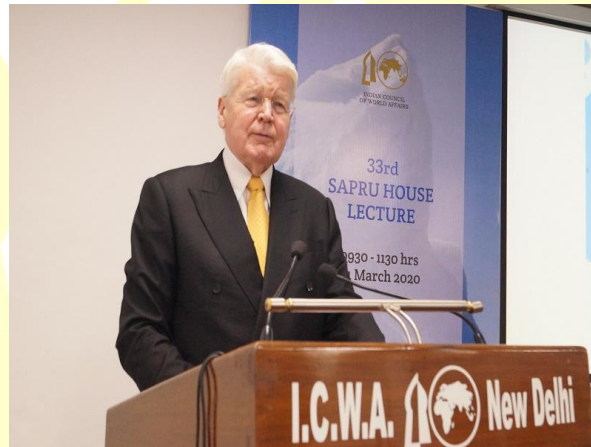




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36th Sapru House Lecture

by



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Sapru House, New Delhi

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The Arctic and the Third Pole
A keynote in India

36th Sapru House Lecture by His Excellency Olafur Ragnar Grimsson
Chairman Arctic Circle
President of Iceland 1996-2016

The lecture was delivered without written notes

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Let me first thank the Indian Council of World Affairs for inviting me and the CEO of the Arctic Circle, Dagfinnur Sveinbjornsson to attend this forum and deliver the Sapru House Lecture here today.

It is a long time since I first arrived in India. I was privileged to meet the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1983, and to develop cooperation with her successor Rajiv Gandhi, as well as five other leaders, among them Olof Palme, Andreas Papandreu and Julius Nyerere. It was called the Six Nation's Peace Initiative; at the height of the Cold War when the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Eastern and the Western Blocs dominated every continent in the world. For me this was a beginning of a longstanding friendship with India, a learning experience that has benefited me in multiple ways, made me a better human being, enriched my knowledge and vision of democracy, culture, economic advancement and also of how the rise of Asia will dominate the 21st century. Therefore, I own a great depth of gratitude to India; very few countries apart from my own have given me so much over such a long time.

As I said in a recent letter to your Prime Minister, I have been privileged to work with five of his predecessors over a number of decades. Yesterday and the day before, I was able to have meetings with your Foreign Minister, your Minister of Climate and your Minister of Science and Technology on behalf of the Prime Minister to discuss the enhancement of India's involvement in the Arctic and how also the lessons on the model of Arctic cooperation could benefit the growing need for the Himalayan countries to come together in a similar platform to examine what is happening to the glaciers in your immediate neighborhood.

Many people might wonder why India should be interested in this faraway place, the Arctic. Why should the Government of India, the business community, the

environmentalists, the scientists, concern themselves with what is happening in the ice-covered neighborhood of Greenland, Iceland, and the frozen tundra in Russia, Alaska and other parts surrounding this top of the world. The answer is actually very clear, that the future of India, will be to a large extent determined by the Arctic and the future of the Arctic will also be determined by what takes place in India and other Asian countries. Our common fate in this new century is so interlinked, that it is impossible to discuss one or the other, without a deep understanding and engagement in all parts of the world.

Of course, the Arctic to some extent is a misnomer, because we often talk about it, as if it is a place like Lapland or Scotland or other such rather small geographical entities. We are in fact talking about the big part of the globe, of continental proportions. Alaska alone is three times the size of Texas, Greenland is equal to half of Western Europe and the Russian Arctic covers seven time zones which is more than twice the continental United States. It is difficult, giving our traditional way of how we talk about the Arctic to realize now in the beginning of the 21st century, that in fact this is a huge part of the planet, when we add it together. And of course, for centuries it was completely unknown to the enlightened educated part of the world, whether there were the educated people in Asia, Europe or United States or elsewhere. Of course, the indigenous people had lived there for centuries, even millennia. Some people say they might be descendants of the Indian people in previous centuries. That's why, when the first Norwegian, English, Canadian explorers went into the Arctic in the beginning of the 20th century, they became world famous because they were really the first people to enter this territory and then reported back to the enlightened world what it was like. Although nobody knew, whether they were alive or dead for three or four years until they suddenly turned up, returning. And then the Cold War closed this part of the planet up because of the intensive militarization and conflict and strategic hostility between the Western and the Eastern Blocs.

So paradoxically dear friends, it is only in the last 20 years that this huge part of the planet has opened up for diplomatic, political, economic and scientific and cultural cooperation. There is no other part of the planet inhabited by States and communities and people and culture that has so recently opened for extensive multidimensional international cooperation. The pace of that change has been so rapid, especially, in the last five or ten years that it has been a challenge even for the most informed of us to understand and draw conclusions from what is happening. It is only seven years since the Arctic Council accepted India, China, Korea, Japan and Singapore, as Observer States in

the Arctic Council, the intergovernmental body established just 20 years ago by the United States, Russia, Canada and the five of us in the Nordic countries.

If anybody would have said at the meeting in Kiruna, where John Kerry represented the United States, Carl Bildt was in the chair on behalf of Sweden. But before the decade was over China, Korea, Japan would become so active participants in the Arctic cooperation that now we are witnessing for the last three years that these three Asian countries Japan, Korea and China have regular trilateral consultations among themselves at their foreign ministry level to coordinate their Arctic policies. Their engagement in the spheres of economic collaboration and investments, scientific research, and diplomatic collaboration is now so extensive that I have stopped calling them Observer States, I call them Action States in the Arctic.

But India, my dear friends, being a great friend of this country, somehow in this Asian family of Arctic Observer States is still at the railway station, which most of us thought would be the Arctic station five or ten years ago, while the rest of the Asian countries as well as the European countries France, Germany and others have scaled up their pressure. I often think that a map of all the member states and observer states is perhaps, more informative about the Arctic playing field that we are now witnessing than the previous more well-known geographical picture of the Arctic because here we not only have the Arctic states- the eight territorial states of the Arctic, but also the Observer States that have been formally recognized, as having a role at the Arctic table, including the Asian states and not just France and Germany, but also Italy, Switzerland and other countries. One could ask oneself, as is often done: Why is it? Why is it? That this constellation of leading key countries, United States, Russia, China, Korea, Japan, Canada, France, Germany, Britain, are all now in one way or another Arctic players. The reasons are of course multiple and we have listed few of them. The Arctic is, of course, extraordinarily rich in energy resources. That is one of the reasons. Over 20% of Russian exports earning now come from the Russian Arctic. And it is yet another reflection of the geopolitical transformation taking place that the Russian government, most recently reconstructed to have a ministry not just of the Arctic, but the combined ministry of the Far East and the Arctic. There are gas pipelines from Russia to Europe but recently an 8,500 kilometers pipeline has been constructed from the Russian Arctic all the way down to Shanghai in China.

