

INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDY
International Whaling

Indiana University Sponsoring Center: Center for the Study of Global Change

Developed by:

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Learning Outcomes:

- A. To expand teachers'/students' knowledge about international whaling.
- B. To identify multiple perspectives on the issue.

What is the disputed issue?

International regulation of whaling practices

In what world region and/or country is the disputed issue located?

Global

What is the essential question that frames the disputed issue?

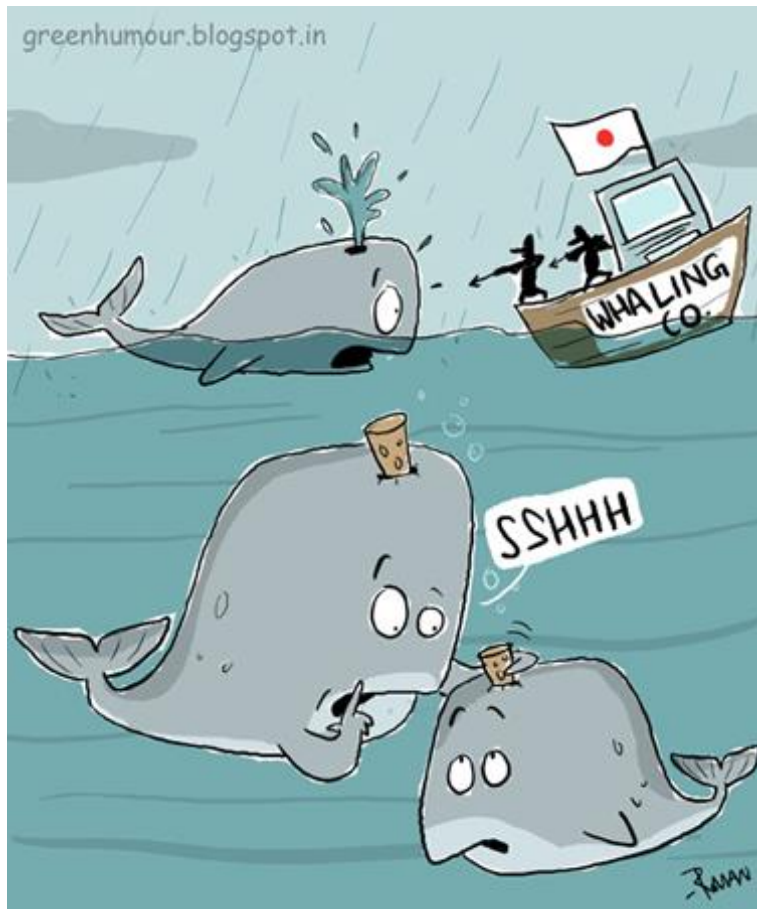
How is the hunting of wildlife or harvesting of natural resources internationally regulated?

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A. What visual resource might ignite the conversation and/or frame the disputed issue?

Figure 1. Whales Hiding Cartoon



Chakravarty, R. (2009), *Whaling Cartoons*. Green Humor.
<https://www.greenhumor.com/2009/10/pale-whale-tale.html>.

Note: Comic-style cartoon of whales hiding from a Japanese commercial hunting vessel.

Figure 2. Whale and Shark Deal Cartoon



Chakravarty, R. (2009), *Whaling Cartoons*. Green Humor.

<https://www.greenhumour.com/2009/10/pale-whale-tale.html>.

Note: Comic-style cartoon of a whale paying a shark to attack a commercial hunter.

B. What are the key vocabulary terms that students must know in order to understand the disputed issue?

Aboriginal (see also: Indigenous): Inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists (Oxford English Dictionary).

Anthropocene: Relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment (Oxford English Dictionary).

Blubber: The fat of sea mammals, especially whales and seals (Oxford English Dictionary).

Cetaceans: A marine mammal of the order Cetacea; a whale, dolphin, or porpoise (Oxford English Dictionary).

Commercial whaling: The practice of hunting and killing whales for the purpose of selling and trading their meat and other products derived from them (National Resource Defense Council).

Foodways: The eating habits and culinary practices of a people, region, or historical period (Merriam-Webster).

Intangible cultural heritage: The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO).

International law: A set of rules and principles governing the relations and conduct of sovereign states with each other, as well as with international organizations and individuals (Cornell Law School).

Moratorium: A temporary prohibition of an activity (Oxford English Dictionary).

International waters: Around two-thirds of the oceans are included in this category, as well as (potentially) transboundary waters and aquifers. No one may lay claim to these, and everyone has a right to use them “for navigation, fishing and other activities without interference from others” as long as they do not exploit or abuse them (Royal Museums Greenwich).

Subsistence: Denoting or relating to production at a level sufficient only for one’s own use or consumption, without any surplus for trade (Oxford).

Sustainability: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (from *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, 1987).

C. What are the general descriptions and context of the disputed issue?

Oceanic regulation has always played a complex role in international relationships. Who controls the water? When no one does, who decides how its resources will be used or protected? These are emerging questions concerning international regulations and laws, prompted by the severe global decline of certain wildlife species, including whales, due to unsustainable human practices. These practices can vary from oil spills to dumping trash in our oceans, and together they are bringing various marine species to critical or endangered status, leaving the environments they inhabit distressed and destroying the ability to harvest sustainably.

Human degradation of our ocean’s wildlife and the growing threats of climate change have led many scholars to label our current geological and social epoch as the “Anthropocene”: an era entirely defined by the more disastrous characteristics associated with industrial and commercial development. Because Anthropocentric approaches to harvesting resources include ecologically harmful practices like whaling, laws have been implemented over the past

several decades that seek to protect an array of endangered species, including many types of cetaceans.

