

With a quiet acceptance of India in the global force and increasing distrust towards Chinese investments, it is an opportune time for India to focus on Arctic region. Analyze. ①

Considered to be as 'global common', the pristine Arctic is now opening new gateways for geopolitical shift due to melting of glaciers on account of climate change. India has found itself to be part of the game on scientific lines - HIMADRI research station, Observer of the Ottawa declaration Arctic Council since 2013, Research on POLARSTERN - German Expedition.

### ACCEPTANCE OF INDIA AND CHINA IN ARCTIC

- 1) India's commitment towards 'Arctic policy' can be seen in it, renaming of Antarctic Research to National Centre for Polar and Ocean research - giving it a scientific stronghold.
- 2) India's softpower engagement with most 8 Arctic Council members has assured it to be selected as observer in 2019. India saw its participation in Reykjavik Assembly of Arctic Council.
- 3) China's presence in Arctic has however been viewed with degree of skepticism - BRI initiative, Sino-Russian bonds, debt-trapping investments, ice-breaker ships - that can overpower pristine environment. Polar silk route mandates aggressive, need based policy.
- 4) Chinese dominance in Arctic threatens sovereignty in opposition to QUAD led Indo-Pacific Strategy.

### INDIA IN ARCTIC - OPPORTUNE ENGAGEMENTS

Quiet acceptance as an observer, can be redrawn to further India's engagement beyond science. It seems opportune due to following reasons.

#### 1) CLIMATE CHANGE:-

Melting of Arctic glaciers, rise in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has direct / bearance on monsoon winds of India. Agriculture - depended on rain needs a climate reliance policy based on research in Arctic.

## 2) EMERGENCY RESERVES:-

- Arctic region is said to hold 40% of natural gas reserves. This can be effectively utilized to meet renewable energy targets of 2015 Paris climate deal, if effectively explored.
- The region is also a rich source of fossil fuels, polymetallic nodules vital for energy sufficiency.

## 3) TRADE ROUTES:-

- Opening of new shipping routes connecting Russia's far east to Europe can reduce the cost of logistics, oil, and time.
- Dominant trade routes, would see newer port areas, and new cities. India's Vladivostok-Chennai shipping lane can soon be used to further venture to European markets.

## 5) STRATEGIC POLICIES:-

- Enhanced race by Russia, China to dominate Arctic region for vital investments eg: Nuclear powered ship - Akademik Lomonosov of Russia, Icebreaker ship - URAL, BRE - Polar Silk Route.
- Diversion of trading towards Arctic routes, India needs to have presence to safeguard its interests.
- Counterbalancing Chinese in Arctic region, in diverting investments.

### FURTHERING INDIA'S ENGAGEMENTS

- 1) Articulate ARCTIC POLICY of India, for research. eg: climate change and Indigenous communities effect on them.
- 2) Linking INSTC with European Rail network to connect High north - counter Polar Silk road.
- 3) Effectuating Act Far East policy with Russia - Vladivostok engagement.
- 4) Research collaboration with Arctic sea littoral countries.
- 5) Conducting joint exercises in HADR, Ocean security.

Thus by proper engagement, India can push for climate change agenda for responsible, sustainable Arctic exploitation, thereby demonstrate its leadership role in clean Environment.