Apart from oil and natural gas, the Arctic is also very rich in other clean energy renewable resources like hydro power, wind power and others, and that is one of the

reasons my own country-Iceland and Greenland, Scotland, Norway, Denmark are leading renewable energy powers in the world.

The Arctic is also, not just Russia but Greenland, Canada and other parts extraordinarily rich in minerals. The mining of rare metals, elements that are absolutely essential, especially for the high-tech IT industry in the 21st century will become increasingly important. It is impossible to maintain a global leadership in the IT sector in the 21st century for India, China, United States or others without, in one way or another, having access to the rare metals and minerals in the Arctic. One of the reasons why President Trump tweeted about buying Greenland is that the government of the United States has realized that Greenland harbors so rich resources that not just for strategic reasons but also for the American economy in the 21st century, it will be an ideal partner. So those who thought the President was simply joking with his tweet must realize that it reflected a realization of the strategic economic importance of Greenland for the future of the American economy.

The Arctic is extraordinarily rich in ocean resources. It is actually one of the major non-polluted territories where large fishing fleets can still harbour catches. George Shultz, the former Secretary of State in America, one of the great elder statesmen of the United States said a few years ago: imagine you got the New York Times tomorrow morning and the main headline was there is a new ocean on the planet. By that he wanted to draw our attention to the fact that the melting of the ice in the Arctic Ocean is for the first time in human history, opening up a new ocean on the planet. An ocean, which could become a territory for new sea lines and shipping, not through the Suez Canal or the Strait of Hormuz, not through the territories that have made Singapore a great hub, but through the Northern Sea Route. Either the North Eastern Sea Route along the Russian coast - incidentally Russia has already a legislative framework to govern the shipping - or even across the pole through the so-called Center Route, in which China is especially interested. The largest shipping company of China, COSCO has for more than five years worked on a systematic Arctic shipping strategy, and Korea is already building enhanced tankers that can sail the Northern Sea Route transporting LNG without the need for icebreakers to accompany them.

Due to the opening of the Arctic Ocean, we are increasingly seeing the attention of major shipping companies turned to the possibility of moving cargo from Asia to Europe and America. It takes 10 days shorter than going through the old Suez Canal route. You only have to remember the wars over the Suez Canal and the strategic importance of it for the

British Empire. India, of course, doesn't need any lessons about the British Empire, to realize the consequences of new sea routes opening up on the planet.

The most important economic consequence of opening of the Arctic is the energy sector. A few months ago, President Putin and President Xi Jinping jointly celebrated the opening up of a huge pipeline 8,500 kilometres long from the difficult challenging Arctic territory in Siberia in Russia, all the way down to Shanghai. As President Xi Jinping said, it was a testimony to the engineering and the building skills of these two nations as they constructed this pipeline in the difficult territories and weather conditions, especially in the Russian Arctic. And I have said to my American friends recently, just draw a line on the map of the United States signifying 8,500 kilometres' pipeline to realize the scale of this project. And when Southern China has become dependent on the Russian Arctic for its energy, when Shanghai has planned its future on having access to the energy in the frozen Russian Tundra, we must all acknowledge that something has happened to fundamentally change how we look at the geopolitics of energy in the 21st century.

The power of Siberia is perhaps our guiding concept for this. It is why the Russian government has made the Russian Arctic a key territory and why President Putin is organizing major conference every two years in St. Petersburg where all the key Russian ministers attend and the big Russian companies because one cannot imagine the future of Russia without utilization of the energy in the Arctic. It is not just with relations to China, it is also many of the other neighboring countries, including India. As you are very familiar with, President Putin offered Prime Minister Modi the possibility of building a similar pipeline from the Russian Arctic to India. There is Nord Stream 2 and such pipelines to Europe. At the Munich Security Conference over a year ago, the Vice President of the United States, the Head of the National Security Council, leading senators and others tried to convince the Germans and the Europeans that they should not continue with the energy trade with Russia. But that did not have any effect. So clearly, like Shanghai and China continental Europe has also based its energy future on the stream coming from Russia continuing throughout the 21st century. And one of the big questions for India is, will it accept the offer, which I believe has been repeated by President Putin, to enter this triangle of China, Europe, and Russia for the construction of new energy system in the 21st century. In addition to shipping between Asia, Europe and America, we have a new energy construction. We only have to look at the importance of oil in the 21st century to begin to understand the geopolitical consequences of these new energy structures that I have just described. My guess is that sooner or later the Modi government will accept this offer and start exploring systematically how to link India

with this new construction. And then, of course, the consequences of the Arctic for India will be obvious to everybody.

As has been mentioned here before, this is not just about shipping and energy and minerals and rare metals or ocean resources, it is also about the weather patterns and the climate. It is also about the monsoons. And how, what's happening to the ice in the Arctic has fundamental consequences for the weather patterns and the sea level in China, India and other parts of Asia as well as every other continent in the world. The melting of the Greenland ice sheet is such and the consequences so dramatic for every country in the world that if only a quarter of the Greenland ice melts, and it is melting very fast, sea level worldwide will rise two meters. Just look at the Indian coastal cities and start thinking about what will happen to Mumbai or other coastal cities in India with two meters rise in sea level. The Chinese have already recognized this relationship between the Southern cities in China and the melting of the Greenland ice sheet.

The aggressive melting of the sea ice in the Arctic has enormous consequences for the weather patterns in Asia, having in recent years provided extraordinary destruction. So, one cannot really understand the weather patterns in your country and the neighboring Asian countries or even other parts of the world, like the strong winter in the United States that created enormous damages and difficulties in the US in the last few years, without bringing into the picture what is happening to the ice in the Arctic and my part of the world.

The polar vortex and the implications of its changes for the weather patterns on climate in the Americas and Asia as well is of course now a fundamental part of the acknowledged scientific wisdom. Perhaps not recognized 20 years ago and let us remember, it was only in the 1970s that scientists recognized the conveyor belts of ocean currents around the globe. So, our understanding or the understanding of the global scientific community of the interrelationship about what happens to the polar vortex and the weather patterns on the climate in every major continent in the world is in fact, quite recent. It is understandable that it takes time for others or the public in general to understand this relationship.

In this context, the relevance of the Arctic is also important for what is happening in your ice-covered neighborhood. There are only three major areas on the planet that are ice-covered. Antarctica, which we all know does not have states or people. Let us also remember, and I sometimes point this out, my father was eight years old when the first human being went to Antarctica. That is how recently that ice covered continent became

a part of the human experience. But the other two are the Arctic and the Himalayas, which increasingly has become to be called the Third Pole. In the Arctic, Russia, United States, Canada and the Arctic Nordic countries have already established a systematic framework of cooperation, not only the Arctic Council, but multiple other entities like the Arctic Circle. And we have recognized India, China and the others as observer states, but the fact of the matter is that there is not even a table in the Himalayan region.