Indeed, cetaceans are some of the most discussed species under such protection. In 1986, the International Whaling Commission (IWC)'s moratorium made commercial whaling illegal globally. The moratorium limits the harvesting of whales to cultural hunts associated with subsistence living and a few hunts per year for scientific research; in both cases hunters must send a report to the IWC. However, over the past decade many countries initially holding membership in the IWC, such as Canada and Japan, have begun to leave the Commission due to disagreements about how whale hunting should be regulated worldwide and who gets to make these decisions. These concerns have also given rise to non-profit organizations such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd using donated money to build fleets of ships that stop the hunting of cetaceans around the world. There is an escalation in political and legal conflicts on an international scale due to the many varied opinions concerning cultural rights to subsistence, goals for sustainability, and ethical beliefs around the harvesting of whales. It all comes back to an essential question surrounding wildlife protection in the Anthropocene: how does one decide if a person or company should be allowed to harvest a protected species?

D. What are the names of the unique multiple perspectives involved in the disputed issue?

Perspective One:	International Whaling Commission (IWC)
Perspective Two:	Japan
Perspective Three:	Canada
Perspective Four:	Sea Shepherd

E. Why does the disputed issue matter?

Historical Background

Many protections for endangered species fall under a treaty written in 1973 known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which began a series of international laws that would govern the harvesting of endangered species to prevent extinction. However, the politics of protecting cetaceans worldwide entered global politics decades earlier, as they were some of the first species visibly impacted by anthropocentric change. There was a vast decline in the number of cetaceans, particularly whales, over the twentieth century, with some species, such as the blue whale, losing over 90% of their population. Unregulated hunting was the leading cause of death for these animals. During this period many cetaceans were sought by hunters for their blubber, which has a high fat content and was used in various cosmetics and as a natural source of oil.

Prompted by concerns about the shrinking population of cetaceans worldwide, several countries united to form the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1946. The IWC's goal was to begin creating international policies and regulations governing the hunting of all whale species. However, it was not until 1987 that the IWC voted to officially outlaw commercial whale hunting in international waters. This vote set a new precedent in international politics, as it was one of the first global agreements established to protect wildlife from human harm. Enacting the moratorium also collapsed what little was left of the commercial whaling industry, sparking contention from the regulation's inception among nations like Japan that favor maintaining the industry.

While whaling has been brought to a near-complete halt worldwide, human activity still poses many threats to whales. In recent years, several laws regarding whaling have been introduced by the IWC and individual nations like Canada to protect whales from other harmful practices, such as polluting and placing them in captivity. On the other hand, some countries like Japan have begun to withdraw from the IWC and resume practices of commercial whaling for meat, leaving the geopolitical landscape of developing policies protecting cetaceans fraught with conflict.

Geographical Background

The governance of international waters is a complicated issue, because no one nation regulates these waters (Source: *Who owns the ocean?* Royal Museums Greenwich.

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/who-owns-ocean>). Without a formal legal definition of

the term, each nation's rights concerning its use of international waters can be complex and ripe for conflict. While countries can claim up to 12 miles out from their shores as territorial waters, it still leaves around 43% of the earth's surface in areas open to dispute. Whales migrate across the planet annually, and the location of each species varies. One thing is sure: whales can usually be found in international waters, leaving them vulnerable to commercial whaling. The IWC is the formal legal body in charge of protecting whale populations worldwide from overhunting; however, enforcing such policies is challenging, especially given that there is no formal legal definition of the geographic concept of international waters.

Economic Background

The economic status of the whaling industry is very conditional depending on the intention of the practice, changing whether the harvesting is for fuel or food. While whale blubber was a highly sought-after product throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its demand slowly dwindled as more accessible and efficient fuel sources developed. However, in post-WWII Japan, and for many Indigenous communities worldwide, the value of whaling for food security has a lasting economic impact, especially in impoverished rural areas with little access to whale meat exports, which provide a vast amount of high-protein meat at a relatively low cost. In these cases, the meat can be vital to the survival of communities. However, whaling costs have become a burden, as the tools, vehicles, and processing spaces needed to prepare whale meat for consumption are expensive.

Civic/Political/Legal Background

Many countries agree that protecting whales and preventing the extinction of certain species is crucial for our world's oceans to maintain a balanced environment. However, the politics of international bans are always challenging when it comes to bringing all nations to formal compliance, especially when such laws conflict with economic and social development or sustainability. For example, Denmark's willingness to participate in resolutions regarding whaling has always been tumultuous due to its continued encouragement of commercial hunting of cetaceans in the Faroe Isles.

In 1986, the IWC placed a global moratorium on commercial whaling, banning the practice in its entirety (Source: *Commercial Whaling*. International Whaling Commission.

<https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/whaling/commercial>). Several nations viewed this moratorium as a temporary measure that would end once whale populations stabilized. Upon attaining this goal, the whaling industry could return. Some nations, such as Canada and Japan, have never agreed with the complete moratorium and have supported the development of sustainable whaling practices. As such, the politics of whaling have grown increasingly complex, with Japan leaving the IWC and reopened its industry.

Further, these issues are even more dynamic when considering the roles of non-profit organizations like Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd. These organizations contribute millions of dollars annually to fleets that target whaling vessels and stop them from whale hunting. Since the governance of international waters is not clearly defined or agreed upon by all nations, these groups have free reign as oceanic vigilantes, leaving nations impacted by their operations with little to no legal recourse.

Social Background

While whaling became a commercial venture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the hunting of all cetaceans by Indigenous cultures from around the world has a history spanning thousands of years. These traditional harvesting practices have always been a central topic in debates over whaling bans, due not only to their cultural importance but also because of food security. Many groups worldwide, such as the Makah in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and the Indigenous peoples of Chukotka in Russia, depend on whale meat as a vital part of their foodways. As such, many laws regarding the hunting of whales do not apply to any practices known as Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW). ASW hunts have varied since the 1980s, with the number of communities participating in the practice growing yearly. In most countries, all catches made from ASW hunts must be reported to government officials to track whale populations and catch limits and to confirm the legality of hunts. For example, the governing body for ASWs in the United States is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (Source: NOAA Fisheries. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/international-affairs/international-whaling-commission>).

F. What is the timeline of significant events that are related to the disputed issue or that describe its stages?

Isaiah Green created the timeline below to briefly capture the centuries-long history of whaling around the world, focusing on its most important moments.

