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THE GAME OF DOMINATION IN THE ARCTIC AND ANTARCTICA

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The geographical location of both the Arctic and the Antarctic has given rise to various geopolitical developments in recent times, enhancing the strategic significance of these polar regions exponentially. On the other hand, global warming and climate change have gradually shrunk the ice caps, especially in the Arctic, prominently boosting the value of waterways in and around Arctic. Moreover, it isn't only the melting ice and the strategic position which has drawn the global powers to significantly increase their activities in these polar regions. The newly accessible natural resource and rare earth materials, potential hotspot for fisheries, the revolutionary transportation routes in the high north (the Arctic), etc., have persuaded the great powers of the world to exploit and capitalise on these significant resources¹. This 'scramble' for polar regions could be viewed as a signal to the international community that "The Great Game of Domination" would soon be beginning and gradually shifting from the contemporary tropical and temperate zones to the vastly unexplored polar region of both the northern and southern hemispheres.²

The struggle for Arctic has been mainly due to its close proximity to major global powers countries which were colonial powers. Moreover, various scientific projection claim that the Arctic would experience ice-free summers by 2035³, directly opening up new water routes for trade and transport, increasing the region's strategic value exponentially. The Arctic region encompasses a total of eight countries. They are Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, and the United States. The Arctic region had the potential to base submarine-launched nuclear weapons in the area making it strategically important for U.S.A and Russia (then U.S.S.R) mainly during the cold war⁴, officially starting of the struggle to control the Arctic region. As a result, the

¹ Mongan, Tyler. "Who Are the Stakeholders in the Arctic Region? - Association of ..." Association of professional futurist, February 17, 2020. <https://www.apf.org/blogpost/1763106/340734/Who-are-the-stakeholders-in-the-Arctic-Region>.

² Ibid

³ Borunda, Alejandra. "Arctic Summer Sea Ice Could Be Gone by as Early as 2035." National Geographics: Science. National Geographic, May 3, 2021. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/arctic-summer-sea-ice-could-be-gone-by-2035>.

⁴ Unknown "Arctic Circle Territorial Conflicts." The Organization for World Peace, September 1, 2022. https://theowp.org/crisis_index/arctic-circle-territorial-conflicts/.

international community responded by introducing a ratified United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which to a certain extent prevented any major territorial disputes between these countries. But today, with melting ice caps and the emergence of a new global powers, like China, India, Brazil, etc., the race to acquire and exploit natural resource like oil and natural gases has intensified, making the treaty unproductive and ineffective. The tensions between artic countries, mainly between U.S.A and Russia is expected to increase, making the region a site of the 21st century ‘cold war’⁵

Similarly on the other side of hemisphere, the major contenders claiming the territorial parts of Antarctica since 1906, have been Australia, New Zealand, France, Norway, United Kingdom, Argentina and Chile.⁶ In the 1940s and 1950s these claims led to diplomatic disputes and even armed clashes between these nations, the major one being the 1948 skirmishes between the Argentinian military forces and the British Forces⁷. From 1955 onwards around twenty countries had established over 20 bases in the Antarctic Peninsula and the ‘scramble’ intensified from thereon⁸. United States of America and the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R) were at a standoff involving nuclear weapons at this point of time and was popularly regarded as the ‘Cold War’. With U.S.S.R showing a lot of interest in the Antarctic peninsula, the International community feared that this ice-covered continent might soon turn into a war front, leading to an environmental debacle in and around the continent. In order to avoid this future war, the world leaders advocated for a treaty designating Antarctica as a military free zone and preclude future territorial claims over Antarctician peninsula.⁹ ‘The Antarctic Treaty’ was officially signed in June 1961 by 12 nations (the original 7 with claims on Antarctica plus South Africa, Belgium, Japan, and the Soviet Union). This treaty has now become the basis for all policies and management in Antarctica.

⁵ Unknown “Arctic Circle Territorial Conflicts.” The Organization for World Peace, September 1, 2022. https://theowp.org/crisis_index/arctic-circle-territorial-conflicts/.