The relationship between you, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, on what is happening in your neighborhood is almost zero. China and Bhutan do not even have diplomatic relations. And when we organized the conference in Dehradun, some years ago in cooperation between me and the then Prime Minister of India, the Indian authorities did not want to allow some of the key Chinese scientists to enter. I am not criticizing China or India, I am just pointing this out, as an evidence of the diplomatic reality. And although there are about 10,000 glaciers on the Indian side of the Himalayas, I doubt if the number of fully trained glaciologists in India is enough to have one per 1000 glaciers on the Indian side. The Chinese on the other hand have established and continue to strengthen one of the most formidable glaciology institutes in the world.

This region is the origin as you all know of the great rivers of Asia. It is impossible to analyse the water future of India and China and other countries without looking at what is happening, in this ice covered neighborhood. Already we have reports of water scarcity in parts of Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and elsewhere. And it is absolutely clear from my discussion with the Chinese authorities that they are scared, fundamentally about the consequences for China, of the melting of the glaciers in the Himalayas and the Third Pole. The Arctic model offers many guidelines and insights and examples of how even countries like Russia and the United States despite the conflicts over Ukraine and Syria, in the Middle East and the sanctions have been able to maintain reasonably good and constructive cooperation on the Arctic. That is why we have in our meetings here in Delhi, not only talked about the Arctic, but also, how what we call the Arctic model of cooperation on science and understanding can help the Himalayan countries like India and China and others to come together. The Arctic has two very powerful countries, Russia and the United States and five relatively small Nordic countries. The Himalayas have two powerful states, India and China, and then Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and others. In that sense it demonstrates how smaller countries can cooperate within the framework of powerful leaders. The Arctic model is of great interest.

Pictures and television reports of what is happening to the people in Asia, because of the extreme weather patterns and the floods, will become increasingly frequent in the years

to come. One of the reasons why we established the Arctic Circle the same year as India was accepted as an Observer State in the Arctic Council was my conviction that we needed a new international platform, where governmental leaders, Prime Ministers, Presidents, Ministers, leading scientists, business leaders, and environmental leaders, indigenous people and others, would come together. In, as I said seven years ago, a kind of Davos like conference.

The interesting story is, that we succeeded in making the Arctic Circle, such a gathering. Every year now, we have in Iceland in October, over 2000 people from more than 70 countries, including all the major countries of Asia and Europe, in addition to Russia and the United States, with last year 700 speakers in 180 sessions. It has become a fascinating 21st century platform of cooperation because it is organized in a different way from many other international conferences. It means that individual partners, whether they are governments or think tanks or institutions like the Indian Council of World Affairs or business companies or environmental organizations, whoever can organize sessions in their own name and have full authority over their session in terms of speakers and content. It is the democratisation of the international dialogue, whereas in most other cases, everything is centralised and everything has to be in the name of that institution. We give the young activists the same platform, as a President of a country, and it has worked, dramatically well. In addition, we have organized in recent years, forums, in other countries, smaller in scale, 300 to 700 people. So far, they have been in the United States, in Canada, in the United Kingdom, in Singapore, in Greenland, the Faroe Islands, in Korea and in China. The next will be in Berlin at the end of June, then in Greenland, then in Tokyo before the end of the year and then in Abu Dhabi and Paris. The Arctic Circle has become a working, dynamic, evolving, international platform of cooperation and that is why part of my message here, in Delhi, today is to encourage the Government of India, various institutions in India, and others interested in this field to actively participate in the Arctic Circle Assemblies and Forum.

Among recent speakers have been the Crown Princess of Sweden, Ban Ki-Moon, who came to report to the Arctic Circle Assembly about the success of the Paris Climate Agreement. This past October John Kerry, who was also directly involved in the Paris Climate Agreement, received the Arctic Circle Prize and delivered a keynote speech. The President of France, President Hollande, delivered the keynote speech in October of 2015. It was the only speech he made prior to the Paris Climate Conference two months later. Some months before the conference, I had promised to take him before he spoke to one of our fastest retreating glaciers. I decided to let the helicopter land not where the edge of the glacier is now, but where it was, when I was born. And I let the President and his entire

entourage and the French media walk for a long time, across the black sands, on the rocks, on the wet territory, until they finally came to the edge of the glacier, where it is now. And as Christiana Figueres said, before he went to that glacier and walked with you, his political mind was of course engaged in the climate negotiations. But after he came back, his heart and his soul was also in it. My friends, it is a formidable experience to witness the glaciers disappearing. And that is why I thought it was a striking message when your Prime Minister, few days before the last election, went to the Himalayas and sat there meditating about the future of India and the future of the world, at the edge of one of your Himalayan glaciers. I am not taking sides in Indian politics, but I found it interesting that this was the final image, he wanted to send to the Indian people before they went to the voting places to choose the next government.

The Arctic Circle has, in its relatively few years, become a platform where major leaders and countries find it proper to present their case. Two years ago, the Foreign Minister of Japan, travelled all the way to Reykjavík, to present in a keynote speech, the case of Japan in the Arctic. And I have invited similarly on my visit now high level ministers from the Indian government to attend the next Arctic Circle Assembly and make a similar keynote presentation on the Indian Policy, on the Indian Vision and the Indian Project for the Arctic, as the President of France, and the Foreign Minister of Japan, and the young governor of Yamalo-Nenets in Russia, to name a few have done in recent years. Yamalo-Nenets is one of the key energy territories in the 21st century. The estimation is that before the end of this decade, they will produce 20% of the LNG in the world. That means that the governor has a territory of Qatar-like importance for the global energy system. For those who do not understand how Russia and the Tundra is being transformed into an energy powerhouse for Asia, Europe and potentially India, need to pay a visit to his region and see for themselves, what is happening in Yamalo-Nenets. I was privileged to go to Sabetta a few years ago, where less than 10 years before, there was nothing, literally nothing except the frozen tundra, no human being, no habitation. Now there is a monumental energy production where Korean tankers with icebreaker potential are transporting the Russia LNG to both Asia and Europe.

I sometimes joke with my American audiences how many of you have heard of Sabetta? Usually there may be one or two, in an audience of hundreds, most of the Western and Asian world, have not heard about Sabetta. But it is one of the most significant energy locations in the 21st century. And this young man, the governor in his 30s, was chosen by President Putin to lead that transformation in the coming years.

