

ARISMUN 2020: United Nations Security Council

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TOPIC A: THE MILITARIZATION OF THE ARCTIC

INTRODUCTION

The conversation of the militarization of the Arctic initiated because of the cold war. The cold war was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective allies, the Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc, after World War II.

The issue has evolved into a debate of territory and rights to resources. With the ice melting in the arctic, there has been an increase of interest to territorial rights from the United States of America, Iceland, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia. This dispute is as a result of more space provided for fishing, drilling and shipping.

BACKGROUND

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 to address common concerns across Arctic States, promote international cooperation; especially in regards to the preservation of the Arctic environment and sustainable development. The creation of the council was an essential step in ensuring peace and stability in the region. The United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), established in 1982, was and still is a vital committee in determining sea territorial rights to countries.

According to the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), any land within 22km (12nm) of a country's coast is territorial waters. Meaning, the laws of a country still apply within 22km of water surrounding a country; any point beyond that is considered the Contiguous zone. The Contiguous Zone is considered international waters; however, the country still controls costumes laws, fiscal laws, immigration laws and pollution laws. They have no ownership, but a considerable amount of control over this space. The Exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is approximately 370km (200nm) off the coast of a country and does not allow for the country to have exclusive rights to fishing and drilling for resources.

Seeing as the continental shelf of the arctic has not yet been fully mapped, many countries mapped out the area independently and staked claims over the seafloor to benefit their countries. If a country can prove that its continental shelf extends beyond the 370km of the Exclusive economic zone, it can gain rights to drilling the seafloor in these areas. Unfortunately, this has led to the country's claims to regions often overlapping. The Arctic countries started making claims of territory as early as 2015, sending applications to the UN.

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KEY INFORMATION

In March of 2018, countries including the United States of America, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia decided to further take advantage of this and stake claims on regions of the Arctic. Despite the creation of numerous treaties signed by these countries to protect the arctic environment, this is, more often than not, not the primary interest of the governments. The Arctic seafloor is precious; it has an estimated amount of 90 billion barrels of oil 47 trillion cubic metres of natural gas, as well as the potential of undiscovered resources. Naturally, with the polar ice caps melting more space is created for trade, sea exploration, resource extraction or drilling.

On the 24th of October 2018, Russia staked a claim of 1.2 million square kilometres of the arctic, which would potentially put them in control of an estimated 8.5trillion dollars worth of oil reserves to 35trillion. Equally, the United States of America, Canada, Denmark and Norway staked claims in March of 2018, as stated earlier.

Along with staking claim over the arctic regions, countries came up with agreements in order to state their intentions and ensure their control over their territory. One example of this was Russia's 2018-2023 defence agreement. This agreement included the increase of military presence in the arctic and a 20% increase in the defence spending over the next six years. The Russian federation policy, which lasts till 2020, included measures of strategic planning of the social and economic development of the arctic zone of the Russian Federation and the maintenance of the national safety of Russia, with the goal being the extraction of oil and natural gas. Russia also wanted to ensure control over the northern sea route and secure it so other nations could not prohibit their use of it. The agreement also included wanting to promote peace and cooperation with other nations and ensuring the preservation of the arctic environment. Russia was not the only country to state these intentions.

Evidently, these countries are taking advantage of the unmapped Arctic seafloor. Due to the arctic being inhabitable, it makes for a tactical military base, in order to store missiles and intimidate other countries, and this is precisely what these countries have done. It can be argued that having military power ensures peace by warning other countries not to start a war; this was mostly the case with Russia, Denmark and the United States of America. As territory is being disputed, the tensions are high. In September of 2018, Britain announced a new "arctic defence strategy" and a ten year plan promising to deploy 800 commandos to Norway and 4 RAF typhoons to patrol Icelandic skies. Currently, Russia is reopening and strengthening its cold war bases on the Kola peninsula in the north-west of the country.

