



General Assembly First
Disarmament and International
Security Committee

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This background guide has been adopted and reformed from the Canadian High School Model United Nations 2017 background guide for the General Assembly First: Disarmament and International Security.

Letter from the Secretariat

Delegates,

Welcome to the background guides for MiniMUN 2017! Whether it is your first or third Model United Nations conference, it is our hope at MiniMUN that you will continue to further expand your knowledge of MUN, world issues, and the UN itself.

The purpose of this background guide is to introduce the committee and the topic, as well as help you write your position paper. Details on position paper and submission are available under the Position Paper tab on our website:

<http://chsminimun.weebly.com/position-papers.html>

The topics and committees were chosen to reflect the problems that our world leaders face. As a delegate, you will be stepping into the role of world leaders. You will take on perspectives different from your own, and you will push for what your country believes to be right.

We have diligently worked to make this year's topics even more captivating and advanced than previous years. If at any time, you are having trouble understanding the background guide, finding information on the topic, or writing your position paper, please contact your chairs for help. They are more than willing to assist you to make MiniMUN a productive and engaging conference!

We are very excited to see you at MiniMUN 2017!

Rogan Munro-Foulis and Christine Pang

Secretary-General and Director-General, MiniMUN 2017



Description of Committee

The Disarmament and International Security Committee is the First Committee of the UN General Assemblies. Its main focuses are on disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, as well as to seek out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime. Established in 1946, it plays a critical role in maintaining local and international peace.

Noteworthy topics discussed by the Disarmament and International Security Committee include nuclear proliferation in the middle east, the role of science and technology in international security, and of course, the demilitarization of the Arctic, and the flow of firearms in the middle east. Every year, all 193 member states are welcome to attend and debate during the four to five week period after the UN General Assembly General Debate.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee, like all general assemblies, have their sessions structured into three distinct stages: general debate, thematic discussion, and action on drafts. Therefore, we strongly encourage our delegates to model committee sessions similarly, to ensure a comprehensive and organized conference.

DISEC: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

Demilitarization of the Arctic

Introduction

On the surface, the Arctic may appear to be an unchanging, beautiful, and blue landscape found on dozens of National Geographic issues. Underneath, however, there lies over a fifth of the world's undiscovered fossil fuels, including 90 billion barrels of oil, and 47 cubic metres of natural gas. Large deposits of precious metals like gold, silver, and platinum are also common in the Arctic. At the rate the world's resources are being used up, many countries in the north look to the Arctic as a way of sustaining the future.

These countries include Canada, Russia, the United States, Norway, and Denmark as well as many others. In 1996, the Arctic Council was established to allow these nations to meet and settle territorial disputes, disagreements over ownership of the land of the Arctic. However, as other countries like China, India, and Japan have begun to voice their desires to gain the oil, gas, and minerals in the Arctic, it becomes a topic that needs to be addressed on the international level.

This issue is not only limited to political conflicts about sovereignty and who owns what. Fights over the land's resources have led to military action. This area, known as the circumpolar north, has been an area of military conflict between countries that want to protect their waters. Conflicts began during World War I and II when scientific work identified new methods of exploration. Conflicting theories often rise when countries decide how the metaphorical pie will be split: either there would be no national sovereignty in the Arctic and no countries can own the land,

known as 'res nullius', or that every nation would have some ownership of the Arctic, termed 'res communes'. Even in the second case, there are many options that benefit many countries unfairly. Another issue is the environmental health and safety of the Arctic while militarization is taking place. Organizations such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have attempted to solve this problem by holding workshops with local, governmental, scientific, indigenous, and environmental experts, but we have to yet to see substantial effects of this.

Any resolution on this topic should address all of these issues and deal with them effectively and efficiently. The Arctic needs to be conserved, but at the same time, it has resources that would benefit all the nations.

Historical Analysis

The concept of militarizing the Arctic is a relatively new idea. Up until World War II, it was mainly used for transportation. Many explorers used this passage to trade and during World War II; it was used to transport supplies and troops through a sparsely populated and relatively neutral area.

