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Book Review

INDIA'S EVOLVING STRATEGY FOR THE ARCTIC

ANKITA DUTTA AND STUTI BANERJEE

Climate change and the rapid decline in the ice-sheets in the Arctic have led to a growing interest in the political, economic and social importance of the region. This has resulted in the region emerging as a new arena for geostrategic competition. The presence of resources such as oil and gas reserves, unexploited marine life and shorter shipping routes connecting two oceans—the Pacific and the Atlantic—presents an incredible opportunity to countries. This has resulted in the Arctic emerging from being the last frontier to a hotspot of major powers' geopolitical games.

In this regard, India's Draft Arctic Policy (2021) and its first Arctic Policy (2022) present the blueprint of New Delhi's approach to the region. Both list a wide range of activities and initiatives to be taken through Action Plans encompassing scientific, economic and diplomatic fields. This article analyses the strategies adopted by India and how it approaches the region. This paper is an attempt to understand the importance of the Arctic for India and how it can bring an Asian perspective to the discourse on the future of the Arctic.

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DEFINING A ROLE FOR INDIA IN THE ARCTIC

India has come a long way in taking steps to engage with the Arctic since it signed the Treaty of Svalbard in 1920 as part of the British Empire. Apart from establishing scientific expeditions, it has become an Observer State in the Arctic Council, a step that has not only helped in expanding its political engagements with the Arctic nations but also to work with the various non-State actors who play an important role in Arctic governance, such as the indigenous communities.

Keeping in mind the flux in the international system which has brought a renewed interest in the region, the importance of Arctic for India's future needs and the growing role of other Asian countries have promoted India to articulate its own interests. With a view to understanding the Arctic and presenting its own vision for the region, India in January 2021 released its draft policy on the Arctic titled, "India's Arctic Policy: Road for Sustainable Engagement" which was followed by the release of its first policy in 2022.

The release of both the documents come at a pivotal time and can be placed in the context of three broad themes in international politics. First, the Arctic is being discussed with a view to its future economic potential, irreversible effects of climate change, sustainable development, the rights of the indigenous communities and the growing military presence. As an emerging power with great power ambitions, it is only imperative that India takes an interest in global affairs, which includes the Arctic. Second, it cannot be denied that both India and China have been vying for enhanced international economic and political presence. In the past few years, China has steadily increased its efforts to engage with the Arctic. In this context of geopolitical competition, a policy outlining India's vision for the Arctic highlights its interest and engagements with the region. Third, as an Observer State in the Arctic Council, India was one of the few countries that did not have a published Arctic Policy. Formulating the larger and future objectives and perspectives through a policy document will not only help navigate the country's policy to the Arctic but also project the approach it would adopt for the region.

India's Arctic Policy

India's Arctic policies highlight the rationale for India's engagements in the Arctic and its goal within the larger Arctic framework of the Arctic Council. The policies place 'sustainable engagement diplomacy' as the underlying approach of India for the region. It spells out the roadmap for India's Arctic vision which would be achieved through a wide range of activities—scientific, diplomatic and economic. The policy recognises India's long association with the region and highlights that, since 2007, it has sent thirteen expeditions to the region and run over twenty-three active projects. It is not by coincidence that the first pillar identified is science and research. As a country that has been involved in scientific research in the Arctic, Antarctic and the Himalayas for several decades, India has much to contribute to the scientific study and understanding of the Arctic. A key objective identified is to align Indian research with the International Arctic priorities in the arena of socio-economic, political, anthropologic, ethnographic and traditional knowledge.

The second pillar is climate change and environmental protection. As India becomes a leading voice in climate change mitigation, it is natural for it to support initiatives to try and preserve the Arctic's immediate physical environment while continuing to understand its long-term effects on regional and global environment. If one studies India's policy documents for the Arctic, it clearly states that, "India will participate in research on ecosystem values, marine protected areas and traditional knowledge systems to preserve Arctic biodiversity and microbial diversity ... Contribute towards environmental management in the Arctic—methane emission, micro-plastic, marine litter and more."¹ For India, there is a link between a warming Arctic and the rising temperatures in the Indian Ocean on the one hand, and cryospheric linkages between glaciers in the Arctic and Himalayas, on the other. Therefore, it becomes imperative for India to understand these links and work towards climate change mitigation.