Figure 3. Brief Timeline of the Development of Global Whaling

Before the 9th century	Deep history of subsistence whaling documented by many cultures around the world. In many cases, these practices of whaling were based entirely on the value of hunting for a substantial food source. Groups such as Alaskan Natives have been practicing these forms of whaling, targeting cetaceans like beluga, from pre-9th century times to the present.
9th century	First documentations of Basque peoples in Europe practicing whaling for food. During this time, they specifically focused on hunting North Atlantic Right Whales, but over time, their practices expanded.
15th century–18th century	During this time, Basque whaling practices spread to the Americas during colonization, especially in New England and Newfoundland. From here, the development of European and American whaling industries began to grow.
19th and 20th centuries	The hunting of whales to gather blubber to convert to whale oil began in the 1830s and was one of the most popular fuel sources for light by the 1870s. Hunting continued through the 20 th century for meat, oil, and other byproducts, and the IWC was founded in 1946. The first global ban on whaling took effect in 1986.

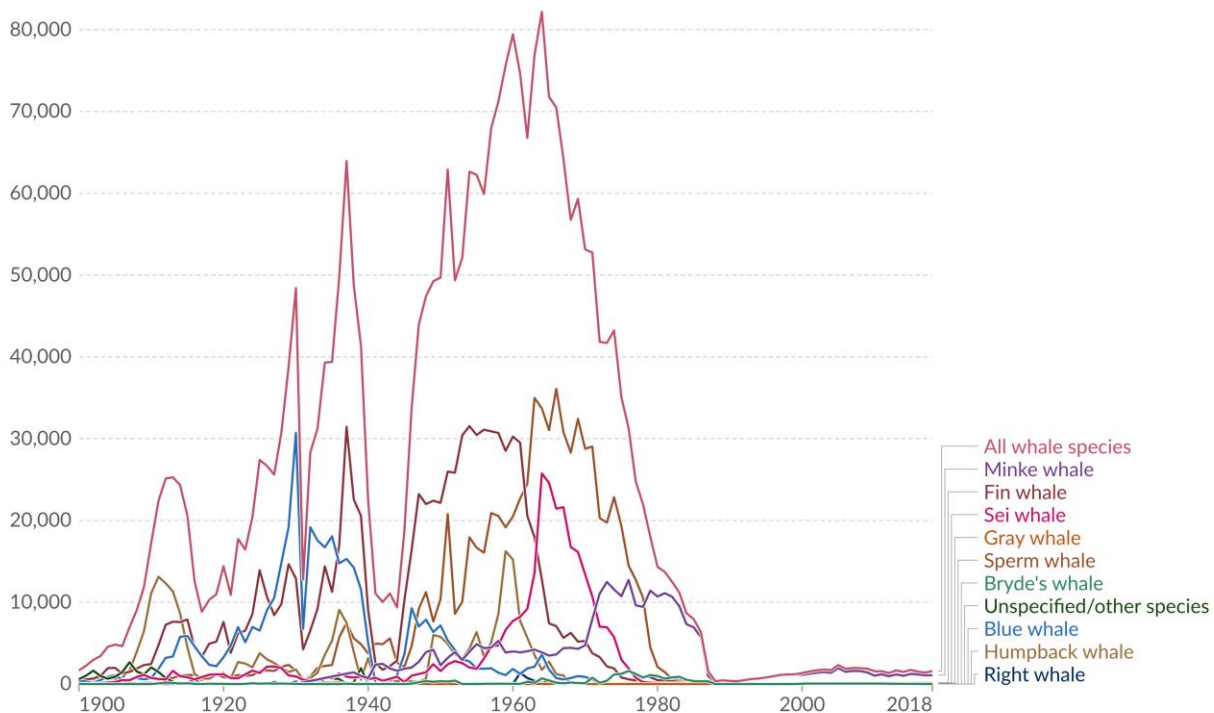
21st century

The IWC global moratorium on whaling is still in effect; however, many countries, such as Japan and Canada, have begun to leave the IWC as they see the ban as indefinite rather than temporary. Commercial practices are still run from various countries, including Norway, Iceland, Japan, and Russia, and calculations on the kills conducted by these vessels are not always clear.

Source: Green, I. (2024).

Figure 4. Number of whales killed, World

Number of whales killed, World



Data source: International Whaling Commission (IWC); Rocha et al. (2014)

OurWorldInData.org/biodiversity | CC BY

Source: Ritchie, H. and Roser, M. (2024). *Global whaling peaked in the 1960s*. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/whaling>.

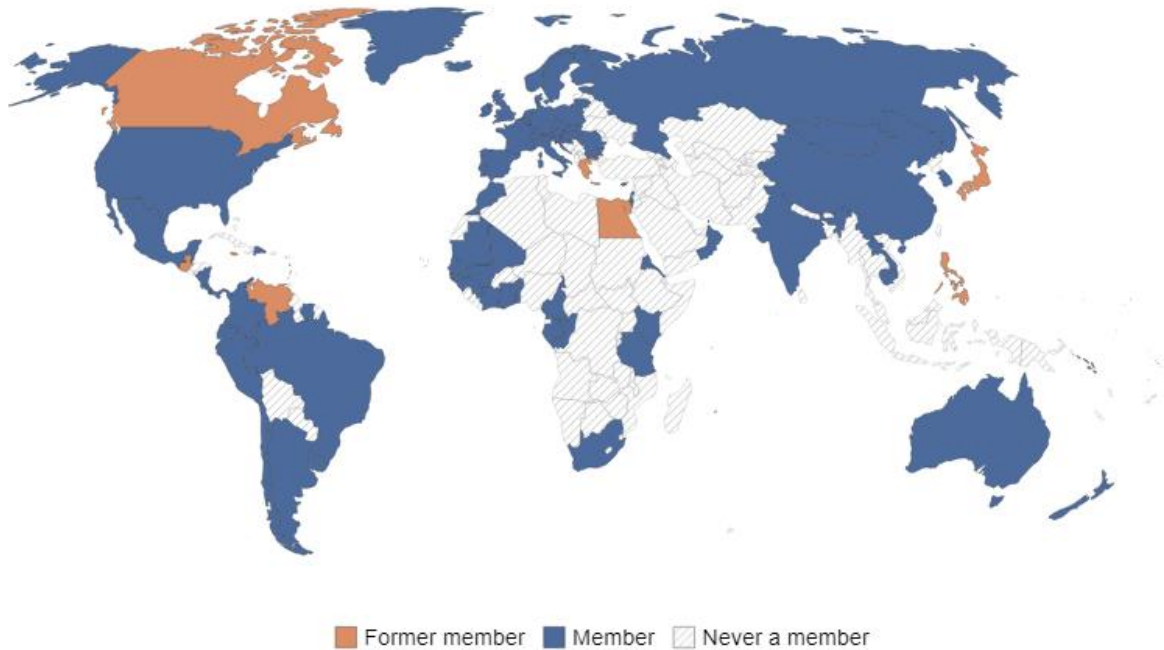
Note: This graph shows the estimated number of whales killed yearly in the commercial industry from 1900 to 2018. This data is vital to understanding the critical impact that Euro-American Whaling industries had on global cetacean populations over the twentieth century.

