

Forum: Economic and Financial Committee (GA2)

Issue: Global economic implications of the extraction of natural resources in the Arctic Circle and disputed territories

Student Officer: Angelica Vogiatzoglou

Position: President

INTRODUCTION

Natural resources are becoming scarce and, since they are of vital importance for all economies, disputes over them are on the rise. Especially when there is no comprehensive legal framework regulating extractivism, the conflicts are severe and have serious economic effects on the entities involved.

Water, oil, gas, coal, minerals, fish and land are some of the natural resources that are critical to a country's economy. The reasons for this are many. Natural resources, especially fossil fuels, are necessary for energy production, for covering basic nutritional needs and for further economic development, as they are used in agriculture and trade. As natural resources become scarce due mainly to population growth and limitless economic expansion, and bearing in mind the fact that most of them are non-renewable, the economic implications of their extraction are even greater.

Natural resource mining in Arctic Circle has become one of the largest-scale resource races, meaning the fierce international competition for the economic exploitation of the Arctic. The rights of specific countries to capitalize on the Arctic's natural resources through their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These countries are Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the United States of America (USA). Although the Arctic is a vast region and the EEZs of these countries are defined, there are serious controversies over territorial claims, which are amplified when other countries with no legal exploitation rights, like China, stake their claims characterizing the Arctic region as "global commons" that cannot be governed by only a few states.

Apart from the resource race in the Arctic region, there are many others worldwide but with fewer countries involved. For example, Ethiopia and Egypt have differing interests in the exploitation of the Nile River's waters, Israel and Palestine have also a dispute over river Jordan's waters, China, Vietnam and other neighboring countries dispute each other's rights to the South China Sea, while Turkey, Iraq and Syria are also crucial resource controversies.

Natural resources are of utmost importance for each country's economic development. The resource races have global economic implications and hence the international community needs to cooperate to tackle them.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Natural Resources

"Natural resources are raw materials existing in the physical world that can be used for economic production or for consumption."¹

¹ "Natural Resources." *Glossary of Statistical Terms*, OECD, <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1740%20>

They are divided into four categories: soil resources, water resources, biological resources and mineral and energy resources and they are quantitatively depleted through human use.

The World Trade Organization defines natural resources as “stocks of materials that exist in the natural environment that are both scarce and economically useful in production or consumption, either in their raw state or after a minimal amount of processing”.

Scarcity

Scarcity is a concept central to economics and refers to the simple fact that resources are finite. The goods and services produced by these resources are limited too. Humans use the goods and services to cover their needs and therefore natural resources are crucial for them. The natural resources are scarce and valuable and this is the main cause of controversies between countries that extract natural resources in the Arctic Circle and other disputed areas.

Arctic Circle

“The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line drawn around the northern part of the world at approximately 66° North”²

It is at the Northern pole of the Earth and it passes through Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, USA (Alaska), Canada, Denmark (Greenland) and Iceland.

Extractivism

Extractivism is defined as “the process of extracting natural resources for exportation worldwide.”³

It is an economic model referring to countries dependent on the extraction of natural resources such as gold, oil, diamonds and lumber. This model was largely used in Latin America but is now prominent in other regions too.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

An Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is the marine area under a coastal state’s jurisdiction extending 200 miles from its shore. The coastal state has the right to explore and exploit marine resources within this zone and its adjacent section of the continental shelf. The term was adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1982).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Resource conflicts

Due to the scarcity of natural resources, there are various disputes over their extraction. Several well-known resource conflicts are listed below.

² “Arctic Circle Definition and Meaning: Collins English Dictionary.” *Arctic Circle Definition and Meaning* | Collins English Dictionary, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/arctic-circle .

³ “EXTRACTIVISM (Noun) Definition and Synonyms: Macmillan Dictionary.” *EXTRACTIVISM (Noun) Definition and Synonyms* | Macmillan Dictionary, www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/extractivism .

