

NATO

*Advanced
Specialized*



TOPICS: Addressing Conflicts in the Black Sea,
NATO's Involvement in the Arctic Circle

CHAIRS: Callie Boren, Matthew Hendrex

LAIMUN XXIX

December 2-3

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Letter from the Secretaries-General

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of our entire staff, it is our pleasure to welcome you to Session XXIX of the Los Angeles Invitational Model United Nations (LAIMUN) conference. LAIMUN XXIX will take place on Saturday, December 2 and Sunday, December 3 of 2023 at the Mira Costa High School (MCHS) campus.

Our staff, composed of over 120 MCHS students, has been working tirelessly to make your debate experience the best it can be. You will find your dais members to be knowledgeable about the issues being debated and MUN procedure. We pride ourselves in hosting a conference that is educational and engaging, and we hope you take advantage of that as you prepare and debate.

At LAIMUN, we value thorough research and preparation. We ask that delegates write position papers following [these directions](#). The deadline to submit position papers to be considered for Committee and Research Awards is Friday, November 24 at 11:59 PM PT. The deadline to submit to be considered for Committee Awards is Thursday, November 30 at 11:59 PM PT.

We also encourage all delegates to read the [LAIMUN Rules of Procedure](#) for conference-specific information and as a reminder of points and motions that can be made during committee.

Feel free to reach out to our staff with any questions or concerns you may have. Delegates can find their chairs' contact information next to their committee profile and the Secretariat's email addresses on the staff page. Any member of the LAIMUN staff will be happy to assist you.

We look forward to seeing you in December!

Sincerely,

Akash Mishra and Lily Stern
Secretaries-General, LAIMUN XXIX
secretarygeneral@mchsmun.org



Introduction to the USG

Hi Delegates!

My name is Aidan Tacinelli and I am honored to welcome you to LAIMUN XXIX! In my fourth and final year of Model UN at Mira Costa, I am the Under Secretary-General of the Specialized Branch, and I cannot wait to see what everyone has prepared for debate.

In the Specialized Branch, we have selected extremely current and pressing topics that will require research and preparedness. Be sure to bring your creative solutions, accurate country policy, and active enthusiasm to each of your respective committees. All of our chairs are excited to see the level of debate brought about by delegates, and are ready to accommodate you in any way that they can.

With that being said, we want to create a safe space for everyone to share their ideas and form solutions as a community. Please do your part in being respectful to other delegates and your chairs. Every staff member is held to a high level of professionalism, which you can return by dressing appropriately and following LAIMUN's guidelines.

We do not tolerate plagiarism or pre-written resolutions in any aspect. If any delegate is found to have plagiarized on their position paper, resolutions, or even speeches, they will be disqualified from receiving committee awards.

Don't forget to submit your position papers, prepare your speaking, and print out any papers you may need.

I can't wait to see each committee's resolutions and the passion that comes along with them. If you have any questions, you can reach me at specialized@mchsmun.org! You can also look on the LAIMUN XXIX website to email any of your chairs or other members of our secretariat.

Best of luck,

Lily Stern and Akash Mishra
Secretaries-General

Aidan Tacinelli
Under-Secretary General

Introduction to the Dias

Hello Delegates!

My name is Callie Boren and I will be one of your co-chairs along with Matthew for NATO Advanced. I am a Senior here at Mira Costa and I have been in the MUN program since freshman year. I was lucky enough to travel to New York last year and participate in NHSMUN as well as MUNUC. Travel conferences are always such a fun and unique opportunity that I hope you all will get to experience during your MUN career.

Besides being a part of MUN, I am on the Costa track team and I love practices after school with my friends and teammates. I love going to the beach with my friends and sunset swims are definitely my favorite. I also really enjoy traveling, I have been lucky enough to visit several countries in Europe and some islands too. Whenever you travel, something inevitably goes wrong, but those stories always make for the best memories. During debate, something may not go your way, and you just have to keep pushing forward. Remember to stay calm and have fun!

For NATO Advanced, I really want to see delegates find more specific areas of this topic that are not as widely discussed. There are so many ways to address this topic, so I am looking for delegates who stand out with unique solutions and detailed research. I also would love to see a focus on more recent events and how they affect both topics. I am excited for debate this year and I cannot wait to see you all!

Best of Luck -- Callie Boren

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Hello delegates!

My name is Matthew Hendrex and I will be your co-chair along with Callie in the NATO Advanced debate for LAIMUN XXIX. I am a junior at Mira Costa High and I have been in the MUN program since my freshman year. Outside of the program, I have been playing club volleyball for nearly five years along with school indoor and beach for two. I really enjoy going to the beach with my friends and I always appreciate a good TV show to binge. I would have to say that my favorite show that I have watched is The Good Place, because of how fun and imaginative the plot was. One of my all time favorite things to do is to go outside and play volleyball with my friends. I love playing with my dog, listening to music, and going on walks. Please reach out if you have any music recommendations; I always love to know what other peoples taste is!

I am so excited to hear the solutions to the topics that we chose. We worked to create topics that had some pressing issues that are currently prevalent in our world today. Within the NATO committee, I hope to listen to solutions that are very creative and effective in preventing issues of the topics. Do not feel afraid to reach out to either of the chairs if you have any concerns. We are thrilled to meet everyone during the debate!

