



Margalla Papers

Volume: 27, Number: 1 (2023)

Journal Homepage: <https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site>

e-ISSN: 2789-7028

ISSN-L: 1999-2297

RESEARCH PAPER

Strategic Opportunity, Security Dilemma and the Interplay of Interests: Russia, China and the US in the Arctic Region Since 2014

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KEYWORDS: Arctic, Climate Change, Security Dilemma, Strategic Interests, Environmental Protection.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54690/margallapapers.27.1.152>

BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY

Mushtaq, Shireen, Uswa Sharif and Rida Fatima. 2023. "Strategic Opportunity, Security Dilemma and the Interplay of Interests: Russia, China and the US in the Arctic Region Since 2014." *Margalla Papers* 27 (1): 67-81.

ARTICLE HISTORY

- **Received:** March 28, 2023
- **Peer Reviewed:** April 29, 2023
- **Revised:** May 11, 2023
- **Accepted:** June 15, 2023

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COMPETING INTERESTS: The author(s) have declared that no competing interest exists.

DATA AVAILABILITY: All relevant data are within the paper and its supporting information files.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY, SECURITY DILEMMA AND THE INTERPLAY OF INTERESTS: RUSSIA, CHINA AND THE US IN THE ARCTIC REGION SINCE 2014

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Abstract

The Northern Pole's polar ice is melting at an alarming rate due to climate change, significantly impacting the region's strategic landscape. The potential for economic growth and increasing security competition has led Russia, China and the US to ramp up their politico-military activities in the region. This research paper uses a qualitative method that explores the changing geopolitics of the region through a structural realist approach to examine the strategic interests and opportunities of these three countries in the Arctic. The study sheds light on how climate change has affected the region's geopolitical and geostrategic effects and how these countries compete for influence in the area, leading to mounting concerns and policy shifts. The paper shows how Russia takes a realist approach; China enhances its influence through a developmental approach, while the US tries to increase its power to counter the influence of Russia and China in the region. Additionally, the paper explains how the interplay of interests in the region is associated with the offence-defence balance and security dilemmas resulting from the neorealist behaviour of these states.

Keywords: Arctic, Climate Change, Security Dilemma, Strategic Interests, Environmental Protection.

Introduction

The strategic opportunity in the shape of the Arctic has increased security dilemmas. Great powers such as Russia, China and the US are involved in an interplay and overlap of strategic interests. Russia has political, military, fiscal, environmental and technological concerns regarding the Arctic. Russia assigns value to it as it hosts nuclear forces deployed at sea and its substantial navy fleet. This region is the main sustainer of Russia's hydrocarbon sector. After the Cold War in 1991, the US was less attentive towards the Arctic region. Although in the 21st century, since 2009, the priorities of the US have changed, the focus of its policies remained environmental protection and sustainable commercial activities, keeping in view climate change in the Arctic region. Similarly, the Chinese government published the first white paper about Arctic Policy in 2018. A significant reason for publishing it

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entailed clarifying China's regional standing. As a non-Arctic state, China's influence on the region is minimal due to geography. However, it wants to increase this influence by asserting itself as an Arctic stakeholder. The Polar Silk Road with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)¹ indicates the Chinese inclination to declare itself a major stakeholder in the Arctic region.

Climate change is piquing the concerns of many powerful states. Russia is approaching the Arctic with a realist character, while China is enhancing its influence in the Arctic through a developmental approach. The interests and influence of these two nations in the Arctic also endanger the US interests in the region. The US is trying to increase its power in the Arctic to counter the influence of Russia and China in the region. This research paper is, therefore, focused on the state behaviour observed in the Arctic in the past few years. It provides a timeline of the region's significance since the start of the 21st century. This paper also includes climate change as an essential factor in determining the region's significance for different states. Only Russia, China and the US interests and activities in the region have been discussed here to ensure the conciseness of the research. Climate change is considered a factor generating a new sphere of influence in the region. The paper associates the interplay of interests in the region with offence-defence balance and security dilemmas arising from the neorealist behaviour of these states.

