

Alliance in the Arctic Region : A NEO-NATO vs Warsaw ?

Shalu Runthala, Ph.D Research Scholar Dept. of Strategic & Security Studies, School of International Studies Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, U.P. (India)

Abstract -

The Arctic region, one of the coldest oceans, is now a day turning hot. Not just because of the increasing temperature but also because of heated politics. The Arctic Ocean, has now become the race, a race to reach and occupy first, during the time of the cold war arctic region was used by both the USA and the former USSR as a buffer zone. But the recent Russia -Ukraine crisis has affected the Arctic, as well as many Arctic region countries, are willing to join NATO. In addition to that Russia-China collaboration in the Arctic Ocean pays way to a new form of NATO vs Warsaw build-up in the region. This might not only affect the politics of the area but also of the world.

This paper is an attempt to understand the new alliance build-up in the region. The paper shall be divided into 3 parts. In the first part, it shall try to understand and analyse the new alliance build-up in the Arctic region and its impact on regional and international politics. The second part shall inspect with how US- Russia enmity would securitize the region after the Russia - Ukraine crisis. And in the third part of the paper, it will try to highlight the importance of the Arctic for China and how increased alliances with Russia will aid China to establish itself in the region.

Keywords :- Nations, Arctic Russia, Ukraine, alliance, region, China, Ocean, Warsaw etc.

Introduction :-

Almost two decades post the time of post-cold war period, the Arctic region has enjoyed the status of a zone of The Arctic exceptionalism, by which one can understand that The Arctic has stayed aloof from the sphere of active geopolitics of the world. But it seems to have changed with the present Russia- Ukraine war. The Arctic region is situated in the north part of the globe, and melting ice with the temperature rise has opened new possibilities for the world. With the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, 2 of The Arctic states Finland, on May 12th 2022, and three days later, Sweden, on may 15th have announced their willingness to join NATO, complexing the situation even further. As the war completed its 100th day and is still going on, the aftermath of this war is likely to change the course of geopolitics soon.

The Arctic as a theater

Past

Among the world's 5 major oceans, The Arctic Ocean is the smallest (5.4 million sq.Miles) and the shallowest. Its located in the northern hemisphere of the globe and spreads around the north pole region. The word *Arctic* originates from the Greek word 'artikos' which means near the bear, and is the reference to the Ursa Major constellation, whose last 2 stars points toward the north star. The size of The Arctic Ocean is almost as big as present-day Russia and nearly one and a half times of USA. The Arctic region consists of 8 The Arctic states; USA, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Canada and Iceland

The Arctic Ocean region was of crucial importance during world war II. It provided an essential supply route between Allied and Axis powers. During the German invasion of the soviet union by operation Barbossa in june 1941, heavy amount of supplies was provided by the shipping lanes from Iceland to the former USSR. A total of 22 convoys occurred during the time of August 1941 to May 1945. Norway had base in the Arctic region from which Germany attacked the Allied powers from the help of their U boats, aircrafts cruiser ships etc. German U boats made passage from Baltic sea to Atlantic ocean via Northern sea. (G. R. Lindsey 1977).

The British were able to squeeze Germany simply by the help of location and weather, due to which German troops could not hold for long in the Arctic region. The Germans were not prepared for such a long gruesome battle in the harsh weather and had to ultimately retrieve back .

The Arctic region rose as a key strategic location only after the end of world war II. All the Arctic nations began to develop their naval and air base and capability in the Arctic region. US's Thule Air Base was developed in between 1951-54 at the cost of 300 billion US \$. At Shemya, which is on the Aleutian island, a radar installation system was developed in order to monitor Russian missile tests. Cold war saw the making of DEW line. The Distant Early Warning line is a system of radar stations in the North of Arctic region mainly near Canada, Alaska, Faroe islands, Greenland and Iceland. It was set up to detect any incoming bomber from the former USSR and provide early warning for any land and sea invasions.