Best regards,

Matthew Hendrex

Committee Description

To counter growing influences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed during the Cold War. More specifically, in 1947, France and the United Kingdom agreed to align themselves with defending against any possible Soviet attack. This agreement called the Treaty of Dunkirk, expanded with countries in the North Atlantic Treaty.¹ Currently, it is an international group of nations that serve as protection and consensus on a variety of issues.² There are thirty countries in NATO that underwent an application process to become accepted. Although most of its members are a part of the European Union, NATO focuses explicitly on responding to threats through the defense and political tactics. Each member agrees to defend another member nation against an external attack.³ The requirements of how much involvement each member state needs to provide depends on the conflict. For example, in the situation between Ukraine and Russia, the United States can only supply weapons. If they were to involve themselves in the air or with troops, they would be instigating a world war. Some countries, like Hungary, have recently voiced their disapproval of how the European Union and NATO handle the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. There are also countries awaiting approval to join NATO, like Finland and Sweden. The

¹ “All You Need to Know about NATO - from Member States to Map of Countries.” *NationalWorld*, 10 Aug. 2022, <https://www.nationalworld.com/news/world/what-is-nato-what-does-nato-stand-for-member-states-map-of-countries-are-ukraine-and-russia-involved-3541768>.

² Nato. “Enlargement and Article 10.” *NATO*, 5 July 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm.

³ “What Ukraine Reveals about NATO and the EU.” *Carnegie Europe*, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/86325>.

expansion of NATO is an essential aspect of the body as it is the largest military alliance.

Member countries must continue to focus on aligning themselves with those in need of support and coming together if any disagreement unleashes.

Topic A: Addressing Conflicts in the Black Sea

I. Background

The Black Sea is notoriously known as an area of conflict and contention amongst influential and powerful countries. It is considered a strategic body of water, due to its central location in the crossroad between Europe and Asia. The political and economic tension that arises from this centralized location has led to the Black Sea's part in several large conflicts. The countries that border the body of water include Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, and Russia— with three of these countries already a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), two interested in joining the alliance, and one in direct opposition to the alliance. Over the past few decades, ten wars have occurred around or directly within the Black Sea area, furthering the Black Sea's regular role in conflict.

The Black Sea's physical geography also poses a critical challenge, as there is only one entrance and exit to the Black Sea: the Bosphorus Strait. This physical limitation necessitated the implementation of the Montreux Convention of 1936, in which Turkey was allocated control of the water route between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to Turkey's designated control over the Black Sea water routes, the convention also outlined specific guidelines for military ships and their deployment in the Black Sea. Although the convention does encourage the freedom of navigation throughout the Strait, Turkey's rights to the Black Sea do include the power to restrict military ships in the event of war or major conflict. Thus, Turkey

consistently has a major role in conflicts associated with the Black Sea since the signing of the Montreux Convention agreement.

Several conflicts near the Black Sea have ensued, such as the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, where Russia attempted an invasion into Georgia. This conflict led to a significant increase in military aggressions throughout the Black Sea region, with fighting even occurring on the water itself. This violence came specifically in a battle off the coast of Abkhazia, a small territory in Georgia, between the Russian and Georgian Navies. Another important conflict that is located in the Black Sea region is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is mainly between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Turkey, however, was heavily involved in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict as they provided weapons and troops for Azerbaijan. Turkey's role in the conflict also impacts the Black Sea region as it maintains the most control of the region in its entirety.

While the Black Sea has been a part of several different conflicts in the past, it is also crucial to note its current role in the Russia-Ukraine War. Beginning in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea became an integral part of the war. As violence and tensions escalated in the years following the annexation, the body of water became the main battleground for all naval conflicts in the contested region. Because of this, Turkey decided to close the Bosphorus Strait to foreign countries' warships at the start of the 2022 Ukraine War, essentially blocking the Black Sea from other countries. The UN later became involved when Ukraine's ports were blockaded, with a deal luckily agreed upon through negotiations with Turkey and an

eventual agreement by both Kyiv and Moscow.⁴ The agreement allowed the Black Grain deal to continue, successfully avoiding mass starvation among civilians dependent on grain products from Ukraine. Within the first few days directly after the invasion, Ukrainian soldiers on Snake Island did not surrender to Russia, showcasing one of the first times Ukraine triumphed and was able to preserve their land from Russia.⁵ Ukraine has had a few vital and successful attempts at reducing Russia's naval power, with one being the sinking of the Russian Moskva missile cruiser on April 13th, 2022.⁶ The Russian Moskva missile cruiser was a significant part of Russia's Black Sea fleet and after Ukraine's success, continued naval attacks were launched on Russia through utilizing aerial and underwater drones. As conflict persists between the two countries, reporters observe the increase of ships in the Russian navy, noticing the transport of assault boats by road from the Baltic fleet to the Black Sea Fleet, and thus proving the critical role the Black sea has in the war. On June 11th, 2023, Russia reported that Ukraine had deployed 6 marine drones to attack Russia's warship, the Priazovye.⁷ The Ukrainian attempt against the Russian warship was proven unsuccessful, yet the naval forces continue to fight via the Black Sea. Russia

⁴ Harmash, Olena. "Ukraine says Russia has effectively stopped Black Sea grain deal." *Reuters*, 8 May 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-russia-has-effectively-stopped-black-sea-grain-deal-2023-05-08/>. Accessed 15 September 2023

⁵ Bigg, Matthew Mpoke. "The Black Sea is a crucial theater in the war between Russia and Ukraine." *The New York Times*, 14 March 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/14/world/europe/black-sea-russia-ukraine.html>. Accessed 15 September 2023.

