Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2015
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Forum: *Special Conference*
Issue: *Environmental activism and whaling in the Antarctic ocean*

Position: *Chair*

Introduction

People are not always good at sustainably managing the ocean's resources. Whales were once a very common marine animal in the Antarctic Ocean. Over the past hundred years, the whales in the Antarctic underwent dramatic population reductions at the hands and harpoons of 20th century whalers. Now, scientists estimate that less than 5% of the original whale population remains. A multi-billion dollar fishing industry is pursued by the world's fishing nations and anti-whaling countries are stuck with what to do.

The whaling debate has been around for several decades now. Whaling for the purpose of obtaining whale oil has diminished. However, this small victory has quickly been changed into a new concern: namely, the increasing acts of whaling for commercial purposes, primarily for food. This increase in whaling naturally stimulates an increase in environmental activism against it.

Despite having all of this information in front of us, nations fail to tackle the issue. The UN Court has attempted to implement whaling quotas and to halt whaling activities in the Antarctic. However, these actions have been less successful than the UN had planned and thus there is still a long way to go before the UN efforts can be rewarded and whaling can be abolished.

Definition of Key Terms

Whaling
Whaling is the hunting of whales primarily for meat, oil (sometimes known as 'train oil') and blubber. Whaling has industrial, commercial as well as scientific purposes.

Aboriginal whaling
Aboriginal whaling is the hunting of whales carried out by aboriginal groups who have a tradition of whaling.

Harpoon
A harpoon is a barbed spear-like missile attached to a long rope. It is thrown by hand or fired from a gun in order to catch whales and other large marine mammals.

General Overview

Protest and acts against whaling have always been around. One of the major breakthroughs was the creation of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which is an organisation set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) in 1946. The IWC is a leading example in tackling the issue of whaling, having established a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982. Despite the IWC's success, some countries (including member countries who voted against the moratorium) continue whaling and threatening the ecological well-being of the oceans. The continuing of whaling is possible because the moratorium of the IWC only applies to commercial whaling, allowing whaling for scientific-research purposes. Fortunately, the IWC has created improvements as well. Some countries which were previously major whaling forces, like the United States of America, became strong opponents of whaling, supporting the anti-whaling cause. The Southern Ocean Sanctuary was adopted by the IWC in 1994, providing long-term protection for the world's remaining whales by protecting their feeding groups. The sanctuary allows for the natural restoration of this ecosystem and its many inhabitants.

Next to the great efforts of IWC, the United Nations is also hugely involved in the matter of whaling. In 1972, the UN Conference on the Human Environment adopted a proposal that recommended a ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling to allow whale stocks to recover, identifying the many species of whales that are in danger of extinction. At the moment, the United Nations' greatest concern regarding the issue of whaling is the behaviour of Japan. The UN has called out quotas and bans on the Japanese to make them stop whaling. However, the UN has had little effect with this. Currently, Japan is allowed to harvest a total number of 950 whales for 'scientific' purposes involved in their Japanese Whaling Research Programme under Special Permit in the Antarctic (JARPA II), according to the IWC.

As whaling (especially by Japan) continues, tension is building up between countries, with Australia and New Zealand in full front attack. In June 2013, Australia and New Zealand sued Japan before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), asking the court to withdraw all permits for future whale hunts from Japanese fleet. The countries alleged that Japan was using the scientific research programme JARPA II to mask a commercial whaling venture in the Antarctic, motivated by the opportunity to sell whale meat. Last March, 2014, The United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled against Japan in a case involving the charges by Australia. The ICJ has ordered a temporary halt to the activities because of the doubts JARPA II casts on its characterization as a scientific research programme due to its open-ended time frame, its limited scientific output to date, and the lack of cooperation between JARPA II and other domestic and international research programmes in the Antarctic Ocean.

Concerning environmental activism and the radical nature of some campaigns, the question of how far they will go to make their point is of great importance and concern. Battles between whalers and activists have become a regular occurrence in the oceans, where activists routinely blast whaling vessels with water cannons, throw flash

grenades, and try to cut ensnared animals free. Environmental groups such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, just like the aforementioned anti-whaling countries, vehemently dispute the claim of whaling countries' research "as a disguise for commercial whaling." The radical campaigns of such environmental groups have provoked a lot of frustration amongst the whaling countries which, in return, try to cause as much bother to the groups as they can.

Environmental activism therefore raises the question concerning the line between making a point and radically inflicting intolerable harm. Comments have been made on the nature of environmental activism, claiming that the activists have lost sight of their initial goal: saving Earth.

Major Parties Involved

The International Whaling Commission
The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is a voluntary, global body currently consisting of 88 member governments from all over the globe who have agreed not to commercially hunt medium and large whales. Ever since the IWC was established in 1946, it has grown into a whaling-managing commission which also addresses other environmental concerns including entanglement, marine debris and climate change. The main task of the IWC is to decide upon hunting quotas and other relevant matters based on the findings of its Scientific Committee.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare
The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) was founded in 1969 to save individual animals, animal populations and habitats all over the world. The IFAW provides assistance to animals in need, including whales. The IFAW carries the same visions as the IWC, acting as an important body that tries to combat whaling.