USSR, on the other hand, built its base in Murmansk and Severomorsk region in the Kola peninsula. USSR's northern fleet, which is the largest of four fleets in based in this area. According to U.S. military experts in Washington, the Northern fleet of Russia contains 69 surface-combat ships and 47 support ships. Listed among its combat vessels are an aircraft carrier, 9 guided-missile cruisers, 2 light cruisers, 7 guided-missile destroyers, 6 other destroyers, 39 frigates and 5 other frigates with guided missiles. With several hundred smaller ships, the fleet has manpower totaling in the area of 117,000 (Report 1980).

The Arctic region then was the home of 2 contesting superpowers, which also possessed nuclear capabilities. During the time of Cold War both USSR and USA flaunted their nuclear capabilities in the region. US's Polaris, a nuclear powered ship, navigated across the Arctic to pose a threat in the region. US's most publicised nuclear power plant which is at Camp Century which was built at the cost of 6.2 million US\$. The plant is situated about 150 miles east of Thule Air Base. Russia, on the other hand, invested heavily on nuclear-powered missile rather than nuclear plants. Bibino nuclear power plant situated in Chukotka peninsula, was built with 4 reactors. At the peak of Cold War Russia had about 150 nuclear-powered submarines stationed at Barrent sea and Kola peninsula. (Nilsen 2019).

NATO

Nordic nations like Sweden, Norway, Denmark were worried about the increased presence of USSR in the Arctic region. The Polish crisis of 1981-82 and the submarine incident of Sweden, had led them to invest more in the NATO and state military buildup. Heavy increase in the military expenditure have shifted their neutral stand toward securitising self and the region. Norway which is stuck in between the east-west tug of war had accepted aid from US. US sent 10,000 marine amphibious brigades to Norway. NATO's biggest concern during that time was the functionality of USSR's Murmansk port. Murmansk port is built on a warm gulf stream which keeps narrow strip of the Arctic waters ice-free throughout the year. Murmansk was a key port during WWII as it was a crucial port for delivering military supplies between US and Britain. Murmansk is only 60 miles away from Norway and being ice-free at the time of need, it shall give higher advantage to USSR than any other state.

The Arctic nations policy at present

Iceland –

Iceland is a nordic county situated just outside the Arctic circle in the Atlantic ocean. Iceland joined NATO in the year 1949 and The Arctic council in the year 2002. Iceland holds the Arctic region as its top priority which is easily visible in its the Arctic policy document of 2009,2011,2021. Iceland's Arctic policy revolve around major 11 key areas: a) Promoting and strengthening the Arctic Council. b)Securing Iceland's position as a coastal State within the the Arctic region., c)Promoting understanding of the fact that the Arctic region extends both to the North Pole area proper and the part of the North Atlantic Ocean., d) Resolving differences that relate to the Arctic on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea., e) Strengthening and increasing cooperation with the Faroe Islands and Greenland with the aim of promoting the interests and political position of the three countries., f) Supporting the rights of indigenous peoples in the Arctic., g) Building on agreements and promoting cooperation., h) To use all available means to prevent human-induced climate change and its effects., i) Safeguarding broadly defined security interests in the Arctic region through civilian means and working against any kind of militarisation of the the Arctic., j) Developing

further trade relations between States in the the Arctic region., k) Advancing Icelanders knowledge of the Arctic issues and promoting Iceland abroad., l) Increasing consultations and cooperation at the domestic level on the Arctic issues. (Iceland 2011). The security of the Arctic region is vital for Iceland . Iceland is a country without any military, hence managing international alliances becomes key. Iceland has adopted a comprehensive multilateral security approach to maintain itself in the region. Iceland holds national security and environmental protection vital to its defence agreement in the NATO with USA. Iceland abides by international law and agreements of the Arctic Council to maintain peace and harmony in the region. Iceland operates IADS which is a part of NATO integrated air defence system. The bilateral defence agreements with USA in 2006 dictates the peaceful consultations and periodical agreement between the two states in order to maintain peace in the country.

Iceland is also a member of the Nordic co operation . In 2009, 5 nordic states signed a memorandum of understanding on Nordic defence co operation. NORDEFECO provides an important platform for the region's security policy dialogue and military cooperation. The cooperation is built on shared values, and by acting together, the Nordic countries can face the challenging security situation in the North and contribute to peace and security in the region. Iceland participates fully within the security policy dialogue of the NORDEFECO framework. (G. o. Iceland 2019).