Arctic Circle

One of the major disputes over natural resources is the arctic resource race. The principal reason for these controversies is obvious.

Extensive hydrocarbon deposits are discovered and more are to be found. In the 1960s, the Yamburg Gas Field in Siberia and Prundhoe Bay Oil Field in Alaska were the first discoveries in the region. The Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal conducted in 2008 by the U.S. Geological Survey concluded that 22% of the earth's undiscovered oil and gas reserves are in the region. Russia has invested more than any other country in the Arctic as 95% of its natural gas resources and 60% of its oil reserves are in the Arctic. According to a 2009 US Department of Energy report, of the nearly sixty large existing oil and natural gas fields, forty three are in Russia, eleven in Canada, six in Alaska and one in Norway.

Moreover, shipping routes in the Arctic provide economic incentives to littoral countries of the region. As sea ice retreats during summer, shipping routes open. The Northeast Passage (NEP) is a 3,000 mile shipping lane connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean from the top of Eurasia. There are also two more pathways, the Russia's North Sea Route (NSR) and the Northwest Passage (NWP), through which the passing ships save time and fuel and emit less carbon dioxide. Lastly, minerals, like gold, silver, diamonds, bauxite and iron ores, exist in the Arctic providing the countries that extract them with great economic advantages.

According to the UNCLOS, the five countries surrounding the Arctic Ocean have the right to extract resources from the area. Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the United States of America have also the right to declare their EEZs and exploit all maritime natural resources within them, such as fish and hydrocarbons. Although there are some conflicting claims, the Arctic coastal states have largely resolved maritime boundary disputes through multilateral negotiations. The most significant unresolved territorial dispute is between the US and Canada in the Beaufort Sea. However, there is no any tension as for the time being the two parties are working to resolve the dispute.

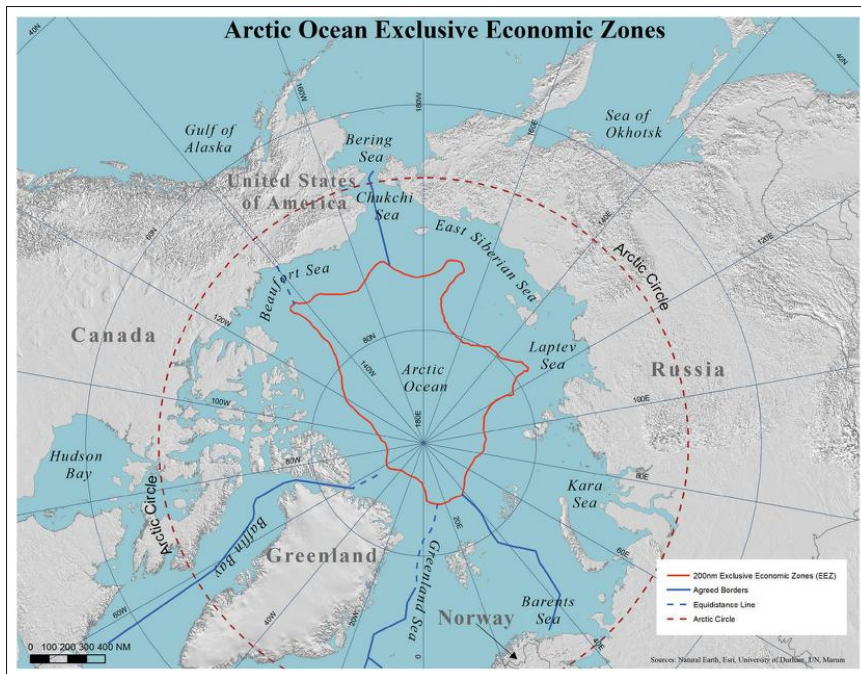


FIGURE 1: ARCTIC COASTAL STATES'S EEZS
"CHAPTER 8: THE ARCTIC & THE LOSC." *LAW OF THE SEA, THE FLETCHER SCHOOL,*
 TUFTS UNIVERSITY, [HTTPS://SITES.TUFTS.EDU/LAWOF THESEA/CHAPTER-EIGHT/](https://sites.tufts.edu/lawofthesea/chapter-eight/)

Signing bilateral treaties and additional rule-making are essential in the Arctic. Also, close cooperation between states is necessary for the region. To serve these purposes, the Arctic Council, consisting of the five Arctic states plus Sweden, Finland and Iceland, was established. The Council is a forum of cooperation and coordination not only among the Arctic countries but also China which has observer status in it.

