



North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Topic: Arctic Sovereignty

Position Paper Policy

Position papers are an integral part of attending a Model United Nations conference. A successful paper communicates your country's perspective on a given issue, as well as more general information about the topic as a whole. For beginner committees, the process of researching for and writing your position paper will likely give you all the information you need about your country and the committee, alongside your background guide. For intermediate committees, more research is not required but recommended. **Submitting a position paper will increase your chance of winning and award.**

Formatting

All papers should:

- Not exceed 1 page
- Be in 12 point Times New Roman, single spaced
- Clearly indicate country name, delegate name, and committee name at the top of the page
- Be written in APA or MLA format with in-text citations and a works cited or references list (not included within the 1 page limit)

Structure

While there is no strictly defined structure for position papers, the following structure is a good starting place:

Paragraph 1: Current Situation

- Discuss the current situation with regards to your topic globally.
- Consider how the issue at hand manifests itself within your country. Is your country handling the issue well or is it struggling? Does your country's government consider this issue is to be pressing for the international community or does it view it as inconsequential?

Paragraph 2: Past Actions

- Discuss any actions taken by your country or the international community with regards to the topic.
- Examine the successes and failures of these solutions. Remember that your goal is to represent your country's views, not your own, so avoid criticizing your country's government.

Paragraph 3: Future Plans

- Introduce any solutions proposed by your country's government. If you can't find any specific plans from your country, try and figure out what they could realistically propose at the UN. The contents of this paragraph will take up a large portion of your discussions in committee, so be thorough.

Submission

Please submit documents in PDF or Word format, with the document title being Country Name, Delegate Name. All position papers must be sent to kdenny@qms.bc.ca by **April 15th, 2023**.

Director's Note

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

My name is Kieran Denny, and I will be your director in the NATO committee on Arctic Sovereignty at QueenMUN 2023. Needless to say, it has been a long journey to the point of writing this message. I remember being in the seventh grade, stepping into my first conference alongside many of you current dais and secretariat members, without a clue of how far I would be taken on my journey of Model UN. Since then, I have attended conferences on Vancouver Island, in Vancouver, and in Montreal, won a good few awards, and gained lifetime connections and skills along the way. None of this would have happened had I not taken that first step, attending a beginner's conference, and speaking in committee for the first time. So I implore you, no matter how insignificant the point, how unsteady the delivery, or how small the country, speak! I can assure you that you will be happy you did afterwards. What I can also assure you is that I and your most skilled of chairs, Maya Harbo, will be working tirelessly to ensure that you have the most rewarding Model UN experience possible. The first step in that process is this background guide, which will guide you with your research leading up to the start of committee. Happy researching!

Sincerely,

Kieran Denny

Director

BACKGROUND GUIDE



**North Atlantic Treaty
Organization**

Topic Overview

It is no secret that the Arctic is a region experiencing change at a rate far more rapid than virtually any other. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it can be projected with high confidence that the Arctic will be free of summer sea ice by the end of the 21st century, alongside a slate of other disruptions to the regional ecosystems (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). The environmental ramifications of this are widely known: rising sea levels and ecological collapse, among other things. What is less widely reported is the equally rapidly changing regional defense environment in the Arctic region. Reduced sea ice opens up new shipping lanes and petroleum reserves, raising questions as to which countries will have access to the next major economic arena of the twenty-first century. As a military alliance, the primary goal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is ensure that members states have the resources necessary to protect such economic opportunities in the event of a military engagement in the region, an ever more likely prospect given Russian aggression in Europe and increased military presence in the Arctic.

In this committee, delegates will focus on updating NATO's strategy in the Arctic to bring it into the twenty-first century. There are a variety of subtopics which delegates can choose to focus on during the committee; these include defending shipping lanes and natural resources made newly available by climate change, responding to Russian militarization in the Arctic, updating poor defense infrastructure in the region, and approaching defense from an environmentally conscious perspective. The ultimate goal of the of the committee is to create a framework for a sustainable and effective strategy to ensure that the Arctic region remains peaceful, environmentally intact, and economically viable for member states. Barriers to this include sparse defense infrastructure



A Russian military base in the Arctic

Source: Mil.ru through Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 4.0)

and infighting among NATO members, making it difficult to provide a united front against potential Russian aggression and other security risks in the area. It is the task of this committee to eliminate these obstacles so that the aforementioned framework can be implemented as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Current Situation