Norway

Norway has a history of being a peaceful and neutral state, the worlds most desired country to live in with zero crime, state-of-the-art healthcare, gender unbiased and advanced education and a stable yet growing economy, Norway has it all. Norway also has the most favourable Arctic power conditions. Norway, due to its neutral approach in the world politics have always abstained itself from the active participation in the Arctic region. But with the increased involvement of the powerful states like China, France and the ongoing rivalry between US and Russia, led Norway to renew its Arctic white papers in 2020 calling it the High North policy, which seems to be the revised version of the previous policy documents. The overarching goals of the Norwegian government remains unchanged in respect of the 2012 white paper “The High North - Visions and Strategies”; that is to say: a) Peace, stability and predictability., b) Integrated, ecosystem-based management., c) International cooperation and the international legal order., d) A stronger basis for employment, value creation and welfare. Over the years, Norway has published many policy documents with regards to the Arctic region, but the key priorities in the Norwegian strategy are: a) continuation of well-function international cooperation with the Arctic neighbours., b) securing a sustainable business development., c) a knowledge-based development of the Arctic., d) an infrastructure in tune with growth and the green transition and ensuring a responsible approach when it comes to environmental protection., e) safety, emergency preparedness and response. (Affairs 2020)

The high north policy document 2020 underlines the importance of bilateral, regional and multilateral co-operation with its neighbours. Security is a critical element of the policy document. Norway has increased its military exercises in the region. Increasing closeness with US is on the Norwegian agenda , in order to reduce the Russian influence and balance the polarity in the region. Norway is one of the founding members of NATO. This plays a key role in securitising the Arctic region.

Denmark

Also known as the kingdom of Denmark, the only reason Denmark is considered as an Arctic nation is that it holds Greenland and Faroe island, which is situated in the Arctic region. In 2011 Denmark published its 1st Arctic policy document, which lays out the next 10 years plan. The next one was due to be published in the year 2021 but due to covid it has been delayed. 2011’s Arctic policy document’s main goals were:A peaceful, secure and safe Arctic; Self-sustaining growth and development; Development with respect for the Arctic’s vulnerable climate, environment and nature ; Close cooperation with international partners (Affairs 2020)

Greenland is located strategically between USA and USSR, which played a key role in the time of the cold war. During the cold war USA with Denmark's permission set up Thule air base station which is not far from camp century, in order to keep eye on Soviet’s missiles. USA had planned to develop top-secret mobile missile system called Project Ice Worm but due to thin ice structure in location the

mission was cancelled. From post cold war period till date Denmark in the Arctic region has carried out various joint military exercises.

Denmark has always been an essential member of NATO, Greenland lies at an important location, and Denmark knows this very well. That's why many times it is seen that Denmark uses Greenland card to get its ways with USA. In the post-cold war period Denmark shifted its attention to building its economy and saving the environment. Which led to Denmark in signing 'The Arctic environmental protection strategy' which later became The Arctic council in 1996. In 2021 Denmark signed an agreement with USA to strengthen defence capability in the Arctic region; under this agreement, it will increase its defence and monitoring capability 1.5 billion DKK. Major of which will go to funding military exercises and training. Denmark's securitization is due to increased Russian and Chinese presence in the region (Clark 2021).

Canada

The Arctic is fundamental to Canadian national identity; hence it is essential agenda in their national security. The Arctic is deeply rooted in Canadian history and culture, so protecting the Arctic is Canada's top most agenda. Canada's Arctic policy revolves around the basic idea to keep the Arctic stable rule-based territory with dynamic economic growth and a sustainable environment and sovereignty. This provides a basic framework in understanding Canada's Arctic policy. In the cold war era, Canada helped USA as its ally, but lot seemed to change in the post-cold war time. Canada is actively participating with other Arctic nations such as Denmark in operation Nanook of 2010 in the region to secure Arctic. (Statment on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy 2020). Canada is not only a member state of NATO but was also one of the principal initiators of the organisation