The Arctic Circle has not only brought the assemblies annually to Reykjavik but has also brought the discussion on the Arctic and the future of the global economy and on cooperation and science and diplomacy to China, to Singapore, to Alaska, to Korea, to Washington, to Faroe Islands, to Scotland, to Quebec, to Greenland, and then in the coming months to Berlin, to Greenland, to Japan, and to Abu Dhabi. I have signed an agreement with the government of the United Arab Emirates, recently, to have the first major intergovernmental international conference outside of Asia, on the Himalaya Third Pole region. And with this presentation here today, I invite all of you to participate in this endeavor. I can assure you, it not only will be intellectually fascinating, but it will also open your eyes, through the Arctic, and potentially through the Himalayas, that we are seeing one of the most fascinating geopolitical transformations of our time. If we really want to understand the future of India, and your place in the world, you have at least partly, to relate that understanding, to both the Arctic and the Himalayas. So that my friends, is my formal way of inviting all of you to join this international dynamic, democratic and open cooperation, where each and every one of you can have a role that you judge fitting for your purpose. And I sometimes say it does not matter how clever I or my colleagues are in organizational efforts, we would not have been able to create this global platform of the scale, of this dimension, of this dynamic growth, if there was not an underlying wave of transformation moving around the world, bringing all these people together, in the realization that on the one hand, the Arctic and the other the Himalaya Third Pole, are now absolutely critical for the future of our countries and the future of our planet. And later today, my good friend the CEO of the Arctic Circle, Dagfinnur Sveinbjornsson will give a more extensive presentation of how this relates to the Himalayan Third Pole effort. But for me personally, having learned so much from India over the decades of my active political life, it will be a great pleasure and privilege to see an enhanced Indian engagement from multiple sectors of Indian society, governmental, business and scientific community, in this Arctic endeavors and this fascinating new global journey, that I am trying to describe to you in my lecture, here today. Thank you.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Thank you very much, your Excellency, for what I can only describe as a brilliant lecture. And rarely, it fulfils all the expectations we have from a Sapru House Lecture in brief, because it widens the parameters of the debate for all of us. I will not try to summarise it. But the three important takeaways for me, at least, were, firstly, underscoring the importance of the Arctic in economic terms, in geo-economics terms and geo-strategic terms, for all the reasons and the most obvious reason being, of course, is this a new Suez type situation-type scenario emerging, but that's one important point.

The second was, of course, the challenge of climate change. And you described it very graphically, in terms of a two meter rise in mean sea levels and the implications for this, for all of coastal Asia and all of monsoon Asia. It is a tremendous challenge. And thirdly, and most importantly, and I think, for institutions such as this council, and other bodies and institutions which think about regional issues and international issues, about the Arctic model for the Himalayan fraternity. And as I said, each of these three points widens the parameters of the debate. And I would like to both thank you and congratulate you for this wonderfully animated lecture for our benefit.

I think we have some time for questions. So with your permission, I would now open the floor for discussions and I would request those of you with a question or a comment to be very brief. And to first identify yourself. Yes, Dr. Balakrishnan, Ambassador Balakrishnan, also distinguished scientist, and he heads many programs in one of our sister research institutions.

Dr. Bhaskar Balakrishnan

Excellent, in the Arctic Council, there are six observers who represent the indigenous people. How has their role been in the Arctic council?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Maybe we could take three or four questions.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yes, sure.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes, sir.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yes.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Can we have the mic on?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yeah.

Kanishka Gupta: Strategic Affairs Blogger at Prasar Bharat

Good morning, sir. My name is Kanishka Gupta and I'm a strategic affairs blogger at Prasar Bharat. My question is sir, we already have a security concern in terms of retreating glaciers and melting ice in the Arctic region. So why are China, Russia and U.S. building military installations over there? Because Russia had major exercise called Vostok-18 last year, and there are over 40 icebreakers and nuclear powered submarines and icebreakers also coming up in that area, we already have a security risk in terms of melting ice. So why the military installations there?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes.

Anurag Bisen

Morning, excellency. I had the pleasure -- privilege of meeting you and [inaudible 73:36] u asked that question [inaudible 73:38] in 2017. My name is Anurag Bisen, I represent the National Security Council Secretariat. Sir, my question is, that the last Arctic ministerial was the first time when there was no joint declarations, sir, no Joint Declaration.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland and Chairman of Arctic Circle

Yeah.

Anurag Bisen

Presumably on account of United States not agreeing for insertion of climate change in the declaration, sir. How do you see the spill over of this big power rivalry, impacting the concerns of the smaller Arctic states in the Arctic. Thank you.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

One more. Yes. Dr. Banerjee?

Stuti Banerjee

Thank you, sir. I am doctor Stuti Banerjee, I'm a research fellow with the council. My question is, sir, there is a lot of concern about China's rise and China's involvement in the Arctic. So you have, as you said, I've said in my introduction, been an advocate of environmental concerns with respect to the Arctic. So there is a divide in the Arctic Council countries with some looking at environment as a primary cause, whereas others are going for sovereignty claims and militarization. So I want your comments and what you see as a future of these countries working towards both issues? Thank you.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Well, thank you very much for these excellent questions. And thank you for the compliment on my lecture. I know it's always a challenge to talk about foreign policy in India, because you are one of the few countries that still maintain very strict, tough, intellectual tradition, when talking about foreign affairs. It's much easier to get away with things in some other country. So I thank you for your compliment, because I think the ultimate test for anybody talking about international issues come to India, subject oneself to criticism and comments from the informed Indian audience, I always have admired your intellectual approach. I know it's sometimes make things difficult for the decision makers in the Indian government. But it is one of the charming aspects of the Indian culture.

The role of the indigenous people in the Arctic Council is of historical importance. I think the Arctic Council in the governmental body of eight Arctic state is the only international organization, which has recognized the inherent democratic right of the indigenous people to have a say in the future of the Arctic. Perhaps, primarily, on the basis that these people existed in the Arctic for centuries or even thousands of years before these states existed, the Federation of Russia is relatively young as we know, a few decades old. The United States is a few hundred years old, Canada is even younger. Iceland only became a republic in 1944, Norway some decades before. So we have relatively young states, wanting to tell the indigenous people once you be the future of their own territory.

And to our credit, we have recognized the right of the indigenous people and that's why many indigenous communities in other parts of the world are looking at the Arctic model, as a basis for claiming more shade in their own future. I never forget, 10 years ago, when I was in Bangladesh and was invited by the Minister of the Environment to take a sailing trip to demonstrate how rising sea levels would affect the future of Bangladesh, as we all know. But it turned out that the minister was also a king in his tribe of 4,000 or 400,000 people.

And as we sat there on the boat discussing or witnessing how the sea level would rise in Bangladesh, he started a detailed discussion on the rights of the indigenous people in the Arctic Council, which he knew all about. And he said, he was trying to claim the same right for his tribe or whatever you want to call it or his people within the governmental system of Bangladesh. And I think this is one of the challenges for China, India and other countries in the Himalaya region.

To what extent are you going to empower the indigenous communities up in the Himalayas in the same way as we have done in the Arctic. And I never forget when I visited Hunan in China I went up to the mountains where four of the twelve glaciers have completely disappeared. And the mayor of that community, a very strong woman, started an extensive lecture in the presence of the President of the Chinese Foreign Ministry who were accompanying me complaining about the lack of understanding of the government in Beijing about what's happening to the water system in their region and their village.