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G. What map(s) can help students understand this disputed issue better?

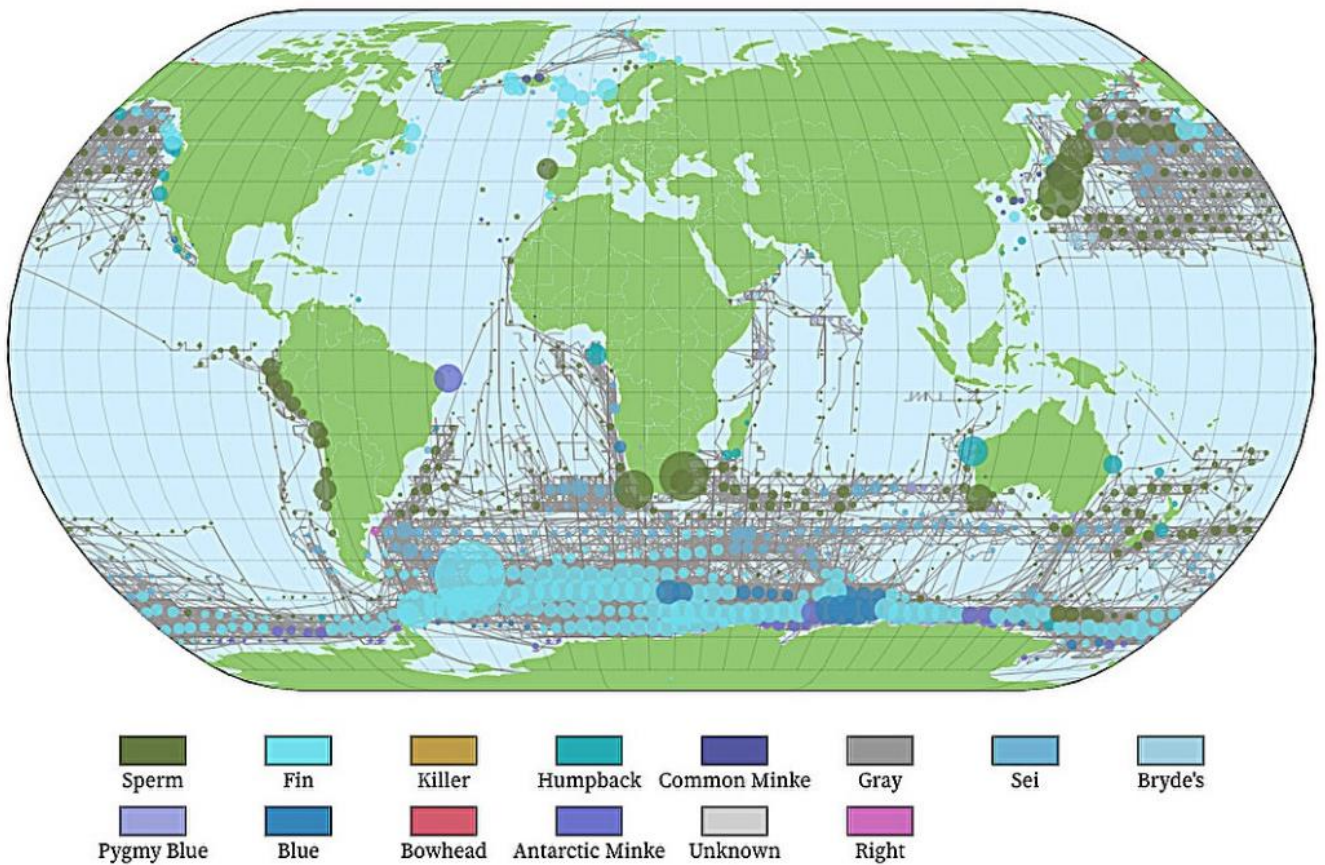
Figure 5. Which Countries are Members of the International Whaling Commission?



Map source: International Whaling Commission. (2022). *Which countries are members of the International Whaling Commission?* Our World in Data.