In 2019 Canada published its newest Arctic foreign policy, which clearly prioritises Canada's key interest in the region. In the document, Canada briefly has laid down three critical roles as its priority in the Arctic region. First is exercising its sovereignty in the far north region. In order to do so, it has invested heavily in the science and technology research dept. working in the Arctic region to understand the changing dynamics of the climate change in the region. Plus the continuous ongoing operations by the Canadian coast guard and royal navy, Canada is practising Canada's first defence strategy which provides an increased presence in the region. Canada is abided by international law and shall only follow it to resolve any border issue in the region. (ibid)

Its second priority is to abide by the UNCLOS law and to develop the region accordingly in a peaceful manner. Canadian govt is abide to protect its people's interest in the Arctic region for its economic and social growth. Canada promotes trade and shipping through the Arctic waters for its economic growth and prosperity.

USA

For USA the Arctic region has always been the top priority (if one overlooks its few years of negligence), Partly because of Russia and partly due to the China factor. During the period of the cold war the Arctic was a buffer zone for USA's missile and military surveillance plans on Russia. DEW line is one of the examples. Post cold war period in 2009, USA published its 1st official Arctic policy under the Article 66 of the national security presidential directive, which in 2019 got amended as a department of defence Arctic strategy 2019. In 2013, USA published a national strategy for Arctic region during President Obama's period.

The main driving force in shaping the US Arctic policy are obviously the growing presence and growth of Russia and China. Second are Environmental drivers, which are simultaneously transforming the Arctic maritime and terrestrial space at rates that confound scientists while fueling the development of flexible governance structures; and, third is Economic drivers that are highly correlated with global commodity prices. (Conley 2019).

The Alaskan region of the USA contains some of the country's largest oils and natural gas fields; the 2016 value of its mineral industry was \$2.83 billion³; and fishermen landed \$5.4 billion of fish and shellfish in 2017 (Welch 2018). Alaska's economic activity has been subdued for several years due to lower global energy prices. One of the most significant moments in the Arctic's geopolitical

development occurred in 2013 when China was invited to become a permanent observer to the Arctic Council. This decision, combined with the emergence of Chinese President Xi Jinping as China's leader and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, gave China greater impetus to be more economically, diplomatically, and scientifically visible in the Arctic. This occurred at the same moment when the Obama administration was preparing in earnest for its chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2015-2017) (Conley 2019). President Obama's three-day Arctic visit formed the basis of the U.S. priorities during its chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2015-2017): improving economic and living conditions in the Arctic communities; The Arctic Ocean safety, security, and stewardship; and addressing the impacts of climate change (State 2017).

In October 2018, NATO conducted a military exercise centred around Northern Norway—Trident Juncture 2018, its largest since the end of the Cold War. It included around 50,000 participants from NATO and partner countries, 250 aircraft, 65 ships, and up to 10,000 vehicles (NATO 2018). Nearly 20,000 U.S. troops were involved, and it was the first time in nearly 30 years that a U.S. aircraft carrier and strike group ships crossed the Arctic Circle. (Truman 2018). At present US has defensive policy, which is made as per the policy or action of Russia or China, In order to survive US need to have a clear goal and work for securitization in the Arctic region.