Theoretical Framework: Offensive and Defensive Structural Realism

Structural realism is a theory that proposes that the urge to enhance one's power in states occurs from the framework of the international order itself. Each country wants maximisation of power owing to the absence of a regulating authority over them and the potential threat of attack from other states.² Structural realism has five basic assumptions. First, the leading players in the international political system are the actors, and the global political order is anarchic. Second, neorealism depicts the possession of offensive military capability, to some degree, by all states. Third, neorealist assumption binds uncertainty to the intention of other states. Fourth, the realist assumption highlights survival as the primary goal of states. Fifth, the neorealist assumption assigns rationality to states.³

"The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," by John Mearsheimer (2001), highlights the central offensive structural realism. He conveys that the international environment is full of uncertainty, and it can never be accurately assumed what the intentions of a state are, what they will be and when it can suddenly become offensive to other states.⁴ Defensive structural realism talks about rationality and choices made due to rationality as the basis of state behaviour. It talks about an offence-defence balance that leans towards defensive strategies over offensive strategies.⁵ Taliaferro has proposed some auxiliary defensive assumptions as well. The assumptions, while being the demarcations between defensive and offensive realism, are not absolute, as all offensive theorists do not prove their negation by offensive realism.⁶ This paper

focuses on the first two auxiliary assumptions, as the latter comes under the neoclassical realist paradigm.

According to Taliaferro's first auxiliary assumption, a security dilemma is a firm trait of an anarchical system. It can be defined as a specific situation in which a country's actions to maximise its security do not proportionally alter the other state's security.⁷ Similarly, the impact of structural modifiers (such as offence-defence balance, geography, and raw material access, among many others) on the severity of security dilemma is regarded as of high value when understanding it by defensive realists. Structural modifiers are material elements that can positively or negatively impact the chances of conflict and the gross distribution of power in an anarchical international order.⁸

Offence-Defence Balance and Power

Power and its pursuit are significant characteristics of an anarchical system. Structural realism does not assure a permanent balance in power, but it proposes that every power imbalance will lead to efforts to rebalance the power.⁹ These efforts lead to an offence-defence balance phenomenon. According to the offence-defence balance theory, while trying to ensure their security from potential security threats posed by other states, they try to balance their capabilities and powers.¹⁰ However, they engage in a competition of overpowering and outsmarting others. This competition cultivates the shape of a security dilemma. The more advantage the potentially offensive state has over the others, the more intensive the security dilemma.

Proceeding forward in the paper, the interests and activities of the great powers, i.e., Russia, the US and China, will be analysed because structural modifiers behave in such a manner, intensifying the security dilemma among states. The structural modifiers making these great powers insecure include access to natural resources in the Arctic region, geographical changes, access to shipping routes for strategic purposes, and regional and international trade. Climate change, though not a structural modifier, is a primary driver behind the accentuation of these structural modifiers. The research focuses on the reaction of great powers to these modifiers.

Climate Change: A Chance to Pursue New Sphere of Influence

Climate change, the long-term variation observed in the average weather patterns, comes with its effects. With technological advancements, human activities have been influencing changes in our planet's climate since the 1950s¹¹ - the more advancements, the more profound the climate change, as observed around us in recent years. According to the recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2022 report,¹² the annual temperature of Arctic air was the 6th warmest since 1900, adding that the top 7 warmest years observed in the Arctic since 1900 have been the recent consecutive seven years. The report also noted that by looking at long-term average records, scientists found that sea ice extent has been low than in the 1980s and 1990s,

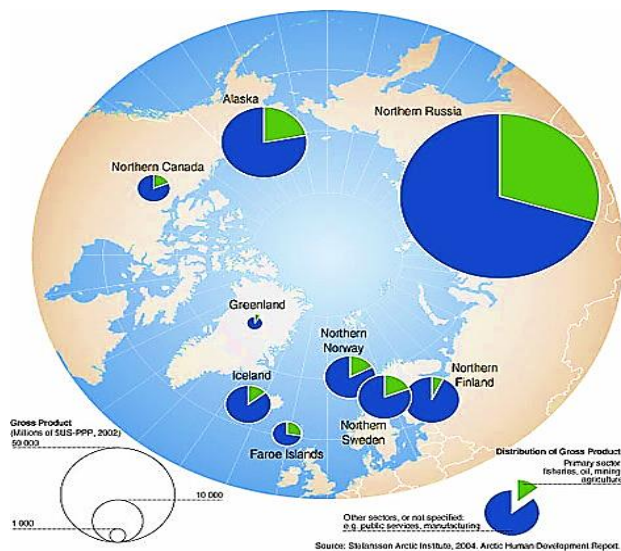
older ice is becoming very rare, open waters are developing more and more and for more extended periods, and snow seasons have been shortening overtime. It is also noted in the report that maritime ship traffic has been increasing significantly in the region, as can be deduced by the 2009-2018 satellite records.