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Timeline of key events

- Tensions between America and Russia (Cold War: 1947 - 1991) & 1990s
- 1996 - Arctic Council established
- August 2015 - Russia sent an application to claim to the UN for 1.2 square kilometers of the arctic
- March - August 2018 - United States of America, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia staked claims of Arctic regions (setting up military bases, deploying troops/commandos, drilling for resources)
- September 2018 - Britain announced a new “arctic defense strategy” and a 10 year plan promising to deploy 800 commandos to Norway and 4 RAF typhoons to patrol Icelandic skies.
- Russia reopening and strengthening cold war bases on the Kola peninsula in the north west of the country.

TOPIC B: THE HEZBOLLAH-ISRAEL CONFLICT

INTRODUCTION

Hezbollah evolved from a background of many Lebanese resistance fighters from all faiths and from all over Lebanon and inhabitants of Southern Lebanon, mainly of Shia faith.

The Israeli - Hezbollah conflict refers to a series of military clashes between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. In 1985, Shia Sheik Abraham Al Amin declared a manifesto in Lebanon, announcing a resistance movement called Hezbollah, with one of the goals being to battle Israeli occupation of Lebanon and Israeli proxy namely SOUTH LEBANON ARMY (SLA). During the years 1985-1990, Hezbollah waged an irregular campaign against Israeli forces and SLA occupying southern Lebanon. After this, Israel adopted a withdrawal plan and drew back its forces to the Litani river in Lebanon from areas it already occupied, creating a 4-12 km Israeli security zone. Although tensions were high, over this period there was not much action as the number of Israeli fatalities per year was in the single-digit figure except for when 21 Israeli soldiers were killed in 1988.



Israeli soldiers in the South of Lebanon, before Hezbollah's occupation.

*Hezbollah became a resistance front / political party . In 1992 , Hezbollah won 10 out of the 128 seats in the Lebanese National Assembly .

2006 LEBANON - ISRAEL WAR

On 12th July 2006, an incident referred to as Zar'it Shtula occurred. Hezbollah dispatched rockets to Israeli military installations near the Israel border village named Zar'it. Also,

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Hezbollah sent a group to cross the Israeli border and ambush 2 Israeli military vehicles, killing three soldiers and seizing 2.

Then, Hezbollah demanded the release of Lebanese prisoners in exchange for the seized soldiers. Following this, heavy gunfire exchanged between the two parties, with Hezbollah targeting IDF positions near Israeli towns. Thus, with the war starting, Israel responded with many airstrikes on targets throughout Lebanon, an air and naval blockade and also a ground attack on southern Lebanon. In Lebanon, this conflict killed over 1,100 people, severely damaged its infrastructure and displaced over 1 million people. Israel also suffered 42 civilian deaths after Hezbollah sent rockets to the North of Israel.

This war affected normality across both countries, which led to the United Nations managing to broker a ceasefire that went into effect on 14th August, 2006. The blockade was lifted on 8th September.



Beirut, Lebanon after Israeli airstrikes.

Major Stakeholders

Israel: They are one of the two ultimate stakeholders as they have been directly involved and invested in all the events.

Hezbollah: The 2nd ultimate stakeholder as they were also directly involved and invested in all the events.

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Lebanon: Probably the most affected stakeholder as there were more than 1 million displaced people in Lebanon after Israeli airstrikes severely damaged the infrastructure and the 2006 war started their economic collapse.

Iran: Iran's involvement with Hezbollah is robust, as they provide a total of \$50- \$100 million annually to the Lebanese party. Also, according to Israeli journalist Ze'ev Schiff, Iran provided Hezbollah with most of their arms.

USA: The US department announced a financial assistance package of \$10 million to the Lebanese armed forces during the 2006 war. After the war, President Bush announced that the US reconstruction aid to Lebanon would be boosted to \$230 million. Also, the US supports Israel as well. On 14th July 2006, it was reported that the Bush administration authorized the process and shipment of precision-guided bombs to Israel without announcing it publicly.



Hezbollah Leader Nasrallah posing with Khamenei, the spiritual Leader of Iran and also with Soleimani, who was a major military general before his death earlier this year.

Timeline of key events

1. Lebanese Civil War (1975- 1990)
2. 1983 Israeli-Lebanese accords and their collapse
3. SLA conflict with Hezbollah (February 1985 – May 2000)
4. Border clashes and assassinations (September 2000 – July 2006)
5. 2006 Lebanon- Israel War

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