<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/iwc-members?time=2022>

Figure 6. Global Whale Catches and Whaling Routes from 1880 to 1986

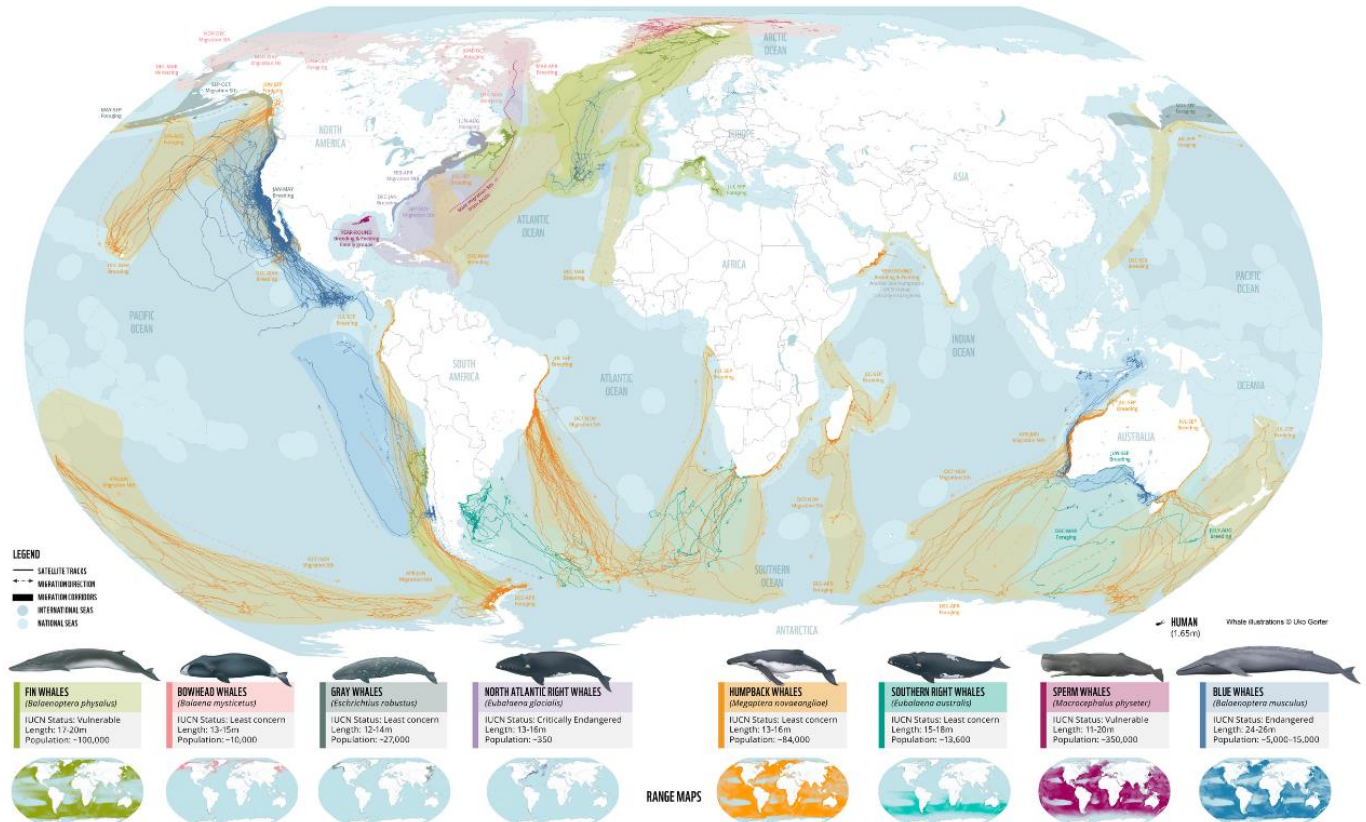


Map Source: Milne, S. (2023). *WhaleVis Turns More than a Century of Whaling Data into an Interactive Map*. UW News. <https://www.washington.edu/news/2023/11/15/whalevis-turns-more-than-a-century-of-whaling-data-into-an-interactive-map/>

Figure 7. Whale Superhighways

WHALE SUPERHIGHWAYS

For the first time, we present a global view of blue corridors for whales, combining satellite tracking data from over 1000 tags from 50 researchers. They help uncover the migration patterns of whales and their critical habitats.



Map Source: Johnson, Christopher M., et al. (2022). *Protecting Blue Corridors — Challenges and Solutions for Migratory Whales Navigating National and International Seas*. World Wildlife Fund. <https://zenodo.org/records/6196131>

H. What short (6-10-minute) video can provide an overall understanding of this disputed issue?



Video Title: What is Commercial Whaling?
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk59f_KtTq4
Alternative Search: On YouTube, type in “What is Commercial Whaling?”
Author(s): Newsweek
Year: 2018
Length: 1:50 minutes

Note: This video* introduces the rise and fall of commercial whaling globally. While it has some graphic imagery of commercial hunting, this short video provides the viewer with a brief overview of what contemporary whaling looks like worldwide.

*Warning – YouTube does not entirely censor its comments section, and some posts in this area may not be suitable for all ages.

I. What additional deliberations questions complement the essential question?

1. In the development of international law, when does jurisdiction over ungoverned territory matter, and when does it not?
2. Why should countries care about protecting the environment of other territories?
3. When should we consider cultural beliefs when developing international law, and when should we not?
4. Why is it important that international waters are not legally defined? What is the value of defining them?
5. Why is it necessary to enforce or police international laws?
6. To what extent do companies have a responsibility to help repair any destruction they cause? How might governance over a specific region impact these responsibilities?

J. What optional and supplementary resources might shape an understanding of the disputed issue?

Parallel discussions of the disputed issue in the US:

- Eric Dolin, *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* (2007, USA)
- Chie Sakakibara, *Whale Snow: Iñupiat, Climate Change, and Multispecies Resilience in Arctic Alaska* (2020, USA)
- Charlotte Coté, *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions* (2010, USA)

Novels, short stories, poetry, documentaries, videos, etc.:

- Jun Morikawa, *Whaling in Japan: Power, Politics and Diplomacy* (2009, Japan)
- Russell Fielding, *The Wake of the Whale: Hunter Societies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic* (2018, Arctic waters and the Caribbean)
- *Sentinels of Silence: Whale Watching, Noise, and the Orca* (2020, documentary, USA). Available on YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2ANuWWfXCM&ab_channel=Ecosong
- Debby Dahl Edwardson, *Whale Snow* (2003, USA). Children's book exploring Indigenous Iñupiaq culture.
- Freakonomics, *Everything You Never Knew About Whaling* (2023, USA). Podcast series discussing commercial whaling.
- *A Taste of Whale* (2022, documentary, Faroe Islands) Trailer available on YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8mY1OiRNiA>

Websites that cover the issue, as a whole, with good reliability and validity:

- The International Whaling Commission. <https://iwc.int/en/> (for updates on the IWC)
- The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/whaling>
- The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/whaling>
- The Reykjavik Grapevine. <https://grapevine.is/tag/whaling/>
- The Japan Times. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/whaling-3/>