Russia

For Russia Arctic is their backwaters and to protect it is of great importance. In 1991 USSR got disintegrated, and Russia became its successor. Russia has deployed its strongest fleet i.e the northern fleet in the Arctic region, The Arctic holds colossal value of natural resources economy and Russian habitat. The Russian Arctic policy is the most complicated one as it is spread across various departments, and there is no single department or document dealing with it. Since president Putin's rise in 2000, basic state policy of Russian Federation was endorsed. In 2008 the document on Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic region for the Period Until 2020 and Beyond was approved by then President Dmitry Medvedev (Federation 2008). This is perhaps one of the most noteworthy and discussed Russian Arctic strategy document, since it followed shortly after 2007 North Pole Expedition. The Foundations of the State Policy serves as a doctrinal agenda for the Russian state's goals and interests in the Arctic. The document also lays out a plan for implementing the State Policy. Further, the Foundations of the State Policy proposes to maintain the Arctic as a region of peaceful cooperation. Ensuring national security and protecting the northern border requires a persistent build-up and modernization of military capabilities. Thus, Russia aims to create and maintain armed forces able to operate in the Arctic'. (Bailes AJK and L Heininen 2012) Observe that the State Policy simultaneously considers Arctic region as both a zone of peace and cooperation and as aspere of millitary security. In comparison to the previous 2001 state policy, the 2008 strategy is also open to security co operation rather than anticipating military clash. This tells that the Arctic policy of Russia is based on achieving peace through security. (Devyatkin 2018). The recent policy document of 2020 called strategy for the development of the Russian Arctic zone and provisions of national security through 2035, is a roadmap and vision which Russia abide to follow in the Arctic region. The basic crux of the document is first to develop the Arctic region, the development paradigm revolves around developing the NSR region, which is the shortest least expensive way of reaching Europe from Asia via sea. NSR is also on the critical agenda of China , the future might hold strengthening Russia China ties. Under the development of the NSR route Russia will build various naval posts primarily in Barrent, White and Pechora sea in order to regulate the ships and port development on this route is also crucial. Second will be building high-class icebreakers to strengthen Moscow's regional supremacy also called as icebreaker diplomacy.

The third is to boost the regional military capabilities of Russia in the region. Russia tends to do it by military modernisation , increasing defence budget and manpower. The fourth focuses on the economy, in the documents, Russia tends to create a special economic regime, stimulating a transition towards a circular economy. The key is to preserve Russian firms in the region to effectively exploit natural resources.

Heavy Russian military buildup has seen by Arctic nations and esp USA with apprehension and as a threat. But Russia has clearly stated in its policy document that securitisation of the Russian Arctic zone is a key national interest for them. Over the years, Russia has successfully conducted military exercises in the region with other Arctic states. 'Russia and Norway have conducted many naval drills in the Barents Sea. Between 2010 and 2013, they carried out the annual joint naval exercise Pomor. The Norwegian Coast Guard and the Russian Northern Fleet have jointly held an annual Barents drill since 2015. Outside of the Arctic, Russia also conducted the annual FRUKUS exercise with France, the UK and the US between 2003 and 2013. Following the Ukraine crisis in 2014, such multilateral military exercises between Russia and NATO member states were put on hold. However, joint coast guard exercises involving SAR operations and oil spill response training continued'. (KS 2016)

Finland

Finland is a nordic state situated in the Arctic circle; Finland published its Arctic policy paper in 2013, which deals with the growth of Arctic in a sustainable manner. Finland is a neutral and peaceful nation in international politics. Its policy does not revolve much around the militarization of the region, but it does talk about the securitization of the region in a peaceful manner. Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region published in 2021; the priorities of the strategy are 'Climate change mitigation and adaptation; Inhabitants (promotion of wellbeing and the rights of the Saami as an indigenous people); The Arctic expertise (livelihoods and leading-edge research); Infrastructure and logistics.; Finland emphasizes the role of the Arctic Council as the primary forum for Arctic issues and supports the strengthening of the institutional role of the Council'. (Finland's Arctic Policy 2021).\

Sweden

To Sweden, the Arctic is both a matter of domestic politics and foreign policy. Any attempt at understanding Stockholm's approach towards its own Arctic region as well as the wider Arctic, therefore, must take into account not only its foreign policy priorities but also its domestic needs and sensitivity to various social, political, environmental, and economic developments that are taking place at an accelerating rate including, among other things, the possibility of an oil leak due to an accident on the sea or at an exploration site and its potential impact on the Arctic's fragile environment, biodiversity, and its indigenous people (Khorrami 2019). Sweden's principle stance on foreign and security policy-making revolves around the ideals of neutrality and active cooperation in the context of a cohesive EU. "The European Union is our most important foreign policy arena. A strong and united EU is crucial in a time of uncertainty around the world. We must strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy. We will hone the EU's instruments, including diplomacy, military and civilian crisis interventions, and development assistance and trade" (Sweden 2011)