Thus, the effects of climate change are profound and are not restricted to environmental concerns only. Climate change is rapidly introducing new possibilities for an intricate play of strategic opportunities and interests of different states. This new sphere of influence is attracting the attention of Russia, the US and China. Their interests overlap in the region, and their actions to secure them are more likely to fall under an offence-defence balance.

Geostrategic Significance of the Arctic Region

The area in the northmost of the earth is encompassed between the lines of the Arctic Circle, at about 66.5°N. This region comprises territories of eight different states: Greenland, Canada, Norway, Russia, the US, Sweden, Iceland, as well as Finland. Water practically covers the entire region, the majority of which is in ice form. Regional glaciers and icebergs constitute over 20% of the world's freshwater supply.¹³ The region comprises around 4 million people. This region is rich in mineral resources. Climate change reshapes the Arctic's geography, wildlife and political units. It is covered in ice, and the population is of indigenous people, such as the Inuit and the Sami. They have adapted to extreme environmental conditions.

Figure 1: Arctic Region



(Source: Hugo Ahlenius, UNEP/GRID-Arendal. 2005)

The region owes its geostrategic significance to natural resource reserves like gas, oil, and minerals. According to the US Geology Survey, it is estimated that about 90 billion barrels of oil, 1669 trillion cubic feet of gas and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids can be present in the region.¹⁴ The Arctic has geostrategic and geopolitical importance. Climate change makes the region's natural resources and marine pathways more approachable. Different states try to maximise their interest in the Arctic and make their policies accordingly.

Table 1: List of Resources in the Arctic

Types of Resources	Mineral Resources
Ferrous Metals	Iron Manganese, Chromium, Titanium, Vanadium
Metals	Mercury, Tungsten, Zinc, Aluminium, Copper, Tin, Nickel, Selenium Silver, Gold, Platinum, Palladium
Crystals	Gemstones, Diamonds Amber
Raw Materials	Mineral Salts, Apatite, Phosphates
Energy Resources	Coal, Methane, Uranium, Oil, and Flammable Gasses

(Source: Compiled by the Authors)

Global warming has affected this region a lot in recent years. The US, China, and Russia are leading powers in this region, taking advantage of this development to increase their military and economic interests. Ice melting will allow the extraction of all kinds of resources from the region, make it accessible for trade and bring many more economic and political prospects. These points hint in favour of the national interests of concerned states. Many of these (Table 1) are deep in the Ocean, under the ice. A high economic cost is required to get access to them.¹⁵ The region is abundant in fish reserves and has the world's most significant biological protein resources. It makes the Arctic important for international fishing markets. Various research shows that Arctic summers will be ice-free by 2030-2060.¹⁶ That is why superpowers and regional powers are trying to assert their powers in this region, as it will open new economic opportunities for them.

States are making policies and enhancing military powers and strategies according to the regional dynamics. The natural reserves will help states to develop in a better way. The changing climatic conditions are creating opportunities for development in the region because of gas exploration that may be under the ice-coated lands. The accessibility has increased to the region's Northern Sea Route due to the changing climatic conditions. All these states have also started military operations and commercial fishing in the region. The economic and military interests of states in the Arctic region will help to grow not only at the regional level but also will help them to expand globally.