Even before any major wars, countries had already begun to make claims to the Arctic. In 1903, Canada had set up North West Mounted police in order to claim the Western Arctic. On February 20th 1907, Canada had gone so far as to even draft a resolution declaring that the lands between Canada and the North Pole were under Canada's control. In the 1980's during the Cold War, the Arctic Ocean had become an ideal location for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and other weapons that could be launched against North

America, Europe, and Russia. World leaders fought for control over the Arctic, as the significant transportation advantage was valuable. Until 1982 when the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was signed, many countries placed flags and made plaques to establish their claims to the Arctic. The tension was so great that in 1996, the Arctic Council was formed under the Ottawa Declaration to relieve it. In response to the growing threat of war, many major players have made their own preparations to establish their claims and defend their sovereignty. In other words, countries began to heavily militarize the Arctic Circle.

Arctic Council

The Arctic Council is an assembly composed of the government of member states and observer states. Naturally, only nations with territory within the Arctic Circle can gain member status in this council. These states include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. The 1996 the Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council as a method to address issues faced by Arctic governments and the people indigenous to the Arctic. There are also many observer states, who want to eventually gain access to the vast amount of resources in the Arctic. Because the Arctic Council is strictly forbidden from discussing militarization in the Arctic, it is limited to discussing disagreements over who owns the territory, environmental protection, and the general cooperation, coordination, and interactions between the Arctic States.

The Northwest and Northeast Passage

These similar situations involve both the Russian Federation and Canada believing that they should maintain absolute control over their respective passages. Canada demands that the United States should ask permission before traveling through their waters in the Northwest Passage but the US recognizes the passage as international waters. The Russian Federation views the Northeast Passage similarly as it is substantially beneficial as a trade route.

Current Situation

All states understand the basic fact that, whoever possesses control of the Arctic region will decide the fate of its resources and role in the future. Although foreign ships are not allowed in other coastal state waters except for continuous passage, aircrafts are still permitted. Using bombers, jets, and submarines, countries can still move through the Arctic. Russia has recently finished equipping six new military bases throughout the Arctic in order to restore the military presence it had during the Cold War. These bases are located throughout Russia both on the country's northern shore and on the outlying islands around it. The locations have all the necessary materials and resources for long time deployment and training. Starting in 2016, Moscow plans to move hundreds of Russian military service men. In total, Russia plans on opening 10 Arctic search and rescue stations, 16 deep water ports, 13 airfields, and 10 air-defense radar stations on top of its already staggering amount of military bases. In other words, Russia is very focused on gaining control of the Arctic with its heavy militarization and aggressive territorial claims.

In 2010, the continued training of Russian bombers became incredibly close to the Canadian airspace. In response, the Royal Canadian Air Force sent two fighter jets along with American and Danish forces in an simulation, “Operation Nanook 2010”, to train for disaster and sovereignty patrol. However, Russia is not the only country interested in maintaining its Arctic sovereignty. Canada is also increasing its national interests and is upgrading its Arctic military too. Over the past fifteen years, Canada has been rebuilding its capacity to operate in the Arctic. Canada is in possession of 13 icebreakers and is in the process of producing around 7 more patrol vessels. Canada also conducts tri-service military training operations three times per year alongside the US and Denmark. Notable Canadian military operations in the North that are worth researching include Operation Nanook and Operation Nunavut.

Denmark has also increased its military activity in the region too. Denmark has combined both the Faroes and Greenland Island Command to create the Arctic Command. Although its main goal in peacetime is to keep Danish control over Greenland and the Faroe Islands, it is also in charge of search and rescue, fishery inspections, etc. Norway, however, has recently taken actions to demilitarize their most northern regions in the Arctic Circle. In April 2016, Norway’s Defense Minister proposed eliminating over 1,500 jobs and over 9 military bases all over Norway. This is in an effort to focus more resources on purchasing new F-35 fighter jets, new ocean patrol vessels, and new submarines. A new ranger company is expected to be

added to the Border Guard on the Russian border. Overall, this demonstrates a trend in demilitarizing the Arctic Circle.