So I think you're absolutely right. One of the key questions for you in India, for the other Himalayan countries, as well as for us in the Arctic, is what would be the role of the people who have lived in these territories for hundreds and thousands of years and who will experience the dramatic consequences of change more than we do who live in the capitals of these countries.

The second question on the security concerns, yes, I know there is a lot, I call it to some extent media hype about the security changes in the Arctic. But don't let this get too alarmist about it. I mentioned in my talk that during the cold war, this was one of the most militarized areas in the world. The Americans abolish their base in Iceland. Many of the bases in Greenland was closed. And of course, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the quality of the Russian military presence in the Arctic left a lot to be desired. I wasn't saying was actually becoming rusty, but to some extent, it was.

So for a country like Russia to build-up their capabilities for a territory which is cover seven time zones, seven time zones and is of great economic importance for the future of Russia is understandable. But I have said in the last year or so, we need to get in the Arctic an agreement about what is acceptable build-up of capabilities in the Arctic, otherwise every new step will be a base for scaremongering. Because it is understandable that important countries, whether they are United States up in Alaska or Russia in its Arctic needs to have a certain capabilities. And so far as China is concerned, I don't think there's any evidence yet of Chinese military interest in the Arctic, at least, if anybody here knows of such evidence I would like to hear.

So, so far China has explained primarily a great economic interest in the Arctic and energy interest in the Arctic, shaping interest in the Arctic, and, of course, a predominant scientific interest in the Arctic. But so far, China has not entered the Arctic in any meaningful military sense, neither has Japan or Korea. The -- any military changes we see in the Arctic are on one hand Russia, the other the United States. And quite frankly, so far as the U.S. concerned -- is concerned, we still have to see Congress providing the necessary funds for any meaningful military build-up in the Russian Arctic or even in Greenland, where they clearly want to have an enhanced presence and that's why, for the first time, the state department is opening a consular office in Greenland. Iceland so far have been the only country with a diplomatic presence in Greenland.

Now the U.S. State Department this year opening an office in Greenland. That doesn't mean that this will not change, but so far, I don't think we can say there is a military race or an alarmist military build-up in the Arctic. So I don't think India needs yet to discuss its presence in the Arctic from a military point of view, but it might change who knows, but so far, the evidence is not there.

And you're absolutely correct. The melting of the glaciers is a far greater threat in terms of economic security, information security, even climate security than any military structure that has been build up in the Arctic. And you -- one of the reason I took President of France, President Hollande to this glacier in Iceland is that until you are in front of the glacier, you don't understand the power, the force of what's happening. We took him into the glacier almost, and we left him there alone, so he could listen to the glacier cracking. Because in fact, the melting of the glacier creates a sound, I sometimes call it the music of climate change. And it's a powerful experience to witness with your ears, how climate change is happening, and you realize, and it doesn't matter what military capability you have, the power of this force, whether it's in Greenland, in the Himalayas or elsewhere is so strong, that there is nothing in the military capability of our countries, even the U.S. or Russia they can stop it. The only thing that can stop it is a comprehensive energy transformation everywhere in the world.

The reason why there was not a joint declaration at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting last year was of course the Trump's government does not want to sign any declaration makes climate change a key issue. But it's also very interesting that the Trump administration is the first American administration, which takes an active interest in the Arctic in his first term. Obama with all due respect had no interest in the Arctic in his first term. Hillary was a lonely voice in his government about the importance of the Arctic and she has described to me how almost every official in the state department told

they don't bother, don't bother, the Secretary of the U.S. should concern himself with other issues or herself.

But she became the first Secretary of State to go to a ministerial meeting on the Arctic Council. But of course, the Trump the speech made by Pompeo was transformative. It's just the first speech of its kind, where geopolitical tension has been brought into Arctic ministerial meeting of the scale that he did. And he want the rest of us against China, saying China is not the near Arctic state, basically saying China has no role in this group. And no other Arctic state agreed to that. We had the Arctic Circle Forum in Shanghai the following days. And some of the key representatives of Sweden, Norway, Canada and other countries came straight from the ministerial meeting in Finland to the Arctic Circle Forum in Shanghai.

And nobody agreed with this. And we are now seeing these very once the scientific cooperation called MOSAiC, where 17 countries including China, Korea, Japan, Canada and others, for the first time in human history have a research expedition for 12 months period around the North Pole. We have never been able to collect data, scientific data during the winter months in the North Pole here. This is of historic importance and it will be fascinating to see the scientific result. And the German representative at the forum in Shanghai declared without China's participation it would not have been possible. So you have the other Arctic states saying we would not be able to conduct the necessary results in the Arctic without the involvement of the Asian countries.

So the interesting question will be, if Trump gets re-elected, how will they follow this up? In the U.S. system, the Alaska Defense has been primarily the subject of the Coast Guard, north of Pentagon under Defense Department. This is changing. Now Pentagon is taking an increasing interest. One of the reason why the U.S. is opening an office in Greenland is they will also scale up their military presence in Greenland.

So it is of course possible that in the second Trump term, we will see an escalation of this. If the Democrats win, I think it's a very open question about what's going to happen. But I don't think it will bring in China in a military sense to the Arctic. It will primarily be on the one hand measuring up with what the Russians are doing, but also one has to admit it and be aware of it that increasingly in the U.S., as you know from your dialogue with the U.S. President and the new relationship between India and the United States, not only the Republicans, but also the Democratic leadership have seen the big game in the 21st century being between China and the U.S. rightly or wrongly.

And what the Trump administration has done is to bring the Arctic into this framework of the big game in the 21st century. So as I've said to the Indian ministers yesterday, the day before yesterday, sooner or later, maybe already in your bilateral discussions with the United States, the U.S. will bring the Arctic on to that table. And will ask you about how that reflects on your relationship with China, your relationship with Russia, your relationship with other Asian countries and your relationship with the United States. If the Democrats win the election, it is however, a more -- more open question. I have already mentioned the MOSAiC expedition. If one wish it's the Polar Institute in Seoul in Korea and in Shanghai, it is hugely impressive.

I have said to my friends in the Nordic countries, none of us, although, we are formally Arctic states, whether Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark or Iceland have anything comparable to what the Koreans and the Chinese have in terms of their Polar Institutes, their research vessels and their technology. Korea, two years ago formally approved what they call Korea Polar Vision 2050, they have a 30 years plan on their engagement in the Polar region.

So I often when people want to talk to me about China and the Arctic, move the conversation over to Korea and the Arctic, because I think that is more interesting as a reflection, now this is a much broader global transformation taking place than just China, Russia and the United States. I first experienced this in the second last year of my presidency when I participate, no it was even before. It was I think in 2012 when I visited the World Economic Forum conference in Davos. And I was asked to meet some Korean members of parliament who were representing then newly elected President of Korea.