Strategic Environment of the Arctic in the Early 21st Century

The regional environment changed strategically in a dramatic manner after the downfall of the Soviet Union. Different states redefined themselves as the Arctic States and Northern States. All eight Arctic states started to put more interest in the region than before and introduced Arctic strategy into their state policies. The focus was on the region's military, state sovereignty, and natural energy reserves. States like Denmark, Finland, Canada, Iceland and Sweden have also changed their policies and strategies after global interests started to rise in this region. After the increasing regional interests of Russia, other Arctic states started focusing on their interests and security. The pursuit of power by one state in the region can compromise others' interests. Hence different states have started to strengthen their influence in the region. In the 21st century, after states started to focus on the geopolitical significance of the North Pole. For instance, in 2007, Canada's government issued a statement, 'Use it or Lose it'. Under this statement, the Canadian foreign policy focused more on the Northern Areas of its territories.¹⁷

Russia is the closest and has the most access to the Arctic, so it acts as a regional gatekeeper. When the Soviet Union saw its downfall in 1991, Russia lost naval unanimity in different seas like the Caspian, Baltic and Black Seas. At the beginning of the 21st century, the main goal was to restore Russia's status as a superpower and strengthen its military capabilities. For doing so, the Arctic region was considered an opportunity to demonstrate Russian military power. Russian foreign policy is heavily focused on the region as it can be helpful to become economically powerful. To survive in the international system, states sometimes use offensive and defensive means to exist in the system. Russia is seen as switching between offensive and defensive realism whenever and wherever it deems fit. In 2007, the Russian Polar Researcher Artur Chilingarov put the flag of Russia on the North Pole Seabed, declaring it theirs. It gained the attention of other regional states. Russia's 2008 policy paper changed Arctic geopolitics' narratives and emphasised regional cooperation. In 2008, Russia and other regional states such as Denmark, Canada, the US and Norway signed the ILULISSAT Declaration.¹⁸

Figure 2: Russian Bases in Arctic Region



(Source: The Heritage Foundation. 2015)

Russian goals toward the Arctic region were officially documented in 2008; further steps were taken to safeguard its regional and national interests after 2014, when a new policy paper was presented. Russia is using the Arctic region to enhance its power by controlling the region, resources and maritime routes. The biggest threat to the sovereignty of Russia, as perceived by itself, is NATO. It triggers the assertive military tendency of Russia as retaliation towards their presence in the region. Russia, having the most extensive Arctic coastline of fifty-three per cent, is trying to militarise the region heavily with military bases. Most Russian military bases are in the Murmansk Oblast (the Murmansk Oblast relates to the Sampi region, which further connects with the four countries).¹⁹

Arctic as a Centre of Strategic Competition Among Great Powers

Russia's strategic involvement in the Arctic is seen as provocative. Moreover, it is one of the main factors contributing to a regional stability crisis. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2014)²⁰ and the Russia-Ukraine War (2022), its relationship deteriorated with the West, especially with NATO. Since 2015, heavy militarisation has protected Russian bases in the Arctic.²¹ The state has also conducted different training exercises. It also started functioning the Russian station on the Kola Peninsula near the Alakurtti.²² In 2020, Russia fostered the “Basics of Russian Federation’s State Policy in the Arctic until 2035 [and] Beyond (2020 Russian Basics) and the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security until 2035.”²³ Safeguarding Russian authority and confronting regional threats to its safety have been made top priorities in the document. As expressed in the 2020 Russian strategy, the increasing conflict potential in the region needs Russia to increase its military presence constantly.

Table 2: Features of Military Doctrines of Russia

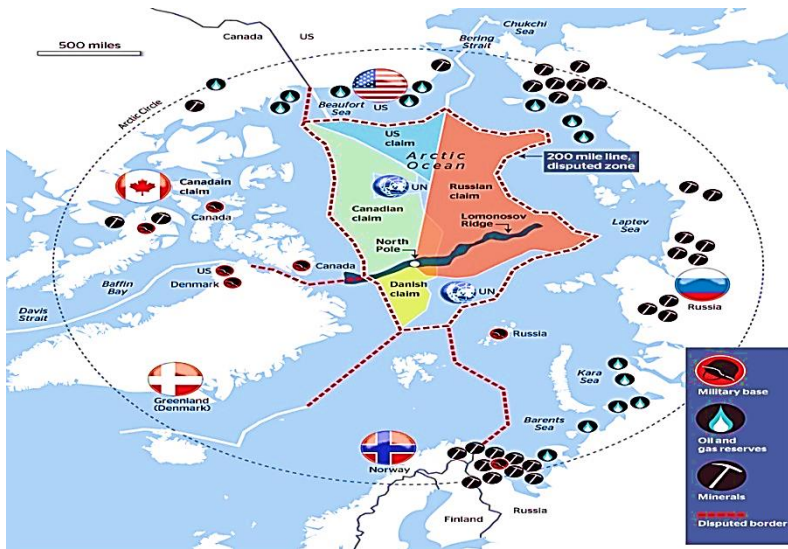
Doctrines	Specific Feature
2014	Protecting the Arctic interests of Russia.
2015	Focused on reducing the challenges in the region as its main policy goal.
2017	The Naval Doctrine considered seeking the upper hand in the maritime domain by the US as a major security threat to Russian national interests.
2020	The 2020 Russian Basics and the 2020 Russian Strategy signify the need to maintain liaisons with the regional and non-regional states.

