

THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE'S CHINA SERIES 2020

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EDITED BY SANNA KOPRA



THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE
CENTER FOR CIRCUMPOLAR SECURITY STUDIES



ABOUT THE SERIES

China's Arctic engagement has increased considerably during the past decade, which has not only offered plentiful economic opportunities but also created new risks and concerns among the eight Arctic states, non-state actors, and peoples.

To increase understanding of dimensions of Beijing's Arctic activities, The Arctic Institute's China series probes into China's evolving Arctic interests, policies, and strategies, and analyses their ramifications for the region (and beyond).

In Spring 2020, The Arctic Institute published numerous articles and commentaries elaborating on the political, economic, environmental, and social dimensions of China's Arctic involvement. Here, we have reprinted eight articles together in one edited volume.



ABOUT THE EDITOR



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Sanna's book *China and Great Power Responsibility for Climate Change* was published by Routledge in August 2018. She has published a number of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and commentaries on China, great power responsibility, climate policy, and the Arctic. She is also a co-editor of *Chinese Policy and Presence in the Arctic* (Brill Publishing, 2020).

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Established in 2011, The Arctic Institute is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, D.C with a network of researchers across the world. We envision a world in which the diverse and complex issues facing Arctic security are identified, understood, and innovatively resolved. Rigorous, qualitative, and comprehensive research is the Institute's core for developing solutions to challenges and injustices in the circumpolar north.



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INTRODUCTION

CHINA'S ARCTIC POLICY

IN BRIEF



BY SANNA KOPRA

China's Arctic involvement began in the field of science. China signed the Svalbard Treaty in 1925, and since the early 1990s, Chinese scholars have conducted Arctic and Antarctic expeditions aboard research icebreaker *Xue Long*. Today, China has research stations on Svalbard (Yellow River Station, est. 2004) and Iceland (the China-Iceland Arctic Science Observatory, est. 2018). In Sweden, China has its first overseas land satellite receiving station (the China Remote Sensing Satellite North Polar Ground Station, est. 2016), and with Finland, it has agreed to establish a joint research center for Arctic space observation and data sharing services. China's first home-built icebreaker, *Xue Long II*, was finished in 2019, and plans for building a nuclear-powered icebreaker have been unveiled.¹

In January 2018, China published its first-ever official Arctic White Paper, which defines China's policy goals in the region as follows: "To understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic".² The White Paper underlines that the Chinese government respects the sovereign rights of the eight Arctic states in the region. At the same time, it portrays the Arctic as a globally shared space, a "community with a shared future for mankind". Notably, the White Paper defines China as a "near-Arctic state" which has legitimate rights in the region – and argues that Arctic states should respect these rights, including the right to conduct scientific research, navigate, perform flyovers, fish, lay submarine cables and pipelines, and even explore and exploit natural resources in the Arctic high seas.

In geographic terms, of course, China is located far from the Arctic region: its northernmost tip is located almost 1500 kilometers south from the Arctic Circle. As China has no history of extensive Arctic scientific expeditions either, it had to undertake serious efforts over the past decade to convince the eight Arctic states of its status as a legitimate stakeholder in the region – without such recognition, they would not have granted China an observer status in the key regional intergovernmental organization, the Arctic Council, in 2013. In other words, as Marc Lanteigne's article explains, China had to build a "robust Arctic identity". Labelling itself a "near-Arctic state" plays an important role in those efforts even though the conception has also

PHOTO CREDIT: Chinese scholars conduct Arctic and Antarctic expeditions aboard research icebreaker *Xue Long*. Photo: [Bahnfrend](#)

¹ Nilsen, Thomas (2019). "Details of China's Nuclear Powered Icebreaker Revealed." *The Barents Observer*. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2019/03/details-chinas-nuclear-powered-icebreaker-revealed>

² (2018). *China's Arctic Policy*. The State Council The People's Republic of China. http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm

faced criticism among the Arctic states and stakeholders. What is more, China has developed bilateral ties and engaged in multidimensional Arctic diplomacy to build relationships with various state and non-state actors in the region. According to Lanteigne, relational theory, a recent addition to International Relations theory drawing from Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions, can help us understand China's activities and identity-building process in the Arctic.³

When it comes to regional governance in the Arctic, China's role remains rather limited. Since 2007, it has taken part in the work of the Arctic Council, and in 2013, it was accepted as a formal observer to the Council. China is also a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and supports the IMO's International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code). Although China did not play a very influential role drafting the Code, Trym Eiterjord's article finds that Chinese experts welcome the Polar Code as a binding international law instrument that, in many ways, supports Beijing's globalist vision of the Arctic. In 2018, China also joined the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.

CHINA'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE ARCTIC

In June 2017, the Arctic was incorporated into President Xi Jinping's flagship Belt and Road Initiative as one of the "blue economic passages".⁴ China has also renamed Arctic shipping lanes as the "Polar Silk Road". As the Northern Sea Route along the Russian Arctic coast constitutes the most viable alternative of these lanes, Chinese investors have begun to cooperate with Russian companies.⁵ In addition to shipping, Sino-Russian cooperation on energy has increased significantly, especially in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, despite their historic mistrust. In particular, the Chinese involvement in the LNG project in Yamal has been decisive. As Christopher Weidacher Hsiung's commentary points out, this remarkable change in the Sino-Russian economic relations raises a question: Are we witnessing an emerging Arctic *economic partnership* between the two countries? Despite their growing cooperation, however, Sino-Russian relations remain very complicated. Mariia Kobzeva's commentary scrutinizes this complexity from various angles: historic, bilateral, and territorial.

Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, constitutes another Arctic region where China's economic involvement has significantly increased. Marco Volpe's article elaborates the role of Chinese investments in two mining projects in Greenland. As he demonstrates, there have been impediments in the process despite mutual interest in developing the mine sector. In addition to economic, social, and environmental impacts locally, China's growing engagement with Greenland may have broader political ramifications given Greenland's relevance for the United States' global policy. Moreover, Chinese investments may also give boost to Greenland's independence movement.

³ Qin, Y. (2018). *A relational theory of world politics*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Xinhua. (2017). Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/20/c_136380414.htm

⁵ Humpert, M. (2013). The future of Arctic shipping: A new silk road for China. *The Arctic Institute*, 20.

In other Arctic states and regions, Chinese investors are involved in many energy and infrastructure projects, among other economic activities.⁶ Chinese investors are also contributing to plans to construct the Arctic Corridor, a new railway link between Kirkenes, Norway, and Rovaniemi, Finland, as well as a tunnel under the Baltic Sea between Helsinki and Tallinn. If realized, these infrastructure projects would link China's Polar Silk Road to Eastern and Central European markets.

China and Arctic Climate Change

As China is the biggest carbon dioxide emitter in the world, its success (or failure) to reduce emissions is a critical factor determining the future of the Arctic. For the time being, regrettably, China's 2030 Paris Agreement Nationally Determined Contribution⁷ is rated "highly insufficient" to prevent dangerous climate change from happening.⁸ China's Arctic strategy does not introduce additional measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, nor has the state assessed its broader environmental footprint on the Arctic region.

What has drawn less attention in the Arctic policy debates is that China is also a large source of black carbon (soot) and other short-lived climate pollutants. Yet China has not taken an active part in international cooperation on black carbon. An important reason for this is, as Yulia Yamineva's commentary illustrates, is the lack of knowledge of sources, impacts, and potential mitigation measures of black carbon in China. As black carbon contributes to air pollution, which is a huge problem in China, there are undoubtedly domestic incentives to reduce it there.⁹ Since the global community also benefits from China's efforts to reduce black carbon, global cooperation should be increased in this field. According to Yamineva, there is plenty of room for international cooperation in science, such as black carbon emissions monitoring and inventories, as well as knowledge sharing about possible solutions.

Risks and the Future Prospects of China's Arctic Engagement

It seems that traditional security issues are making a comeback in Arctic affairs, especially due to the intensifying great power competition between the United States and Russia¹⁰ as well as the ongoing power transition between the United States and China.¹¹ From the perspective of the United States, as Yun Sun's commentary and Jacquelyn Chorush's article make clear, China's growing Arctic role is largely perceived as a military threat. In May 2019, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explicitly challenged¹² the regional role and intentions of China and Russia in the Arctic, and the Department of Defense warned about potential dual use of Chinese

⁶ Chun, Zhang (2020). "China's 'Arctic Silk Road' Projects." *China Dialogue Ocean*. <https://chinadiologueocean.net/12569-chinas-arctic-silk-road-projects/>

⁷ (2015). China's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution: *Enhanced Actions on Climate Change*. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/China%20First/China's%20First%20NDC%20Submission.pdf>

⁸ (2020). China: Country Summary. *Climate Action Tracker*. <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/china/>

⁹ Yang, Y. (2016). China's 'airpocalypse' hits half a billion people. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/46cbacea-c669-11e6-8f29-9445cac8966f>

¹⁰ Cooper, H. (2019). Military drills in arctic aim to counter Russia, but the first mission is to battle the cold. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/12/world/europe/global-warming-russia-arctic-usa.html>

¹¹ (2019). "Is a U.S. – China Power Transition Inevitable?" *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/is-a-us-china-power-transition-inevitable/>

¹² Pompeo, M. (2019). "Looking North: Sharpening America's Arctic Focus." Speech Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Rovaniemi, Finland. *U.S. Department of State*. <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>.

facilities in the region.¹³ US Senate bill 1790 also clearly reflects these threat perceptions about China.¹⁴ Chorush's article reviews the historic origins of US Monroe Doctrine and analyses the ways in which it continues to shape the contemporary narrative of the Arctic among US leadership – a narrative that anticipates a military conflict in any arena in which China is involved.

Due to the above-mentioned economic possibilities that China's growing Arctic interest offers to Arctic states and regions, Sun points out in her commentary that many Arctic states do not share the same threat perceptions about China's growing regional influence with the United States. That said, there are signs that many Arctic states are increasingly concerned about security implications of China's growing Arctic engagement. For example, the Swedish Defense Agency, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service, and the Norwegian Foreign Intelligence Services, among others, have expressed concerns regarding potential dual-use of Chinese Arctic facilities and the party-state's growing influence in those countries. In contrast to the US, which according to Chorush's article fears a "fully kinetic" Chinese threat in the Arctic, other Arctic states seem to be more worried about political and economic risks that may accompany Chinese investments in the region.¹⁵

As Sun notes, it is not "legal, sensible or feasible" to prevent China from taking part in Arctic affairs. Undoubtedly, China has come to the Arctic to stay, like or not.¹⁶ At present, China's influence in the region is largely based on its economic prowess. Yet it is likely that China wants its voice to be better heard in Arctic policy debates as well. If it is not accepted in international meetings discussing the Arctic, there is a risk that China will establish its own Arctic club – a fact that motivated Norway to accept China's application for Arctic Council observer status some years ago.¹⁷ What's more, some of the pressing problems in the Arctic – especially climate change – cannot be solved without China's contribution. That is why it is easy to agree with Chorush's point that the contemporary US threat narrative based on the centuries-old Monroe Doctrine fails to grasp multiple dimensions of China's Arctic engagement, including its true security implications. To mitigate those risks, international cooperation is an absolute necessity.