⁶ Unknown “Antarctic Treaty.” Discovering Antarctica, February 7, 2016. <https://discoveringantarctica.org.uk/how-is-antarctica-governed/geopolitics/geopolitics-of-antarctica/>.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

However, with the evolving geopolitical situations around the world, the peace treaties and councils might soon become ineffective and defunct. Today, nations are focusing more and more on their national interests, blatantly ignoring these peace treaties and conventions which preserved the peace and harmony to an extent. Hence, the paper tries to analyse how prominent nations such as U.S.A, Russia, China, Australia, Denmark, India, etc., are orienting their policies, postures, and military capabilities towards polar regions hampering the peace and stability of these polar regions. Furthermore, the paper would comment on how increasing Chinese and Russian presence in Arctic as well as Antarctic could lead to militarization of these regions making them a potential conflict zone in the near future. Finally, the paper would conclude by providing certain tangible recommendations on how these polar regions could still be preserved for scientific and research purposes only, and simultaneously, making the trade routes and waterways near these polar regions accessible for all the countries equally.

Arctic: A Potential Site for the 21st Century ‘Cold War’

With the beginning of 21st century, the unipolar world order gradually shifted to a multipolar world order. Numerous emerging powers like China, European Union, India, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, etc., are shaping the new world order socially, politically and economically. This shift has spurred conflicts and tensions in almost every continent on the Earth¹⁰. In Asia, the tensions between North and South Korea, India and China, Taiwan and China, etc have all the potential of turning into a full-scale war, similarly the European continent is plagued by Russia-Ukraine war, the Africa continent has serious armed conflicts due to terrorist organisations, the civilian unrest in South American continent, Israel-Palestine conflict in Middle East region, etc., all testify to a volatile and unstable emerging multipolar world order. ¹¹

Similarly, Arctic, which was isolated and dormant for quite a while, has suddenly turned into a hot topic in the International community. As highlighted in the introductory section of the paper, the

¹⁰ Kumar, Mohan. "Perils of Military Intervention," Introduction to U.N Systems (class lecture, O.P Jindal Global University, Haryana, India, October 27, 2022).

¹¹ Ibid

strategic position of the region, melting ice caps resulting in new shipping routes, untapped natural resource like oil and natural gases have led to this developing new interest in the arctic and hinting at a potential cold war like conflict in the near future. The succeeding paragraphs would emphasize and analyse policies and national strategies adopted by global powers with regards to Arctic region in general.

United States of America

The US is considered an Arctic Country by virtue of Alaska, as it was purchased from Russia in the year 1867 for US\$ 7.2 million¹². From then to 2013, US had a distinct relationship with the Arctic and was mostly ambivalent with its approach and policies. But in 2013, after the publication of its first "National Strategy for the Arctic Region," US started showing significant interest in the region, mainly because of the evolving geopolitical situation around Arctic.¹³ With this new 'National Strategy', US divided the Arctic region among its three geographic combatant commands' area of responsibility the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM); US European Command (EUCOM); and US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). This move made the Arctic a hotspot for many other nations, especially for Russia and China. As the scramble intensified, and with Russia's special military operations in Ukraine having spilled over to the Arctic, U.S released the second edition of its Arctic Strategy titled 'National Strategy for the Arctic Region' (hereafter strategy) on 7 October 2022.¹⁴ As per the strategy, U.S aspires a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative Arctic. Moreover, it also advocates for freedom of navigation in and around Arctic and pursue a sustainable economic objectives in the Arctic. The US aims to achieve these objectives by closely working with its allies and partners, who, mostly are located in the European continent and are in close proximity to the Arctic region. (Canada, Greenland (Denmark),

¹² Unknown "Purchase of Alaska, 1867." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/alaska-purchase>.

¹³ Bisen, Anurag. "US National Strategy for the Arctic Region: An Assessment." US National Strategy for the Arctic Region: An Assessment | Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, October 14, 2022. https://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/us-national-strategy-for-the-arctic-region-abisen-141022#footnote3_c6nh2lk.

¹⁴ Unknown "National Strategy for Arctic Region ." The White House Washington . The White House Washington , October 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.

Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland).¹⁵ The Strategy explicitly states that the Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of the globe due to global warming and claims that this has an impact on indigenous peoples' livelihoods and damages infrastructure. At the same time this development presents new opportunities like new shipping routes, availability of mineral resources, etc., which would change the arctic's landscape forever. This change in the landscape has intensified the competition among countries as they have begun to pursue dynamic economic interests¹⁶. More importantly, the strategy has been critical against Russia and China for raising geopolitical tensions in the Arctic, instigating new risks of unintended conflicts, hindering cooperation and their intention to play a bigger and unilateral role in shaping the regional governance of Arctic¹⁷.

