

Climate Change and the Geopolitics of Russia in Arctic

Biju Thomas, Assistant Professor (Political Science)s, Christian College, Chengannur, Kerala, India. Area of interest: Strategic Affairs of Russia, India and China bijuthomasccc@gmail.com

Climate change is affecting the world faster than expected and it is most visible in Arctic. It has made exploration of the arctic easier. Presence of hydrocarbons and possibility of opening new transport routes has resulted in a geopolitical competition for control over the arctic region. Russia is in the forefront. It has planted its flag in the North Pole and made claims for arctic before the UN as its continental shelf extends to arctic. According to the United Nations convention on the Law of the Sea, a country can make additional claims over exclusive economic zone if it can prove that its continental shelf extends beyond 200 nautical miles. Other countries bordering arctic are not ready to accept Russian claims and they are also making claims over arctic territory. Will Russia succeed in its race for arctic?

What is the international law in this regard? The arctic circumpolar nations meeting at Illulissat, Greenland, on Hugo Ahlenius, UNEP/GRID-ArendaMay 28, 2008 blocked any international legal initiative. The fate of arctic would be decided by countries bordering it. Countries in search of dominance and energy security are eager to bring this beautiful part of earth under their control

Map of Arctic



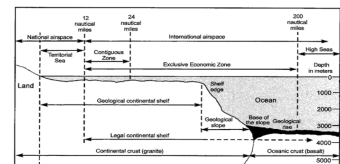
Arctic sea routes



Sea routes along the edges of the Arctic ocean, or rather along the coasts of Northern Canada and Russia, holds potential for decreasing the number of days

in shipping goods from the Pacific to Atlantic coasts in Europe and North America, and vice versa. In addition, this could provide a means to transport natural resources, such as oil and gas, extracted in the Arctic.ⁱ

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA
Signed: Montego Bay, Jamaica, 10 December 1982
Entered into Force: 16 November 1994
Ratification, Accession or Succession: 155 Nations



ARCTIC SECTORS



- 1) North Pole: 2) Lomonosov Ridge 3) 200-nautical mile (370km) line
- 4) Russian-claimed territoryⁱⁱ

Russian Flag in Arctic Seabed



ⁱ Cartographer- Hugo Ahlenius, UNEP/GRID-Arenda
ⁱⁱ Russia plants flag under N Pole,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6927395.stm>