Relations with the US, both within the bilateral and the Nordic setting, are still viewed as paramount to the country's long-term security. The government intends to maintain and improve its strategic ties with the US. Relations with China are undergoing a revision, which will probably be on friendly terms since currently there seems to be no party in Sweden who would support a hardline approach towards Beijing, for example in form of securitising its polar silk road policy. Beijing is considered as a key source of investment and a major market for Swedish businesses and the current debate is mainly focused on finding the right balance between commercial cooperation and protection of the core Swedish values such as human rights and freedom of expression. A common Nordic approach is highly desirable but there is still a long way to go before the Scandinavian states can tailor and agree on a common approach towards China because Denmark and Norway, due to their NATO membership, have different threat perceptions compared to Sweden and Finland and also have less freedom in determining their China policies on their own. (Tuomas Iso-Markku, Eeva Innola, Teija Tiilikainen 2018).

Disputes in the Arctic region

Disputes in the Arctic region are more complex than the land's . The disputes here are not only of the border but also of the continental shelf, passage rights, EEZs. There are two main international laws

that provide a principle for the nations to settle their differences : the 1958 continental shelf convention and the 1982 UN Law of the Sea convention UNLSC. The UNLSC establishes that the coastal states have sovereign rights over the natural resources within 200 NM from their baselines. This extended boundary represents their Exclusive Economic Zones , EEZs. Beyond the EEZ lays the high sea, where right of free shipping and flag rights apply. The most problematic question is where the continental shelf starts and where it ends. According to the UNLSC after the end point of 200 nautical mile boundary a country's jurisdiction on the continental shelf starts and where it ends. According to the UNLSC, after the end point of 200 nautical mile boundary, a country's jurisdiction on the continental shelf extends until it becomes deep seabed. The mineral resources in the deep sea bed belongs to all mankind. To claim their rights over the continental shelf countries must submit relevant documents to UN continental shelf commission. (Hoel 2009).

There are a few disputed yet unresolved areas in the Arctic region, which are the potential areas of dispute. A large portion of the Arctic international waters as well as the north pole area are claimed by Greenland and Russia. There is a Canadian claim over these waters, too which overlaps their claims. The Hans island is wedged in the strait between Greenland and Ellesmere island a point of contention between Denmark and Canada. A proposal of splitting the island into 2 equal parts for both the state is still on the table but with no concrete discussions.

Generally, disputes in The Arctic region are solved by the help of UN following UNCLOS acts or in the Arctic council. The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum formed by The Arctic 8 nations in 1996 by Ottawa declaration. It promotes co ordination co operation among people and the government of the Arctic circle. At present, the Arctic chair is with Russia and the strategic plan of AC for the year 2021-2030 is to develop Arctic region towards as a region of peace stability and constructive co operation.

Alliances in the Arctic region

The Arctic region is a lucrative place at present; with the rising temperature, stakes in the Arctic get higher and higher. Since the cold war era NATO has had a vested interest in the Arctic region, but ever since the formation of The Arctic council in 1996, the agenda to lead security affairs towards a more peaceful and co operative Arctic region is practised. Issue of the Arctic security is not a traditional one but is more complex in nature. With the growing temperature threat and opportunity in the Arctic region rises. Two major factors which hampered the peace and increased tension in the region are the Russian Ukraine crisis began in 2014, a tactical agreement among the membership that cordoned off non Arctic political and security concerns from the council deliberation and overall Arctic diplomacy. Second increase of non The Arctic states in the Arctic region, for example, Japan has an Arctic ambassador for the region, China has an Arctic policy document called as Polar Silk road as a critical plan of their BRI policy.