The third pillar looks at economic and human development cooperation. Climate change has presented opportunities to explore

1. Ministry of Earth Science, Government of India, "India's Arctic Policy: Roadmap for Sustainable Engagement", March 2022.

the economic and resource potential of the Arctic. However, this endeavour is not without challenges. India supports the economic development of the Arctic as the resource deposits in the Arctic—copper, phosphorus, niobium, platinum-group elements and rare earths—are important for India. While hydrocarbons have been the focus of most nations, India, as a leader for the promotion of renewable energy, is looking at exploring the potential of off-grid renewable power in the Arctic through hydroelectricity, bio-energy, wind power, solar, geothermal, and ocean energy. An interesting addition to the policy is to establish digital partnerships with the Arctic nations for promoting e-commerce in the region. This plays well with India emerging as a key digital hub in South Asia and can help in promoting good practices in the region by sharing its own experiences and developmental story.

The policy also mentions the dynamics of human development as part of larger economic development in the region. The emphasis is laid on the similar socio-ecological-economic predicament of the Himalayan population and the indigenous population in the Arctic. The policy recognises India's experience in building low-cost social network using digitisation and innovation strengths and calls for sharing of this expertise with the Arctic states on issues related to governance and welfare of the indigenous communities.

Linked to the economic development prospects is the fourth pillar of India's policy—transportation and connectivity. While none of the sea routes in the region have major economic benefits for Indian container movement, it needs to be understood how their increased use will affect movement of ships in the Indian Ocean. As the country that contributes the third largest number of seafarers in the world, it is likely that commercial ships plying on the Arctic routes would have a predominantly Indian crew. India needs to plan for the future and build human maritime resources that will be able to guide ships in these waters. While the maritime connectivity might not prove to be the most economical for India, it hopes to reach the Arctic through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)—the multimodal transit corridor that will connect India with Russia. India is exploring the possibility of extending this route to the Baltics and the Arctic region. India's Arctic Policy aims to explore the linking

of INSTC with the Unified Deep-Water System (UDWS) of Russia and its further extension to the Arctic. If realised, the route would provide quick, cheap and a direct connection between India and the Arctic. India hopes that apart from East-West connectivity, such projects would help in the overall development of the hinterland and of indigenous communities.

An important aspect of working in the Arctic is the need to have a collaborative approach towards the challenges and opportunities that are presented by the region. The policy articulates this need in its fifth pillar on governance and international cooperation. India has stated that it will pursue cooperation with all stakeholders in the Arctic. It will actively participate in the deliberations of the Arctic Council and the other forums such as the Nordic Defence forum, Arctic Coastguard forum and encourage academic exchanges, enhancing the knowledge base on the Arctic. The idea is to move beyond the official level to build cooperation through a 'whole of nation' approach.

To do all of the above, India would also have to build its national capacity. This important element forms the sixth pillar of India's Arctic policy. Currently, India's expertise on the Arctic is limited. There is a need to involve the states, civil society organisations such as think tanks, universities, scholars and experts from both, pure sciences and other subject areas to collaborate with institutions in the Arctic region and across the world to build a wide-ranging institutional base on the Arctic in terms of maritime, legal, environmental and governance issues.

While the policy document has been able to articulate India's vision for the Arctic, it has overlooked the geopolitical dimension of the ongoing struggle within the Arctic region. This may have been a deliberate step to ensure that India's first policy document is focused on its priority areas and highlights sectors in which it can make a meaningful contribution.

TRACING INDIA'S INTERESTS AND CONCERNS IN THE ARCTIC

India's engagement with the Arctic has emerged to be multidimensional. From a modest station at Svalbard, India has come

a long way to establish itself as a credible actor in the region. While the policies are recent additions to India's outlook to the region, New Delhi's interests in the Arctic can be broadly identified in three interlinked aspects—these are, scientific, strategic and political.