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
The radical environment group Sea Shepherd campaigns against whaling activities, especially against those of Japan. The Sea Shepherd campaigns are guided by the United Nations World Charter for Nature, which permits individuals to act on behalf of international conservation laws and enforce them. Sea Shepherd aims at causing as much bother and as many obstacles as they can to the whalers carrying out their task. Doing this, the Sea Shepherd has been proud to sink a few whaling vessels and cause plenty of property damage.

Greenpeace
Greenpeace is an independent global campaigning organisation that 'acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace'. Part of their activities focus on defending the oceans by challenging wasteful and destructive fishing. Greenpeace aims at exposing environmental criminals and at challenging government and corporations when they fail to live up to their mandate to safeguard the environment and the future. Activists have risked their freedom and their lives campaigning against whaling programmes, especially against the JARPA II.

Japan
Japan is one of the world's most well-known whale-hunting nations with their annual whale hunts. The UN, Greenpeace, WWF and many other environmental organisations have tried to restrict Japan's whaling activities. Japanese whaling activities have extended outside Japanese territorial waters, harming the wildlife in many other oceans and waters, which makes Japanese whaling a global concern. Despite the criticism on the Japanese whaling activities for commercial purposes in the 20th century, Japan continued whaling using the scientific research provision in their argument since 1986. Even though strict quotas are implemented, environmental organisations are forced to watch Japan's whaling activities continue.

Norway
When the IWC agreed a moratorium on commercial whaling, Norway objected so they would be able to re-start their hunt. Since re-starting commercial whaling about twenty years ago (in 1994), Norway is claiming to only hunt on a small-scale and for traditional purposes.

Iceland
Iceland is another of the only three countries still engaged in commercial whaling. They picked up the commercial hunt back in September 2006, in order to resume exports to Japan. The decision was met with condemnation at home and abroad.

Australia
Australia is one of the most active member states of the United Nations campaigning against whaling, being particularly vocal in its opposition to Japan's whaling activities. Australia has declared at least all Australian waters to be a whale sanctuary by adopting the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act in 1999.

New Zealand
New Zealand is another very active anti-whaling member state of the UN. Together with Australia, New Zealand sued Japan before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, asking the court to halt Japan's whaling activities.

Timeline of Events

1946	Signing of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), aiming to provide for the proper conservation of whale stock.
1972	The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. The conference adopted a proposal that recommended a ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling to allow whale stock to recover.

July 23 1982	Members of the IWC voted by the necessary three-quarters majority to implement a pause on commercial whaling. This moratorium would begin in the 1985-1986 season.
1986	Japan set up the Japanese Whaling Research Programme under Special Permit in the Antarctic (JARPA II) and started whaling for scientific purposes.
1994	The Southern Ocean Sanctuary was adopted by the International Whaling Commission, aiming to provide long-term protection for the world's remaining whales.
1994	Norway re-started its whaling activities, making it the second country in the world engaged in whaling.
September 2006	Iceland re-starts commercial whaling, making it the third country in the world engaged in whaling.

Previous Attempts to solve the issue

As already shown, whaling has been an ongoing debate for a very long time now. Countries and organisations started modest campaigns and objections against whaling activities of others. Because whaling did not only continue but also dramatically increased for industrial and commercial purposes, the nature of the modest campaigns took a radical twist. Solutions concerning imposing quotas, restrictions and fines on those engaged in whaling activities have been used most frequently. However, radical environmental activism increased in those cases where these solutions had little effect. Agreements get broken and quotas get exceeded, which lead to no change in whaling activities but only an increase in environmental activism.

Possible Solutions

To solve the issue of whaling and environmental activism once and for all, countries and organisations should firstly acknowledge that environmental activism and whaling go hand in hand. Stopping whaling is a long journey, but environmental activism prolongs the journey even more. Possible solutions would therefore include assigning professionals who are able to set up a few strong agreements, beneficial for both parties involved, without other radical environmental groups becoming involved. In this way, environmental activism will not irritate the whaling countries even further, which has so far only had a reverse, hostile effect. Once having tackled the environmental activists, the agreements between the parties could most likely only be successful if they would be very clear, to the point and discrete. Clear quotas, clear

exceptions, clear moratoriums and so on. Clear agreements would give both parties no chance to find a weak spot of the agreement and turn back to its initial acts again, as whaling countries did with the masks of 'scientific research'. This would not only cease whaling activities and environmental activism, but also make it lasting in the long run and therefore solve the issue once and for all. Only by leaving the Antarctic Ocean's ecosystem alone for a minimum of 50 years, the remaining population of great whales will be allowed natural restoration.

Useful documents

https://iwc.int/home
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaling http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/oceans/fit-for-the-future/whaling/
http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2013/03/01/3700679.htm
http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/united-nations-japanese-autho/
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http://www.ifaw.org/united-states/our-work/whales/southern-ocean-sanctuary