea routes (Argentina, 2013).

Australia is not a player in Arctic issues, but has been widely interested in the Antarctic continent. Its policy aims the maintenance of a peaceful area, since an Antarctic demilitarized zone means no threat near Australian borders (Jennings 2013). Australia was one of the twelve original signatory-countries of the Antarctic Treaty, it is also a signatory of UNCLOS and is committed to political resolution of all conflicts. Australia asserts that 42% of Antarctic continent is under Australian sovereignty, although some countries disagree with such claim (The Strategist 2013). The country has a wide cooperation with the United States, mainly in the military field and, together with New Zealand, it is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations⁴⁸.

Brazil is a signatory country to both the UNCLOS and the Antarctic Treaty, having a scientific mission accredited to the region (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2013; Brazil, 2013b). Brazil has developed a strong position toward defending the maintenance of a peaceful system of cooperation in the South Atlantic Ocean (ZOPACAS). This position is expanded to other areas of the globe, especially in defending the non-militarization of other oceans and sea routes (Brazil, 2013a).

Another signatory country to both the UNCLOS and the Antarctic Treaty, **Chile** claims part of the Antarctic continent, which is an important part of the country's foreign policy interests (Chile, 2012). The maintenance of its legal status and the security in the region are important elements when discussing the law of the ocean and the situation in the globe poles.

Egypt, a UNCLOS signatory country, is responsible for the maintenance of the main passage from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indic Ocean, the Suez Canal.

47 The South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone was created in 1986 through a General Assembly resolution sponsored by the Brazilian representatives to the body. It is currently composed by 24 countries, namely Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, and Uruguay.

48 The Commonwealth of Nations was created in 1949 through the London Declaration. It is composed of 54 states, mainly former British colonies and the United Kingdom itself, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji (suspended in 2009), the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, UK, Vanuatu, and Zambia.

The security of this passage is one important aspect of the Egyptian foreign policy concern, considering the large flow of merchandises and people that cross the Canal on regular bases (Egypt, 2013). The creation of a new Arctic sea route for goods and people would affect the flow of vessels that cross the Suez Canal.

Due to their interests and responsibility over the Malacca Strait, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are important actors in Asia; they are cooperating in this *sloc* governance, which includes the Malaysia – Indonesia – Singapore Malacca Strait Coordinated Patrols and the Eyes in the Sky instruments (ARF Annual Security Outlook 2011). The foreign policy of **Indonesia** is mainly concerned to enhance multilateralism in Southeast Asia, recognizing itself as an ARF leader. The country actions go along with Asean solidarity principles and the UN Charter, conceiving as priorities the resolution of its boundary disputes, especially the maritime ones with Malaysia, Australia and Singapore (Ibidem). In this sense, the country may deal with Arctic issues through cooperation and correspondence to the UN framework.

Malaysia has a major role in Asian geopolitical dynamics. Concerning the Malacca strait, it looks to assure security and safety to international navigation, while in the South China Sea, where it has overlapping disputes with China, Brunei, Viet Nam and the Philippines, its policy is based on peaceful resolution of such controversies (ARF Annual Security Outlook 2011). Since 2011 Malaysia is an Antarctic Treaty signatory and has demonstrated its intentions in having a significant scientific program in the Antarctic (East Asia Forum 2012). As Indonesia, it is a signatory of UNCLOS and is highly committed with United Nations' bodies.

New Zealand's main interests, in its turn, are in the Antarctic continent, where it asserts its sovereignty over Ross Territory. Even though this territory does not overlap with other countries territorial claims, its sovereignty is contested (USA 2013).

Nigeria has offshore oil reserves and is strongly interested in maintaining the oceans in pacific conditions (Jane's, 2009b). Its efforts to keep it so set the tone of its foreign policy regarding the sea. The country is signatory to the UNCLOS.

Panama is a signatory country to the UNCLOS and the Panama Canal is a major target of its concern while negotiating international affairs. So, one of the Panamanian main foreign policy objectives is to maintain the current sea routes flowing regularly, concerned with the security of the seas (Panama, 2013).

Being one of the six new Permanent Observers in the Arctic Council, **Singapore's** interests in the region are growing due to the perspectives of economic gains through its industrial sector, "namely Singapore's role as a global hub port, as a strong base of offshore and marine engineering and as an international leader in port management" (Eurasia Review 2013)⁴⁹. Beyond that, the country is a

⁴⁹ As Singapore has been ruled by a single party since 1959, the government has a major role in economy. Its long-term approach to the Arctic may involve important industries, such as PSA International and Keppel

long-standing member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and it is interested in maritime and transportation governance. Singapore perceives the freedom of navigation as vital to its interests and recognizes the oceans as a common heritage of mankind. A key point to the country's interests involving the Arctic is the development of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which may challenge its role as a global shipping hub (Eurasia Review 2013).

South Africa has signed both the UNCLOS and the Antarctic Treaty. Under the second legal body, South Africa has deployed a mission to Antarctica, being positively committed to ensuring the principles accorded when signing the treaty, mainly the development of only peaceful activities in the continent (South Africa, 2013). This position is confirmed by the South African participation in the ZOPACAS (South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone).

5. Questions to ponder

1. What international regime shall be employed to define the countries' right to use Arctic resources and routes?
2. What opportunities and challenges will rise with the creation of Arctic routes? How should this process be conducted in order to promote the most beneficial results to humankind?
3. What role can non-Arctic countries play in the Arctic issue and how can their actions interfere in the Arctic countries' sovereignty?
4. Considering the International Law and territorial controversies among Arctic countries, what sort of collective actions should be taken to avoid increasing militarization?
5. What actions could be taken to improve governance within the Arctic Council and/or to eventually lead to the constitution of an "international regime" for the Arctic?

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Abstract

The Arctic region has been emerging as a potential conflict zone since the earliest attempts for its militarization. Despite having gained importance during the Second World War, when the region served as a supply line to the Soviet Union from the Allies, it was only during the Cold War that it gained major strategic importance. The division of the international system in two antagonistic blocs created a competition for strengthening military capabilities in order to succeed in the case of a military threat. Indeed, during the Cold War the U.S. and the USSR developed military capabilities in the regions. More recently, the projections of climate change have shifted the world's attention to the Arctic. The region is seen as having great potential mainly because of its natural resources. In order to achieve the interests of the States one may face an increasing process of militarization and territorial divergences in the region.