⁶ Kadam, T. (2023a, March 1). *Russian Navy "crippled" in Ukraine War; top US military official says Kyiv effectively using weapons "we provided them."* Latest Asian, Middle-East, EurAsian, Indian News. <https://eurasiatimes.com/russian-navy-crippled-in-ukraine-war-top-us-military-official/>

⁷ Hagen, I. van. (n.d.). *Russia repelled a mass attack by Ukraine's high-speed marine drones on a reconnaissance warship in the Black Sea, Moscow says.* Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-repelled-attack-ukrainian-forces-warship-black-sea-russia-says-2023-6>

claims that the Priazovye ship was monitoring the major gas pipelines located in the Black Sea—the TurkStream and Blue Stream. These gas pipelines not only affect Russia and Ukraine by providing gas to both individual countries in this war, but also impact surrounding countries that depend on the gas from these pipelines. The TurkStream pipeline has a capacity of 31.5 billion cubic meters, which provides gas to both Turkey and Southern Europe.⁸ In order for European nations to maintain access to gas, conflicts in the Black Sea need to be resolved.

While the naval aspect of the war is an important factor to the overall outcome, another contributing aspect is the commercial relevance of the Black Sea. Recently, Ukraine and Russia reached an agreement in which the Black Sea Grain Deal was extended past its original expiration date. The extension of the grain deal allows Ukraine to continue shipping grain through blockaded ports until July 16th of 2023. Grain exportation across the Black Sea continues to be an economic advantage for Ukraine, but also impacts other countries that depend on that grain to feed their civilians. With this new agreement reached, Ukraine’s ships are allowed to travel past Russian naval ships— and with the Black Sea Grain Initiative— a humanitarian maritime corridor for Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey, is preserved. Although Russia has agreed to the current extension, Guterres is concerned that Russia may abandon the deal in July, leaving many grain-dependent people in starvation.⁹

II. UN Involvement

⁸ Person. (2023, June 12). *Russia says Ukraine tried to attack Russian ship near Major Gas Pipelines in Black Sea*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-says-ukraine-tried-attack-russian-ship-near-major-gas-pipelines-black-sea-2023-06-11/>

⁹ Person, & Nichols, M. (2023, June 12). *Un chief concerned Russia will quit Black Sea Grain Deal in July*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/un-chief-concerned-russia-will-quit-black-sea-grain-deal-july-2023-06-12/>

The United Nations has continued to put forth solutions and increase collaboration between countries within the Black Sea region. The UN has always been involved with international waters and has negotiated agreements many times before. During the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the right to control the international straits globally was established, yet in regards to the specific entrance in the Black Sea, the Montreux Convention was given the power to regulate the Turkish Strait. However, as conflict escalates between Russia and Ukraine, the UN has attempted to ensure humanitarian relief for civilians negatively impacted by the fighting. Their plan included the preservation of food resources and stabilization of food prices from both Ukraine and Russia, done in order to protect millions from starvation.

The Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) is another UN body that was created in order to implement and ensure the success of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The JCC has been hosted in Istanbul and consisted of representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Nations itself. One of the roles of the JCC teams is to monitor and check ships entering or exiting through the Ukrainian ports— done so with the use of UN inspectors. A large vessel sent by the UN World Food Program containing 30,000 metric tons of wheat was even checked by the JCC when traveling through the Black Sea, as part of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The UN Food Program attempts to provide food security for many affected by the conflict, with the Black Sea being an important part of the shipping routes.

The UN has remained relatively active in regards to the Black Sea and has decided to develop two task forces. One of these task forces emphasizes the protection of grain shipments through the Black Sea, and the other prioritizes Russian exports of food and fertilizers. The UN

humanitarian affairs chief is in charge of the Ukrainian task force, and the head of the development body of UNCTAD organizes the task force focused on Russian exports.¹⁰

Additionally, the UN Secretary General has remained both observant and involved within the Ukrainian and Russian issues concerning the Black Sea— noting in an update on May 17th, 2023— that Russia has agreed to continue the Black Sea Grain Initiative for an additional 60 days. The Secretary General commented that this was a success, but continued to express concern for after the expiration of this agreement. The UN has continuously examined the Black Sea area and works to ensure the safety of surrounding civilians, and preservation of peace between countries.

III. Topics to Consider

A. Illicit Business

Unlawful commerce has become a major issue in the Black Sea region as a result of criminal groups participating in a variety of illegal activities, including human trafficking, money laundering, arms smuggling, and drug trafficking. With that, the Black Sea has recently become a hot spot for heroin shipping and transport into Western Europe and Asia, with the Azerbaijani customs department recording one of the greatest heroin seizures in the area in 2019.¹¹ This has not been the only case of heroin smuggling, however, as Ukrainian police have seized nearly 600 kilograms of Afghan sourced heroin. Although there are known instances of recent seizures of illicit substances, much is unknown about the true scale of this regional smuggling.

¹⁰United Nations. (n.d.). *Black Sea Grain Initiative | Joint Coordination Centre*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative>

¹¹ *Black Sea: A rising tide of illicit business?*. Global Initiative. (2020a, April 3). <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/black-sea-illicit-flows/>

Money laundering has also been seen as a major issue in the Black Sea, with one high-profile money laundering case being the Russian Laundromat. Between the years 2010 and 2014, authority figures in Latvia and Moldova have tracked nearly \$20 billion in dirty money that spread into many countries including the US and areas in Europe.¹² The laundromat worked like a shadow banking system where a lot of Russian elites and businessmen were utilizing the scheme to benefit.