The articles of The Arctic Institute's China series do their bit in facilitating such cooperation by increasing understanding of the political, economic, and environmental dimensions of China's Arctic engagement. Together, the articles in this edited volume offer a comprehensive account of China's policies and interests in the Arctic – highly recommended reading if we are to enhance international cooperation and secure a resilient future in the region.

¹³ US Department of Defense. (2019). Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2019. https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf

¹⁴ S.1790 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020

¹⁵ Kopra, S. (2019). "China in the Polar 'Zone of Peace.'" *Echo-Wall*. <https://www.echo-wall.eu/knowledge-gaps/china-polar-zone-peace>

¹⁶ Stephen, K. (2019). "New Report: China is in the Arctic to Stay." *High North News*. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/new-report-china-arctic-stay>

¹⁷ Brugard, M. (2013). "Norway Says Yes to china in Arctic Council." *Barents Observer*. <https://barentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2013/01/norway-says-yes-china-arctic-council-22-01>



IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IN CHINA'S ARCTIC DIPLOMACY

BY MARC LANTEIGNE

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In 2013, the Arctic Council agreed to admit six new states as formal observers, with five of them, including China, being from the Asia-Pacific region, (these are India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea; Italy was the sixth).¹⁸ This decision can be viewed as a watershed for regional diplomacy, both because it underscored the fact that Arctic affairs were in the process of becoming steadily more globalized in scope, and that the admission of Asian governments as observers, including countries far from the Arctic Circle such as India and Singapore, has brought forward the question of how best to define

an 'Arctic stakeholder'.¹⁹ Unlike previous observers welcomed by the Council, including Britain, Germany, Netherlands and Poland, the five Asia-Pacific observers lacked an extensive history of far northern exploration and scientific endeavors. Thus, the quintet sought to accentuate other assets which could be brought to the Council's expanding portfolio including modern scientific diplomacy as well as the potential for Arctic economic engagement.

The need to create an acceptable Arctic identity was arguably most pressing for China, given its status as a great power and early concerns expressed by other actors, particularly the United States, that Beijing was seeking a revisionist agenda in the region, especially at a time when the Arctic was seen as a resource bonanza-in-waiting.²⁰ Increasing concerns was the timing of China's admittance as a Council observer, which coincided with rising tensions between Beijing and Washington over the South China Sea, as critics often attempted to loop together that waterway and the Arctic Ocean as simply facets of the same policy of Chinese strategic assertiveness. While the acceptance of China as an observer could be considered a validation of the country's emerging Arctic interests, at the same time it placed Beijing under a metaphorical microscope, prompting the Chinese government to adopt a conservative approach to regional diplomacy.

Navigating as a 'Near-Arctic State'

PHOTO CREDIT: China's icebreaker Xuelong docked in Shanghai, June 2015. Photo: Marc Lanteigne

¹⁸ Myers SL (2013), Arctic Council Adds 6 Nations as Observer States, Including China, *New York Times* 15 May

¹⁹ Lanteigne M (2018), How to Define an Arctic Stakeholder, *Over the Circle*, 19 February, <<https://overthecircle.com/2018/02/19/how-to-define-an-arctic-stakeholder/>>

²⁰ Arsenault C (2010), 'A Scramble for the Arctic. *Al-Jazeera*, 8 December
<<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2010/11/20101130181427770987.html>>

Central to the success of China's emerging Arctic policies was the need to be accepted as a legitimate stakeholder in the region without being viewed as pursuing a dissenting agenda and risking being marginalized in a region which Beijing had recognized as one of emerging strategic importance. Therefore, China was required to build a robust Arctic identity over the past decade, and despite more overt pushback²¹ from the United States since last year, Beijing has been largely successful in achieving this goal. To understand why, it is necessary to look closely at the building blocks of the country's current Arctic identity, especially since Beijing was able to develop key bilateral and multilateral relationships in the region to fortify the perception of it becoming an indispensable partner in the development of the Arctic.

One example of the difficulties Beijing faced in developing its Arctic identity was the negative reaction in some international policymaking circles towards China's self-identification, starting almost a decade ago, as a 'near-Arctic state' (*jin beiji guojia* 近北极国家). From a geographic viewpoint, the label made little sense. China has no territory in or near the Arctic; the county of Mohe (漠河县), which despite being the northernmost point in the country and renowned for its sub-zero winters, is located over 1400 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle. Nonetheless, the use of the term began to appear in both Chinese policy statements and research commentaries shortly before China achieved Arctic Council observer status, and then was a feature in the country's six-point statement²² on the Arctic produced in 2015, and within China's first government White Paper on Arctic policy,²³ released three years later, which also confirmed that the Arctic was to be linked with Beijing's greater 'Belt and Road' trade and infrastructure strategies. The 'near-Arctic' concept was also explained in an official Blue Book on Chinese Arctic affairs, published in 2018,²⁴ which suggested that in addition to China's relative proximity to the Arctic, the country's economic weight, and the connections between Arctic climate change and its changed weather and pollution conditions within China, were also components of that descriptor.²⁵

