



Russia-China Cooperation in the Arctic

Why in News?

Recently, [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) Warned Russia's Military built up and Chinese interest in Arctic Region.

- As per various reports, China has deepening **strategic partnership with Russia in the Arctic Region.**



What are the Concerns Regarding the Cooperation?

- **Russian Military Build-up:**
 - Russia has set up a **new Arctic Command** and has **opened hundreds of new and former Soviet-era Arctic military sites**, including airfields and deep-water ports.

- Significant **Russian military build-up with new bases**, new weapons systems and also using the High North as a test bed for their most advanced weapons, including hypersonic missiles.
- **China's Claim:**
 - China has declared itself a near-Arctic state. Further, China plans to build the **world's largest icebreaker and is spending tens of billions of dollars on energy, infrastructure and research projects in the north.**
- **Climate Change:**
 - As [climate change](#) thaws more ice, it is predicted to **open up more waterways enabling deeper penetration in the area.**
 - Further, these channels can be **exploited by nations as they explore new shipping routes that could be a gamechanger in trade**, cutting down longer and costlier journeys around the globe.
- **Conflict with US's Interest:**
 - While China is not an Arctic nation, its **deepening strategic partnership with Russia and increased cooperation in the Arctic** has worried the US which thinks this pairing is against American values and interests.

Is there any cooperation among Nations in the Arctic?

- There are eight Arctic nations - **The US, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia.**
 - These are part of the [Arctic Council](#), **an intergovernmental forum that was formed to promote cooperation in the region.**
- On three occasions, the Arctic States have negotiated legally binding agreements. these are -
 - Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (signed 2011),
 - Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (signed 2013),
 - Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation (signed 2017).

What is the Relevance of Arctic Region for India?

- **About:**
 - **India's interests in the Arctic region are scientific, environmental, commercial as well as strategic.**
 - **India became the observer of Arctic Council** in 2013 and its membership as an observer was **renewed in 2018 for another five years.**
 - **The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, is the nodal agency for India's Polar research programme, which includes Arctic studies.
 - India's Ministry of External Affairs provides the external interface to the Arctic Council.
- **Research Station:**
 - India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the **Svalbard Treaty in Paris.**
 - Since July 2008, India has a **permanent research station in the Arctic called Himadri at NyAlesund, Svalbard Area in Norway.**
 - It has also deployed a multi-sensor moored observatory called **IndARC** in the Kongsfjorden fjord since 2014.
- **Impacts on India:**
 - The Arctic influences atmospheric, oceanographic and biogeochemical cycles of the earth's ecosystem.
 - Moreover, the Arctic is **vulnerable to climate change and global warming.**
 - The effects are manifested by the loss of sea ice, ice caps, and warming of the ocean and atmosphere.
 - It will lead to **lowering of salinity levels, rising temperature differential between land and oceans in the tropical regions**, drying of subtropical areas and increase in precipitation at higher latitudes.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following countries: (2014)

1. Denmark
2. Japan
3. Russian Federation
4. United Kingdom
5. United States of America

Which of the above are the members of the 'Arctic Council'?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
(b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 4 and 5
(d) 1, 3 and 5

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- The '**Arctic Council**' is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- **The 1996 Ottawa Declaration established the 'Arctic Council'.** The Declaration lists the following countries as members of the Arctic Council: **Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.** Hence, **1, 3 and 5 are correct.**
- The Arctic Council's mandate, as articulated **in the Ottawa Declaration**, explicitly excludes military security.
- **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. How do the melting of the Arctic ice and glaciers of the Antarctic differently affect the weather patterns and human activities on the Earth? Explain. (2021)

Source: TH