Many of the efforts to combat many of these illicit crimes have been restricted by weak law enforcement, corruption, as well as a major lack in resources. These issues are a significant threat to regional security and stability, making it an important topic to discuss in ensuring that no further conflicts continue.

B. Territorial Disputes

The Black Sea has grown to become a serious concern for many NATO members due to the many border and land disputes; the region has had more conflicts than any other maritime sea.¹³ Some examples of these disputes include the Russian-Georgian War, Ukrainian and Russian wars, the first and second Nagorno-Karabakh wars, as well as first and second Chechen wars. Remaining a hotspot for conflict has led the area to become a large issue for security.

The Black Sea is mostly prone to such violence and war for a lot of reasons, although its location and region are the main contributors. The Black Sea is one of the most strategically

¹² Guardian News and Media. (2017, March 20). *The Global Laundromat: How Did It Work and who benefited?*. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/20/the-global-laundromat-how-did-it-work-and-who-benefited>

¹³Hess, M. (2022a, April 25). *Welcome to the Black Sea era of war*. Foreign Policy.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/25/black-sea-war-russia-ukraine-turkey/>

placed areas, as it is located between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The region has many significant transportation routes that connect to the Mediterranean Sea, which is another important body of water for states to control. Not only that, but the sea is rich in resources, including gas and oil, which only increases the competition between states that are near. These disputes that take place lead to drastic changes to countries' economies and citizens' lives.

In the Russian annexation of Crimea alone, corporations in Russia spent about 4.2 percent of their gross domestic product.¹⁴ This was due to the severe sanctions that were imposed on Russia after their illegal annexation, which forced them to slow their efforts. In addition, Ukraine was one of Russia's largest trading partners, which led to a devastating loss after the dispute. Almost every other territorial dispute that occurred in the Black Sea Region has led to large impacts that have left numerous repercussions on multiple NATO countries. Minimizing the rate and frequency at which conflict occurs will ensure security and the safety of citizens.

C. Rising Refugee Challenges

Although the Black Sea does not experience the same level of refugee conflict as other regions of the world, there has been a significant increase in the number of migrants and refugees arriving from places like Afghanistan, Syria, and other war-torn nations—necessitating the need to address the issue. Numerous individuals have fled their countries and traveled across the Black Sea to find safety, mostly in Ukraine, which has been severely impacted by the Russian invasion.

¹⁴ Mirovalev, M. (2021, May 24). *The devastating human, economic costs of Crimea's annexation*. News | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/21/the-devastating-human-economic-costs-of-crimeas-annexation>

One common occurrence that has happened in the Black Sea is the smuggling and trafficking of these refugees and migrants. The main reason as to why these groups are victims to smugglings is because of poverty issues. People would be lured into the situation through the promise of a better economic environment, later setting them up for potential trafficking. In addition, there is such corruption and lack of governance that the region becomes one where criminal organizations can act with a sense of immunity. The Black Sea has always been a major transit point for all sorts of illegal activity, which provides the framework to human trafficking.

With that, the Black Sea is often a highly dangerous route for refugees to take, especially when compared to other options such as the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁵ Smugglers often crossed refugees through the sea as test subjects. In September of 2017, smugglers took over 150 passengers to Romania from Iraq through the Black Sea, when reports in November estimated twenty-one people had drowned. Most of the people traveling on the Black Sea were not respected at all: they would be tightly packed onto ships, treated with the worst conditions, and were refused any form of accommodations. There have been many other incidents like this, and some where people have been taken and trafficked. By focusing on this topic, ideas and ways to combat mistreatment of refugees can be elaborated on.

IV. Case Study: Russian Annexation of Crimea

In 1991, Crimea was given to the newly independent Ukraine as the Soviet Union dissolved. However, it became clear that over time, the Crimean Peninsula had important geopolitical and economic worth for Russia– with Russia becoming extremely interested in

¹⁵ Mihala, L. (2017, December 9). “*tolerated*” in Romania after Surviving Deadly Black Sea. Refugees | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/12/9/refugees-tolerated-after-crossing-deadly-black-sea>

holding onto the peninsula as a result of this realization. Annexing Crimea was seen by Russia as a way to not only push back NATO and European Union expansion, but secure its access to the Black Sea. In the Black Sea, there are many natural resources that are beneficial for Russia, coupled with proximity to an area that was important for transportation. If in control of Crimea, Russia would have a tactical advantage in the area with heightened geopolitical sway.

When armed personnel— who were later identified as Russian soldiers— quickly infiltrated crucial installations in Crimea in February of 2014, tensions dramatically rose. Russia's swift invasion and coordination suggested that they had a definite plan to impose their control over the area, with a firm hold over the peninsula occurring in a matter of weeks. This issue was brought to the Crimean Supreme court, where a vote was held, in which there were two options given: the choice between joining Russia or establishing Crimea's original position as autonomous. Authorities then reported a vote of 83 percent with 96.7 percent having voted to initiate Crimea into Russia.¹⁶

These numbers seemed as though they were implausible, since Crimea was a multicultural area with a sizable Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian community that made up about 40% of its population. This had led to major doubts about the voting's legitimacy. The annexation of Crimea had violated multiple international agreements, including the 1994 Budapest Memorandum of Security Assurances for Ukraine, as well as the UN Charter, which is the reason as to why many people saw this act as unethical.