However, the term has at times been denigrated outside of China, including last year by the US government, for implying that Beijing was seeking to challenge the sovereignty of Arctic states and institutions.²⁶ China has been actively seeking to dispel such concerns, given that much of its Arctic policy is heavily dependent upon the goodwill of the Arctic states themselves, especially Russia, which is the centerpiece for future development of an 'Ice Silk Road' (*Bingshang Sichouzhilu* 冰上丝绸之路), which would connect China to markets in Northern Europe, and potentially elsewhere in the Arctic Ocean, via the Russian Arctic.²⁷

²¹ Lino MR (2020) Understanding China's Arctic activities. *IJSS*, 25 February, <https://www.ijss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/02/china-arctic>

²² MFA China (2015) Keynote Speech by Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming at the China Country Session of the Third Arctic Circle Assembly. 17 October, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1306858.shtml

²³ State Council Information Office, PRC (2018), Full text: China's Arctic Policy, 26 January, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/32618/Document/1618217/1618217.htm>

²⁴ Liu H, Dong Y, Sun K and Chen Y (2018) 北极地区发展报告(2018版2017)/北极蓝皮书 [Arctic Development Report (2018 Edition 2017 / Arctic Blue Book)] Beijing, Social Science Academic Press.

²⁵ Chen H, Liu N and Zhang Z, (2013) Severe Winter Weather as a Response to the Lowest Arctic Sea-Ice Anomalies *Acta Oceanologica Sinica* 32(10)(October): 11-15; Zhu Z, Fei H and Xiao X (2019) Predictability of Chinese Summer Extreme Rainfall Based on Arctic Sea Ice and Tropical Sea Surface Temperature *Journal of Ocean University of China* 18(3)(June): 626-32.

²⁶ Wong A (2019) US Rebukes China's Claim to be a 'Near-Arctic State', *Inkstone*, 7 May, <<https://www.inkstonenews.com/politics/mike-pompeo-says-chinas-arctic-claims-should-get-it-exactly-nothing/article/3009169>>

²⁷ Guan X, Yang B and Liu M (2019), "冰上丝绸之路"与中俄参与全球经济治理的新探索[The Polar Silk Road and New Exploration of Sino-Russia Cooperation in the Global Governance,] *Journal of Northeast Asia Studies* 3: 30-42; Lanteigne M (2020) The Twists and Turns of the Polar Silk Road, *Over the Circle*, 15 March, <https://overthecircle.com/2020/03/15/the-twists-and-turns-of-the-polar-silk-road/>

Faced with both a considerable degree of international scrutiny and a sensitivity to being viewed as an illegitimate Arctic actor, Beijing has undertaken a multifaceted approach to developing its Arctic diplomacy, which has included a heavy focus on regional scientific cooperation, economic engagement, and institution-building via bilateral and multilateral engagement as well as using both governmental and ‘Track II’ (sub-governmental) organizations.²⁸ This protean, ‘all-around’ approach, which has focused specifically on relationship building and strengthening, has provided China the opportunity to both deepen its diplomatic footprint in the region and accumulate necessary information on the subjects of regional politics, governance, development, and security perceptions while, until recently, avoiding a blowback situation from Arctic governments.

Relationships Matter

A recent addition to international relations (IR) studies in China has been in the field of relational theory, which seeks to understand the importance of, and the potential power derived by, select relationships in the international system using Chinese historical and philosophical traditions.²⁹ As this theory explains, global actors exist within a network of relationships which could and should be studied specifically along with the processes they create. These interactions, relational theory suggests, can also create and shape power in the information system, including through the development of prestige or ‘face’ (*mianzi* 面子) amongst various actors. Unlike Western materialist approaches to IR theory, including various schools of realism and liberalism, relational theory tends to focus less on the actors themselves, with a preference for examinations of the linkages they produce. This approach is useful in understanding how Beijing has been able to develop both its Arctic interests and a distinct Arctic identity despite the challenges posed by both geography and history.

On one level, China has sought to develop bilateral Arctic partnerships with regional governments over the past decade, although its success rate has been mixed at best when looking at each of the eight Arctic states. By far the strongest of these ties has been with Russia, as the Ice Silk Road slowly but steadily develops based on energy partnerships and the promise of future infrastructure projects.³⁰ Beijing has also developed strong relations with Finland and Iceland in recent years, with the latter country signing a free trade agreement with China in 2013. Free trade talks are also, sporadically, underway between China and Norway after a six-year diplomatic freeze ended in December 2016.³¹

China’s bilateral Arctic ties are less evident in the cases of Canada and Sweden. Chinese relations with Ottawa deteriorated in late 2018 after Canadian authorities arrested a senior executive with the Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei at the behest of the United States,

²⁸ Bertelsen RG, Li X and Gregersen MH, (2017) Chinese Arctic Science Diplomacy: an Instrument for Achieving the Chinese Dream? in *Global Challenges in the Arctic Region: Sovereignty, Environment and Geopolitical Balance*, ed. Elena Conde and Sara Iglesias Sánchez (New York and London: Routledge, 442-61.

²⁹ Qin Y (2016) A Relational Theory of World Politics *International Studies Review* 18: 33-47; Kavalski E (2018) *Guanxi* or What is the Chinese for Relational Theory of World Politics *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 18: 397-420.

³⁰ Tsafos N (2019) Is Russia Winning the Race to Develop Arctic Energy? *Cenrer for Strategic and International Studies*, 22 March, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-winning-race-develop-arctic-energy>

³¹ Klesty V and Solsvik T (2020) Norway Hopes for China Free-Trade Deal in 2020, Industry Minister Says, *Reuters*, 8 January, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-china-trade/norway-hopes-for-china-free-trade-deal-in-2020-industry-minister-says-idUSKBN1Z71FP>

and Sino-Swedish ties have become brittle over human rights policies and the recent Chinese sentencing of a Hong Kong-based Swedish bookseller.³² Chinese relations with Denmark have also faced headwinds over the past few years, due to Danish concerns about Chinese interests in pursuing investments in Greenland, developments which Copenhagen is beginning to view as representing a potential security risk.³³ Finally, as previously noted, the Arctic is one of the many areas where US-China relations have frequently clashed of late.