One major legal dispute is the passage of international entities through the NWP and the NSR. The NWP is a sea route via waterways through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago while the NSR is a passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean along the northern coast of Russia. These two countries claim that these waters are internal and foreign states cannot pass without their permission. The USA argues these passages are international straits, while Canada bases its view on the fact that those waterways were used by the Inuit people for hundreds of years. However, the NWP and the NSR are defined as international straits by the International Court of Justice ruling for the Corfu Channel case that a body of water must have a "geographical situation as connecting two parts of the high seas and the fact of its being used for international navigation."¹⁰ Articles 37 and 38 of the LOSC also define that these straits are international. Like Canada's, Russia's claims are also based on history. The USA has consistently questioned Russia's claims. However, this dispute has not been a major source of tension, as the USA ships have not passed through the NWP and the NSR without permission. However, there are many countries that recognize the straits as great shipping routes and could support the USA in this contest, and thus tensions could increase.

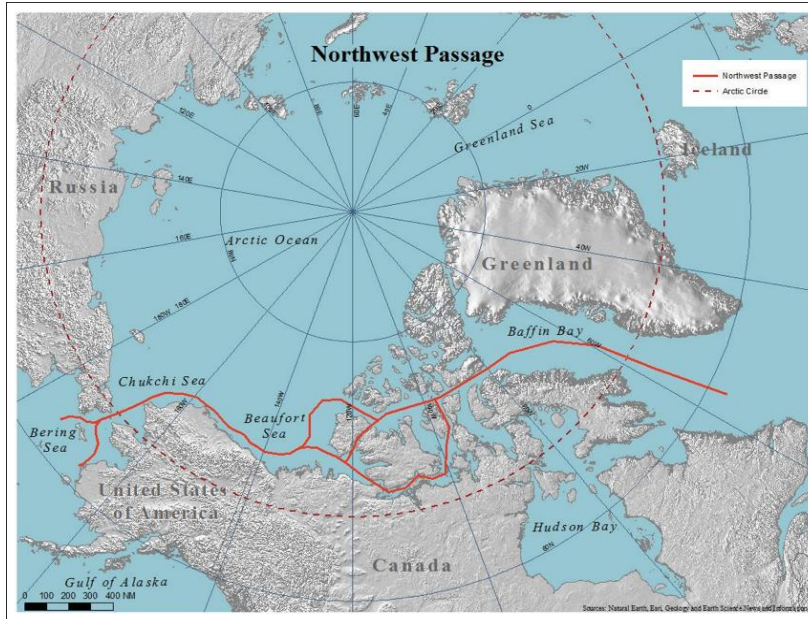


FIGURE 2: NWP

SOURCE: "CHAPTER 8: THE ARCTIC & THE LOSC." *LAW OF THE SEA*, THE FLETCHER SCHOOL, TUFTS UNIVERSITY, [HTTPS://SITES.TUFTS.EDU/LAWOFTHESEA/CHAPTER-EIGHT/](https://sites.tufts.edu/lawofthesea/chapter-eight/)

Another cause of tension in the area is the territorial claims over the Arctic High Seas. As shown in Figure 1, there is 1, 1 million square miles of open waters lying beyond the Arctic coastal states' EEZs and their national jurisdictions. Although the UNCLOS comprehensively sets out the arctic states' rights, some of them might still try to exploit the wealth of the region by crossing the straits freely and mining and fishing without limit.