¹⁶Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.-a). *History of Crimea*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Crimea/History>

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine, demonstrated his passion to pursue all diplomatic and legal options to regain Crimea since the annexation. Zelenskyy has actively sought assistance from Ukraine's allies, with the collective members of NATO having made significant efforts to give Ukraine the support and aid it needs. Through training initiatives, logistical assistance, and the delivery of military hardware, the alliance has closely collaborated with Ukraine to strengthen its defense capabilities. Individual NATO member states have also played a large role in helping Ukraine defend itself through contributing military equipment and defense systems. An example of one of the largest contributors towards Ukraine would be the United States, providing around \$39.7 billion in security assistance.¹⁷

Even today, the fight to reduce the impact of the Crimean annexation and resolve the territorial conflict is ongoing. Through this breach of Ukraine's independence, the world's commitment to upholding the ideals of territorial integrity and observance of international law are put to the test. The hard work shown by the Ukrainian government and its supporters to resolve the conflict demonstrates a shared determination to pursue diplomatic solutions, while being ready to protect Ukraine's interests and restore Crimea to its original state..

This case is one of the most significant conflicts that has occurred within the Black Sea, and has not only put a strain on the two countries at war, but also on the countries that are working to provide aid and support. In being one of the Seas with the highest cases of conflict, it is important to recognize the strain that is created on bordering nations. To understand the

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State. (2023, June 14). *U.S. security cooperation with Ukraine - United States Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/>

severity behind conflicts within the black sea, it is important to recognize the specifics of the Crimean annexation, and areas where factors have been, and need to be improved.

V. Guiding Questions

1. How can NATO improve the active monsterization of the Black Sea?
2. In what ways can countries minimize the amount of illicit businesses being carried out through the utilization of the Black Sea?
3. How can NATO member states implement diplomatic solutions to combat territorial conflicts taking place at the Black Sea?
4. While addressing the political aspects of the Black Sea, it is also important to consider how best NATO can also protect and provide for civilians living in the Black Sea region?
5. How can delegates provide safety and reduce naval battles between Russia and Ukraine occurring in the Black Sea, eventually hoping to secure peace?
6. How would it be possible for NATO to minimize the amount of refugees and those who are human trafficked from crossing the Black Sea

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Mongilio, B. H., About Heather Mongilio Heather Mongilio is a reporter with USNI News.

She has a master's degree in science journalism and has covered local courts, & View all posts by Heather Mongilio →. (2023, February 24). *Russia, Ukraine in Black Sea stalemate a year into Russo-Ukraine conflict*. USNI News.

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RADM Brooks was a career naval intelligence officer who retired in 1991 as the Director of Naval Intelligence. As a young lieutenant during the Cold War. (2022, April 6). *Turkey, the Montreux Convention, and Russian navy transits of the Turkish Straits*. U.S. Naval

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Topic B: NATO's Involvement in the Arctic Circle

I. Background

The Arctic region has several roles on a global scale, and NATO has made it a priority to ensure security and stability within the Arctic Circle. Environmental concerns surrounding pollution and the deterioration of the Arctic ecosystem caused Finland to initiate the creation of an Arctic Council consisting of the eight Arctic countries. These eight countries included Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, and the United States.¹⁸ The council was officially formed in 1996 and was dedicated to protecting the environment and cooperation between the Arctic nations. The Arctic Council has 6 areas of major focus, which are Arctic Peoples, biodiversity, the state of the climate, the ocean, pollutants, and addressing pressing emergencies. Throughout the past decade, each of the eight countries has fought for rights and controls of certain areas in the Arctic Circle as the region contains many valuable minerals and resources. The current approximation of untapped oil in the Arctic Circle is about 22%, which encourages disputes between Arctic countries for the rights to the land.¹⁹

Additionally, rare earth minerals are a profitable resource located in the Arctic Circle, again causing tension between the eight Arctic countries. With resource competition continuing to increase, essentially a New Cold War has emerged between NATO countries and other countries

¹⁸ Admin@gotechark.com. (2023, May 29). *The future of the high north*. NATO's ACT. <https://www.act.nato.int/article/the-future-of-the-high-north/#:~:text=The%20Arctic%20region%20carries%20significant,an%20important%20priority%20for%20NATO.>

¹⁹ *The winds of the new Cold War are howling in the Arctic Circle: The second newsletter (2023)*. Tricontinental. (2023, January 13). <https://thetricontinental.org/newsletterissue/arctic-circle-new-cold-war/>

such as Russia and China. Competition between these countries has led to a militarization race and each member of the Arctic Circle has already developed military bases along the rim of the Circle.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, NATO has had a more active and significant role in the Arctic, practically replacing the Arctic Council and becoming the major influence in the Arctic region. NATO has been mainly operating out of the Center for Cold Weather Operations, which based in Norway, primarily gathers to practice military exercises and grant NATO with usable computer software in such cold temperatures to gather data and find points to strengthen the climate. In 2007, Russian scientists placed a titanium flag on the Arctic seabed, further fueling the militarization race in the Arctic and increasing tensions between the countries. Other notable militarization actions by countries include the United States' Thule Air Base located in Greenland which has been operational since the 1950s. In addition, Canada is currently in the construction process of developing the Nanisivik Naval Facility on Baffin Island, which is aiming to be functioning in 2023. As the climate continues to deteriorate over the past several years, the melting of ice has in turn opened new channels and pathways through the Arctic ocean, intensifying the pre-existing competition for power between countries. Throughout the past two decades, Russia has predominantly been the major country in the Arctic with access to the 15,000 miles of Arctic coastline bordering it.²⁰ In addition to their large quantity of coastline,

