

**SECTION EUROPÉENNE ET DE LANGUES ORIENTALES (SELO) PROGRAMME
INTERACADEMIQUE D'HISTOIRE – GÉOGRAPHIE APPLICABLE À LA RENTRÉE 2021**

**The Arctic Ocean: appropriation, protection and freedom of circulation
(global and regional scale)**

Le sujet s'inscrit dans le programme de géographie de Terminale : **Th 1-** Mers et océans : au cœur de la mondialisation et **Th 2** - Dynamiques territoriales, coopérations et tensions dans la mondialisation

Rappel du programme (extrait du programme de Terminale Générale, BO n°8 du 25 juillet 2019)

Thème 1 : Mers et océans au cœur de la mondialisation – Mers et océans : entre appropriation, protection et liberté de circulation

La maritimisation des économies et l'ouverture des échanges internationaux confèrent aux mers et aux océans un rôle fondamental tant pour la fourniture de ressources (halieutiques, énergétiques, biochimiques...) que pour la circulation des hommes et les échanges matériels ou immatériels. L'importance des routes et les itinéraires diffèrent selon cause de tensions entre les Etats en raison des ressources présentes dans ces zones et de la volonté de ces Etats de les exploiter

Accompagnements des programmes

Thème 1 : Mers et océans au cœur de la mondialisation

Les possibilités de mise en contact engendrées par les mers et les océans d'une part et les ressources qu'ils abritent d'autre part ont fait des mers et des océans des espaces stratégiques à l'échelle du monde tant pour les acteurs qui les sillonnent que pour ceux qui en exploitent les richesses dans un monde qui cherche toujours de nouvelles ressources. Les mers et océans ont joué et jouent un rôle essentiel dans la mise en relation croissante des différentes parties du monde grâce à une fonction de support des flux matériels et immatériels toujours plus massifs. (...) La maîtrise des flux et l'exploitation des ressources maritimes reflètent donc les inégalités de la mondialisation (...).

En tant qu'espaces vecteurs de transport et zones pourvoyeuses de richesses, au cœur donc de l'accroissement des échanges, les mers et les océans sont aussi l'objet de tensions fortes entre volonté d'appropriation de la part des États, principe de liberté de circulation et prise de conscience de leur nécessaire protection.

Thème 2 : Dynamiques territoriales, coopérations et tensions dans la mondialisation

Loin d'être un processus spontané, la mondialisation est un processus induit par les stratégies d'acteurs et les progrès réalisés en termes de transports et de communications. (...)

Cela implique des mesures de coopération et de régulation organisées entre les États (...). Ces stratégies de coopération et de régulation peuvent parfois conduire à des tensions à différentes échelles (...). Il convient d'étudier les objectifs et les effets des coopérations régionales dans un contexte de mondialisation en prenant soin de préciser les spécificités de ces organisations."

Les connaissances fondamentales attendues sont :

- 1/ Concepts:** constraints / natural resources / Cold Rush / new sea routes / EEZ /geopolitical tensions
- 2/ Actors:** bordering states / Arctic Council / TNC / NGO
- 3/ Challenges:** social issues / ecological issues / sustainable development/ Natives / Indigenous tribes

Key questions:

- **What geopolitical and economic issues arise in the Arctic Ocean?**
- **What strategies are the actors deploying to exploit and protect the Arctic Ocean?**

Suggested plan:

I- What geopolitical and economic issues arise in the Arctic Ocean?

- The climatic evolution of the Arctic region
- The opportunities it offers
- The threats and challenges it creates

II- What strategies are the actors deploying to exploit and protect the Arctic Ocean?

- States (Arctic and non-Arctic)
- NGOs
- Indigenous peoples
- The Arctic Council

The following plan, different from the previous one, can also be established (it is a proposal and in no case an obligation)

This topic could begin with documents that draw parallels between Alaska, Canada, Russia, Norway and Greenland to get students thinking about these documents and the notion of a new frontier. The introduction to this topic could then present the context of the Arctic before setting out the key questions. Depending on the time available, it is also possible to briefly look at the situation in each territory.