To conclude, the Arctic Circle is a disputed region due to the desire of the coastal states and other countries with interests in the region to extract and exploit its natural resources. Despite the fact that the UNCLOS' and the bilateral treaties' clauses are clear, the Arctic Circle territorial disputes remain. In order to ensure the economic stability and benefits of all states from the exploitation of Arctic's natural resources, the territorial disputes need to be resolved. In this way, overexploitation of the resources will not be the case and long-term economic progress will be guaranteed.

Israel-Palestine

Israel and Palestine have been engaged for a long period of time in a dispute over the Jordan River, Israel's main water source, which is said to have been one of the main causes of the Six Day War in 1967. After diversion for irrigation and human use, Jordan River is expected to dry away in the future. Palestine accuses Israel of illegally diverting the course of the river depriving the Palestinians of vital quantities of water. On the other hand, Israel claims that the proportion of water available to Palestine has not changed since the 1950s. Heated arguments are taking place over the two countries' rights to the mountain aquifer. Israelis possess 80% of it leaving Palestinians with only 20%. The possession of adequate quantity of water is significant for all countries, as, apart from covering basic sanitation and water needs, it is necessary for their agriculture economy.

South China Sea

In the South China Sea, another territorial dispute which has its roots in the desire of acquiring and exploiting natural resources rages on. The South China Sea, except for being a great shipping route, holds gas and oil reserves. Brunei, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam have territorial claims to the sea. The People's Republic of China is demanding control of a huge region defined by its nine-dash line. The disputed areas in the region include the Paracel Islands which are claimed by the PRC, Vietnam and the Philippines, the Spratly islands, claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC), the Pratas Islands that are administered by the latter although it is only 170 nautical miles away from Hong Kong, the Macclesfield Bank and the Scarborough Shoal, which are also claimed by the PRC. In 2013, the Philippines brought the Scarborough Shoal case before the Permanent Court of Arbitration against the PRC. In 2016, the Court ruled that China's nine-dash line and claims to historical rights to this territory are invalid under international law. Although there has been no violent offense, the territory needs to be rightly divided according to the UNCLOS in order to ensure that states assert authority in their own natural resources and avoid the overexploitation of them which could destroy the environment and devastate the economies of all countries surrounding the South China Sea in the long-run.

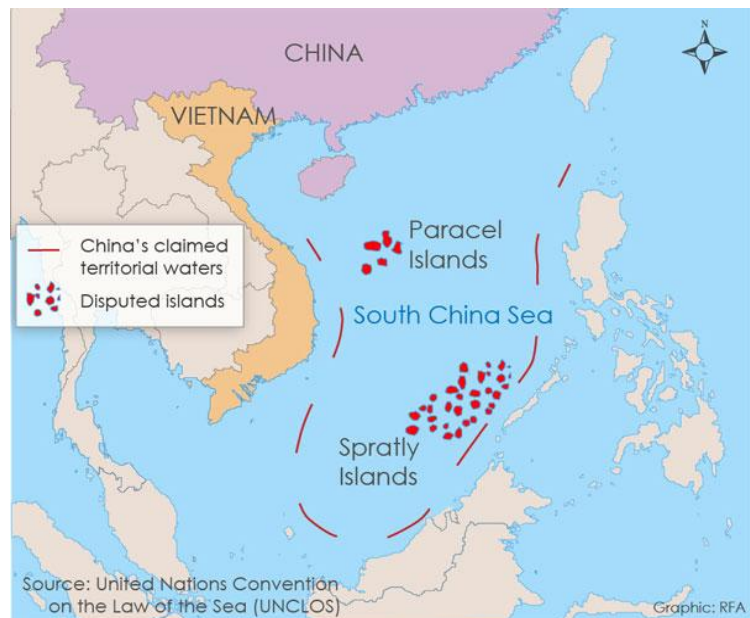


FIGURE 3: SOUTH CHINA SEA NINE-DASH LINE, SOURCE: PU, WEI. "HOW THE ELEVEN-DASH LINE BECAME A NINE-DASH LINE, AND OTHER STORIES." RADIO FREE ASIA, RADIO FREE ASIA, 16 JULY 2015. WWW.RFA.ORG/ENGLISH/COMMENTARIES/LINE-07162015121333.HTML.