And I didn't know what they wanted to talk about. I prompted quite strange why, why did they want to meet with me? But it turned out they have been asked by the newly elected President of South Korea to ask me to support Korean membership for observer state in the Arctic Council. While at the same time, the Prime Minister of Singapore was going to visit mostly touring for a meeting with President Obama. And as is the practice, there was a preparatory meeting all official from Singapore, all officials in Washington to prepare their meeting. So at the end of this preparatory meeting, the Singapore official said to the White House officials, said I know of course the Prime Minister wants to talk to the President about the Arctic.

And the Washington White House guys just laughed, they thought it was a joke. So when the meeting started, the first thing was the Prime Minister of Singapore brought up was to ask for support from President Obama for Singapore being an observer state in the Arctic Council. But the guys who had laughed in the White House had consequently not

prepared the President, or even told him this will be on the agenda. So he was completely unprepared.

And I'm telling you these two stories. One, my own experience, the other is Obama experience to illustrate to you how recently this transformation has taken place. And the scale of what has happened since these two meetings took place, is one of the most fascinating evidence of high speed geopolitical transformation taking place in front of our eyes. And India surely, and clearly has to be onboard that train in a massive way.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Thank you. We have time for one more round, if you excellency?

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Sure.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes. There was, there was also a question about balancing the geopolitical, the economic potential?

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yes, I will do that.

Sanjeev Chaturvedi: South Asian University

Your excellency. I'm Sanjeev Chaturvedi from South Asian University. I'm Sanjeev Chaturvedi from South Asian University of New Delhi. It has been a great privilege and great learning experience listening to you. My question relates to what the Arctic social scientist, polar social scientists are calling the Arctic paradox. Given that we are looking at these transformations within the overarching context of what we call Anthropocene, we often also wonder about the continuity in this change, the changing Arctic. And the paradox relates to the fact that, on the one hand, we are looking at the role that fossil fuels have made in global warming. On the other hand, one of the catalysts for the so called scramble in the Arctic also happens to be these U.S. Geological Survey maps and the potentials for oil that we are talking about in the Arctic.

So my question is looking ahead, and looking at all the three poles, which is because the melting of the Antarctic would also lead to a very, very serious consequences. I wonder

whether on the menu of different narratives about the Arctic engagement, should we not be giving importance to ecological narrative, the Anthropocene narrative? And the kind of dilemmas that this Arctic paradox could lead and what kind of diplomacy and science diplomacy would we need to address this Arctic paradox? Thank you.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes, yes.

Himanshu Chaudhary: National Defense College

Good morning. I'm Himanshu Chaudhary from the National Defense College. Given the four key aspects of energy, trade, environment and water security, and in your perspective, so despite your trepidation to comment on anything on to do with internet, India's international relations, where do you think the focus of India's Arctic interest should lay, should and when the train finally starts moving from the station?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes, the lady at the back.

Unidentified Speaker

I'm Shalogna. And we have a think tank on polar issue. We're working for a decade now called Saga. My question is, you have said reiterated that China anxiety is not something that you should worry from. But Iceland, Finland and Sweden, they have this observatory which has come up '17, '18 -- '16, '17, '18; all of them commissioned, one in Iceland as well recently functioning, which has, people have been saying that maybe the NATO airspace is being monitored. And there are -- people who are writing about this, so, I mean, I would like to know what your views are on that?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

That there are observatories, military observatories set-up in space observatories. And are we -- and there's a great deal of major activity.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yeah, sure, sure. You're talking about the observatory in Iceland?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

In Iceland, yes.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yeah.

Athar Zafar: Indian Council of World Affairs

Thank you, sir. I am Dr. Athar Zaffar, Research fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs. And thank you for the wonderful lecture. I think it will be remembered for a long time. My question is related to the membership or observation at the Council. So, what are the basic criterias, the four of the five Asian countries are leading economies also of Asia. And what are the interest you find in Central Asian countries, they are also quite vulnerable. And you rightly referred to the Himalayan region being the Third Pole and Tian Shan mountains, they have the largest number of glaciers online. So, they are also quite vulnerable. So, have they shown any interest in Arctic Council? Thank you.

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Yes, yes, yes sir.

Unidentified Speaker

Thank you very much for your very brilliant lecture. I have two small issues. One issue is that how the release of methane from permafrost is going to be addressed by the Arctic Council, the release of methane?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Methane from permafrost.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Yeah, okay, yeah.

Unidentified Speaker

And the second issue, you showed that what is likely to happen like sea level rise and the floods in Asia and many other countries. Is there any way the economic loss which would

have of this is going to be more or less compared to the economic gain, which we'll have from the energy?

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

Okay. Last question there.

Sanjeev Kumar: ICWA

Thank you, sir. I am Dr. Sanjeev, a researcher from ICWA. Sir, it was a wonderful lecture and I greatly benefited. My question is about China. You very rightly said at that in the current context, there is no military sense as far as Chinese actions are concerned. But here I would like to bring the white paper issued around two years ago by China on Arctic policy. And it very clearly and directly talked about how to advance the Arctic cooperation. And it said that the it should be, it should be advanced through Belt and Road, Belt and Road initiative, that is controversial project as we all are aware. But more importantly, it said that we have to build a community of common destiny for the humankind. They directly linked the Arctic policy with building community of common destiny for the humankind, it is a highly controversial political concept proposed by China. And you very rightly talked about the geopolitical transformation in the region. So through this document, they want to lead the geopolitical transformation, if you could comment, thanks.

And I have also a second question. There was reports about -- you talked about COSCO Shipping Corporation involved in Arctic. The Chinese company reports about U.S. imposing sanctions on COSCO for bringing crude Iranian while, whether it has affected, whether it has any impact on their working in Russian Arctic? Thank you.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Sorry, could you explain the second question a little bit more.

Sanjeev Kumar: ICWA

Last year...

TCA Raghavan: Director General Indian Council of World Affairs

U.S. sanctions on COSCO, because of transporting Indian oil, will this impact?

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson: Former President of Iceland

Okay, well, I must say again, I have talked about the Arctic in many countries. Very rarely do I get such insightful questions as I have had here. So, I have one more testament to what I said before, the ultimate challenge for anybody who wants to be taken seriously on international affairs is to come to India to have a lecture, and see what happens.

So I think all these questions are absolutely critical in terms of the debate and how we move forward and I will try to respond to them very briefly.

First what I forgot, the previous set is this, like [inaudible 101:41] between the environment and economic progress in the Arctic, don't forget that there are four million people who live in the Arctic and they want to be a part of the global economy. They want to have prosperity, livelihood and health service, and interconnectivity like any others.

And it is perfectly reasonable to have economic activity in many parts of the Arctic, which are absolutely no threat to the environment. I'm absolutely sure if you went to Northern Norway, and you talk to the mayors, the business leaders, the scientists or the environmentalists they would not maintain the economic progress in Northern Norway is threatening the environment. On the contrary, they would try to claim that Northern Norway is a good example of how you can live in harmony with the environment as well as having Northern Norway one of the most prosperous Nordic areas that we can encounter.