(Source: Compiled by the Authors)

Russian nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines that are used in the Arctic region were included in the navy fleets. The Russian border guard executes three large armed Project 97P in the Northern fleet areas while the two, just like these, are operated in the Pacific fleet area.²⁴ The Navy is strengthening its capabilities for

operational processes on thin ice. In 2016, an icebreaker or patrol ship, Project-21180, was launched. The formation of the 19 airfields in 2019 and the modernisation of the old ones were also done. In March 2021, three Russian submarines broke through the ice close to the North Shaft. Each watercraft has 16 ballistic rockets, which may field many atomic warheads. The submarines were before long joined by two MiG-31 airships and ground troops partaking in Umka-2021, a Russian military exercise.²⁵ These activities are Russia's way of instilling its influence in the Arctic.

Figure 3: Overlapping Arctic Claims and Resources



(Source: *The Times*. 2016)

Russia's Strategic and Economic Interest in the Region

Russia, an Arctic state, has been very active in the region to pursue its fiscal, military, and geopolitical interests. Almost ninety-one per cent of Russia's natural gas reserves and eighty per cent of the industrial gas reserves are found in this zone. The Russian government had paid different industries and infrastructure companies to start regional development.

The regional ice is melting, making the possibility of a functioning Northern Sea Route (NSR). It will be the future Swiss canal for Russian trade. The shipping from the Panama Canal takes almost 24 to 30 days, but if the NSR routes open, it will take less than 18 to 20 days.²⁶ It can be understood that Russia has plans to dominate the route and secure its economic interests before its other possible competitors, namely the US and China, insert their influence here. Russia also has its own geopolitical and military concerns in the region. To protect its sovereignty, Russia is strengthening its military to tackle any problematic situation. These objectives are consistent with the

peacetime military involvement of Russia in the region and its deployment of assets to expand its military capability and infrastructure there.

Chinese Strategic and Economic Interests in the Region

China always tried to establish its influence where it deemed beneficial. It has prioritised Asia's economic, political and social development for many years. Opportunities arising from global warming in the Arctic region have attracted China towards the region. China has always prioritised its economy to excel in other fields too. China is gradually gaining economic and political influence in the region through investments and alliance strategies.

Structural modifiers such as geography and raw material are behind accelerated regional interests. The Arctic, considered the biggest oil reserve, has provided China with oil opportunities. The investments in different projects in the region will help China to grow its long-term plans and strategies.²⁷ The other interest of China in the Arctic is in the gradually emerging trade and shipping routes. Using the Northern Passage, for example, would provide passage to Europe with a reduction of 6400 km in length and solve China's Malacca dilemma.²⁸ China's Arctic scientific efforts provide it with more operational experience and accessibility. Different scientific and satellite centres have also been created by China in Norway, Iceland and Sweden, with plans to build more in Greenland and Canada.