All Arctic states except Russia is active member of NATO, of which Norway is the most active one. Norway is the leading voice in the Arctic region to promote NATO's role . US shall build solar air station in Norway which will help to monitor russia. In Feb 2021 four B1 lancers conducted a military exercise in the Arctic region with Denmark, Germany, Poland and Norway. The strategic concept of NATO is very clear of 2022. It aims to eradicate China and to limit Russia in their own domestic waters. The strategic concept of nato sets its alliance strategy. It outlines NATO's enduring purpose and nature, its fundamental security task and the challenge and opportunity it faces. It also specifies the elements of the alliance approach and provides a military and political adaptation to its member states. US, the leader of NATO recognised the geopolitical significance of the Arctic and its role in the great power competition. US has deployed its 5th gen combat aircraft in Alaska , the second US navy fleet was activated in up North, it has also added ice-breakers and upgraded its military base in the Iceland.

For Russia however, breaking up NATO is as crucial as strengthening ties with China. Russia has a treaty with almost all the member nations of NATO who are an Arctic state. Russia's Arctic participation the Arctic council has gained itself some trust, but all seems to be lost with the ongoing Ukraine-Russian crisis

Russia- Ukraine crisis

Russia-Ukraine crisis is not as simple as one thinks, it has a larger impact on the world considering Russian image. After the disintegration of USSR in 1991, Ukraine declared itself as an independent state. Ukraine's increased ties with Europe and with NATO is a major cause of Russian rage. The Ukraine crisis of 2014 had divided Arctic region as NATO and Russia. Where NATO states worked together in order to securitise the region led by USA and Russia on the other hand struggled to maintain itself in the region. NATO states unilaterally suspended many ties or areas of cooperation with the Russia in the Arctic region. The suspended activities include military exercises, joint ventures of energy etc. This aloofness made Russia to strengthen itself in the the Arctic region , and this strengthening was done by heavy military buildup in the Russian Arctic region. In 2018 Russian defence minister announced 2 new navy bases on Kola peninsula. Moreover, older bases at Siberian island , Franz Josef island, were re-equipped with coastal missile systems, air defence systems etc. Russian military modernisation and expansion worry the world at present as its military buildup is offensive in nature. (Sergunin 2020).

At present Russia and Ukraine have been at war since February 2022. The effect of war is devastating in Ukraine. Ukraine has lost thousands of its citizens, and the economy is weakening day by day, which impacted food and health supply of the nation. Many countries of the Europe have helped Ukraine but the war could not stop. Yes, even NATO and UN is unsuccessful in stopping the ongoing Russia Ukraine war. Some non-western political analysts believe that this war .ie 2022 Russian-Ukraine war, was ignited by USA after offering Ukraine a NATO seat. Russia in the talks with NATO presented with a list of demands of which NATO's expansion in the eastern Europe to be immediately stopped. As Russia attacked Ukraine back in 2014 for annexing Crimea, it is not hesitant to annex Ukraine whole this time.

Russia considers Ukraine as its own , many times Russian president has addressed Ukraine and Russia as one people – a single whole. And Russia won't like it if the west creates a wall between the two. US on the other hand responded in a defensive manner by stating that with the ongoing Russian militarisation and Russia China ties, US requires an ally, and it sees Ukraine as its ally. As a result of the present Russia Ukraine war, at present Russia faces an international ban from almost all the major countries of Europe which has affected Russian economy. Shell industry had signalled Russia to exit Russian peninsula's energy market, and this will hit Moscow's immediate plans for the Gydan Arctic peninsula ventures. UK's Beyond Petroleum has already announced to exit its 19.75 percent stake in Russian oil major Rosneft. (Buchanan 2022)

Impact on The Arctic

Russia held The Arctic chair in May 2021, this position opened up new opportunities and power for it. Russia is the largest region with numerous economic possibilities. But with the Russia Ukraine war, this possibility has turned to uncertainty in the region, especially for member nations. Nations are now apprehensive in having any deals with Russia. The Russia Ukraine war has opened its gates for the geopolitical tussle to enter. The disbanding of the regional co operation removes safety net of Arctic and makes it more vulnerable. Securing of the region without Russia will be difficult as it holds a large mass of The Arctic ocean. On March 3 2022, seven of the eight permanent members of The Arctic council released a joint statement. In which they clearly outlined in pausing all the participation in the Arctic Council and its affiliated bodies (Buchanan 2022). This will eventually affect Russia in the worst possible manner.