However, to understand the current state of Chinese diplomacy in the Arctic, an examination of Beijing's multilateral diplomacy in the region is essential and provides much additional insight into the country's effective use of relationship building. For example, China has sought to be an active participant in the Arctic Council despite its limiting observer status, or as one academic paper from the Ocean University in Qingdao colorfully phrased it, 'dancing in shackles'.³⁴ China's most recent activity report to the Council, covering 2016-8, noted that Chinese representatives were active in several of the organization's Working Groups, including those overseeing climate change monitoring and marine environmental protection.³⁵

Despite ongoing US government criticism of China's alleged challenge to the 'rules-based order' of the Arctic, Beijing has sought to support governance regimes relevant to the Arctic, including older agreements such as the Spitsbergen Treaty, (which China joined in 1925),³⁶ and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).³⁷ As China's 2018 Arctic White Paper indicated, the country would 'participate in regulating and managing the affairs and activities relating to the Arctic on the basis of rules and mechanisms.' China was also active in the drawing up and implementation of two more contemporary regional agreements, specifically the 2017 Polar Code, via the International Maritime Organization, and the 2018 ban on unregulated high seas fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean.³⁸ Beijing's support for the fishing moratorium, as one commentary argued, served to underscore Chinese support for a strong legal framework in the Arctic while also allowing China greater visibility in emerging regional legal debates, despite the country's limitations within the Arctic Council.³⁹

China, like many other non-Arctic states with broadening concerns in the far north, has also engaged extensively with Track II mechanisms both as a means for further information collection and to further deepen relations with sub- and non-governmental actors. Chinese governmental, scientific, and academic representatives have been frequent participants in Arctic Circle

³² Milne R (2020) Swedish Cities Cut China Links after Increase in Tension, *Financial Times*, 25 February <<https://www.ft.com/content/b6c8d510-429e-11ea-a43a-c4b328d9061c>>

³³ Shi M and Lanteigne M (2019) China's Central Role in Denmark's Arctic Security Policies, *The Diplomat* 8 December, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/chinas-central-role-in-denmarks-arctic-security-policies/>

³⁴ Liu H and Sun S (2016) 中国与北极：合作与共赢之路, [China and Arctic: To Create a Cooperative and Win-win Situation], *Journal of Ocean University of China (Social Sciences)* 2: 1-7.

³⁵ Arctic Council (2018) China Working Report, 31 May, https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2251/CHINA_2018-05_Review-Report.pdf

³⁶ Qin T, (2015) Dispute over the Applicable Scope of the Svalbard Treaty: A Chinese Lawyer's Perspective *Journal of East Asia and International Law* 8(1)(May): 149-70.

³⁷ Zhang C (2017) '北极海域的大陆架划界问题——法律争议与中国对策,' [‘Delimitation of the Continental Shelf in Arctic Seas: Legal Disputes and China's Policy’] *Global Review* 3: 116-34.

³⁸ Yuan X and Tong K (2019) 《极地水域船舶作业国际规则》的法律属性析论 [Analysis of Legal Attributes of the “International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters”] *Chinese Journal of Polar Research* 31(3)(September): 334-45.

³⁹ Liu N (2018) How Has China Shaped Arctic Fisheries Governance? *The Diplomat* (20 June) <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/how-has-china-shaped-arctic-fisheries-governance/>

(Reykjavík) and Arctic Frontiers (Tromsø) conferences, as well as within the Russia-sponsored Arctic: Territory of Dialogue events. Shanghai hosted an Arctic Circle breakout forum in May last year, which provided China with further opportunities to demonstrate its research and business prowess in the region. In an announcement last year, Beijing also sought to develop its own Track II conferences via the China-Nordic Arctic Research Centre (CNARC) created in 2013, as well as via a similar forum, which reportedly will connect Chinese and Russian scientific expertise.

China as an Arctic Pathfinder

Although Beijing's Arctic diplomacy remains a work in progress and may be facing stronger resistance from the United States, and other Western governments in the near future, some initial conclusions can be drawn from China's early patterns of Arctic engagement. First, although China is accepting, at present, of its subaltern status within the Arctic Council, the country has been actively seeking to deepen its polar diplomacy through alternative avenues, and the development of multifaceted relationships with significant regional actors is essential to achieve this. Second, China's relational diplomacy is also having the effect of bringing forward the question of defining an Arctic stakeholder, even among states with no Arctic geography.

Third, the Ice Silk Road may still be in its infancy, but its slow and steady development may serve as the central platform for further Chinese integration, especially relating to economic diplomacy in the region. Fourth, should the United States continue to pursue a zero-sum, 'security first' approach to its Arctic strategy, the relationships Beijing has begun to build may be essential in a scenario, which Beijing is duly concerned about, involving a more overt 'cutting up' of the region amongst the Arctic powers, with no significant role for outside actors.⁴⁰ Finally, the Arctic is proving to be a critical acid test of Chinese international relations beyond the familiar frontiers of the Asia-Pacific, and in addition to the need for greater understanding of the players within the region, China is also seeking to comprehend the political relationships amongst them, and how they can also be key components of Beijing's emerging diplomacy in the circumpolar north.

