

**DEMUN 2025**



**North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

Committee Chairs: Ben Blitz and Hannah Chun

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## From Your Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Hello! My name is Ben Blitz, and I'm a senior at Dwight-Englewood. I am thrilled to serve as one of your chairs for DEMUN this year. My name is Hannah Chun, and I'm a junior at Dwight-Englewood, also super excited!

Over the past several months, we've been working hard to prepare an engaging committee focused on the militarization of the Arctic, one of the most pressing security challenges of the 21st century. As NATO member states confront Russian expansion and China's growing interest in the region, delegates will grapple with the difficult balance between hard security, environmental concerns, and the rights of indigenous peoples. We are eager to see the debates unfold as you work to craft innovative and unified solutions to guide NATO's response.

We look forward to thoughtful discussion and strong resolutions. As always, please remain respectful throughout the committee and be sure to follow parliamentary procedure at all times. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to either of us.

We wish you the best of luck and cannot wait to see you at DEMUN!

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## Committee Description

Welcome to the NATO Committee. In this body, delegates will serve as ambassadors from member states as they confront a pressing question: the militarization of the Arctic. Each delegate will represent their nation's priorities and perspectives, balancing national interests with NATO's collective security.

Our single focus will be the future of the Arctic, where Russia is expanding its military presence and China is showing growing interest. Throughout the conference, you will receive real-time updates reflecting new developments—from military activity to environmental concerns and indigenous responses. These updates may shift debate, requiring you to adapt quickly and think strategically. The choices you make will shape NATO's role in one of the world's most contested regions.

The chairs are looking for diplomacy, collaboration, and creativity. While defending your country's stance is essential, success will depend on building consensus and crafting solutions that balance security, environmental, and human concerns. Respectful debate and coalition-building will be critical to moving this committee forward.

We are excited to begin this simulation with you and look forward to seeing how you handle one of NATO's greatest challenges in the 21st century.

## History

The roots of the Arctic's militarization can be traced back to the early Cold War, when both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the region's strategic value. The Arctic provided the shortest flight path for intercontinental bombers and missiles, making it a potential frontline in a nuclear conflict. As a result, the U.S. and Canada developed the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line in the 1950s to track potential Soviet attacks, while the Soviet Union expanded its northern bases to project power across the polar region. Although the Cold War ended, the Arctic never lost its significance as a military and geopolitical space.

In the decades that followed, melting ice and climate change transformed the Arctic into an area of renewed competition. Retreating sea ice opened new shipping routes, such as the Northern Sea Route, and revealed vast reserves of oil, gas, and rare minerals beneath the seabed. Russia, inheriting the largest Arctic coastline, moved quickly to reassert dominance by reopening Soviet-era bases, deploying advanced weapons systems, and expanding its nuclear icebreaker fleet. At the same time, NATO members like Norway, Canada, and the United States increased patrols and exercises in the High North, wary of Russia's growing assertiveness.

The Arctic also attracted outside powers. China, branding itself a "near-Arctic state," began investing in Arctic research stations, shipping projects, and resource extraction. Its involvement has raised alarms within NATO, which sees Beijing's presence as a potential extension of its global ambitions. Meanwhile, environmental and indigenous groups have voiced concerns about the militarization of a fragile ecosystem, where military buildup risks undermining local communities and accelerating ecological damage.

By the 21st century, the Arctic had become more than a frozen frontier: it emerged as a contested arena where security, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship collide. As NATO debates how to respond to Russia's expansion and China's rising interest, the militarization of the Arctic now stands at the intersection of global competition, environmental vulnerability, and alliance unity.

## Current Status

The militarization of the Arctic has become one of NATO's most pressing security challenges in the 21st century. Melting sea ice has opened new shipping routes and revealed valuable reserves of oil, gas, and rare minerals, fueling competition among global powers. Russia, which controls nearly half of the Arctic coastline, has been the most aggressive actor, reactivating Soviet-era bases, expanding its nuclear icebreaker fleet, and deploying advanced missile systems to project dominance in the High North. Meanwhile, China has declared itself a "near-Arctic state," investing in shipping projects, research stations, and energy ventures in the region, raising concerns about its long-term strategic goals.

NATO allies have responded with growing unease. The United States has increased its military exercises in Alaska and Greenland, while Norway and Canada have strengthened Arctic patrols and invested in new defense capabilities. NATO itself has expanded its focus on the High North, conducting joint exercises such as *Trident Juncture* and emphasizing deterrence in its strategic planning. Yet, there are deep divisions within the alliance. Some member states prioritize environmental protection and cooperation with Russia on issues like search-and-rescue or climate research, while others argue that only a stronger military presence will secure NATO's interests in the region.

In this committee, delegates will be tasked with determining NATO's future posture in the Arctic. Should the alliance pursue militarization and deterrence to counter Russia and China, or focus on cooperation, diplomacy, and environmental stewardship? Delegates must weigh the competing priorities of security, environmental sustainability, and indigenous rights while staying true to the interests and policies of the countries they represent.

This topic provides delegates with the opportunity to go beyond traditional debates over land and borders, and into the unique complexities of the Arctic. Discussions will require balancing national perspectives with alliance unity, all while navigating a rapidly changing geopolitical and environmental landscape. While debate may become contentious, delegates are expected to engage with an open mind, respect differing views, and work collaboratively toward solutions. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and may impact award consideration.

Thank you, and good luck delegates!

## Possible Solutions

**Enhancing NATO's military presence in the Arctic:** Increase joint exercises, expand surveillance and reconnaissance missions, and consider establishing permanent or rotational bases in key areas. This would demonstrate NATO's resolve but risks escalating tensions with Russia.

**Pursuing diplomatic engagement and cooperation:** Open channels with Russia, China, and Arctic Council members to promote dialogue on security, environmental protection, and indigenous rights. This could reduce conflict risks but may require compromises on NATO's military posture.

**Strengthening partnerships with Arctic member states:** Provide support to Norway, Canada, Denmark, and the U.S. in building Arctic-specific capabilities, such as icebreakers and cold-weather training, while ensuring equitable burden-sharing across the alliance.

**Protecting environmental and indigenous concerns:** Develop policies that balance security with stewardship of the fragile Arctic ecosystem, including safeguards for local communities. This approach could help NATO’s image but may slow down military readiness.

**Investing in long-term resilience:** Bolster NATO’s cyber and technological defenses to counter hybrid threats, expand intelligence-sharing on Arctic developments, and prepare for the future by investing in Arctic infrastructure and research.

## Questions to Consider

1. Should NATO prioritize militarization of the Arctic to deter Russia and China, or focus on cooperation and restraint?
2. How can NATO balance environmental protection and indigenous rights with its security responsibilities?
3. To what extent should NATO member states commit resources to Arctic defense, and how should burden-sharing be managed?
4. What role, if any, should non-Arctic powers like China play in the region, and how should NATO respond to their involvement?
5. How can NATO maintain unity when member states have different priorities for the Arctic—some focused on deterrence, others on diplomacy?

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