Similarly, in Greenland, you have a country half the size of Western Europe with 55,000 people. It's very difficult to visualize economic development for Greenland that would in fundamental ways threaten the environment in Greenland I think, in fact, what's happening in the energy economy in India, China, United States and Europe is a greater threat to the environment in Greenland than the economic activity in Greenland so far. But they have been very careful. For example, our Alcoa wanted to build an aluminium smelter in Greenland for a long time. But they've said no, because that smelter would be such a fundamental cause of change in the socio cultural economic structure of the society in Greenland. So they've turned that down. One of the reason why Greenland is perhaps more interested in building hydro power stations and export the entities that are all through cables, to neighbouring countries because that took did not have a similar effect.

Of course, in Russia, and Canada, and Alaska, it is a more crucial question that was raised. Because the mining in these three countries surely also is to some extent a threat or an element in the environmental future, not only of these three countries but also of the entire planet. So we have examples both ways in the Arctic, both ways of communities having economic progress and being able to sustain the environment in a

responsible way. And we also have example, where the story is, regrettably otherwise, but I think in the last five or six years, the awareness of the environmental dimension in Arctic development has been recognized by almost everybody.

You asked about the so called Arctic paradox in terms of what's really happening to the ice, and then the utilization of the oil and so on. And of course, this is one of the interesting questions. It's one of the reason why in total, the French and LNG oil companies that they're not going to be involved in Arctic drilling. It's one of the reason why we have some proper shipping companies saying we are not going to use the northern sea route. So there is clearly a recognition that it's problematic to continue along the oil explorations in the Arctic. But one of the reasons why the Russians and the Chinese claim, I think rightly, that their new pipeline from Siberia down till Shanghai is positive. Is that the case? Natural Gas replacing coal.

So at least for some decades, I think the case can't be made that by increasing the production and access to natural gas from the Russian Arctic, and if you start to close down coal power stations and other more dirtier fuel, there can be a positive contribution, although it's not a perfect solution. But we should not forget either that the Arctic is also the home to vast renewable energy resources. Greenland is probably the last -- the biggest reservoir of hydro power left in the Western world. And with the new technology in ocean cables, you can transport it via the Europe over to the United States. Norway, as you know, is already building cables to Netherlands, Germany, Britain to export hydro power to these countries in order to enable them to deal with peak demands in their energy systems. And one of the reason why Microsoft decided to put its data storage centre in Denmark was the combination of wind power from Denmark and hydro power from Norway through cable that could enable Microsoft to run that largest data centre in Europe for Microsoft, entirely 100% on clean energy.

And the wind patterns in the Arctic, including on my own country, assets that using and building wind power stations is more economical. They don't have to be as high, they have a greater productivity. That's why the Faroe Islands that will soon become 100% clean energy because of the success of their wind power. So it is a complicated picture and it is misleading to think as sometimes it is presented that the Arctic energy question is simply about oil today. It is -- that's why it's better, it's interesting. That's why the LNG export from Yamal Nenets is interesting. That's why this pipeline is interesting. That's why the offer by Putin to Prime Minister Modi is interesting. And also, why Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Faroe Islands could become a clean energy powerhouse for Europe through a new network of ocean cables. So I often say the Arctic is also a big part of the

renewable energy future and the responsible transition from coal over to natural gas over to renewable energy in the coming years.

What should be India's priority in terms of Arctic interest? Well, first of all, I would say to meaningfully live up to your status as an offshore country in the Arctic Council. That means giving priority -- a new level of priority to Arctic policymaking not just in terms of science, but in terms of diplomacy, energy, economic activity and other areas. You already have a seat at the table, I know it's a limited sheet, but it's a sheet you share with France, Germany, United Kingdom, China, Japan, Korea, and other countries. And since you were accepted, the role of observer states has evolved in a more enhanced way. But of course, since the energy offer from Russia is on the table, the most immediate question is does India wants to be a part of the Arctic energy future? That is a question which has already been brought to your prime minister. And you can already examine the case of Europe and the case of China in order to enable you to answer the question. I would say the third priority is to examine looking at what other Asian countries are doing. What would be the role of Asia, not overall India vis-à-vis the other Asian countries with respect to the Arctic, because in fact what China, Japan and Korea doing is bigger, more extensive, more active than any of us expected.

And as somebody mentioned, the new China Arctic policy is good evidence of that. It's probably the most sophisticated Arctic policy put forward by any country in recent years. I must admit, I don't know if India has a similar document, but it might be an interesting exercise for India to go through that exercise, giving your intellectual knowledge based traditional foreign policymaking. But then you also need to look at the resources and your economic presence in the Arctic. There is a Malaysian diploma -- Malaysian businessman, Vincent Tan, which bought the largest hotel chain in Iceland last year. He has now put on the table a plan for a new hotel in the capital of Greenland. He wants to build hotel chains across the Arctic because he wants to get the part of the profit of the growing Asian tourism to the Arctic.

I mentioned before, access to mining in not only Greenland, but other parts you have to make, and your big companies have to make a strategic decision, where are you going to secure your access to rare metals or mineral in the 21st century? Are you going to do it completely outside the Arctic or are some territories in the Arctic going to be part of your resource plan? And that's a very serious question. That's one of the reason why gold mining in Greenland will probably be very prosperous, because all of the big IT companies in the world require gold for their production. And they are getting a bit tired of having to deal with unstable African countries as a provider of these resources. And then of course, comes the evolution of global shipping. Of course, geographically, India is

differently placed than China, Korea and Japan in that respect. I listened to an India representative at the Arctic -- one of the Arctic Circle assemblies few years ago where he presented a very interesting notion of planning sea routes from India and Asia and to the Arab Gulf, and then putting the cargo on land in the Iran. And then transporting them on trains through Iran, to Europe, Russia, and then across the Atlantic to America. The plan was a fascinating vision. The only problem is the political position of Iran in that plan. But I've mentioned it here as an evidence that now major countries are looking at new transport lines. And whatever you think about the Belt and Road or the so called Polar Silk Road.

If you are in the Chinese leadership, and you face the prospect that you're going to be the major economy in the world in the 21st century, you want to have highly modern transport system. You want modern railways, you want modern harbours, you also want a modern IT communication. In the same way as the British, and the Americans and the French wanted the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal for their economic development in previous times. It is absolutely understandable that a major trading country like China wants to have a modern infrastructure for transport, IT communication, the railways, whether they are fast speed trains or whatever. We now have trains producing -- transporting cargo from China to the Netherlands, to the ends to Europe.

And they started with I think two trips a week. They are now 25 times a week, which shows the level of increment of the level of the amount of cargo. So India, in one way or another also has to answer the question, what kind of modern infrastructure are you going to use in the 21st century for your economic interaction with Europe, Asia, other parts of the world.