The U.S has adapted four pillars guided by five principles which would be applied in all its policy formulation with regards to arctic. First and foremost, pillar is the 'security'. This pillar seeks to 'deter threats to the U.S homeland and its allies through capability enhancements, coordinating shared approaches with allies and partners and mitigating risks of unintended escalation. It intends to maintain US presence in the Arctic to ensure the protection of its citizens and defend its sovereign territory'.¹⁸ Second pillar focuses on climate change and environment protection, in which the strategy declares, 'aims to improve scientific understanding and conserve Arctic ecosystems. The third pillar centres on sustainable economic development and improving livelihoods in Alaska by investing in infrastructure and critical minerals. Finally, International Cooperation and Governance encompasses the fourth pillar, which on one hand aims at sustaining Arctic institution and on the other uphold the International Law. These pillars would be guided by

¹⁵ Unknown "National Strategy for Arctic Region ." The White House Washington . The White House Washington , October 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.

¹⁶ Bisen, Anurag. "US National Strategy for the Arctic Region: An Assessment." US National Strategy for the Arctic Region: An Assessment | Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, October 14, 2022. https://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/us-national-strategy-for-the-arctic-region-abisen-141022#footnote3_c6nh2lk.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Unknown "National Strategy for Arctic Region ." The White House Washington . The White House Washington , October 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.

five principles which are : ‘Consult, Coordinate, and Co-Manage with Alaska Native Tribes and Communities’, ‘Deepen Relationships with Allies and Partners, Plan for Long-Lead Time Investments’, ‘Cultivate Cross-Sectoral Coalitions and Innovative Ideas’ and finally, ‘Commit to a Whole-of-Government, Evidence-Based Approach’.¹⁹

U.S has also increased military activities in the Arctic as a counter measure to Russia’s enhanced military presence in the region. US deployed its aircraft carrier in the Arctic region for the first time since 1991 and has actively participated in NATO exercises like Trident Juncture 2018 and Cold Response 2022²⁰. Moreover, it has started to undertake various under-ice operations utilizing its submarines and Icebreakers and has established 11th Airborne division in order to develop expertise in Arctic mobility and extreme cold weather operations.

To conclude, the National strategy effectively positions U.S.A to both efficiently compete and manage tensions in the Arctic. It also focuses on climate crisis with greater determination and provides a framework for how the US would act in response to emerging challenges and opportunities in the arctic region for the next ten years.

Russian Federation

The Arctic region has gained a lot of prominence to the Russians ever since the US along with its allies have started to develop economic and political interest in the region. The policy adopted by Moscow with respect to Arctic is exponentially strategic and economic in nature. The Russian arctic strategy specifies that the Arctic should be treated as a strategic resource base to fulfil the country’s socio-economic needs²¹. It also focuses on using the Northern Sea Routes (NSR) as a national

¹⁹ Unknown “National Strategy for Arctic Region .” The White House Washington . The White House Washington , October 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹Ahmad, Shaheer, and Mohammad Ali Zafar. “Russia's Reimagined Arctic in the Age of Geopolitical Competition.” Air University (AU), March 9, 2022. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2959221/russias-reimagined-arctic-in-the-age-of-geopolitical-competition/#:~:text=Russia%20Arctic%20Policy%202020%E2%80%93932035,for%20Russia%20in%20the%20Arctic>.

transport route exclusively for Russia, indirectly ruling out the concept of ‘Freedom of Navigation’ in the region. There has been upsurge in Russian activities already to achieve these objectives, major ones being the revival of the Russian Northern Naval Fleet, the development of new oil and gas terminal including Yamal and Shtokman and expansions in Russian exclusive economic zones.²² The deployment of the Northern Fleet clearly proves the western nations prediction of Russia trying to militarise the NSR and the Arctic region. With this deployment, Russia is gradually transforming from a continental power to maritime power in the region. Moreover, the Russian Arctic policy also aims to utilise the opportunity to develop energy resources, which would include 85.1 trillion cubic meters of natural gas and 17.3 billion metric tons of crude and condensation oil. Furthermore, the policy also plans to increase the Arctic’s contribution to crude and condensate oil production to 20 percent in 2024, 23 percent in 2030, and gradually 26 percent by the year 2035²³. Lastly, Russia has accepted China as a ‘near Arctic state’, hinting at an emerging Sino-Russian cooperation in the region mainly to counter the military and economic dominance of NATO countries in the Arctic region²⁴.

