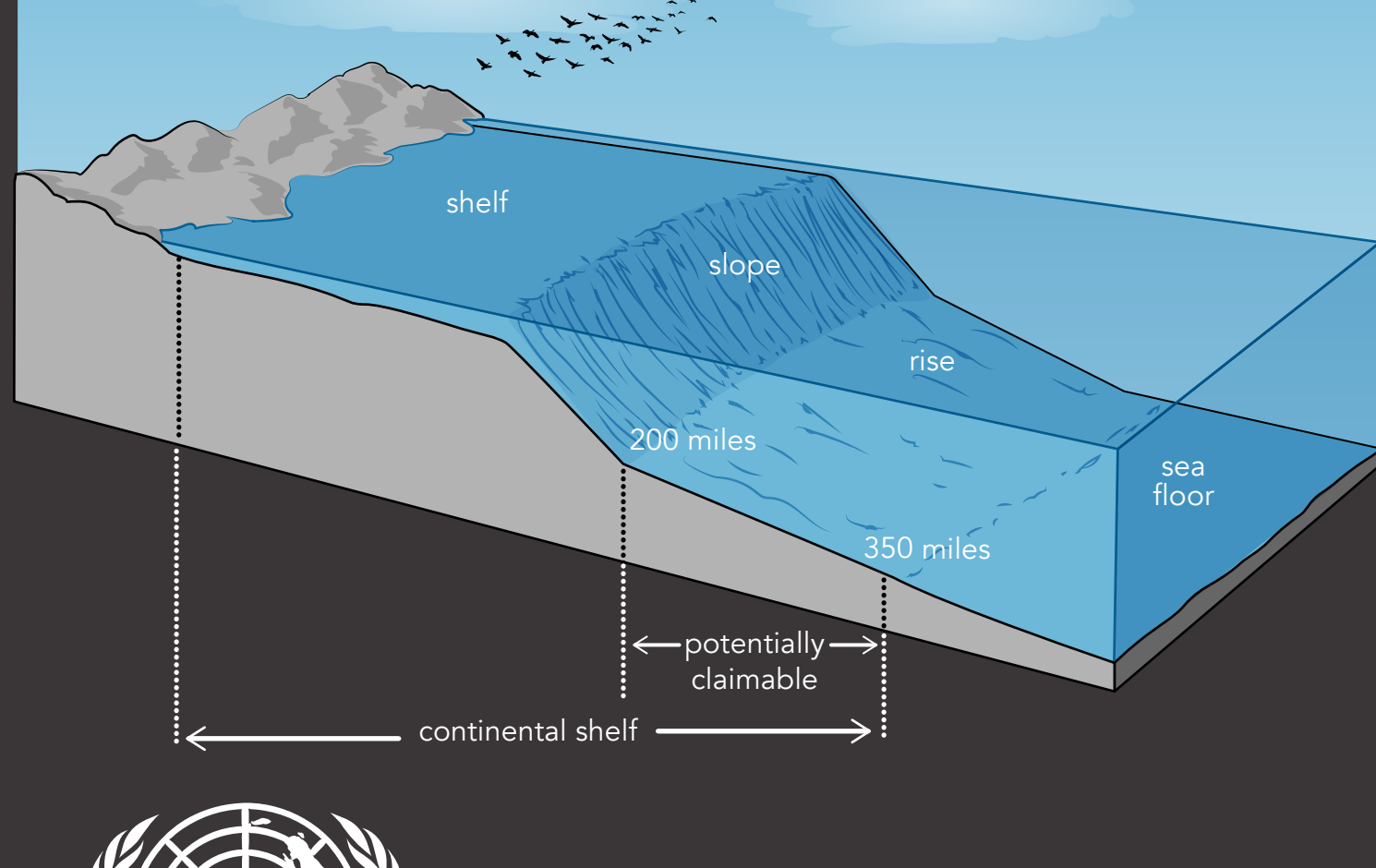


CONTINENTAL SHELF CLAIMS

in the Arctic

What is the continental shelf?

The continental shelf is a shallow extension of the continent's landmass under the ocean, restricted outwardly by the ocean floor bend.



According to The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) article 76, the default length of the continental shelf is minimum 200 nautical miles (nm) from the coastal state's baselines.

What is the extended continental shelf?

Coastal states can claim an extended continental shelf beyond the 200 nm default if the sea high is determined to be a natural prolongation of the land territory. The coastal state can claim an extended continental shelf up to 350 nm from its baselines.



The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) consists of twenty-one members who are experts in the fields of geology, geophysics or hydrography.



Their purpose is to facilitate the implementation of the UNCLOS in respect of the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

Who has claimed what?



Norway

- Submitted a claim to the CLCS in 2006 and was the first country to receive recommendations in 2009, extending Norway's continental shelf with 235 000 square kilometers.
- The area included Loop Hole in the Barents Sea, the Western Nansen Basin in the Arctic Ocean and the Banana Hole in the Norwegian Sea.



Canada

- Partial submission to the CLCS in 2013 claiming about 1.2 million square kilometers.
- Is conducting research and is expected to submit a full claim in 2018 which will likely include the Lomonosov and Alpha-Mendeleyev Ridges, underwater mountain ranges that stretches from Canada to Russia and includes the area under the North Pole.



