



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalsivam Kamarajar"

Exploring India's potential in the Arctic region

Published On: 23-04-2025

Context

- The September Arctic sea-ice is now shrinking at a rate of 12.2% per decade compared to its average extent during the period from 1981 to 2010 (NASA).
- This melting ice is also **opening up access to a new trade route called the Northern Sea Route (NSR) in the Arctic, linking the Atlantic and the Pacific.**

Northern Sea Route

- The NSR is being hailed as the **shortest route between Europe and Asia**. India's long term approach to exploring new mega ports and new routes — not just from an economic lens, but also from a strategic and geopolitical lens — makes the NSR crucial.
- India began is the **only developing nation besides China that has an Arctic research base (Himadri).**
- With its vast Arctic coastline, extensive experience in Arctic navigation, and training of personnel, **Russia is an obvious partner for India to explore the NSR.**
- However, if India inclines towards the Russian bloc, then it would be implying support to Chinese efforts, such as the **Polar Silk Road which China** is building as a northern extension of its Belt and Road Initiative.

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Arctic Council

- The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the **Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and other Arctic inhabitants.**
- It addresses the concerns related to the Arctic region, including **sustainable development and safeguarding the environment in the Arctic region.**
- It was formally established in **1996** through the **Ottawa Declaration.**
- The establishment was preceded by the **Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (June 1991), a declaration on protecting the Arctic environment.**
- The **eight Arctic States** (whose territories fall in the Arctic region) are members of the Arctic Council.
- These are **Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US.**

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- **All Arctic Council decisions require consensus** of the eight Arctic States.
- The **Observer status** is granted to entities that support the objectives of the Arctic Council and have demonstrated capabilities, including the ability to make financial contributions.
- Observers of the Arctic Council are:
 - 1 Thirteen Countries, including **India**.
 - 2 Thirteen intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary organisations
 - 3 Twelve Non-governmental organisations.
- **India had been given the Observer status in 2013**