US Strategic and Economic Interests in the Region

The US' rise in military activities in the Arctic region resulted from the fear of the military activities of Russia in the North Atlantic Ocean. This rising militarization has caused fear of national security threats that led to the US involvement in the militarisation of the Arctic region, especially on the northern side of the region. The US focused on the Arctic region and made it part of the National Security plan to increase its regional power. The US has distinct regional economic interests. According to UNCLOS, the US has the Exclusive Economic Zone in the Arctic Sea. It is following UNCLOS here, despite not ratifying it. The EEZ of the US surrounds Alaska. It further goes towards several seas, such as the Bering Sea, the Beaufort Sea, and the Chukchi Sea. According to UNCLOS, the US has all rights to explorations and conservation of natural resources in its EEZ.²⁹

After Russian activities increased in the region, US policies started to change also. Under Obama's administration, the focus shifted to the region to avail all benefits it offers so that the US could lower its dependency on oil from other countries. The Alaska Sea holds the second-largest amount of oil resources, around 20% of total oil resources in the Arctic.³⁰ The regional oil and gas resources are the main reason behind the growing interests of the US. The US, an Arctic power, has security and military interests here. The primary focus of the US 2009 directive of the Arctic Council was the state's national security. With changing geopolitics of the region, the

US sees increasing accessibility to this region as having more pros than cons.³¹ The US has been establishing its regional military presence to strengthen its influence. It will help it tackle any threat to its national security. The most immediate danger to US security interests is Russian military operations in the Barents and Greenland Seas. Russian soldiers in the region might strike the US heartland, ships and data cables traversing the North Atlantic and pose a danger to NATO partners in northern Europe.

Table 3: Highlighting Specific Features of Official Documents of the US

Official Documents	Specific Features
National Strategy 2013	The 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region barely focused on military factors, which changed after Russia annexed Crimea.
Navy Roadmap 2014	According to the 2014 Navy Roadmap, there might be an increase in tensions because of misunderstandings and wild talk, also because of the unpredictable future of the regional economic environment.
Defense Department 2016	By 2016, the US Defence Department advised, in favour of an active rise in US military activity in the Arctic, to be prepared to conduct any operation.

(Source: Compiled by the Authors)

Structural Realism and Security Dilemma in the Arctic: Contemporary Interplay of Interests

When looking at the activities of the US, Russia and China in the Arctic for the past few years, it can be seen that structural modifiers, as explained earlier, are working in such a way that the security dilemma is intensifying in the region. The main structural modifiers are the geography of the region, continuous development of military capabilities of the regional states, especially the US and Russia, and increasing prospects of natural resources extraction, mainly for China, the US and Russia, among others. Climate change is proving to be one of the main factors that have triggered the security dilemma's intensification via these structural modifiers. Russia, the US and China are trying to secure their interests in this new sphere of influence created by climate change.

Today, Russian military forces in the Arctic place premium on naval units stationed in the state's northern portion. In addition to nuclear-powered rapid attack submarines (SSNs), conventional submarines (SSKs) and an array of surface vessels varying in size from coastal vessels to ocean-going destroyers, the Northern Fleet also has air forces and navy infantry.³² Conventional ground forces are only present in the form of a mechanised infantry unit stationed in Pechanga, around ten kilometres from the border between Norway and Russia.³³ The Russian Coast Guard, administered by the Federal Security Service (FSB), has geographically dispersed personnel, surveillance vessels and planes, adding to the Russian armed units in the area. Russia

also has the world's biggest concentration of conventional and nuclear-powered ships. These icebreakers are also under significant upgrades via investments.³⁴ Russia's military engagement in the region has gradually increased since 2007, mainly at sea and in the air. The increase in engagement is mainly a reaction to initiatives pursued by several other Arctic littoral countries, mainly the US and Canada, as per the opinion of Russian defence expert Alexandr Goltz.³⁵ Regarding the Arctic, Russia's Foreign Ministry has started settling rhetoric by being more careful of its tone than the Defence Ministry.

The Arctic Policy White Paper begins by emphasising that China has justified influence in the area due to its standing, stature and vicinity to the Arctic and should be acknowledged and integrated as a key player. China's fundamental viewpoint entails the international repercussions and global consequences of the region's changing climate, and it is thus not up to Arctic governments to set the rules and standards for the region's prospective progress regarding its assets.³⁶ Like some non-Arctic countries, China actively engages in regional scientific diplomacy by leveraging scientific research to justify and bolster its rising reach and presence. Furthermore, through concentrated and tangible research collaboration and networking, the research projects assist China in enhancing its contacts with regional nations and entities such as universities, cities, regions and provinces. China focuses on ensuring access to the unrefined and natural resources of the region, thereby assisting in the security and diversification of China's energy supply. The Poles are defined as new strategic frontiers by China.³⁷ China is attempting to build and gain entry to Arctic maritime routes, which offer an appealing substitute to the current lengthier and more strategically risky routes.³⁸ Hence, China is inserting itself in the region in every logical way possible to secure its economic interests.