Polar regions provide an interesting conundrum in international relations. Relatively few nations have the geographic placement and economic ability to effectively utilize their abundant resources, and their lack of major population centres ensure that governments active in them face comparatively little resistance from local citizenries. Rather, it is the environment itself which provides resistance. This combination of factors leads to unlikely rivalries between countries and otherwise humble nations rising to become major regional players. Such power struggles were all but neutralized in the Southern Hemisphere by the Antarctic Treaty (1959), however in the Arctic they remain. There are currently six countries with a coastline on the Arctic Ocean and all excepting Russia are NATO members. They are:

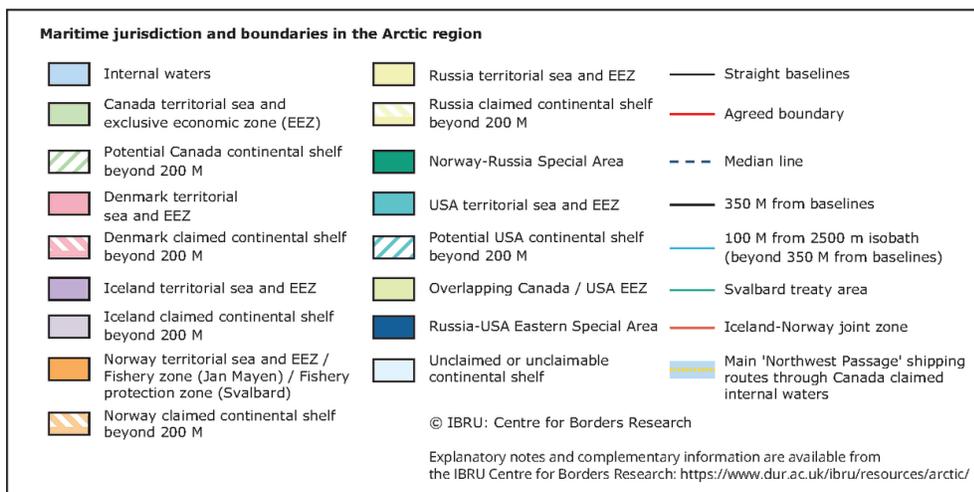
- Canada
- Greenland (owned by Denmark)
- Iceland
- Norway
- The Russian Federation
- The United States

All of these countries are currently involved in a boundary dispute of some form in the Arctic, save for Iceland (European Environment Agency, 2017). Most of these disputes arise from disagreements over continental shelf claims, which pertain to the sea floor, but not the water column. While such claims may seem inconsequential, they dictate which countries will have access to oil and gas deposits in the Arctic, which may contain 160 billion barrels of oil and up to 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas (BBC, 2022). The security risks created by these disputes are twofold. Firstly, conflict over resources between NATO members and the Russian Federation could ignite armed conflict between the two parties, which given Russian aggression in Ukraine, is not as far-fetched an assertion as it would have been just over one year ago, especially given the Kremlin's increasingly rapid militarization of the Russian Arctic (Dean & Walsh, 2022). Secondly, if such an event were to occur, infighting amongst NATO members over their own boundary disputes in the region could cause confusion and hinder NATO's ability to create a united front against Russian encroachment in the Arctic.

Another potential motivator for unwanted attention to NATO assets in the Arctic is less political and more economic. That is, the opening of new trade routes through Arctic seas. Due to rising temperatures caused by human carbon dioxide output, it is generally accepted by the scientific community that Arctic summers will soon be free of sea ice, and, if left unchecked, ice-free periods will all but lengthen (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). While this is of great concern to the local and global environments, some, namely China, have viewed it as an opportunity. The Chinese government has expressed interest in the creation of an "Arctic Silk Road," and even brands itself as a "Near-Arctic State," which while geographically dubious, may soon become a reality politically (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2018). China has made numerous economic and scientific investments in the Arctic, most prominently in Russia and the Nordic countries, and most concerningly for NATO members, is expanding its military capabilities in the region with a growing icebreaker fleets and visits from naval vessels. While military

direct military engagement with China in the Arctic is considered unlikely, many sources within China state that it cannot be ruled out, something to which NATO must be able to effectively respond (Zhang, 2021).