Scientific Footprints in the Arctic

India initiated its Arctic Programme with four broad aims: “*first*, to study the hypothesised tele-connections between the Arctic climate and the Indian monsoon; *second*, to characterise sea-ice in the Arctic using satellite data to estimate the effect of global warming in the northern Polar Region; *third*, to conduct research on the dynamics and mass budget of the Arctic glaciers focusing on the effect of glaciers on sea-level change; and *fourth*, to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the flora and fauna of the Arctic vis-à-vis their response to anthropogenic activities. In addition, it proposed to undertake a comparative study of the life forms from both the Polar Regions.”²

India sent its first scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean in 2007 which was followed by the establishment of the research station ‘Himadri’ at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, Norway in 2008. This marked the beginning of long-term scientific research in disciplines like atmospheric science, biological science and glaciology by the Indian scientists in the Polar Region. In 2014, India established its first multi-sensor moored observatory called ‘IndARC’ at Kongsfjorden. Another key atmospheric laboratory was established in 2016 at Gruvebadet in Ny-Ålesund. India is also a member of International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), a non-governmental organisation which facilitates and advocates cooperative research between all countries active in Arctic research.

With the ability to influence global weather patterns, the Arctic remains important for the Indian weather system. While sea ice exists primarily in the Polar Regions, it influences the global climate. India is likely to feel the effect of these climatic changes on critical aspects such as national development, economic security, water security and

2. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “India and the Arctic”, *In focus*, June 10, 2013, at <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?21812/India+and+the+Arctic>. Accessed on September 17, 2022.

sustainability, weather conditions and monsoon patterns, coastal erosion and glacial melting.

India's Arctic research also aims to gain a better understanding of the glaciers in the Himalayan region. The Himalayan Mountain range—after the Antarctic and Arctic—is home to the world's third-largest amount of glacier ice and is often referred to as the world's "Third Pole". The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research—India's nodal agency for research on the polar regions—in its annual reports has mentioned that there are similarities in the loss of glacier surface in the Arctic and the Himalayas, and this degradation has an accelerated level in the past two decades.

Another issue that needs to be noted is the melting of permafrost, which has twofold consequences for the earth—first is the release of trapped methane and other gases which contributes to global warming. Second is the release of new pathogens that had previously remained trapped, thus increasing the possibility of future pandemics. As the world emerges from COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to understand the scale of disruption that can be caused by pathogens. This aspect has been very well noted in the draft policy: "The thawing of permafrost soil could potentially release viruses and bacteria that have lain dormant for thousands of years, thereby increasing the propensity of pandemics."

To take forward its scientific contribution and in an effort to fulfil its policy objectives, as mentioned in the document, *India would need to work towards maintaining a year-round presence in the Arctic and establish additional research stations in the Arctic, work to acquire a polar research vessel to ensure that it is not dependent on other nations and collaborate with other observer nations which would further expand the scientific and research expertise of India.* (Emphasis added)

Expanding India's Political Footprint

As India gets ready to play a more active role in the activities of the Arctic, it will need to create strategic connections and increase its political and economic interaction with the nations of the Arctic. In this regard, India is very well placed as it shares cordial and friendly relations with all Arctic nations as well as stakeholders in the Arctic. India has made a conscious effort to increase its engagements with

the Arctic Eight as well as with its fellow Observers in the Arctic Council.

A year after becoming an Observer State, President Pranab Mukherjee visited Norway and Finland in 2014. These visits were important as they helped enhance bilateral relations with a renewed focus on innovation, sustainable development, urban development and scientific research. In 2018, Prime Minister Modi took forward the momentum when he visited Sweden for the Nordic Summit and the leaders pledged to “deepen cooperation between the Nordic countries and India ... on key issues related to global security, economic growth, innovation and climate change.”³ In 2021, Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Stefan Löfven held a virtual summit which, among other things, also highlighted enhancing scope for scientific collaboration in polar research.⁴

In 2019, President Kovind visited Iceland with an aim to enhance economic and political ties which include cooperation in the Arctic. The Arctic also found mention in the Joint Statement issues after the Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, of the Kingdom of Denmark, and Prime Minister Modi in 2020.