K. What are some ways in which students might safely civically engage in response to this case study?

Find suggestions at:

- **Better World Info**—many different topics and ways to take action:
<https://www.betterworld.info>
- **DoSomething**—has campaigns to join and challenges to take action:
<https://www.dosomething.org/us>
- **Global Citizen**—offers petitions to sign on various global issues:
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/take-action/>
- **The Global Goals**—suggests ways to take action on the 17 UN Sustainability Goals:
<https://www.globalgoals.org/take-action/>
- **United Nations: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**—"The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World": <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/>



MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES HANDOUTS FOLLOW ON NEXT PAGES*

HANDOUTS ARE ONLY FOR STUDENT SMALL GROUP PRESENTATIONS

***NOTE: These are not to be handed out to the whole class, but to small groups after the class has learned about the case content.**

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PERSPECTIVE ONE*:

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

***This perspective description is being handed out to your team only.**

NOTE: This description is written from the perspective of the Bureau and the Secretariat of the International Whaling Commission.

General Description: The IWC as a governing body established in 1946 with the primary goal of enforcing international laws that concern the protection of cetaceans worldwide. It was formed in response to concerns about the massive decrease in whale populations due to the commercial whaling industry. However, the IWC's attempts to create laws formally regulating over-hunting were met with failure for many years. These laws failed to pass because the IWC comprises both anti-whaling and pro-whaling nations, leading to issues around how to compromise and pass laws for international governance. Even so, the IWC brought these nations together and formally implemented a moratorium on all commercial whaling in 1986 to slow down the industry and prevent the extinction of certain species. The moratorium included several exceptions, though. Scientific whaling and Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling continue, permissible under regulation through the IWC. In recent years, the IWC has begun to switch its focus from solely whaling to protecting whales from other forms of anthropocentric harm, including noise pollution, chemical pollution, injury from nets used by fishing vessels, ship strikes, and interference from whale-watching operations. These efforts partly come from acknowledging the many forms of human harm done to whales beyond hunting and recognizing the multitude of modern factors inhibiting the growth of cetacean populations worldwide.

Values: Democracy, Sustainability

Comments and Resources Supporting this Perspective:

- Historically, the IWC has worked to create and enforce international laws concerning whaling practices and the protection of cetaceans more generally from human harm. The IWC regulates whaling practices today through these laws and seeks to implement a variety of other protections through similar legislation.

Resource: *Overview of International Whaling Commission*. Animal Legal and Historical Center, Michigan State University. (2002).

<https://www.animallaw.info/article/overview-international-whaling-commission>

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- The IWC seeks to accomplish its many current goals while also maintaining a strong global influence with the policies it has already implemented. Its current work, though, specifically focuses on “conservation and management” through the development of legal protections for all cetaceans from many forms of anthropocentric harm beyond hunting, such as pollution from chemicals and noise.

Resource: International Whaling Commission. <https://iwc.int/en/>

Comments and Resources Opposing this Perspective:

- Some critics of the IWC claim that, while the committee has brought the attention of global politics and the public to the protection of cetaceans, it has failed to do any kind of serious enforcement or conservation work by leaving too many loopholes for commercial whaling, not focusing on climate science impacts, and due to the continual allowance of “self-monitoring” for hunts.

Resource: *Resurrecting the International Whaling Commission: Suggestions to strengthen the conservation effort.* Animal Legal and Historical Center, Michigan State University. (2002). <https://www.animallaw.info/article/resurrecting-international-whaling-commission-suggestions-strengthen-conservation-effort>

- While the IWC may be focused on fostering the protection of whales through international partnership, the focus on a compromise for pro-whaling nations in recent years of policy development has left the committee’s regulatory practice locked in a stalemate with few signs of progress.

Resource: Hurd, Ian. Almost saving whales: The ambiguity of success at the International Whaling Commission. *Ethics and International Affairs*. (2012). <https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/journal/almost-saving-whales-the-ambiguity-of-success-at-the-international-whaling-commission-full-text>

Primary Outcomes of Perspective: We, as members of the IWC, have effectively brought the global commercial whaling industry to a complete halt. We have maintained our dedication to efforts that would protect non-whale cetaceans like seals and dolphins. Moreover, we have continued to advance the goals of the Commission to protect whales from various threats. Also, we have tried to implement regulations around the world to protect these cetaceans from all forms of anthropocentric harm, such as the impact of climate change and other forms of environmental damage caused by industrialization. In doing so, we hope to help rehabilitate whale populations to thriving numbers globally.

Secondary Consequences: The support of the IWC from all nations is necessary if they are to continue to aid in effective international governance. Without support, the IWC has little ability to police illegal commercial whaling in places like Japan and the Arctic, and many scholars are concerned about their authority to protect cetaceans beyond current measures. With little affordance in terms of jurisdiction, a lack of resources to address environmental degradation in general, complications in defining international legal precedence for protecting whales, and regulations extending only to members of the Commission, the IWC's current methods cannot effectively progress their work to conserve and protect all marine mammal if continued international cooperation fails.

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PERSPECTIVE TWO*:

Japan

***This perspective description is being handed out to your team only.**

NOTE: This description is written from the perspective of the government of Japan.

General Description: Japan's Indigenous communities have long histories of whaling cultural traditions. However, compared to many other countries, the nation was not involved in commercial whaling to a significant extent until after World War II. Their involvement increased because Japan experienced an extreme economic collapse and whale meat was an easily obtainable food source for impoverished people. The nation joined the IWC to have a voice in promoting whaling for countries that need it for food security and to preserve cultural traditions. After the moratorium went into effect in 1986, Japan hesitantly agreed to follow it and mostly only practiced scientific hunts. During that time, a large number of cetaceans were killed for scientific research. However, little research came from these hunts and many of the companies involved sold most of the meat on the Japanese fishing market. After a short time, Japan revealed that it would not regulate commercial vessels intending to harvest whales in the Arctic as part of the continuing cultural tradition of eating whales in specific communities throughout the country. Finally, in 2019, after much conflict with the IWC and many other nations that they have deemed to be colonialist and violent, Japan left the Commission and immediately reopened its commercial whaling industry, but only within its territorial waters. Since the reopening of the industry, the demand for whale meat has not seen any form of increase. Their government is still firmly committed to reintroducing it as an essential aspect of Japanese food culture and sustainable living.