A map of maritime claims in the Arctic
(European Environment Agency, 2017)



Possible Solutions

Militarization

One potentially appealing solution to issues with Arctic Sovereignty is an increased level of militarization in the arctic. There are some advantages and disadvantages to this approach. On the one hand, in the event of a military engagement in the arctic NATO would be poised to quickly prevail if this strategy was executed in full. That said, an increased level of militarization in the Arctic could trigger an arms race with Russia or other adversaries, which could potentially destabilize the region. Additionally, militarization does nothing to resolve disputes between NATO members, and such disputes could potentially hinder a coordinated military response to any Arctic threats.

Upgraded Infrastructure

While militarization is perhaps the most upfront solution, a plan to upgrade defense infrastructure in the Arctic, while less direct, preserves some of the advantages without upsetting the fragile balance of power in the region as much. The current state of defense infrastructure in the Arctic is quite lacking (Senate of Canada, 2022), making a sudden response difficult. This strategy would involve upgrading ports, bases, and radar facilities to make a quick and decisive militarization of the arctic possible if necessary. Despite the advantages, this solution will do little to solve disputes, and requires the largest monetary commitment.

UN Arbitration

One of the only solutions to have ever proved effective in resolving Arctic boundary disputes, UN Arbitration involves two parties agreeing to the present arguments to a UN commission and accept its decision, whatever that may be. While not always honoured, when parties are cooperative it has proven effective in resolving arctic disputes before, and can result in the UN siding entirely with one party, each party being awarded a portion of their claim, or an agreement to share the claimed area. While true sharing is a rare occurrence in international relations, it is possible, such as when a continental shelf dispute between Iceland and Norway was taken to arbitration, eventually leading to the creation of the Norway-Iceland Joint Zone (Conciliation Commission on the Continental Shelf area between Iceland and Jan Mayen, 1981).

Guiding Questions

1. How invested is your country in the Arctic region? Does it:
 - a. Have an Arctic coastline?
 - b. Have a significant monetary investment in the Arctic?
 - c. Use or plan to use increasingly ice-free Arctic shipping channels?
2. Is your country involved in any boundary disputes in the Arctic? If so:
 - a. Has it ever agreed to any reduction or compromise in its claim in the name of international cooperation?
 - b. What other countries claim the area? Are they NATO countries? Are your countries allies outside of this one issue?
 - c. For what reason does your country claim the area? Economic? Historical? Defensive?
3. How active is your country militarily?
 - a. Does your country support direct military intervention or diplomatic solutions?
 - b. Does your country commit as many resources to its military as required by NATO (2% of GDP (NATO, 2021))?
4. If your country is not in the Arctic region, what does it stand to gain from defending the Arctic?
 - a. Is it particularly concerned with combatting Russian expansion?
 - b. Does it plan to invest in the region economically?

References

- BBC. (2022, April 28). Who owns the Arctic and should they drill for oil and gas? BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-61222653>
- Conciliation Commission on the Continental Shelf area between Iceland and Jan Mayen. (1981). REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRAL AWARDS. United Nations. https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXVII/1-34.pdf
- Dean, S., & Walsh, N. P. (2022, December 21). Russia's militarization of the Arctic shows no sign of slowing down. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/21/europe/russia-arctic-military-intl/index.html>
- European Environment Agency. (2017). Arctic continental shelf claims. European Environment Agency; European Union. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/arctic-continental-shelf-claims>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2021). Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis (p. 143). IPCC. https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6/wg1/IPCC_AR6_WGI_FullReport.pdf
- NATO. (2021, August 13). Funding NATO. NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm
- Senate of Canada. (2022, December 14). Defending the North: The Arctic's strategic role and importance. SenCanada. <https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/news/defending-the-north-the-arctic-s-strategic-role-and-importance/>
- The Antarctic Treaty, (1959). https://documents.ats.aq/keydocs/vol_1/vol1_2_AT_Antarctic_Treaty_e.pdf
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2018, January 26). Full text: China's Arctic Policy. English.www.gov.cn. https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm
- Zhang, R. D., Alexis Dale-Huang, and Gaoqi. (2021, April 12). Northern expedition: China's Arctic activities and ambitions. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/northern-expedition-chinas-arctic-activities-and-ambitions/>