The author would like to thank Lynn Gardinier, Francesca Rán Rositudóttir and Mingming Shi for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

⁴⁰ Li D (2011) 多国觊觎北极 “大蛋糕” [‘Many Countries Covet the Arctic’s “Big Cake”], *Modern Navy* (November): 10-12.



THE TORTUOUS PATH OF CHINA'S WIN-WIN STRATEGY IN GREENLAND

BY MARCO VOLPE

Marco Volpe holds a Master's degree from the Italian Society for International Organization (SIOI) in Sustainable Development, Resources Geopolitics and Arctic Studies and a Master of Research from the University of Leeds in East Asian Studies with a deep interest in China's role in Arctic geopolitics.

Through *China's Arctic Strategy* published in January 2018, China's leadership has officially declared which role it will play in the "race to the North". However, China is also engaging in a new maneuver in order to improve its role in Arctic governance: the *win-win strategy*, which involves the improvement of bilateral relationships with Arctic States, bolstering China's involvement in Arctic matters.⁴¹

Greenland plays a key role in this strategy: extremely rich in natural resources, it is the hypothetical arrival point of the Polar Silk Road through the Transpolar Route, the only one that does not foresee the passage through territorial waters, and in need of international investors for new infrastructure. By looking at two main mining projects (Isua and Kvanefjeld projects), the article will shed light on why these projects are extremely relevant to China's strategy, and the main social and political issues related to them.

Why the win-win strategy?

In January 2018, China's leadership officially released its strategy for the Arctic through the publication of a white paper. The document presents a snapshot of the current status of the Arctic region, and it also illustrates collaboration opportunities that the region offers to the international community and clarifies why the polar region is extremely relevant for China's leadership. The whole strategy is based on the main principle of China as a "Near Arctic State". Giorgio Cuscito, referring to an interview with the Polar Research Institute's vice president Yang Huigen, additionally proposes the concept of China as a "Future Polar Power."⁴² Four main reasons may be considered in the light of these two statements:

PHOTO CREDIT: A view of Nuup Kangerlua long fjord in Sermersooq municipality, Greenland. An area extremely relevant for local people's livelihood. Photo: [Thomas Leth-Olsen](#)

⁴¹ In the Keynote Speech at the China Country Session of the Third Arctic Circle Assembly, the Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming, in October 2017 declared: "As a developing country, China will continue to advocate respect, cooperation and win-win results, step up exchange and mutual learning, and work together with others to build an Arctic that enjoys peace, stability, a sound ecosystem and sustainable development" see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China (2017) Keynote Speech at the China Country Session of the Third Arctic Circle Assembly. *MFA News*, 17 October, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1306858.shtml. Accessed on 20 January 2020.

⁴² Cuscito G (2019) L'artico è vicino ma non sarà della Cina. *La Febbre dell'artico*. Rome: GEDI gruppo editoriale

1. **Geographical proximity** justified by the map created by the geophysicist Hao Xiaoguang.⁴³ Since 2004 China's State Oceanic Administration has been using it to carry out Arctic research expeditions. Looking at the map, China emerges as a central maritime and terrestrial power, the Asian block seems to be close to the North Pole, and the United States occupies a marginalized position.
2. **Strategic relevance and neutrality of the Central Arctic Ocean:** part of the Arctic Ocean is shared among global powers, and China demands to have full access and rights to its development and governance as common heritage of mankind. In order to enhance international collaboration for environmental protection and for sustainable development in the area, China has joined the European Union (EU), Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Russian Federation, Norway and the United States in signing an agreement to ban illegal fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean for the next 16 years.⁴⁴
3. **Right to conduct exploration and exploitation activity:** as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes, in the central part of the Arctic Ocean that is not covered by the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) and by the continental shelf, China can exert the rights to exploration and exploitation.
4. **Right to conduct scientific research:** it aims to map Arctic geography and, in particular, to study climate change's impact on China's territory.

Through the white paper, China shows its commitment to respecting the existing legal framework regulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Polar Code, the Ilulissat Declaration, and the sovereignty of Arctic states.

This declaration of respect towards the various legal frameworks actually enables China to apply its win-win strategy and “to pursue an economic development strategy for the region that requires the Arctic be open to Chinese development and that China is given equal standing to other Arctic nations.”⁴⁵ China is enhancing bilateral relations with a non-intrusive political approach by sustaining infrastructural investments in Russia's liquefied natural gas (LNG) project and the Sabetta Port,⁴⁶ signing a joint agreement with Finland for future cooperation on polar research, environmental protection technology and shipping and maritime safety;⁴⁷ injecting a large amount of money in Icelandic economy after the collapse of 2008;⁴⁸ making a

⁴³ Cuscito G (2019) L'artico è vicino ma non sarà della Cina. *La Febbre dell'artico*. Rome: GEDI gruppo editoriale.

⁴⁴ European Commission, (2018) EU and Arctic partners enter historic agreement to prevent unregulated fishing in high seas. *European Commission*, 3 October, https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/eu-and-arctic-partners-enter-historic-agreement-prevent-unregulated-fishing-high-seas_en. Accessed on 10 December 10 2019.

⁴⁵ Conley H (2018) *China's Arctic dream*. Centre for international and strategic studies. Washington: Centre for international and strategic studies.

⁴⁶ Conley H et al., (2017) *Maritime futures: the Arctic and the Bering Strait Region : a report of the CSIS Europe program*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

⁴⁷ *Joint Declaration between the Republic of Finland and the People's Republic of China on Establishing and Promoting the future-oriented new-type cooperative partnership* (2017) 5 April, <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/joint-declaration-between-the-republic-of-finland-and-the-peoples-republic-of-china-on-establishing-and-promoting-the-future-oriented-new-type-cooperative-partnership/>. Accessed 10 December 2019.