²⁰ *A battle for the Arctic is underway. and the U.S. is already behind.* POLITICO. (n.d.). <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/12/17/climate-change-arctic-00071169>

Russia has constructed 475 military bases on its northern border.²¹ Russia is aiming to soon control the Northern Sea Route, which may be available by 2035 based on the current trends of melting sea ice. The United States is clearly a main contributor to NATO and has developed the National Strategy for the Arctic region in order to account for climate change's impact on their own military forces. Within the United States' National Security Strategy, their policy clearly outlines that there is a concern that unintended conflict will result from Russia's war in the Ukraine.

Given the escalating Russia and Ukraine war, NATO, and its members, have altered their involvement in the Arctic Circle in response to the war. Russia has remained a key player in the Arctic, yet NATO countries are planning to boycott upcoming communication meetings with Russia due to their invasion of Ukraine. As Russia has demonstrated signs of expanding further into the Arctic Circle, NATO allies have put forth demonstrative actions to highlight that they will not allow Russia to dominate and overpower each individual country's current rights in the Arctic region. Russia has been calculating specific military exercises for their nuclear forces and, although this has not yet become a large enough action to warrant combat in the Arctic, it is still a cause for concern among many of the NATO members. Therefore, in 2022, the NATO Secretary General claimed that NATO must increase its presence in the Arctic region as a result of Russia's continued military exercises. It was reported that Russia began storing hypersonic missiles in the Arctic Circle, which spurred NATO into recognizing the impending threat of

²¹ Guardian News and Media. (2023, June 13). *As the ice melts, a perilous Russian threat is emerging in the arctic* | Barry Gardiner. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/13/arctic-russia-nato-putin-climate>

Russian expansion in the Arctic. Because of the Russia and Ukraine War, both Finland and Sweden have requested to join NATO for further protection and safety during this crucial time of uncertainty. Finland was accepted and officially joined NATO in April, and Sweden is currently in the process of joining the alliance. As NATO is continuing to expand, Russia will soon be encircled by members of the NATO alliance. Russia is suspected of utilizing expansion in the Arctic as means to further their dominance on a global level, and assert power over the other countries who have claims in the Arctic region as of now. Russia has launched a new Arctic Command as of last year, and continues to increase their military presence in the Arctic. Although Putin pledged that this new Command was created to protect the Arctic waters, NATO is worried about their Arctic military potential.

Lastly, although the Russia-Ukraine War remains a crucial focus of NATO, another major point is the inevitable climate change that NATO is attempting to solve. Throughout the past 30 years, a 30% decline in the quantity of summer sea ice has been observed, thus tasking NATO with the fact that the Arctic is currently warming 2 to 3 times faster than it was predicted.²² As NATO is in the process of developing solutions to this climate crisis, they simultaneously are brainstorming ways to handle the new trade routes that will be created from the lack of ice in the Arctic. In the 2021 NATO conference, the Climate Change and Security Action Plan was agreed upon by the major NATO leaders to both increase awareness of climate change and mitigate the effects of climate change. Because of the loss of ice in the Arctic, NATO will have to adjust their

²² Guardian News and Media. (2023, June 13). *As the ice melts, a perilous Russian threat is emerging in the arctic* | Barry Gardiner. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/13/arctic-russia-nato-putin-climate>

Search and Rescue missions in addition to their supply routes and future exercises that use Unmanned Air Vehicles. The noticeable depletion in the ozone layer above the Arctic results in increased radiation, another factor that NATO must consider in moving forward with new policies. Escalating tensions and competition is creating more pressure on NATO to respond with a new policy that maintains peace and stability within the region, while also addressing the drastic climate change that the world faces today.

II. UN Involvement

The United Nations has been fairly active and effective in regards to the Arctic Circle and has focused on the environmental aspects as well as the tension between countries. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982 established that the 5 countries that border the Arctic Ocean are permitted to claim 12 nautical miles off of their coasts as their own territory, and are also permitted to develop an exclusive economic zone that is up to 200 nautical miles off of their coast.²³

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has been particularly active in the Arctic region and, in 1991, they developed the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy.²⁴ The UNEP also collaborates with 6 Arctic Council working groups to address parts of climate

²³ Bmuv. (2023). *Legal order in the Arctic*. Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection. <https://www.bmuv.de/en/topics/europe-international/international/multilateral-cooperation/the-arctic/legal-order-in-the-arctic#:~:text=The%20UN%20Convention%20on%20the,up%20to%20200%20nautical%20miles>.

²⁴ Environment, U. (n.d.). *Arctic region*. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/working-regional-seas/regional-seas-programmes/arctic-region>

change.²⁵ A notable Arctic Council group is Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), which aims to provide protection for the marine environment in the Arctic. PAME's goals include assessments and the creation of guidelines for the Arctic marine environment to ensure the health of the ecosystem, as well as control excess competition for resources in the Arctic. Additionally, the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris of 2015 directly referenced the Arctic as a major topic of concern, with the Paris Agreement outlining the limit of a 2 degree Celsius increase— which the world's temperature quickly approached.