People’s Republic of China

In 2014, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, declared the country’s intentions of becoming a Polar great power in the near future²⁵. In order to achieve this objective, China in its white paper on

²² Ahmad, Shaheer, and Mohammad Ali Zafar. “Russia’s Reimagined Arctic in the Age of Geopolitical Competition.” Air University (AU), March 9, 2022. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2959221/russias-reimagined-arctic-in-the-age-of-geopolitical-competition/#:~:text=Russia%20Arctic%20Policy%202020%E2%80%932035,for%20Russia%20in%20the%20Arctic>

²³ Griffin, Rosemary. “Russia Approves Arctic Strategy up to 2035.” S&P Global Commodity Insights. S&P Global Commodity Insights, October 27, 2020. <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/coal/102720-russia-approves-arctic-strategy-up-to-2035>.

²⁴ Ahmad, Shaheer, and Mohammad Ali Zafar. “Russia’s Reimagined Arctic in the Age of Geopolitical Competition.” Air University (AU), March 9, 2022. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2959221/russias-reimagined-arctic-in-the-age-of-geopoliticalcompetition/#:~:text=Russia%20Arctic%20Policy%202020%E2%80%932035,for%20Russia%20in%20the%20Arctic>

²⁵ S. Glaser Elizabeth Buchanan, Bonnie, and Elizabeth Buchanan. “China in the Arctic: Ambitions and Strategy.” GMFUS, March 8, 2022. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/china-arctic-ambitions-and-strategy/#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20its%20global,route%20through%20the%20Arctic%20Ocean>.

Arctic, which was published four years later, proclaimed China as a ‘near Arctic state’ and outlined Beijing’s vision for Arctic development²⁶. China is increasing its presence in the Arctic as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative by establishing research stations, making investments in mining and energy, and cooperating with Russia to develop a new sea route through the Arctic Ocean²⁷ (Sino-Russian Cooperation). The white paper also describes Arctic as one of world’s “new strategic frontiers” prepared for rivalry and extraction combined with its objective to exploit the valuable natural resources in order support its socio-economic needs²⁸. The Chinese military also determines the policies and strategies of China towards Arctic. The military texts consider Arctic to be a zone of future military competition , and state that “the game of great powers” would undoubtedly emerge and such a rivalry would mainly focus on the “struggle over and control of global public spaces”²⁹. And as per the white paper, ‘in this scramble for new strategic spaces’, China would use force if necessary to defend its national interests and sovereignty. Moreover, the Chinese investments in Arctic science are mainly intended to bolster its Arctic influence and its strategic position in the region. Arctic diplomacy as also been adopted recently by China to boost its regional influence³⁰. Finally, the infrastructure development in Arctic sometimes appear to be of dual use for the Chinese. Several Chinese infrastructure projects that have modest economic gain have raised concerns about China’s strategic motivations and dual-use capabilities to increase its presence in the region³¹.

²⁶ Doshi, Rush, Alexis Dale-Huang, and Gaoqi Zhang. “Northern Expedition: China's Arctic Activities and Ambitions.” Brookings. Brookings, March 9, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/northern-expedition-chinas-arctic-activities-and-ambitions/>.

²⁷S. Glaser Elizabeth Buchanan, Bonnie, and Elizabeth Buchanan. “China in the Arctic: Ambitions and Strategy.” GMFUS, March 8, 2022. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/china-arctic-ambitions-and-strategy#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20its%20global.route%20through%20the%20Arctic%20Ocean>.

²⁸ Doshi, Rush, Alexis Dale-Huang, and Gaoqi Zhang. “Northern Expedition: China's Arctic Activities and Ambitions.” Brookings. Brookings, March 9, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/northern-expedition-chinas-arctic-activities-and-ambitions/>.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

Canada and the European Union

The policies and strategies adopted by Canada and the European Union (EU) mostly is in line with the U.S strategy towards Arctic. Canada and most countries of EU have been traditional allies of the US since decades and this has been the main reason for having similar strategies and policies as each other, with regards to the Arctic region. Canada has adopted a shared vision when it comes to Arctic and its native people and has laid out a clear framework to achieve this vision. The paper would briefly highlight these visions in a point wise manner below:

- nurture healthy families and communities
- invest in the energy, transportation and communications infrastructure that northern and Arctic governments, economies and communities need
- create jobs, foster innovation and grow Arctic and northern economies
- support science, knowledge and research that is meaningful for communities and for decision-making
- face the effects of climate change and support healthy ecosystems in the Arctic and North
- ensure that Canada and our northern and Arctic residents are safe, secure and well-defended
- restore Canada's place as an international Arctic leader
- advance reconciliation and improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

Similarly, EU has also laid out a visionary framework with regards to Arctic, mostly focusing on Climate change and Sustainable development of the Arctic³². First and foremost, the policy aims to preserve the Arctic as a region of peaceful cooperation. Secondly, it aims at slowing down the effects of climate change in the Arctic region, and finally to support the sustainable development of Arctic region to the benefit of Arctic communities³³. The other most interesting part of the recent policy is the suspension of regional cooperation with Russia in response to Russia's unprecedented

³² Strategic Communications. "The EU in the Arctic." The EU in the Arctic | EEAS Website, September 29, 2021. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-arctic_en.

³³ Ibid

military aggression against Ukraine³⁴. The strategy also acknowledges that the European Green Deal is at the heart of the EU's Arctic engagement and states it major objective of having a sustainable blue economy in the Arctic region.³⁵

Geopolitics Surrounding Antarctica

The geopolitical and environment changes are increasing international focus on Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. These developments may have economic, political, and security implications on whole of International community.³⁶ The main concern are the rising presence of China and Russia in the Antarctic which might shake up the integrity of Antarctic Treaty, which had preserved peace and tranquillity in the region since 1960s³⁷. The treaty's main aim is to preserve Antarctica exclusively for peaceful purposes like scientific research and development and also prevent any country from claiming Antarctica's territories. The policies and strategies adopted by major powers like US, Russia, China, Australia, etc., would play a central part in shaping the future geopolitics of the Antarctic peninsula.

United States of America

Unlike Arctic, the US policy towards Antarctica has so far been strictly scientific in nature. The policy for Antarctica has evolved steadily and consistently over the years and is majorly based on four principles that have been clearly laid down. Firstly, the U.S recognizes no foreign territorial claim over Antarctica, especially by countries who are at close proximity to the polar region³⁸. Secondly, the policy states that the U.S reserves the right to participate in any future use of region,

³⁴ Strategic Communications. "The EU in the Arctic." The EU in the Arctic | EEAS Website, September 29, 2021. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-arctic_en.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Unknown "Antarctica: Overview of Geopolitical and Environmental Issues." Congressional Research Service reports, March 10, 2021. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/>.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Unknown "National Science Foundation - Where Discoveries Begin." US NSF - OPP - ANT - U.S. Policy for Antarctica. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/antarct/uspolicy.jsp>.

may it be for scientific purposes or for the exploration of untapped natural resources³⁹. Thirdly, there is strong commitment in preserving Antarctica only for peaceful purposes, like Scientific research and exploration of unexplored regions of the continent.⁴⁰ Finally, the policy believes in free access for all to conduct scientific investigation and carry out other peaceful pursuits and strongly condemns any use of force or any other action that is in violation of the Antarctic Treaty⁴¹. These principles are subjected to evolve with the ever-changing global order, and the US military presence which currently is minimal around the continent, might also significantly ramp up in the near future, mostly because of the increasing presence of the Russians and the Chinese who envision to alter the geopolitical landscape of Antarctica.

Russian Federation

Russia views Antarctica in geopolitical sense mainly due to increasing number of actors in and around the South pole. The policy mainly aims at ensuring Russia's future place within the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and strategically increase its presence in the continent both scientifically and militarily⁴². Moscow is making plans for the future, and its acts with regards to Antarctica can be considered as contingency measures. In terms of security, this translates into an expansion of Russia's naval presence and activities on the Antarctic continent, frequently with suspected military and intelligence objectives.⁴³ Beyond the Russia future at ATS, two major problems loom evidently. First, is Russia's efforts to have the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources' marine protected zones (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean subjected to stricter rules (CAMLR Convention)⁴⁴. By doing so Moscow wants to make sure that

³⁹ Unknown "National Science Foundation - Where Discoveries Begin." US NSF - OPP - ANT - U.S. Policy for Antarctica. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/antarct/uspolicy.jsp>.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴²Boulègue, Mathieu. "05 Antarctica, the Southern Ocean and the South Pole." Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank, June 6, 2022. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/militarization-russian-polar-politics/05-antarctica-southern-ocean-and-south-pole>