The strategies, published by different departments of the US over the past few years, focus on the recent prioritisation of the Arctic region, which is potentially harbouring new trade routes and chances of resource exploitation due to climate change.³⁹ On the logistics front, defence leaders and Congress have agreed on the importance of polar security investments and prioritisation, with financing for ski planes, the Polar Security Cutter Programme, and the Arctic port.⁴⁰ The US is apprehensive about the regional military escalation by Russia, which could have triggered a US military involvement in the area. The growing Chinese involvement and geopolitical interests, however, have prompted a thorough upgrade of the US diplomacy towards this region, as can be observed from the incline in high-level excursions to the Arctic in recent times, as well as the declaration in early June 2019 of the revival of a permanent US diplomatic facility in Greenland.⁴¹ The US, being a superpower, is also actively trying to safeguard its influence in the region.

Table 4: Cooperative Stance vs Competitive Pursuits

States	Cooperative Stance	Competitive Pursuits
Russia	For the Arctic to remain a cooperative zone for resource development and peaceful conflict resolution.	Russia expresses its desire to control the Northern Sea Route, maintain the viability of its geopolitical deterrent, and keep NATO outside the Arctic and away from its boundaries.
China	By accessing Arctic trade routes, exploiting resources, exercising influence, participating in Arctic working groups, and conducting scientific studies.	China's power has a competitive edge. Arctic objectives include financial ambitions and investments that might be used for civic and military purposes.
USA	Cooperation through the Arctic Council and other regional structures for social and environmental protection and economic growth. The settlement of territorial issues.	The pivot to the Arctic by the US military branches and the expansion of military assets in Alaska in reaction to traditional and non-traditional challenges and threats in the region. The industrialisation of the North American defence system and deterrence by denial through incorporated offensive and defensive capabilities.

(Source: Compiled by the Authors)

Conclusion

The Arctic region is undergoing changes that will impact the strategic relations of states affiliated with and interested in the region. The region is experiencing the impact of climate change. Such changes in the Arctic region are visible, altering the geostrategic environment. Instead of considering this a threat, different regional states perceive it as an opportunity, where now great powers like Russia, China and the US compete to establish control. The realist paradigm is one of the traditional international relations paradigms, which has continued to evolve with time better to suit the changing needs of international relations discourse. All these states prioritise self-survival in the region while using the circumstances in their best interests. Their actions and decisions can be understood using the structural realism theory. With the increasing possibilities of accessible regional natural resources, their strategic interests and regional involvement are also mounting. All these factors are working as structural modifiers, impacting the security dilemma in the region and materialising as they struggle to establish regional influence and power. States, including the US, Russia and China, are deliberately working towards enhancing their various capabilities in the Arctic. Their overlapping interests make them a part of the offence-defence balance in the region. One's increase in influence is regarded as offensive, making the other increase its impact. This region is gradually emerging as a new arena for great power competition in this ongoing competition.

Russia's regional investments are to strengthen its military capabilities to protect its interests against threats. Russia wants to establish a monopoly over using marine pathways and economic resources to reduce its dependence on other states. A non-Arctic state, China is making alliances with Russia and other Arctic states to benefit from the strategic location and natural reserves. China's growing interest in the region is establishing and enhancing its influence over the Arctic states through economic incentives and investments. It aims to access the marine pathways for economic development, just like BRI in South Asia. Although the US is far behind Russia and China in military development in the region, the current status of the international system, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is expected to make changes in the US foreign policies towards the region and will increase the fiscal and military involvements of the US in the region. The US has been in border disputes with Canada and has been working toward the environmental protection strategies of the region. In the years ahead, the effects of climate change are predicted to multiply exponentially; likewise, strategic opportunity will increase in the region. They will contest over the opportunities the region will provide, instigating an intricate power play that will make the region a hotspot of competing nations and their strategies.

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