⁴⁸ Conley H (2018) *China's Arctic dream*. Centre for international and strategic studies. Washington: Centre for international and strategic studies

nickel-shipping investment in Canada,⁴⁹ and signing a five-party Joint Development Agreement with Alaskan Governor Walker for an estimated \$43 billion investment in Alaska's LNG development.⁵⁰ These collaborations testify an improved diplomatic and political strategy aimed at building win-win cooperation and a well-planned public diplomacy attitude that have both facilitated improvement of China's relations with the Arctic states. The "win-win" concept has two key components: China's growing investments in the Arctic states may directly bolster China's influence in the area and the realization of shared goals may reinforce the idea of China as a cooperating and peace-seeking country.

Greenland's relevance for China's strategy

As a huge and isolated island located at the extreme North of the world, Greenland has historically occupied a strategic position. During the Second World War, Greenland's position was especially significant for the United States, which took advantage of icy relations between Denmark and its colony, and established thirteen army bases and four naval bases there. Greenland was exceptionally relevant to American foreign policy because having control of the region meant blocking enemy access to North America. It also served as a key transit point to Europe, a strategic location to obtain forecast information, and had many valuable minerals which could be exploited.⁵¹ After the end of the Cold War, most of the US bases were dismantled, and currently only the Thule Air base is still operational, regulated by the Igaliku Agreement. The closure of its many military bases on Greenland meant a reduction in the American influence on the island. However, Greenland's strategic position is still very attractive for many other states, not only for its geographical position, but also because of the presence of onshore and offshore hydrocarbon deposits and mineral basins. By mapping the undiscovered oil and gas basins in the Arctic territory not yet exploited, Donald L. Gautier et al. have revealed the proximity of many of them to Greenland's coasts.⁵² According to the U.S. Geological Survey's, the region consists of the "25% of the world's undiscovered hydrocarbon resources along with 9% of the world's coal and other economically critical minerals".⁵³ According to another report, the U.S. Geological Survey (2008) estimates as follows: "a mean of 7.3 billion barrels of oil and a mean of 52 trillion cubic feet of undiscovered natural gas in the West Greenland–East Canada Province north of the Arctic Circle". Greenland is also interested in expanding its rights beyond the 200 nautical miles: following the process regulated by UNCLOS Annex II, art. 4, the Danish government and the Greenlandic self-government have submitted the necessary information concerning the areas both North and South of Greenland to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in an effort to extend their territory.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Radio Canada International (2017) China's Arctic Road and Belt gambit. *The Independent Barents Observer*. 3

October, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2017/10/chinas-arctic-road-and-belt-gambit>. Accessed 14 November 2018

⁵⁰ Conley H (2018) *China's Arctic dream*. Centre for international and strategic studies. Washington: Centre for international and strategic studies

⁵¹ Ackrén M & Jakobsen U (2014) Greenland as a self-governing sub-national territory in international relations: past, current and future perspectives. *Polar Record* 51(4): 404-412.

⁵² 2009, Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas in the Arctic. *Science*, 324(5931): 1175-1179.

⁵³ Wright D (2011) *The dragon eyes the top of the world: Arctic policy debate and discussion in China*. Newport, R.I: U.S. Naval War College, China Maritime Studies Institute.

⁵⁴ Zeuthen J (2017) Part of the Master Plan? Chinese Investment in Rare Earth Mining in Greenland. *The Arctic Yearbook*.

Even though China strives for establishing what Chinese President Xi Jinping has defined as the “New normal”,⁵⁵ a domestic-driven economic model and a mid-to-high-speed growth with higher efficiency and lower cost,⁵⁶ from the tenth China’s Five Year plan (2001-2005), it has turned its attention to nations and regions that possess significant natural resources in order to enhance its energy and mineral sector.⁵⁷ From this point of view, Greenland may be considered an extremely relevant partner for China due to its rich deposits of iron, zinc, rare earth elements, and uranium. Rare earth elements consist of 17 different minerals, including uranium, that are mainly used in the automotive industry, and for manufacturing magnets and weapons. They occur together and the separation process consists of an extremely polluting process that takes place in the first instance at the mine and later in the processing plants that may be a different place.

Although China has very large reserves, its iron ore has always been classified as low grade. From 2010-2011, many low-grade deposits have been exploited, reaching a domestic production of iron ore of 1.32 billion tons. While China’s economic growth started to slow down after 2012, supplies from overseas deposits continue to increase.⁵⁸ Even though China has 30% of the global reserves of the rare earth elements, it produces more than 80% of the global output.⁵⁹

Isua Project

The iron ore deposit of Isua is located in the Qeqqata area of south-western Greenland and was discovered in 1965. The UK-based company London Mining obtained an exploration license for the area in 2005 and started looking for investors. It was the first large-scale mining project to be submitted to regulators in Greenland and provoked a debate in both Greenland and Denmark about the potential impact of a large number of foreign workers going to the island. In 2012, the Naalakkersuisut (Greenland’s government), headed at the time by Premier Kuupik Kleist and the Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) party, passed the *Storskalalov* or Large Scale Projects Act, which helped create a framework that allows companies to bring foreign workforce in Greenland for the construction of large-scale mining projects.⁶⁰ The Act was discussed extensively and met with opposition from Greenland’s and Denmark’s labor unions. In June 2014, an amendment to Denmark’s immigration laws was passed in the Danish Parliament in order to implement the Large Scale Project Act.⁶¹

Chinese and Indian investments were discussed until London Mining had to declare bankruptcy in October 2014, partly caused by the outbreak of the Ebola virus and the fall of the price of the iron-ore.⁶² The license was transferred to the private Hong Kong-based company General Nice

⁵⁵ See China Daily (2017) New normal in economic development. *China Daily*, October 5, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thpcnationalcongress/2017-10/05/content_32869258.htm. Accessed on 23 March 2020.