Implications of the extraction of natural resources

Global implications of the extraction of natural resources in disputed areas can be both positive and negative. Natural resources have a huge significance for the economy, especially when policies improving the natural resource management are followed. They can also have a negative impact on the economy in case of poor management, overexploitation and the so called “Resource curse”.

The economic significance of natural resources

1. Increase in revenue and poverty reduction

Natural resources are valuable. Many countries have huge profits from a rise in commodity prices. When countries possess large quantities of oil, gas, minerals and lumber, they can export them in high prices increasing their revenues.

Natural resources contribute to the significant reduction of poverty. Poor people are dependent on natural resources for their basic needs. In 2002, according to the World Bank, 90 percent of the world’s population living on less than \$1 per day —about 1, 1 billion people— depends on forestry as a basic source of income. In some countries, the poverty rates have decreased in recent years thanks to the effective exploitation of natural resources. If the natural resources are to be managed efficiently, poverty could be eliminated.

2. Job creation

Unemployment would decrease in a country rich in natural resources as more jobs will be created for natural resource management. Although extractive jobs have globally declined due to mechanization, green jobs are on the rise. In Germany, for example, jobs in the renewable energy sector have risen from 66,600 in 1998 to 259,100 in 2006 (UNEP, 2008). Green jobs in the agriculture have also increased as sustainable, organic farms require less reliance on machines and greater human capital.

Negative implications of natural resources “Resource curse”

The “Resource curse” refers to the paradoxical phenomenon of countries rich in natural resources, the economies of which are stagnant or even in contraction. In some countries, there is a negative correlation between natural resources and economic development. For example, Sachs and Warner (1995) found that GDP growth and the ratio of natural resource exports to GDP in 97 developing countries between 1971 and 1989 were negatively correlated. This weakness is due to mismanagement and not to natural resources per se. It happens when an economy focuses on a single industry, such as oil production or mining, neglecting other principal industries. Hence, it becomes dependent on commodities, the volatile prices of which affect GDP accordingly. Such economies become vulnerable to an economic downturn of that industry. For instance, Venezuela —the 7th largest net exporter of oil in 2013— which is overdependent on oil, since its oil revenue accounts for 12% of its GDP. It is inevitable that even a decrease in oil price by \$1 per barrel would cause a significant loss of government revenue. In 2014, in an economy without any other competitive non-oil sectors, the plunge of oil prices caused inflation to rise to 63, 6%, —the world’s highest inflation for this year— and huge socioeconomic upheaval. When in fact the extraction of natural resources comes from a disputed area, the country’s desire to focus on that sector of the economy is stronger.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Russian Federation

Russia is one of the countries having the right to exploit the Arctic Circle up to the limits of its EEZ. The Arctic region is the major source of all its natural resources, and thus significant for its economic development. 20% of Russia's GDP is produced in the Arctic. Russia is competing with the US and China for greater influence over this vast region. It has the longest coastline in the Arctic Ocean and has become more assertive than any other country in administering marine territories, while at the same time has militarily expanded in the area. It views the NSR as internal waterway unlike to what the international community states. Russia has signed and ratified the UNCLOS.

United States of America (USA)

The USA has not yet ratified the UNCLOS. However, it has publicly recognized its significance. The USA, during the Obama administration, had adopted a series of natural resource management measures aiming at sustainability and avoiding overexploitation. The U.S. Department of the Interior had banned drilling in the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea of the Arctic between 2017 and 2022. The Trump administration does not believe in climate change and, as it was mentioned, it is trying to reverse the Arctic drilling ban the USA has imposed.