Furthermore, the UN has been involved in the shipping restrictions for countries who utilize the Arctic Ocean. In 2002, the International Maritime Organization passed guidelines for ships located in the Arctic Ocean that are typically covered by ice. In particular, the guidelines drew attention to hazards ships will encounter when crossing the Arctic, while also noting the prevention of pollution from ships. The Sustainable Development Goals created by the UN have an important impact for the Arctic as several of the goals address climate change. It is important for the Arctic Council to continue supporting and working on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, so that the excessive climate change can be reduced and the Arctic Environment can be protected. While the UN has worked to develop solution oriented policy for climate change, the complex militarization is not as thoroughly addressed by the UN. Thus, as the Russia-Ukraine War continues to plague the world, it is important to consider next steps to limit competition and develop realistic guidelines for the new trade routes that will soon be open.

²⁵ Environment, U. (n.d.-a). *Arctic region*. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/working-regional-seas/regional-seas-programmes/arctic-region>

III. Topics to Consider

A. Security

From the 1980's to now, the Arctic Circle has slowly transformed in its physical shape. More streamlines have opened up, making the area an even greater target for countries to control it. In turn, this has caused a heightened risk to potential conflicts that can not only affect the NATO countries' security, but the security of the native people. From NATO's standpoint, the largest and most prominent competitors towards their security are the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

Under the power of Vladimir Putin, Russia has worked endlessly to boost their polar territories in order to gain control of the Arctic Circle. For instance, their 2035 Arctic Strategy plans to take over the northern riches that have become more accessible because of the melting ice. Not only has Russia played a major role in breaching the security in the Arctic Circle, but China has as well. While they may not have the initial Arctic territory, it has not prevented China from displaying their desire to expand their influence in the High North. In China's 2018 declaration, they labeled themselves as a close Arctic power, and additionally designated a considerable investment for the polar region.²⁶ In this event, Russia seems to possibly be a partner to the ambitions of the Chinese, as they have had individual attempts in the area of Greenland that were ineffective due to intervention caused by the United States. If both the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China were to be working together, they would

²⁶Mottola, L. (2023, January 19). *NATO's arctic command: A case for the expansion of NATO's mission in the High North*. The Arctic Institute - Center for Circumpolar Security Studies. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/nato-arctic-command-case-expansion-nato-mission-high-north/>

pose an extreme source of power that would challenge NATO's cooperative order, and harm the efforts working to protect the North.

There is also seen to be an importance of the environmental and economic issues in the Arctic Circle. Today, these kinds of issues are widely considered to be serious threats to stability and security of the nations in the area. Currently the Arctic contains some of the greatest amounts of uranium, oils and gas, diamonds, gold, copper, nickel, iron ore, and fish that are undiscovered to the world.²⁷ Since there are so many resources that have not been collected, there is more reason to believe that challenges and races to reach these items will be enacted, leaving the Arctic at major risk of security breaches and conflict..

B. Maritime Activity

As the Arctic Circle continues to melt, more sea routes tend to appear, causing more and more countries to work harder to take control of the area. In addition, Maritime activity is growing rapidly, demonstrating a prevalent issue that is arising. One reason for the desire to travel in the Arctic is the faster routes that it contains. In 2017, the Russian *Christophe de Margerie*, the carrier to the Russian icebreaking liquefied natural gas (LNG), transited the Northern Sea Route of 2193 nautical miles in a little over six days.²⁸ In nineteen days, they traveled from Hammerfest, Norway, to Boryeong, South Korea. This is a very notable feat, as this is almost thirty percent faster than the route that is often taken, the Suez Canal. This achievement has piqued the interests of China and Russia, as they believe it could be used as a

²⁷Arctic security: A global challenge - Marco Marsili, 2022 - sage journals. (n.d.). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09735984221120299>

²⁸Gosnell, R. (2022, October 17). *The complexities of Arctic Maritime Traffic*. The Arctic Institute - Center for Circumpolar Security Studies. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/complexities-arctic-maritime-traffic/>

more efficient route than the Suez Canal. Even though it demonstrated impressive statistics, it raises questions on the governance and viability in the North. Issues mainly arise in the lack of infrastructure that is located in the area. The region has poor communications coverage, making regional travel much more difficult. Furthermore, only those with high experience in Arctic traveling are able to cross— due to the complicated, icy conditions. Overall, the region is one that has an extremely hostile environment.

Norway is one of the countries that is experiencing the most growth in Maritime activity, especially in shipping traffic. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has recorded a forty-two percent increase in the amount of ships crossing through Svalbard and the Arctic Circle, all in the time span of nine years.²⁹ In respect to Russian and Icelandic water, which has seen an increase of roughly ten percent, Norway is experiencing immense transit. The newfound Maritime activity in the Arctic Circle is leaving room for severe impacts on the environment and the lives of citizens, leading to a needed change in the rate at which boats are crossing the region.