Apart from Nordic outreach, India shares multifaceted relations with Russia when it comes to Arctic. Russia is the largest Arctic nation in terms of geographical space. As the two nations look to diversify their relations beyond the defence and energy sector, the Arctic has presented a new front of opportunities and cooperation between India and Russia. During Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Vladivostok in September 2019 for the 20th India-Russia Annual Summit, the Joint Statement mentioned, “India looks forward to cooperating with Russia in the Arctic, India has been following the development in the Arctic region with interest and is also ready to play a significant role in the Arctic Council.”⁵ In May 2021, Russia assumed the chair of

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3. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Joint Press Statement from the Summit between India and the Nordic Countries (17 April 2018)”, at <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29828/Joint+Press+Statement+from+the+Summit+between+India+and+the+Nordic+Countries>. Accessed on October 2, 2022.
 4. “Joint Statement on India-Sweden Virtual Summit, March 2021”, at <https://www.government.se/493b85/contentassets/bec33fe3add443f783c977b70028e412/joint-statement-on-sweden-india-virtual-summit.pdf>. Accessed on October 3, 2022.
 5. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “India-Russia Joint Statement during visit of Prime Minister to Vladivostok”, September 2019, at <https://www.mea>.

the Arctic Council, and during its tenure, India completed a decade as an Observer and aligned its Arctic goals with some of the shared aspirations of other council members.

India also shares cordial relations with the countries from continental North America. India and Canada signed an MoU on Polar Research in 2020 and talks to establish more research stations in the Arctic are underway and promote a rules-based approach to Arctic participation. India and the United States have common goals towards the Arctic. The Arctic policy of both nations lays stress on the need to engage with the indigenous communities and use their knowledge to protect the Arctic. They also emphasise the need to protect the environment, while developing the area with the stakeholders. Thus, there is ground for the two nations to bring the Arctic within the framework of their partnership.

Apart from the Arctic eight countries, India is also engaged with other Observer members such as Japan and South Korea. As the Arctic gains prominence India is ensuring that while its government officials engage with their counterparts, there are also robust engagements between the civil society through academic exchanges, interactions between think tanks and research organisations.

The brief snapshot of the exchanges between India and the Arctic shows that India has stepped up its engagements both at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Strategic Interests

As an aspirational power that has global interests and capabilities to correspond with its growing stature, India needs to respond to the questions of Arctic governance. While the Arctic States' sovereignty and rights to exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and extended continental shelves are clearly scripted in international law, other aspects of Arctic governance continue to evolve.⁶ It is in India's interest to guide this discourse to highlight the concerns of non-Arctic States and the effects that the Arctic has on their socio-

gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31795/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_during_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Vladivostok. Accessed on October 3, 2022.

6. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "India's Arctic Engagement: Emerging Perspectives", *Arctic Yearbook 2013*, p. 2, at https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2013/Scholarly_Papers/1.LACKENBAUER.pdf. Accessed on October 4, 2022.

economic development. It would not be wrong to say that the Arctic falls within India's strategic interests which include energy security needs, food and nutritional security, environmental security, the need to protect geopolitical interests as other nations raise their profiles in the Arctic and long-term military interests also need to be studied.

Energy Security. India's energy security is intricately linked to its economic and population growth, accessibility, availability, affordability, and supply and demand. Its continuing industrialisation and urbanisation will make huge demands of its energy sector and its policymakers. Therefore, affordable and reliable supply of energy remains a key concern for India.

The Arctic as a region boasts of an estimated "90 billion barrels of oil and almost 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, amounting to 22% of world's unexplored oil and natural gas reserves".⁷ India being the third largest consumer of energy in the world, its future consumption is expected to rise by more than 4 per cent annually.⁸ India's Arctic policy is not oblivious to this fact. Along with focus on the research in the Arctic region, the policy also refers to the economic opportunities related to hydrocarbons exploration. Since 2018, India has been focusing on exploration of oil and gas reserves in the Russian Arctic. The latest cooperation includes joint developments in the Vankor oil region. India's major energy companies, including ONGC Videsh Ltd., are in discussions to buy stakes in Russia's massive Vostok oil project as well as a planned liquefied gas project, Arctic LNG-2.