And whatever we say about the political strategic nature of the Belt and Road, on the one hand it's an understandable proposal. The difficulty is that it is still so vague that is difficult to actually conclude what it means. So when they added Polar Silk Road to this notion in the policy document that you mentioned, the China Arctic Policy, which you all should read, because it's a fascinating evidence of their sophisticated thinking about the Arctic.

All of us asked the question, what does this mean to add the Polar Silk Road to general Belt and Road notion, because it didn't exist when President Xi Jinping first launched this. But what I'm simply saying is, whether it is China, Russia or some of your neighbours are now in the process of planning out a new communication infrastructure between Asia and Europe, and other parts of the world and India, has to make up it's mind in what way you are going to be part of it.

The role of the Arctic Council has of course evolved, but it is still limited in the sense to scientific environmental issues. Military issues are not on the table. Political issues are not on the table. Compelled speech was with the exception of a geopolitical speeches by Arctic ministers, foreign ministers at the Ministerial Meeting.

So that is why the Arctic Circle has fulfilled important function. Because we can talk about all these aspect, whether they are strategy, economic, environmental, geopolitical or whatever. And also because we have organized at the Arctic Circle assemblies what we call country sessions. It means that countries like France, Germany, United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Switzerland and others have come to the Arctic Circle assembly and presented their case, their policies, their project, their plans, and then accepted to be questioned by the participants on this. And I find it remarkable as an observer, professional international issues that China, Korea, Russia, U.S. and others have accepted to turn up formally of the Arctic Circle assemblies and then take question from anybody in the audience.

And in that way, we provide the functional accountability in this evolution, because they all now know that every year in October, they will be examined by this vast audience of over 2,000 people, from probably the most active constituency on the Arctic affairs.

And that is what India needs to do also. In order to maintain the reputation among the active Arctic community, that you are a player, if I may say so. You simply don't have a chair among the observers that aren't the Arctic council. You're also a player in the wider sense of the world. That was why it was interesting why Korea came to us on the Arctic Circle Secretariat from years ago and said, we want to give a party on the final night and we want to invite everybody to this party. We haven't thought about that but we said yes, because it was a fascinating way for them to signal we are part of your family. We want to have a song and dance and then invite you to a party. And then, Japan came and said, we also want to give a party next year, and then China came, and so on.

So maybe India, could have a party to work. So formal offer, I'm not joking. If the Indian Foreign Ministry and the others ambassadors, you are for the taking, want to organize an India night. Bring some food and Indian dancing song. It would be a very sophisticated way to India, even if you don't bring the Foreign Minister to say, hey guys, we are here also. So take it seriously for me. You can organize a party at the Arctic Circle either this year or next year.

So part of the Arctic involvement is this -- are these other platforms. And Arctic Circle is not the only one. This is the biggest, the most dynamic one, but there are others as well. So that is important to understand. It's not just the territory for inter-governmental

activity. It's a territory where almost anybody who wants to be a participant can actually be a participant.

Regarding Permafrost, it is a very good part. It is one of the perhaps neglected areas in this cooperation, both in terms of scientific. We have often discussed it in the Arctic Circle Secretariat, how we could perhaps help to further add international scientific dialogue on the Permafrost, because in all this spectrum of climate change some of the impact of the future of the planning, this is one of the neglected areas. So you are absolutely correct.

How the U.S. sanctions will affect all of this, well the interesting thing is, if I was a leader of the United States, I would worry about this. The world even Europe, Western Europe increasingly is not listening to what you all are saying. When the Chinese decided to establish the Asian infrastructure investment plan, Obama opposed it very strongly. I think Australia maybe a few other countries were the only countries that's listed, I don't know about India. I don't know (Multiple Speakers)

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely yes. And my own country France, Germany, Britain and others. So now, there is not role. Trump be saying the same thing, don't be a part of the Belt and Road. So let's remember, Trump is not the first one to say don't work with China, Obama was the first one. And most of you simply slumped our shoulders as they saw war. And then Trump came along and said, Belt and Road, don't work. The fact of the matter is four or five or six NATO countries are already formally part of the Belt and Road.

Even Luxembourg is my favourite example, formally joined Belt and Road last year. Luxembourg is a founding member of NATO. Founding member of European Union. Key country in the financial structure of the European Union. I don't think France or German or even the U.S. tried in any significant way to prevent them from being member of the Belt and Road. Italy, of course is a member of the Belt and Road. Even the Norwegian representative at the Arctic Circle, simply at Shanghai said, Norway we are perhaps not formally be a member of the Belt and Road, but we will examine individual project. But the Belt and Road simply consist of individual projects. So that was on all the way to say, Norway will be a part of it.

So, I don't really know what effect American decision on this, with all due respect to both Obama and President Trump will have. When Vice President Pence came to Iceland last year, he had two messages and that is correct, he only had two messages. One was to warn us against China in the Arctic. And the other one was to warn us against the OHI, the 5G telecommunication company. My response to that was the following, there are two

countries, that are actively formally working with China on the Arctic, Korea and Japan. They asked them to be your key allies in Asia. Have you said this to them? Of course, they have not. Of course they have not. And the other one on the telecommunication company and the 5G was to point out that the telecommunication company in Iceland that is actively working with OHI on 5G happens to be owned by an American investment firm. So I said, you should talk about this back home to the owners instead of coming all the way to Iceland. Currently, we don't own that company. That is owned by you guys, Pt Capital in Alaska.

So, what we wish now is a lot of sound and dance in the diplomatic community, but the reality is different. The reality is different. And quite frankly I think the U.S. has some tough thinking to do, in order to make up it's mind how they are going to be affected. But don't let us forget that although China and Russia are working now arm and arm on the energy and many of this issues, there is no long-term guarantee that they will continue to be partner.

There is this famous story when Kosygin went to Vietnam, to attend the funeral of Ho Chi Minh and he stopped in between on the way back for a meeting, wish you a luck. And Kosygin of course in a very polite diplomatic way talked about the great partnership between Russia and China. As you analyze it, yes, but it will take at least 1,000 years to bring out whether that is a solid partnership or not. Kosygin of course has taken aback by that statement, he said, no, no, no, no it's not going to take that long. As you analyze it, yeah maybe it will take 900 years. So, let us be aware that there is no guarantee that the picture we have describe here today is going to be permanent. What is clear however, is for the first time in human history, we are witnessing the new geopolitical importance of the Arctic on the one hand and the Himalaya on 127.05 on the other. And it's up to all of us to construct the framework and the rules of engagement to make that cooperation successful.

TCA Raghavan

Thank you. Thank you very much, you Excellency. Thank you both for your brilliant lecture and also for the patience with which you have addressed all these questions. We could have gone on but there is - we are going to talk about Arctic for the rest of the day and the seminar will follow and I do hope your Excellency you will be here, so that I am - because I am sure many of those present here would be very keen to engage further with you.