C. NATO's Limitations

From Russia's newly developed and expanded military facilities that are spread along the Arctic Circle, to, out of the eight Arctic states, three of the states are not NATO members, and China's investments to diplomatic and maritime activities in the Arctic, there is not much room for NATO to play a greater role in the region. Creating a policy that would find solutions to the issues that may impact NATO, is extremely difficult. This difficulty occurs because in order to

²⁹zText Malte Humpert. (2023, March 7). *Norway sees greatest increase in Arctic shipping traffic*. High North News. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/norway-sees-greatest-increase-arctic-shipping-traffic>

work in the Arctic, NATO requires a consensus on those with a pending initiative veto power. In addition, it can be difficult to agree on a solution as many members may not appeal to NATO support. A reason why NATO members are so skeptical of the possibility of an increased focus in the Arctic Circle is that they see conflicts in Ukraine, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Balkans with greater importance and necessity for NATO assistance.³⁰ NATO also finds many complications as they have not developed a cohesive strategy for the Arctic. There is a large stress for the need to develop a code of conduct for military action, as it would limit the risk of miscalculation.³¹

The need to form a policy on the increased NATO support comes from the unlikely possibility that Russia may attack European NATO members. A front may be opened by Russia in the Arctic Circle that would be used during a NATO conflict. Moreover, China is another player that poses a great threat in the Arctic region, that may entail NATO assistance in the area. This is because their scientific activities in the region have the possibility to form the groundwork for military activities.

IV. Case Study: Russia-Ukraine War: Impact on the Arctic Circle

The Russia-Ukraine war started in 2014 when Russia had sent troops into the Donbas area of Ukraine. As nearly seven years passed, around 14000 citizens were killed in the area of eastern Ukraine. Up to the year 2022, a full scale invasion into Ukraine was enacted in attempt to

³⁰NATO in the arctic: Keep its role limited, for now. War on the Rocks. (2020, October 12). <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/nato-in-the-arctic-keep-its-role-limited-for-now/>

³¹ Bennet, M. (2020, May 6). *NATO's role in securing a changing arctic*. The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. <https://jsis.washington.edu/news/natos-role-in-securing-a-changing-arctic/>

gain back territory that Russia believed was theirs.³² From the attacks and conflicts, Russia utilized the area of the Arctic region as a way of gaining more military power and control, in order to aid their goal in taking over Ukraine, and potentially harming the security of NATO.

According to the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), the war between the two countries could, and will, raise Arctic tensions geopolitically. Russia has proved this multiple times throughout the war, seen through their many attempts to expand their military power and strength across the region. For example, Russia's Red Arctic objective allowed them to sustain their military stance in the Arctic. Furthermore, they were able to demonstrate their military capabilities of deterring other countries and operating directly from the region.³³ The motivation behind this military integration has been Russia's desire to display their defenses and strengths. Russia shows their defensive power through their ability to protect their homeland as well as the Arctic Circle regional economy, including the gas and oil projects. In contrast, they show their goals that relate to offensive acts. This includes projecting power through utilizing hybrid activities in the area to alarm other European countries in the region. While unlikely, they may also use the Arctic as a way to invade Finland or Norway, in order to protect their nuclear assets, through the making of a more wide scale defensive depth.

From Russia's growth of military influence into the Arctic region, mostly of use in acts against Ukraine, the possibility of a conflict between NATO member states and Russia is heavily

³²Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (2023, June 22). *Russia-Ukraine War*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2022-Russian-invasion-of-Ukraine>

³³Gross, M. (2020, December 2). *Geopolitical competition in the Arctic Circle*. Harvard International Review. <https://hir.harvard.edu/the-arctic-circle/>

amplified. This type of conflict may lead to drastic impacts throughout the Arctic area, which is why NATO members are creating plans to weigh the various solutions at play— working to implement those with minimal damage. If armed conflict is to take place in the area, it could harm the cooperation and coordinated efforts that the Arctic states, including Denmark, The United States, Iceland, Sweden, and more practiced—dating back to 1996³⁴. Currently, NATO and Russian troops are plotting around the area, having conducted some minor conflict in close proximity. With tensions rising in Ukraine from the stress placed by Russia, the tensions in the Arctic between Russia and NATO also rise. This Ukrainian conflict will lead to a heightened risk of coordination on regional interest and limits of communication between the major countries in power, The U.S. and Russia. In addition, the heightened tensions between Russia and Ukraine could result in the straining of Arctic governmental structure. The governance has many standards that were placed nationally— including treaties and laws, in accordance with the Arctic Council— that creates the governance forum. The forums have been important on bonding relations between NATO and Russia in the past.

It is important to acknowledge the reasons as to why the Ukrainian and Russian conflicts have played such a key role in impacting the Arctic and in drawing NATO's involvement in the area. Not only are Russia's actions in the Arctic a threat to NATO's security, but also to all of Europe's energy supply, as Russia contains one of the most shares of oil reserves— and sanctions on them would lead to a lack of crucial exports from the country. While it seems as though it

³⁴ Analytics, F. (2022, February 25). *How Russia's future with NATO will impact the Arctic*. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/25/arctic-ukraine-russia-china-eu-invasion-nato/>

may be possible to reduce Russia's spontaneous action, it must be done in a way that is supported by a majority of countries, making this situation one of the hardest to solve.

V. Guiding Questions

1. In what ways can NATO persuade Arctic countries to allow their assistance and support in the region?
2. How can NATO member states effectively prevent security breaches caused by main agitators?
3. How have other organizations or nations previously taken action in the Arctic Circle, and how can those actions be utilized now?
4. What is a viable solution that NATO can formulate in order to combat the continued climate crisis
5. In what ways can NATO positively impact the military competition that ensues based on climate change?
6. How can NATO create a logical policy to maintain equality with regards to new resources in the Arctic?

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