Canada

Canada has the second longest coastline in the Arctic claiming the larger marine territory than any other country outside Russia. On 20 December 2016, Barack Obama and Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, jointly agreed upon a ban on drilling in the Arctic. Despite their differences on the Arctic issue, this proves that they are inspired by a spirit of cooperation and have a plan for the management of natural resources. An unresolved territorial dispute in the Beaufort Sea puts in danger the Americano-Canadian relations, but so far there are no tensions or threats of armed conflict.

China

Although China is not bordering the Arctic Ocean, it has argued for governance rights and joint exploitation of resources as it is a "near Arctic" country. China was awarded the observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013, which gave her the right to participate in the discussions but not to vote. In 2016, China said that it would send a cargo ship through the NWP, and thus it increased tensions with Canada.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
16 November 1994	The UNCLOS enters into force a year after Guyana became the 60th nation to ratify the treaty.

<p>19 September 1996</p>	<p>The Ottawa Declaration on the establishment of the Arctic Council.</p>
<p>20 December 2001</p>	<p>Russia files a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) explaining that Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of its continental shelf. The Commission answered in 2002 arguing that additional research is necessary.</p>
<p>13 July 2005</p>	<p>In an operation code-named “Exercise Frozen Beaver”, Canadian forces replaced a previously planted Danish flag with a Canadian one and left a plaque and an Inukshuk—a stone marker— on Hans Island, an uninhabited island that both Denmark and Canada claim in order to symbolically assert their sovereignty.</p>
<p>1 December 2006</p>	<p>The Norwegian government publishes the “High North Strategy” which states that the Arctic is its foreign policy’s utmost priority.</p>
<p>6 February 2008</p>	<p>Under the Bush Administration, approximately 80 million acres in the Arctic Ocean were opened to energy development in light of the 2007-2012 offshore drilling plans. Six sales were planned, but only one occurred—Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193— because later on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit declared the plan illegal.</p>
<p>27 March ,2009</p>	<p>Norway receives a proposal from the CLCS on its 27 November 2006 submission to the Commission. The recommendation helps Norway to clarify territorial disputes in the Barents Sea, the Arctic Ocean, the Norwegian and the Greenland Seas.</p>

12 July 2011	President Obama signs the Executive Order 13580 aiming to establish the Interagency Working Group on Coordination of Domestic Energy Development and Permitting in Alaska.
2013	Canada is expected to file a claim to the CLCS asserting its power over the Lomonosov Ridge.
2014	Denmark is expected to submit its claim to the CLCS maintaining that Lomonosov Ridge is part of its territory. Russia, Denmark and Canada claim this region.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

Entered into force in 1994.

Parties: 150 (the USA, Egypt, Sudan have signed but not ratified it).

The Convention establishes a legal framework setting out maritime boundaries, the continental shelf, the high seas and conservation of resources in the high seas. It is directly connected to the topic at hand, since it has set the 200 nautical mile EEZ preventing any overexploitation of resources and conflicts among the coastal Arctic countries. In 1994, the USA has signed the Agreement on Implementation but not ratified the Convention, because 2/3 of the votes in the US Senate were required for its ratification. Many republicans maintained that the Convention was not in favor of the US interests, and thus the 2/3 majority has not been achieved and the Convention was not ratified. The Convention has created three international institutions: the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)

It is a judicial body established to resolve any dispute arising from the different interpretations of the UNCLOS. However, no dispute in the Arctic Circle escalated so much that it had to be brought to the Tribunal. In any case, if in the future tensions between littoral countries increase in the region, the abovementioned court could be regarded as a solution to resolving a conflict. In order for a case to be brought to the court, a state needs to initiate a proceeding against another state.