Values: Self-Reliance, Sustainability, Freedom

Comments and Resources Supporting this Perspective:

- The government of Japan has shown considerable support for returning country to its whaling culture, as they believe it will not only evoke a sense of national pride but will also supply a stable food source as it did for many people following World War II. Some officials, like the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture director of international negotiations, Hideki Moronuki, have outlined the considerably high economic value of reintroducing commercial whaling, which could potentially lead to some conservation benefits as

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more money could be brought towards the scientific study of cetaceans.

Resource: *The devil and the deep blue sea—Japanese whaling brings surprising conservation benefits.* World Finance. (n.d.). <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/the-devil-and-the-deep-blue-sea-japanese-whaling-brings-surprising-conservation-benefits>

- The history of whaling in Japan is critical for understanding the desire to return to hunting. Despite the growth in popularity of whale meat across the country in post-World War II Japan, the practice is hundreds of years old in places like Kumano. The practice of whaling within Japanese culture has been passed down through the continuation of tradition and cultural events, making it a vital aspect of Kumano's and, more broadly, all of Japan's intangible cultural heritage.

Resource: *Japan heritage living with whales story.* Japan Heritage: Living with Whales (Association for the Protection of Kumano Sea Whaling Culture). (n.d). <https://kumanonada-nihonisan.jp/en/story/>

- The potential future of whaling within Japanese communities has grown extensively since the country's exit from the IWC. By resuming the practice of commercial whaling in their own territorial waters, the nation will see potential cultural and foodways benefits throughout the county, as this practice stems from hunts conducted by four historic whaling villages located across Japan.

Resource: *After withdrawal from the IWC: The future of Japanese whaling.* Asia-Pacific Journal. (2019). <https://apjif.org/2019/04/holm>

Comments and Resources Opposing this Perspective:

- Japan's new means of marketing whale meat to the public could be seen as unnecessary, especially as it perpetuates the commercial whaling industry. For example, one business created vending machines to try and stimulate the purchase of whale meat, as the demand for it is relatively low and has not increased since its reentrance into the market.

Resource: *Campaigners criticize Japan firm selling whale meat from vending machines.* The Guardian. (2023). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/24/campaigners-criticise-japan-firm-selling-whale-meat-from-vending-machines>

- Japan's construction of a "whaling mother ship" stirred controversy, as some critics believe it means they intend to take commercial beyond their territorial waters. Many nations like Australia are concerned not only that this industry is unnecessary and violent but also that it will only exacerbate the dangers whales face in the Pacific and



Antarctica.

Resource: *Japan's new whaling "mother ship" being built to travel as far as Antarctica.*

The Guardian. (2023).

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/17/japans-new-whaling-mother-ship-being-built-to-travel-as-far-as-antarctica>

Primary Outcomes of Perspective: With the reintroduction of the commercial industry, whale meat is now widely available in Japan. Some companies have opened vending machines for the meat to encourage people to buy and use it daily. This industry supports a cultural history of using whale meat in Japanese cuisine and contributes to the Japanese government's vision of sustainable whaling. Even though the demand for whale meat has not grown, it has provided a healthy, efficient, and frugal form of meat for lower-income households to consume.

Secondary Consequences: Japan has drawn much criticism over its reopening of commercial whaling, with concerns heightening about its impact on cetacean populations. The industry could potentially return certain whale species to endangered status or even to complete extinction. Furthermore, it could be economically harmful to Japan should the lack of demand for whale meat continue; perhaps leading to bankruptcy for those in the whaling industry. This downfall might also have negative consequences politically among those who have participated in the whaling moratorium.

INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDY

International Whaling

PERSPECTIVE THREE*: Canada

***This perspective description is being handed out to your team only.**

NOTE: This description is written from the perspective of the government of Japan.

General Description: While Canada was historically part of the global whaling industry, it was one of the first countries to turn away from the practice in the twentieth century. Canada was with the IWC initially, but eventually left the Commission in 1982 due to their opposition to the moratorium. This exit was not because Canada did not support the ending of commercial whaling but rather because the nation did not see how the Commission could effectively do this on a global scale. They also did not believe that the moratorium would be temporary, nor would it be focused on creating a sustainable future where whaling could return but with more regulation to ensure the survival of all cetacean species. Even since their exit from the IWC, they have still been deeply involved in international policies regarding whaling, as they are one of the major countries that people look to when considering how to implement Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling effectively. Moreover, they have always focused on protecting cetaceans from all industrial harm.

Values: Sustainability, Self-Reliance, Stability

Comments and Resources Supporting this Perspective:

- Whaling has been of great significance to the Indigenous peoples of Canada for thousands of years and continues to be important to these communities as they seek to maintain subsistent and sustainable livelihoods. Support for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling not only allows Indigenous people to engage in practices of intangible cultural heritage but also aids in their economic and food sustainability, which in many cases is necessary for these communities' ability to thrive.

Resource: *When whaling is your tradition*. Royal Ontario Museum. (2018).

<https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/when-whaling-is-your-tradition>

- Canada has a long history of implementing environmental protections for whales, which have worked towards entirely ending the practice of commercial whaling and enforcing laws to protect various cetaceans that are considered endangered. However, the

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Canadian government has also put forth efforts to safeguard *all* cetaceans, even those not considered endangered, from other forms of anthropocentric harm, by strictly regulating oceanic pollution and outlawing the captivity of cetaceans.

Resource: *Whale protection measures in Canada and beyond*. Whale Seeker. (2024).

<https://www.whaleseeker.com/post/whale-protection-measures-in-canada-and-beyond>

Comments and Resources Opposing this Perspective:

- Some critics who support a complete ban on whaling believe that Canada is allowing unsustainable hunts by Indigenous communities. The country also does little to protect whales globally, as exemplified by its anti-whaling units focusing only on territorial water and its government's refusal to participate in the IWC.