Legality of the UNCLOS

In order for countries to properly use the resources that are available in the Arctic, many conventions, treaties, and articles define the boundaries within which a country may fish, patrol, and in general, exercise their sovereignty. The principal convention that defines the Arctic legal framework is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Although it has been mentioned several times before in this background guide, it is imperative that key terms and definitions are laid out for the efficiency of this committee. It is also important to note that all Arctic states have signed and ratified this agreement except of the United States of America.

Innocent Passage

Countries are allowed to travel through a coastal state's territorial seas so long as the voyage is does not stop, unless there is an emergency. Therefore, activities like fishing, surveying, launching, landing, or taking off of any aircraft or military device, and military exercises are strictly prohibited. Submarines and other underwater vehicles are required to rise to the surface and show their flag.

Exclusive Economic Zone

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a 200 nautical mile extension from the baseline of a coastal state, in which the state can explore, exploit, conserve, and manage the natural resources that lie within it. They may also establish and use

artificial islands and structures, conduct marine scientific research, and/or protect and preserve the marine environment.

UN Involvement

The United Nations has played a large role in shaping the political atmosphere of the Arctic conflict. This has happened in two ways: the creation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The UNCLOS, as previously mentioned, is a legally binding document that provides the legal framework for how Arctic nations should make claims to land and how they should govern their own oceans. The CLCS is the organization to which all territorial claims are submitted. Although it has been heavily criticized in the past for being slow and ineffective in its rulings in regards to territorial disputes, it is still the organization that is in charge of approving all these claims. Besides these two bodies, DISEC, the first committee of the UN has discussed this issue multiple times in the past. The general consensus of the committee is that demilitarization is important to consider and it is essential that countries come together and cooperate in terms of environmental and scientific technological progress.

Possible Solutions

One possible solution to this topic is an Arctic treaty with a similar structure to the Antarctic Treaty signed on December 1st, 1959. Things like the banning of military activities and the prohibition of nuclear explosions and disposal of radioactive waste are things that can be applied to the Arctic too. However, some

Arctic nations are against a treaty like this because it does not allow them to use the vast resources. This kind of treaty would restrict them to scientific investigations and research. The situation of the Arctic is very fragile, and the presence of many militaries in the Arctic makes armed conflict very possible. It would be most beneficial to the Arctic Council to maintain stability between countries. However, despite the fact that DISEC does not have the power to pass or draft any treaties, the committee has the responsibility to decide whether a new Arctic Treaty could be a possible or necessary solution. As the Disarmament and International Security Committee, it is essential that we try to prevent as many military conflicts and activities as possible. As the very purpose of this committee, it is expected that delegates can compromise to fulfill their foreign policy, and at the same time find ways to slow down, or stop Arctic militarization. Establishing the Arctic Circle as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone would also aid in demilitarization. There are many other solutions to take into consideration. More power could be given to the Arctic Council in order to make them a peacemaker in disputes. Reforms could be made to the CLCS to improve efficiency. Although it is not the main focus, to some degree, delegates should also address the environmental side of the topic. Another popular solution by many non-Arctic states is to change the status of the Arctic Ocean to international waters, also known as res nullius. In a scenario like this, countries could use a portion of their generated revenue to ensure environmental protection of the region. This of course, would receive heavy opposition from aggressive Arctic states

like Russia. Whatever it is, delegates should create a comprehensive resolution that encompasses all aspects of this issue.

Questions to Consider

1. What is your country's stance on the Arctic? If they are not from the Arctic, do they have major allies who are involved? What is their stance?

2. Does the UNCLOS provide the sufficient legal foundation to ensure a stable and peaceful Arctic?

3. How will countries demilitarize the area and what can DISEC do to help?

4. Who should own the Arctic? Arctic States or the international community? A combination of both?

5. What body should oversee demilitarization efforts and maintain them in the long run?

6. What are the possible economic effects of the different possible solutions? How will your country be affected?