International Seabed Authority (ISA)

The ISA has the duty to organize and regulate all mineral-related activities and extractions in order to ensure that there is no overexploitation of natural resources and minerals are extracted in a socially optimal way. ISA's contribution in tackling the issues of the Arctic Circle is small. The reasons for this are the unfinished process of delineation of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction and the lack of information for Arctic deep seafloor and resources. If the information increases, the ISA could definitely

contribute to the efficient management of natural resources which would lead to long-term economic growth.

Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)

The purpose of the Commission is to facilitate the implementation of the UNCLOS by taking into account data brought forward by states concerning the outer limits of their continental shelf anywhere it exceeds 200 nautical miles providing the states with recommendations and scientific data for the establishment of those limits. All Arctic States have submitted their claims to the Arctic Circle except for the USA.

Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean

Ratified on 7 July 2011

This Treaty resolved a 40-year dispute over a 67,000 square miles area in the Barents Sea to which both Norway and Russia had raised a claim. The area is believed to have huge amounts of natural reserves but until then the two countries had been unable to explore them. The Treaty divided the region in two equal parts and both countries are now able to explore its vast reserves.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

Although the disputes resulting from the extraction of natural resources are crucial, there have been no major conflicts so far that could negatively influence the Arctic States' economies. This is due to the fact that the UNCLOS in combination with its established organs does not leave much room for disagreement on the part the states. This proves the success of the UNCLOS in tackling these issues.

With regards to previous economic policies and measures adopted to tackle the "Resource curse" and the adverse economic effects the existence of natural resources has on states' economies, there are some examples of successful policies. Norway, which is heavily dependent on oil, managed to counter the "Resource curse" and avoided the unsustainable use of its resources achieving sustained economic growth. It limited government spending in order to balance its budget and keep inflation low. It invested budget surpluses in education and training of human capital and infrastructure and implemented policies that contributed to the development of small- and medium-sized local enterprises in underdeveloped natural resources related industries, thus diversifying its economy. It ensured low levels of corruption, sound regulatory bureaucracies and transparency in the decision-making system.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Although Norway was successful in tackling the "Resource curse," not many countries have managed to counter the adverse effects of the abundance of natural resources. With Russia's increased military presence in the Arctic and the ice gradually melting, territorial disputes might also arise, which would devastate the economies of the countries dependent on natural resources.

There are many solutions states should find in order to strike a balance between the extraction of natural resources and economic growth. Firstly, any kind of monopoly power in the extraction and ownership of the natural resources should be reduced.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) like Shell, BP and Esso, control huge natural resources. As a result, profits go to a small portion of major stakeholders instead of flowing into the countries' economies. Also, MNCs usually pay a lower business tax because many countries want them to invest, which means that there is lower tax revenue for the governments. Developing economies with large firms might also be subject to corruption, when natural resources concessions are given to the MNCs by the governments. In order to limit monopoly power, the countries should consider enacting legislation that promotes competition, forbids the formation of monopolies, punishes collusion among oligopolistic firms and regulates mergers (firms joining together) by limiting the size of the merged firms. Nationalization, i.e. the transfer of a firm's ownership from the private to the public sector is also an effective policy of countering private monopoly power, although here lays the risk of creating state monopolies. Trade liberalization, i.e. the removal of trade protectionist measures (tariffs, quotas) in order to facilitate trade is also an effective policy in limiting monopoly power. In this way, competition from abroad gives firms incentives to lower their prices, and thus their power is limited.

Moreover, the economy needs to diversify and not rely solely on exports of natural resources. Countries should not only export raw materials but also process them in order to produce manufactured goods and refrain from being dependent on volatile commodity prices. Subsidies can be given by the government to small- and medium-sized local enterprises in order to support the manufacturing and service sector. Also, governments should fund training and education of human capital so that low-skilled workers employed in extracting resources and mining businesses can be retrained and employed in the manufacturing and service sector.

Lastly, the UNCLOS, ISA, CLCS and ITLOS should be further endorsed and the countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention should be advised to do so. In this way, future disputes can be prevented, as military conflicts would devastate not only the involved states' economies but also the global economy.

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