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

claimant states (Australia, New Zealand, France, Norway, United Kingdom, Argentina and Chile) cannot use MPAs as a launching pad for extending their territorial claims and gaining more control over the continent. Second, Russia has been attempting to control the presence of international entities in the Southern Ocean by claiming fishing activities as a pretext.⁴⁵ Moscow frequently complains about, what it claims, ‘are instances of discrimination over Russia's limited access to regional bioresources’, mostly for the sake of krill and toothfish fishing. This is similar to how it complains about MPA laws. When it comes to fishing rights, Russia takes an all-or-nothing, self-serving stance: if Moscow can't have unfettered access, then no one else should either. These instance show that Russia is contesting what it considers attempts by claimant states to delegitimize Russian interest and activities in Antarctica, and it predicted that these activities by Moscow would likely increase in number in the near future.⁴⁶

People’s Republic of China

Being the second largest Economy in the world, China currently has interests in practically every region of the earth, including space, the deep seabed, the Arctic, and Antarctica. The Chinese interest mainly includes, science and research , resources (e.g., fisheries or bioprospecting), tourism, shipping and most importantly national pride⁴⁷. The recent Chinese actions and policies seem to be intended to make sure it will not be left out should there be any possible opportunity in Antarctica in the near future.⁴⁸ For instance, China is interested in Antarctic krill, the planet's last untapped source of marine life. Currently, the Chinese catch in Antarctic waters is incredibly small. However, China is interested in expanding its krill fishing in the Southern Ocean because it recognises the potential of krill fisheries under the current supervision of the Commission for the

⁴⁵ Boulègue , Mathieu. “05 Antarctica, the Southern Ocean and the South Pole.” Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank, June 6, 2022. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/militarization-russian-polar-politics/05-antarctica-southern-ocean-and-south-pole>.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Liu, Nengye. “What Are China's Intentions in Antarctica?” The Diplomat, June 17, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/what-are-chinas-intentions-in-antarctica/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid

Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)⁴⁹. This might be the main reason why efforts to create marine protected areas in Antarctica are at a standstill. Similar to Arctic, the Chinese consider Antarctica to be a strategic polar region and a potential military conflict zone if the countries scramble for the untapped resources in the Antarctica continent.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As depicted in the previous sections, the strategies and policies with regards to Polar regions has mostly been to support nations self-interests and to enhance their presence and influence in and around the regions. An increase in military activities by the concerned states like US, Russia, and NATO near Arctic has also heightened the potential of cold war like scenario in the high seas. With China's rising ambition towards Arctic and Antarctica, the US has grown sceptical of these ambitions and has openly called out China in its National strategy for Arctic. Moreover, the possibilities of Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic has once again made NATO and the EU to increase their military presence as a counterbalance in the region. The Arctic diplomacy has also become a new trend with many nations, as it helps in addressing the political and economic affairs relating to the polar region in fast paced manner.

Certain tangible steps could be adopted by the International community to subdue the rising tensions in both the Arctic as well as in Antarctica. Most importantly, a concrete peace treaty must be adopted by all the states with regards to Arctic, replacing the present Arctic council which has been plagued by internal differences among its member countries. The divide between US and Russia mainly after the Russian-Ukraine war, has destabilised the Arctic council. Moreover, the proposed new treaty must restrain all the states from pursuing exploitative economic objectives and should focus more on sustainable development and environmental protection. With respect to Antarctica, the present Antarctic treaty, which is due to expire in the year 2048, must be revised and made more adaptable to the present day complex geopolitical situations. With many riches

⁴⁹ Liu, Nengye. "What Are China's Intentions in Antarctica?" *The Diplomat*, June 17, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/what-are-chinas-intentions-in-antarctica/>.

hiding under the ice sheets of Antarctica, nations are eyeing to exploit them to support their socio and economic needs. The use of force by nations to control these valuable resource could also lead to potential war in the region. Hence, a stronger and more sustainable Antarctic treaty should be adopted replacing the present one which hasn't been ratified since its inception. To conclude, the world is set to witness two potential conflict zones apart from outer-space and cyber-space, which could be detrimental for the global order and could debacle our environment in various ways leading to unimaginable consequences. Thus, the International community setting aside their differences and national interests, must act on a war footing to stop the brewing potential conflict and the increasing global warming in the polar regions which are melting the ice caps in an unprecedented level.

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