I- Resources and actors

Traditional activities include fishing (with an EEZ based on the sea rights established by the 1982 Montego Bay Agreement) and mining for mineral resources (diamonds, gold, nickel, and rare earths) as well as hydrocarbons such as gas (30% of reserves) and oil (10% of reserves), which may account for a quarter of global energy resources. Nowadays, new tourism has emerged, with 1.5 million tourists per year taking cruises to observe wildlife. This tourism is based on biodiversity and landscapes such as glaciers.

Thanks to the melting ice caused by global warming, new sea routes have emerged, even though they are risky. They are very interesting for international trade, especially for container ships because these passages are shorter (by around 4,000 km), making them faster and less expensive, which is an asset to globalization. This explains the increasing traffic, especially through the Northwest Passage, as well as the rivalries between countries to control this territory.

II- Actors and geopolitical tensions

Governments are increasing investments in social fields like housing, education, and health to improve living conditions. Modern infrastructure (ports, airports such as Yellowknife or Whitehorse in Canada) aims to improve access to this area and support its opening up. Moreover, public authorities have an economic goal: to attract private actors, such as TNCs (transnational corporations).

Indeed, even though exploitation (exploration and extraction) is very difficult, TNCs like Total or Shell develop technologies related to fossil energy reserves because they are a source of profits. They therefore create jobs and exchanges, which are assets for economic development.

Private actors integrate non-governmental organizations, such as WWF and Greenpeace, as well as citizens who intervene for different interests. Sometimes, these interests conflict with those of other actors, particularly regarding the use of resources and environmental issues.

Countries have polar ambitions and want to reinforce their sovereignty, especially on their borders, with the desire for expansion (e.g. Hans Island, disputed between Denmark and Canada until 2022). This provokes tensions, especially between the US and Russia, as shown by the presence military bases, submarines, and aircraft carriers in the North Sea, which suggests the remilitarization of a new Cold War.

There has been an effort of diplomacy through the Arctic Council, which was created in the '90s. It comprises eight permanent members (Russia, Canada, the US, Norway, Greenland, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland), organizations of Arctic indigenous peoples, as well as European and Asian observers. The observers are neutral and propose ideas, such as the Chinese project. *However, there is a lack of cooperation, even during negotiations, because there is competition to integrate new actors with interests in the power struggle.*

III- New threats: social and environmental issues

Local populations mainly live in urban areas (80%, except for the Nenets and the Sami, who protect their lifestyle based on reindeer farming). 40% percent are young, and 2/3 have no degree or diploma. There is significant unemployment, as well as a high cost of living (no food security with the end of subsistence

hunting). This explains the lack of well-being and the high number of suicides (seven times higher). The natives protest and defend their culture and traditions (based on fishing, hunting, and reindeer farming) because they are disappearing. They defend their identity through language, beliefs (shamanism), and art (sculpture, drawing, music, and clothing). This is a form of activism.

From a political point of view, they are trying to obtain autonomy, especially the Inuit, who have an Arctic organization with headquarters in Inuvik or Whitehorse. Natives are trying to increase their participation in territorial policies through councils such as the Sami Council in Norway or the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) in Russia. In Greenland, there is a debate about independence.

Besides, climate change clearly impacts coastal villages because erosion destroys them, forcing residents to relocate, sometimes without financial assistance from the government, especially under the Trump administration.

There is a growing environmental vulnerability with PBS (pollution from fossil fuels, oil spills, and plastic), ice melting, and sea level rise caused by global warming. This results in erosion of the coastline and threatens biodiversity, symbolized by the polar bear (as well as gray whales, walrus, and seals). That's why different actors develop protection policies, such as states, NGOs like Greenpeace, and Arctic organizations (ICC, RAIPON, and the Sami Council), which establish national parks, reserves, and bird sanctuaries (in Svalbard), as well as renewable energy projects (e.g., wind turbines and wave energy in Canada).

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