Resource: *Alaska: Where was ICC at the IWC?* Nunatsiaq News. (2003).

https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/alaska_where_was_icc_at_the_iwc/

- Canada's legal position on fishing practices is poorly defined and allows for the over-hunting of species like belugas. Moreover, the level of protection that it holds for most whales is not extended to all species of cetaceans.

Resource: Campbell, M.L. and Thomas, V.G. Protection and conservation of marine mammals in Canada: A case for legislative reform. *Ocean and Coastal Law Journal*.

(2016). <https://digitalcommons.maine.gov/oclj/vol7/iss2/2/>

Primary Outcomes of Perspective: Many of Canada's policies have set up impressive examples of how to effectively engage in Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling for other nations supporting Indigenous endeavors. Their policies support Indigenous communities throughout the Arctic as they continue long-standing cultural traditions of whaling that contribute to subsistence livelihoods and the sustainability of food, economy, and tradition. Further, as a nation they have set a foundational example of effective harvesting reporting and population tracking, to ensure that certain species are protected from endangerment by commercial fishing or tourism.

Secondary Consequences: Some of Canada's lack specificity in their definitions, with little work done to separate laws regarding fishing and whaling. While this has little impact on the killing of whales, since the nation banned whaling before the IWC's moratorium, it has still left other forms of cetaceans vulnerable, such as seals, which continue to be hunted in Canada today as a commercial product. Further, their absence from the IWC has only given more power to pro-whaling nations and has left them with no influence over global whaling policies and regulations.

INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDY
International Whaling

PERSPECTIVE FOUR*:
Sea Shepherd

***This perspective description is being handed out to your team only.**

NOTE: This description is written from the perspective of members of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

General Description: Sea Shepherd was founded in 1977, during a period of growing global environmental concerns. As an offshoot of Greenpeace, the organization's goal has always been to protect marine mammals worldwide. They have invested large sums into programs and projects to stop the commercial hunting of all cetaceans and to establish branches across multiple countries. Overall, they have attempted to help nations in policing and enforcing the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling by building fleets of vessels that target ships used for hunting or processing marine mammals. In doing so, their goal is not to physically harm the people on these hunting ships but rather to immobilize and destabilize them so that they cannot continue their practices. In recent years, Sea Shepherd has also begun employing more spy-like methods, following these vessels and taking photos of their commercial hunting practices to report to the world through the IWC. They hope to bring to light the continued issue of whaling in the Pacific Ocean and the Arctic. Their goal is to end the killing of whales and other marine mammals in all its forms, and to make this killing an international crime.

Values: Justice, Sustainability

Comments and Resources Supporting this Perspective:

- Sea Shepherd, as an activist organization, has had a relatively successful record of targeting or stopping numerous illegal commercial vessels from being able to hunt whales in unregulated waters illegally. The organization characterizes their approach as "aggressive non-violence," and these tactics have been rather effective in policing illegal whaling around the world.

Resource: *Sea Shepherd Captain Paul Watson: "I call what we do aggressive non-violence."* The Guardian. (2019). <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/jul/26/sea-shepherd-captain-paul-watson-i-call-what-we-do-aggressive-non-violence>



- Sea Shepherd's success as a vigilante group has led to legal complications concerning its approach to policing commercial whaling. According to strict legal definitions, some of its operations against whaling vessels might be considered piracy. Still, because of the many benefits nations such as Australia have had from this organization enforcing whaling protections in international waters, it has been suggested that some countries might give Sea Shepherd letters of marque (deputization to police) so that they may continue obstructing illegal commercial hunting.

Resource: Nousari, M. From pirate to partner: Sea Shepherd's evolution in maritime conservation and the pursuit of high seas legitimacy. *University of Miami Law Review*. (2024). <https://lawreview.law.miami.edu/from-pirate-to-partner-sea-shepherds-evolution-in-maritime-conservation-and-the-pursuit-of-high-seas-legitimacy/>

- Sea Shepherd has had a long history as an organization and has been successful as an activist vigilante group in protecting cetaceans from vessels that refuse to comply with the IWC moratorium. In doing so, they have tried to uphold their mission "to protect defenseless marine wildlife and end habitat destruction in the world's oceans. Since 1977, Sea Shepherd has used innovative direct action tactics to defend, conserve, and protect the delicately-balanced biodiversity of our seas and enforce international conservation laws."

Resource: *Who we are*. Sea Shepherd. (n.d.). <https://www.seashepherdglobal.org/who-we-are/>

Comments and Resources Opposing this Perspective:

- Sea Shepherd's approach to activism has been tenuous over the last several years and has begun to become inefficient as the organization continues to build bad relationships with countries like Japan. Because the organization has engaged in practices that critics label as piracy, they have earned bans from entering many nations' territorial waters due to the fear or threat of their practices constitute eco-terrorism.

Resource: Hoek, A. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society v. Japanese whalers, the showdown: Who is the real villain? *Stanford Journal of Animal Law and Policy*. (2010). <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/hoek.pdf>

Primary Outcomes of Perspective: Sea Shepherd has effectively stopped many commercial vessels from being able to harvest or hunt cetaceans illegally. In doing so, they have had a lasting impact on the industry, making it a potentially non-lucrative business venture for those looking to involve themselves in whaling. By making their presence known and conducting vigilante operations, they have provided a pseudo-police force for international waters,

enforcing laws such as the IWC moratorium in ways that might be impossible for legal bodies to achieve.

Secondary Consequences: Because of some of the violent tactics Sea Shepherd has used against Japanese commercial vessels, they have been labeled as an eco-terrorist group. In many cases, this is bad for environmental activism as it only increases tensions between legal bodies wanting to move forward with environmental policy and nations unwilling to change their destructive practices. For example, in the case of Japan, the Sea Shepherd's attacks on their whaling ships only incited the Japanese government to further push for the reopening of commercial whaling, ultimately serving as a contributing factor to Japan leaving the IWC.