

Teaching Module: The Emerging Arctic

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The following discussion questions, essay questions, and in-class activities are designed to help educators use the "The Emerging Arctic" InfoGuide in the classroom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Geography and Climate

- What are the main drivers of change in the Arctic early in the twenty-first century?
- By what definition/criteria are the eight Arctic Council member states considered 'Arctic,' and how does this uniquely influence their conduct in the region?
- The Arctic region is home to roughly four million people. How well are the interests of these residents represented at the national and international levels? Approximately how many are indigenous peoples, and in which nations do they live? What major groups represent the Arctic indigenous peoples?
- How fast is the Arctic warming in comparison to lower latitudes? Discuss the consequences Arctic warming could have on lower latitudes.

Sovereignty and Governance

- How is sovereignty over the seabed at the Geographic North Pole and in the central Arctic Ocean established, and what are the ramifications of Arctic state ownership?
- Besides the Arctic Council, which international organizations and non-Arctic states can be considered stakeholders and actors in the future of the Arctic? Explain.
- Could changes in the Arctic help Greenland gain full independence from Denmark during the next few decades?

- What are the lingering international disputes in the Arctic? How significant are they?
- Is the Arctic region on a trajectory toward stability or strife? What factors could alter this course?

Economics

- Where is the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and what is its relationship to future Arctic shipping? What is the history of the NSR? What's the relationship between the NSR and the Northeast Passage?
- How are the Northwest Passage and Transpolar Route defined with regards to future Arctic shipping?
- Which natural resources abundant in the Arctic may play future roles in global markets and developing economies? What factors will influence their exploitation?
- How have oil and gas helped drive Arctic development, and what are some of the seminal energy-related events?
- What are the prospects for fishing in the Arctic Ocean, and how might each of the Arctic states respond to this potential development?

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

National Strategies

- Identify the primary national interests of the Arctic states and describe how each nation responds to the needs of their respective indigenous peoples. Compare national strategies.

- The United States has a new *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* and an Implementation Plan for that strategy, released in January 2014. How well do these documents express the national interests of the United States in a future Arctic?
- The Russian Federation is the largest Arctic nation. Discuss why the Arctic is important to Russia's future. Outline the primary environmental, economic, and military security challenges that Russia faces in its large Arctic region.

Governance

- The Arctic Council is an international, intergovernmental forum that was established in 1996. How does the council function, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of such a diplomatic body? How do the Arctic indigenous peoples participate in the Arctic Council process? What are the roles of the Arctic Council working groups?
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the governing legal framework for the Arctic Ocean. Discuss how UNCLOS addresses navigation rights, fishing, and seabed claims for the Arctic Ocean. Explain what special rights an Arctic coastal state may exercise in ice-covered waters.

Environment

- The *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* of the Arctic Council, released in 2004, is an important report for the global community. Discuss its main findings and what roles the Arctic plays in global climate change. Identify the main climate change threats to indigenous peoples that the assessment highlights.
- What are the environmental risks associated with the exploration and development of Arctic hydrocarbons? To what extent can these dangers be mitigated? What new policies, if any, are needed at the national or international levels?

Security

- Consider the military security implications of the Arctic. Who are the military powers in the Arctic and Arctic Ocean? What type of naval operations are conducted in the Arctic Ocean? Why would a strong involvement of NATO in Arctic affairs potentially cause tension and disagreement among the Arctic states?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- **Arctic Council Role Playing**

Divide the students into four teams representing members of the Arctic Council: Arctic states, Permanent Participants (Arctic indigenous peoples groups), non-Arctic state observers, and other observers. Assign the role of the Arctic Council Chair to one student. (For further information on the structure of the Arctic Council, see their website at <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>.)

Choose an environmental protection or sustainable development topic for discussion by the Arctic Council. For example, how to conduct surveys of marine use by indigenous peoples and how to use that information in integrated marine management schemes.

Ask the groups to first discuss individually priority issues for those they represent and their stance on them. Then bring the groups together to role play an Arctic Council meeting on the topic, moderated by the Arctic Council Chair. At the end of the meeting, ask the students to discuss as a class, what steps should be taken to arrive at consensus on the issues and stances put forth during the role playing.

- **Arctic Mapping**

The Arctic can best be viewed on a polar projection looking down at the North Pole. Have students use the InfoGuide map to identify the defining features of the Arctic (most of the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by land; notable presence of a sea ice cover, many archipelagoes and complex geography) Facilitate a class discussion on future uses of the Arctic and where they may take place. Discuss the relative sizes of the Arctic spaces under the sovereign control of each of the Arctic states. Discuss the potential, seasonal Arctic Ocean

marine routes. Look for satellite images of Arctic sea ice and the Greenland ice cap to gain an appreciation for the importance and scope of the melting Arctic environment.