Denmark (via Greenland)

- Submitted a claim in 2014 for an area of 895 000 square kilometers, which includes all of the Lomonosov Ridge.



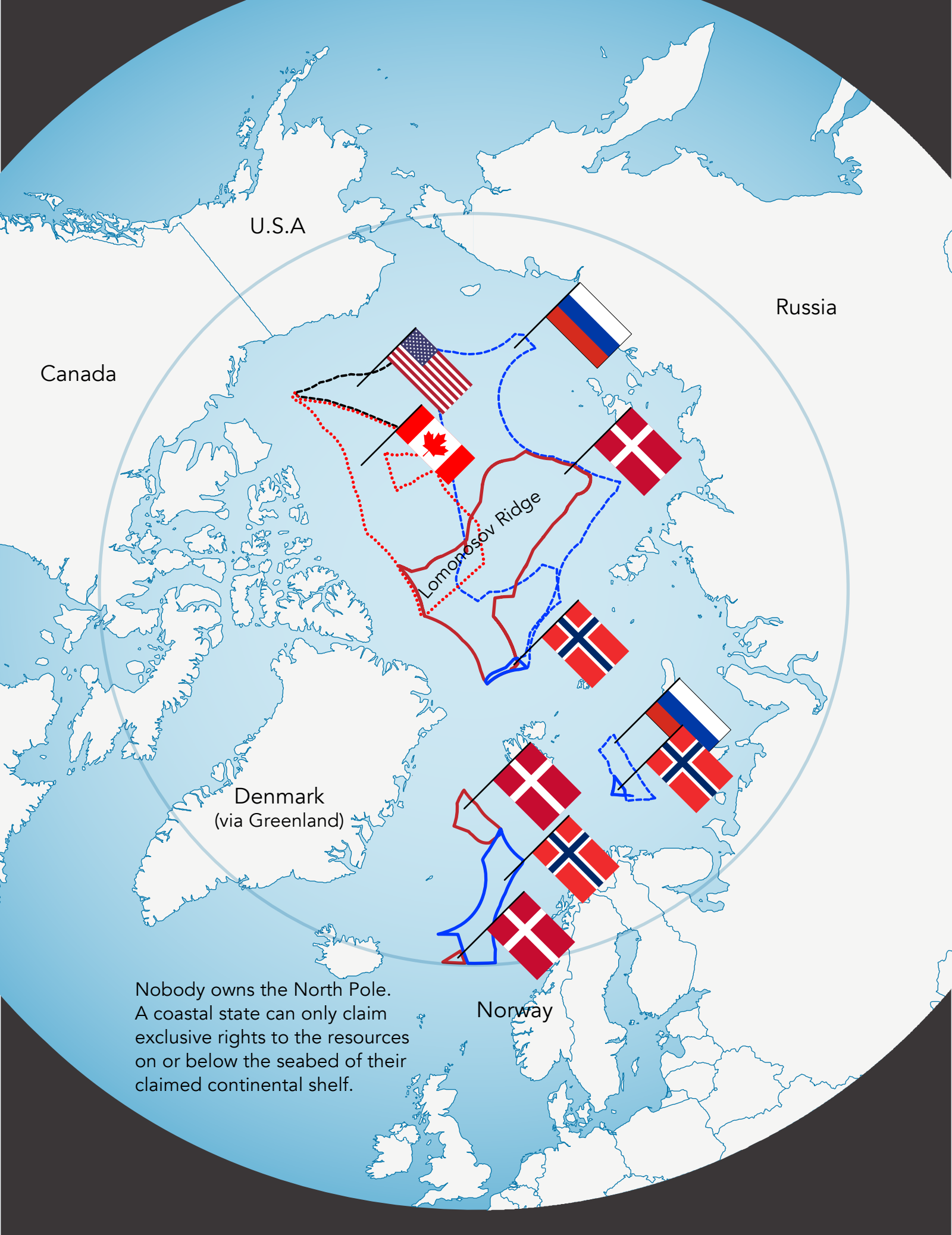
Russia

- Submitted a claim in 2001, but was recommended to file a revised submission because of lacking data.



U.S.A

- Has not ratified UNCLOS and cannot make claims for the continental shelf.
- Accepts UNCLOS as customary international law.



How does a coastal state claim an extended continental shelf and who determines it?



In order to claim an extended continental shelf, the coastal state must collect and analyze data describing the depth, shape and geophysical characteristics of the seabed and sub-sea floor.

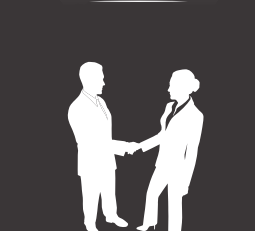


The CLCS gives final and binding recommendations on the limits of the continental shelf, but does not determine the maritime boundaries of the nations if there are overlapping continental shelf claims. States with overlapping continental shelf claims must settle the dispute in a different forum.

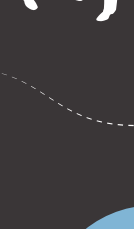
Why does it matter?



The coastal state has the sovereign right to explore and exploit the natural resources of the continental shelf, such as oil, gas, minerals etc. found in the soil and sub-soil.



Coastal states do not have sovereign rights over the water column or the airspace subjacent to the continental shelf.



All countries have expressed willingness to solve a possible future dispute through peaceful means, and are likely to do so.



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