The China factor

China's involvement began in the field of science, as China signed the treaty of Salvabard in 1925. At present China has research station in Salvabard ; Yellow river station was established in 2004, and Iceland in 2018. In Sweden, China has its first over seas land satellite receiving station built-in 2016. China is one of the permanent observer nations of the Arctic council. For China Arctic is of great importance as it has untapped resources new shipping lane, the possibilities are endless. In January 2018 when China released its official Arctic white paper, where it underlines that the Chinese govt

respects the sovereign right of all the 8 Arctic state as well as china considers the Arctic as shared global commons. Notably, in the Chinese Arctic papers it calls itself a near Arctic state by this statement, the Chinese intentions were clear i.e China is here to stay. Unlike other observer nations, China has a multilateral approach in the Arctic region or as per Lanteigne's relational theory of international relations, China is trying to build ties with Arctic's state and non-state actors at the same time to increase its value in the region.

China in its Arctic policy document, has plans of shipping lanes in order to prosper its shipping industry. China's Belt and Road Initiative has extended up to the Arctic, and the new edition of it is under the Polar Silk Road. Polar silk road of china refers to The Arctic shipping route connecting three major economic centres; North America, East Asia and Western Europe through the Arctic circle, of which Northern sea route is of great importance.

China is invested heavily in the energy sector in the Arctic region, Arctic is full of resources like petroleum gas etc. China has a growing population with 90 percent net export dependency. Chinese companies stand to gain by investing in the Arctic region as they are supported by the Chinese government. In 2012 the Chinese company Sinopec and Icelandic company Orka Energy announced plans to invest more than \$100 million USD in geothermal technology. (Richter 2012). China is heavily investing in two mining projects in Greenland. China's national petroleum corporation purchased 20 percent stake in the first Yamal LNG project in 2013. In April 2019 CNPC and CNOOC¹ each purchased 10 percent stake in Yamal LNG project 2, Chinese subcontractors are also providing equipment for the projects. Zhejiang Energy also signed a deal in which it will invest 10 percent in a liquified natural gas project in Russia.

It is evident that there is an increased dependency in Chinese and Russian relations. This closeness has worried the western scholars and also the politicians. No western country esp, the US seems absolute not to happy with the ongoing Sino-Russian relationship. Their relation has been studied from each and every angle and approach possible. China's policy in the Arctic region may seem counterintuitive but it's a straightforward one. China is simply addressing climate change while making economic and strategic gains, and to fulfil it Russia is a key partner. Russia - China relation is not new it has some deep-rooted historical background as well, and as history dictates, both have been traditional allies except for a brief period. China- Russia relation in the Arctic region is symmetrical in nature. Russia lacks the funds and technology to develop itself in the Arctic region, China has both. China need to establish Polar Silk Road in order to expand its shipping industry, Russia has the longest Arctic coastline. The match seems to be made in the realm of geopolitics. The power transition between US-China , and the Russia being US's traditional enemy appears to be the main factor of the west worrying about China.

But With the ongoing Russia Ukraine war this narrative is about to change. Russian annexation and China not condemning it in UN or on any platform might seem problematic esp for china, which is heavily invested in the Arctic region.

Conclusion

The Arctic region no longer have the Arctic exceptionalism status quo. Russia Ukraine war of 2022 has opened up gates for Arctic geopolitics to the world, which likely is to be a scramble in upcoming days. West is apprehensive about Russia in each and every possible manner. If the war is not stopped as early as possible, it will be a huge loss for Ukraine as well as for the west as the war has built a new axis in the region which is directly linked with The Arctic. It was not just a mere coincidence when emerging countries of the global south like India and UAE did not raise their negation in UN council meetings to condemn Russia's attack on Ukraine. It was well-calculated risk these countries were ready to take to come out of the shadow of USA. At once, the Russian camp may seem illogical, but in the race to claim resources, each act of powerplay is logical and justified.

¹ CNPC stands for China's National Petroleum Corporation
CNOOC stands for China National Offshore Oil Corporation

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