Apart from hydrocarbons, the Arctic is also rich in renewable energy resources such as hydropower, wind power, etc. India, as a leading voice on climate change and one that is committed to green development through renewable energy, can explore cooperation in these areas as well. The Arctic is also rich in other minerals such as copper, phosphorus, niobium, platinum-group elements and rare earths which are important for the information technology and

7. "Arctic Governance—Challenges and Opportunities", Council on Foreign Relations, November 29, 2018, at <https://www.cfr.org/report/arctic-governance>. Accessed on October 6, 2022.

8. "India Presently 3rd Largest Energy Consumer In World", *Business Standard*, November 13, 2018, at https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/india-presently-3rd-largest-energy-consumer-in-world-118111300715_1.html. Accessed on October 10, 2022.

innovation sectors. To explore and utilise these resources, India can identify opportunities for investment in infrastructure development such as offshore exploration, mining, ports, railways and airports, while also encouraging its private sector to build expertise and invest in the region.

Sea Routes and Connectivity Interest. The melting of the ice caps and shorter shipping routes connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans present an incredible opportunity to countries. India has expressed its interest to develop the transport route with Russia and also explore the possibility of linking connectivity between the resource-rich Arctic and the INSTC. The INSTC corridor plans to connect Mumbai, India with St. Petersburg, Russia in a seamless multimodal connectivity project. In this regard, India is also studying the feasibility of integrating the INSTC with the TEN-T European rail networks like North Sea-Baltic Corridor, the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, and the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor, while considering a maritime route connecting Chennai to Vladivostok.

Concerns for India

The key concern for India in the region is the *rapid militarisation of the region*. As the warmer climate, exploration of newer maritime routes and newer technologies for resource extraction reshape the Arctic landscape, it has led to the emergence of a new power game in the region. With the Arctic becoming more accessible, many states are in the process of securing their assets in the region. The planting of a flag on the Arctic seabed in 2007 by Russia began the process of renewed militarisation of the Arctic. This led other littoral states like the United States, Norway, Canada, etc., to reformulate their policies towards the region. Russia is upgrading its military capabilities with new fighter jets, navy vessels, submarines and also is in the process of refurbishing its older naval military bases. The steady build-up by Russia comes in the backdrop of its deteriorated relations with the West and it needs to protect its military as well as natural resources.

As national security comes to play an important role in the Arctic strategy of other nations, it may overshadow the consensus building approach that has been followed vis-à-vis the Arctic till date. With

growing militarisation of the Arctic and exercises being conducted for “training and interoperability for Arctic conditions”, tensions and mistrust are likely to grow.

Given this situation, India has to walk a very critical diplomatic tightrope as its capabilities and its geographical distance do not allow it to comprehensively secure its own interests in the Arctic amid emerging great-power competition that is increasing instability in the region. India shares good relations with these countries and its emphasis on multilateralism can help the country play a critical role in the region's security architecture.

The second key concern for India is *China*. Beijing has been promoting itself as a “near Arctic” country. With the granting of Observer Status in the Arctic Council in 2013, it has been preparing itself to play a larger and more prominent role in the region. China's interest in the region is driven primarily by two reasons: first, the area is host to untapped energy and natural resources. In this regard, China is cooperating with Russia by holding stake and financing a part of Yamal Liquefied Natural Gas project. Second, due to melting of the ice-sheets, new routes—the Northwest and Northeast passage—have opened which provide shorter transit periods and alternative routes for energy goods coming from Europe and North America. These passages can also provide safety to Chinese commercial ships from the other security threatened routes of the African Horn and the Red Sea.⁹

One of the key highlights of Chinese outlook towards the region is the idea of building a ‘Polar Silk Road’.¹⁰ The planned route passes through “Japan, crossing the Bering Sea, following the NSR above Russia, Norwegian Sea and ends near Netherlands. With the completion of this project, China aims to circumvent the Asian and European continents, as well as make some inroads into Africa”.¹¹ It can be argued that by integrating the Arctic policy in its larger flagship

9. Clara Ma, “The United States and China in the Arctic: A Roadmap for Sino-US Cooperation on Energy, Climate Change, and Global Governance”, Yale University, April 23, 2019, p. 13, at https://politicalscience.yale.edu/sites/default/files/ma_clara.pdf. Accessed on October 15, 2022.

