Melting Point: Unlocking the Arctic’s Potential
ARCTIC

Exploration?
Sovereignty?
International Relations?
Climate Change?
Identity?
Economics?
History & Exploration

- First occupied by aboriginal & indigenous groups
- Later supplanted by Western explorers
- Eurasia: Far East and Siberia charted & claimed for the Russian Empire during the Great Northern Expedition (1733)
- North America: Vikings colonized Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland between the 9th and 15th centuries.
- 15th century: European explorers arrive looking for the Northwest Passage
- Early 17th century: establishment of first permanent European settlements in North America by the British & French (Jamestown, 1607; Quebec, 1608)
- Colonial competition and the race for resources & territory fueled exploration.
  - British Hudson’s Bay Co. vs. French North West Co.
  - 1789: Alexander Mackenzie reaches the Arctic Ocean
Goals of exploration

- Search for the Northwest Passage continued into the 19th century.
  - 1845: Sir John Franklin’s last expedition.
  - Northwest Passage finally charted during the search.
- Arctic territory claimed for its resources, to increase national prestige, and to prevent other European states from claiming it, not out of a desire to colonize it.

Canada & the US: Fight for the West

- 1867: Alaska purchased by the US from Russia.
  - Goal was to encircle British Columbia and pressure it to join the United States.
- 1868: US attempts to buy Greenland from Denmark.
- Sir John A. Macdonald persuades Britain to purchase Rupert’s Land (1869), and cede it and the Northwestern Territory to Canada. (1870)
- 1871: British Columbia joins Canada.
- 1880: Arctic islands ceded to Canada.

Source: Alaska State Library; Alaska Purchase Centennial Photography Collection
Sovereignty

- Definition?
Sovereignty

- Definition: the ability of the state to exercise jurisdiction over a given territory without outside interference.

- De jure sovereignty: internationally-recognized political or legal claim to a territory.

- De facto sovereignty: control of a territory “in reality”: who controls the resources, whose laws are enforced, who provides defence and law enforcement, etc.
  - Sometimes subjective
  - Examples?
Methods of claiming sovereignty over a territory: discovery, cession, subjugation.

Discovery is insufficient to establish a permanent claim to a territory. The territory must be “effectively occupied” by the discoverer or their claim will lapse.

- Effective occupation: permanent settlement, providing government services, enforcing laws.
- Basically, convincing other states that the territory is yours.
Sovereignty in the Arctic

- How have the Arctic states claimed sovereignty over their territories?
  - Europe: unquestioned occupation
  - Russia: discovery, military presence, lack of interest from others
  - United States: purchase of Alaska seen as legitimate after its land border with the Yukon was established through negotiations with the United Kingdom
  - Canada?
Canadian sovereignty

- Last challenge to terrestrial sovereignty in 1946.
- Challenges to maritime sovereignty are ongoing.
- 1985: Canadian government considers the Northwest Passage and the waters inside the Archipelago as internal.
- Russia considers the Northeast Passage to be internal as well.
- US & EU dispute that claim, believe it’s an international waterway instead.
  - Transit passage & right of innocent passage
US & Canada disputes

- 1969: Humble Oil Co. requests permission to transit the Northwest Passage. Canada agrees and provides an icebreaker. The US sends its own icebreaker without asking.
- 1985: US icebreaker *USCGS Polar Sea* traverses the Passage. The US government notifies Canada but does not ask permission.

Source: National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration. [http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/10ecs/media/two_ships.html](http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/10ecs/media/two_ships.html)
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea

- Defines the boundaries of territorial waters and determines use of maritime resources.
- Signed & ratified by all Arctic states except the US.

- This chart does not include continental shelves.
- With evidence, states can claim sole access to the resources under the sea bed up to 350 nm from baselines.

Sector theory

Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRID-Arendal,
http://www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/arctic-topography-and-bathymetry_qbca
Claiming the continental shelf

- States must prove the sea bed they’re claiming is part of their continental shelf. (based on bathymetry, sediment composition, etc.)
- Claim must be submitted within 10 years of ratifying UNCLOS to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for review and a final decision.
  - Norway’s deadline in 2006, Russia’s in 2007 (submitted a claim in 2001, but a final decision was deferred for lack of evidence), Canada’s in 2013, Denmark’s in 2014.
Boundary disputes

- Lomonosov ridge claimed by Demark, Russia, and Canada as part of their continental shelves.
- 2010: Norway-Russia dispute in the Barents Sea resolved.
- Hans Island: ongoing negotiations between Denmark & Canada.
- Beaufort Sea: dispute between the maritime median line and continuing the land border.
- Who should own the North Pole?
Climate change

- IPCC evidence suggests the Arctic & Antarctic are warming faster than the rest of the planet.
- Summer ice extent has decreased by 40% since 1979, with record lows in 2007 and 2012.

