

Contested places

The Arctic Circle

- Under international law, the high seas including the North Pole and the region of the Arctic Ocean surrounding it, **are not owned by any country**. The five surrounding Arctic countries are limited to an **exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles** adjacent to their coasts.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_claims_in_the_Arctic

- However, some countries are filing claims to the **UN Convention on the law of the sea** about the right to certain land as

it is an **extension of the countries' continental shelf**. This is an area that is **still part of the countries' land mass** but under the sea.

- Unfortunately, many countries **claims overlap**, causing political and military tensions.
 - Canada, since 2002, has carried out military exercises.
 - Norway as expanded its navy
 - Denmark has created an Arctic military response force.
 - Russian Arctic circle military bases have rapidly grown in number.
 - They have the **most to gain from the Arctic**.

Why are these countries interested in the Arctic?

- The ice in the Arctic is **melting**, meaning that its resources and investment opportunities are more accessible now.
 - Cargo ships – in **2014, 71 ships** passed 'over the top of the world'. This figure was **46 in 2012**.
 - Oil – The USGS estimates there is **1/8 of the world untapped oil**.
 - But it needs **high global oil prices** and gas prices to be **profitable** – A possibility for the future due to shrinking resources.

A good video to watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx_2SVm9Jgo





The South China Sea conflict

- The South China sea is an extremely important area of sea, and 5 countries lay claim to some part of it.
- In a similar style to the Arctic circle conflict, many countries base this claim on the UN Convention of the law of the sea stating that a countries EEZ extends 200 nautical miles adjacent to its coast.
- Countries have exclusive rights to all the resources and trade within their EEZ. Sea that does not fall into any countries EEZ is known as international waters and its resources are shared.

China

- China is arguing that it has a rightful claim to a large amount of the South China Sea.
- Its claims are expressed by a line known as the 'nine-dash line' and is shown by the picture opposite.
- The claims are based on historical reasons, namely that the Parcel and Spratly islands were once regarded as Chinese. Vietnam disagrees with this and has documents to prove it has actively ruled over the islands since the 17th century.



- China has also made a claim to a large proportion of the South China sea as an extension of China's continental shelf.

Military bases

- China is building artificial islands in the Spratly islands by dumping sand onto coral reefs. They are then building military bases on these islands.
- The shows that China is potentially willing to defend its claims with force.
- They are also surrounding the Spratly islands with as many military ships as possible, which is supported by the new military bases. This allows them to take over contested territory in small steps, without sparking a larger conflict.
- India and the US are worried about the military threat China poses, as it has many allies in the region, but does not want to go to war with China. The US regularly sends military ships and planes to ensure access to key shipping and air routes.

Conclusion

It is predicted, in the future, this issue will gain more publicity and there is a possibility for this political conflict to become militarised.

Source for this case study: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

Source and good video to watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luTPMHC7zHY&t=5s>