10. Ibid.

11. Rashmi B.R., “China in the Arctic: Interests, Strategy and Implications”, No. 27, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, 2019, at <https://www.icsin.org/uploads/2019/03/18/2659130d6b316472ca6abed7afb1381.pdf>. Accessed on October 15, 2022.

programme of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China is positioning itself to play a more assertive role and is strengthening its position through enhanced cooperation with the stakeholders.¹²

This is visible in the way China is increasing its presence through its engagement with the other Arctic Circle members. With the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—China has scientific cooperation and governmental dialogue. During the period from 2005 to 2017, China invested over US\$ 1.4 trillion in Arctic nations such as Finland and Sweden. Similarly, since 2013, China and Russia have been conducting dialogues on the Arctic issues, in 2016, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea launched “high-level trilateral dialogues on the Arctic issues to promote exchanges on policies, practices, and experience regarding Arctic international cooperation, scientific research, and commercial cooperation.”¹³

Though the Arctic has not yet featured in the Chinese defence white papers, nonetheless, in an essay published in People’s Liberation Army Navy’s (PLAN) official newspaper in 2018, it was mentioned that PLAN should focus on “... near seas defence, far seas protection, oceanic presence, and expansion into the two poles”.¹⁴ Its first ever freedom of navigation operation was conducted near Alaska in 2015. It has participated in the largest military exercise with Russia, the Vostok (2018), and has also sent its destroyer, frigate, and a supply ship on goodwill visits to Denmark, Finland and Sweden.¹⁵ China, through its initiatives and enhanced cooperation with the stakeholders, projected its clear and strategic interest in the Arctic.

The third key concern for India is the *soft security issues*. Apart from these ‘hard’ security interests that need to be understood in the context

12. Gisela Grieger, “China’s Arctic policy: How China aligns rights and interests”, Briefing, European Parliament, May 2018, at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/620231/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)620231_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/620231/EPRS_BRI(2018)620231_EN.pdf). Accessed on October 18, 2022.

13. “China’s Arctic Policy”, The State Council, The People’s Republic of China, January 2018, at http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm. Accessed on October 18, 2022.

14. Ryan D. Martinson, “The Role of the Arctic in Chinese Naval Strategy”, The Jamestown Foundation, December 20, 2019, at <https://jamestown.org/program/the-role-of-the-arctic-in-chinese-naval-strategy/>. Accessed on October 20, 2022.

15. Anne-Marie Brady, “Facing Up to China’s Military Interests in the Arctic”, The Jamestown Foundation, December 10, 2019, at <https://jamestown.org/program/facing-up-to-chinas-military-interests-in-the-arctic/>. Accessed on October 20, 2022.

of India's engagements with the Arctic, there are links between the Arctic and 'soft' social security issues such as environmental decay and impact on food and nutritional security needs of the country. The policy makes no mention of environmental threat that will arise with the rise of activities in the Arctic.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the Arctic is a region with its own unique physical environment and a challenging political future. The melting of the Arctic ice has increased the potential for human activity here and in turn led to concerns about the future of the region. This has resulted in the emergence of the economic opportunities in the Arctic which are of interest not only to the littoral states but also to the non-Arctic nations. As the resources in the Arctic will be available in the future, the concerns over potential of exploitation and geostrategic contestations are already emerging. Within this there is also a need to accommodate the growing interests of non-Arctic nations in the region. The economic exploration of the region coupled with its growing geostrategic relevance will pose a challenge not just to the Arctic Circle nations but to the international community, as established international norms and rules are beginning to be challenged. The contradiction before nations is to take advantage of the economic potential, now available as a result of climate change, but with the caveat that it will likely contribute to accelerate the degradation of the environment, while working towards preserving the Arctic.

Within this changing scenario, India is emerging to be key players in the region. The paper looks at India and the policy it has adopted to pursue its national interests and ambitions in the polar region. It is evident from its approach that India has realised the potential of the Arctic not only in terms of scientific research but also its strategic relevance. India is interested in the oil and gas resources, the potential of shorter shipping routes and the impact of climate change in the Arctic on its own weather patterns. As the Arctic continues to attract attention, India is expected to play a larger role in the region, both in terms of research and innovation, as well in the governance.