Source: National Snow and Ice Data Center, University of Colorado, Boulder

Economic benefits – Oil & Gas

- Arctic home to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world’s undiscovered petroleum reserves – 413 billion barrels of oil.
- Russia is facing declining production in existing fields.
- Offshore drilling is expensive, particularly in the Arctic environment ($115-$700/barrel).
- Crude oil prices down 30% this year due to increased supply and reduced demand.

Shipping routes

Source: Hugo Ahlenius, UNEP/GRID-Arendal,
Common problems...

- As use of the Arctic increases, the risk of an environmental disaster or commercial accident grows.
- The region is remote and isolated, which would make crisis management, disaster relief, and search & rescue difficult.

Source: General configuration of polar routes used by major airlines.
...Multilateral solution

- The Arctic Council founded in 1991 as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.
- Goal of integrating Russia into the Arctic community.
- Security and defence were left off the table deliberately.
- Instead, the Arctic Council deals with “soft” issues such as environmental protection, human security, and sustainable development.
- Increasingly seen as *the* forum to discuss Arctic issues.
- 2011: Gained legitimacy by passing a legally-binding agreement on search and rescue practices.
Arctic Council membership

- 8 Arctic states
- 6 Permanent Participants (aboriginal & indigenous bodies)
  - Ex: Inuit Circumpolar Council
- 9 intergovernmental organizations and 11 NGOs are observers.
  - Ex: Nordic Council of Ministers
- 12 non-Arctic states also sit as observers.
Confrontation?

- The Arctic Ocean was a front of the Cold War.
  - Soviet Northern Fleet prepared to strike the US across the North Pole; DEW Line and NORAD to counter.
- After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Arctic was no longer a vital theatre of operations.
- Today, Arctic security among NATO members is guaranteed by NATO.
  - Presents a united front against Russia without provoking an arms race.
- 2008: Ilulissat Declaration commits Arctic coastal states to resolve boundary disputes through UNCLOS and diplomacy.
United States

- 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region
  - 3 priorities:
    - Advance security interests (including energy security & freedom of the seas)
    - Responsible environmental stewardship
    - Strengthen international cooperation (ratifying UNCLOS)
- Fleet of 5 icebreakers, but the 2 most powerful are at the end of their lifecycle.
- Also has up to 18 nuclear- and 53 diesel-powered submarines capable of Arctic operations.
European Union

- 1999 Northern Dimension Policy to promote economic integration, sustainable development in northern Europe (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia).
- Current Arctic policy with 3 objectives:
  - Broaden knowledge of the impact of climate change in the Arctic
  - Promote sustainable economic development
  - Engage with other actors in the region
- Combined fleet of 28 icebreakers, but ½ classified as “Baltic” – not suitable for multiyear Arctic ice.
- 2009 ban on seal products angered many.
Russia

- Russia’s Arctic policy demonstrates the desire of Russia to return to Great Power status, reclaiming the prestige of the Soviet Union.
- The Arctic is a resource to be exploited: heavy emphasis on economic development, promoting NSR, finalizing territorial claims.
- Security and sovereignty through remilitarization of the Arctic.
- 37 icebreakers, 6 nuclear-powered, and another 12 on the way.
The Arctic is an important part of the Canadian identity. But Canada has rarely had a proactive Arctic policy. Instead, the Canadian government has usually reacted to outside events.

2009: Canada’s Northern Strategy
- 4 pillars: exercising sovereignty, environmental protection, social & economic development, devolution of Northern governance.

By assuming the presidency of the Arctic Council in 2013, Canada is well-placed to pursue the last 3 pillars in a multilateral setting.
Canada (continued)

- 6 icebreakers in fleet, but 5 are used to clear ice in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in the winter.
- Only 1 ship is on “Arctic duty” all year: the CCGS Louis S. St-Laurent, built in 1969, and at the end of its life.
  - The CCGS John G. Diefenbaker will replace it, but not before 2021 due to production delays.
- 6-8 Arctic patrol ships to be built.
- Deep-water port in Nanisivik to promote the Northwest Passage not yet built.
- Territorial claims under UNCLOS filed in December 2013, after last-minute changes.
Discussion questions

- How effective has Canada’s Arctic policy been at promoting our interests? What are our interests? Do you agree with the government’s focus?
- Do you think the EU’s approach to the Arctic (based on sustainable development and environmental protection) can be a model for other states to follow?
- Given Russia’s aggressive actions in Ukraine, is its Arctic policy threatening, or simply normal behaviour? Are the two connected? How should other Arctic states react?
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