⁵⁶ Du M (2016) China’s “One Belt, One Road” Initiative: Context, Focus, Institutions, and Implications. *Chinese Journal of Global Governance* 2(1): 30–43.

⁵⁷ Zeuthen J & Raftopoulos M (2018) Promises of hope or threats of domination: Chinese mining in Greenland. *The Extractive Industries and Society* 5(1): 122-130

⁵⁸ Li G (2018) *The Chinese Iron Ore Deposits and Ore Production*.

⁵⁹ Hunnewell N (2019) China’s Control of Rare Earth Metals. *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, 13 August, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/chinas-control-of-rare-earth-metals/>. Accessed 2 March 2020.

⁶⁰ London Mining (2013) *Social Impact Assessment for the ISUA Iron Ore Project for London Mining Greenland A/S*.

⁶¹ Boersma T & Foley K (2014) *The Greenland gold Rush. Promise and Pitfalls of Greenland’s Energy and Mineral Resources*. Washington: Brookings Institution.

⁶² Zeuthen J & Raftopoulos M (2018).

Development, owned by the General Nice Group, that took over the operations, and the Isua project became the first project that was fully-owned by a Chinese company in the Arctic.⁶³ At the moment, the Naalakkersuisut has established that the Chinese company “must submit an exploitation and closure-plan as well as document the mine’s financial capacity by the end of 2021 and start mining operations by the end of 2025”.⁶⁴

According to the social impact assessment (SIA) conducted from 2009 to 2012, the project’s main contributions may include an increase in public revenue, local employment, and training and education opportunities.⁶⁵ However, concerns have been raised concerning the division of labor between local and international workers and impacts on hunting and fishing practices in the area of Isukasia and in the Nuuk Fjord, which are extremely relevant for the environmental, social and cultural life of locals. In order to extract more of the ore, the mountain in which it sits has to be gradually cut away, and London Mining had estimated that 3.5 tons of ice would need to be removed annually with it. The project received opposition due to the valuable environmental aspects of the surrounding region. Isukasia is a relevant area for reindeer, which are hunted during the summer and autumn, and many locals use the area’s rocks, which are rich in soapstone, to make jewelry. With its 15,500 people, Nuuk’s population is one of the largest in Greenland and, in the outer fjord near Nuuk, Atlantic cod, salmon, and Greenland halibut and other fish represent an important source of income. Berries and edible plants represent an important source of livelihood for locals as well.⁶⁶ Greenland’s economy is extremely limited and dependent on fishing industry which consists in the 90% of the commodity exports.⁶⁷ Food exports and food security in remote areas such as Greenland are deeply connected to high transportation costs, high pressure on traditional food sources, harder access to traditional food sources due to climate change, lack of nourishing supplies, and even with some contaminants, such as mercury, in the fish stocks. For these regions, protests were organized by local organizations such as ‘Nuup Kangerluata Ikinngutai’ in March 2012 in Nuuk, where around 60 people attended.⁶⁸ In the same year, other protests against the *Storskjallov* and the Isua mine project were scheduled in Nuuk by the president of the organization ‘Foreningen 16. August’. It is extremely important to underline that the organizer of the protest emphasized that the demonstrations were not against development in Greenland but advocating that the development be undertaken through proper and informed terms.

The need for diversified income opportunities means that developing the mining sector could be a chance to increase Greenland’s economy and offer a solution to the unemployment rate, which reached 9.4% in 2015.⁶⁹ Mortensen (2015) has also underlined the low qualification level (70% of the population has only school education) of the Greenland’s population, and Pall Tomas Finnsson states that: “Greenland is projected to see the largest decline of its working-age population, 16%, compared to 6.6% in the Faroe Islands, 3% in Finland and 2% in Denmark.

⁶³ Du J (2015) General Nice Group to take over Greenland mine. *Chinadaily.com.cn*, 13

January, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-01/13/content_19301900.htm. Accessed 2 February 2020

⁶⁴ Schultz-Nielsen J (2018) Nuuk: Kinesisk mineprojekt holdes i live. *Sermitsiaq.AG*. <https://sermitsiaq.ag/node/208815> Accessed 22 January 22 2020.

⁶⁵ Trump B & Kademic M & Linkov I (2018) A sustainable Arctic: Making hard decisions. *Arctic, Antarctic and alpine research*, 50(1): 1-10.

⁶⁶ Nuttall M (2012) The Isukasia iron ore mine controversy: Extractive industries and public consultation in Greenland. *Nordia Geographical Publications* 41(5): 23-34.

⁶⁷ Mortensen B (2015) Arctic Mining: The Case of Greenland. *The Yearbook of Polar Law* 7(1): 102-127.

⁶⁸ Kleemann L (2012) Demonstration mod Alcoa og London Mining. *Sermitsiaq.AG*, 7 March, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/node/120117>. Accessed 8 February 2020

⁶⁹ Mortensen B (2015).

Moreover, many rural communities have seen a decline in their youth population, with Avannaata municipality losing a staggering 85% of its young people, aged 20-29, in the last two decades” and “since 2000, the country’s fertility rates have diminished from 2.5 births per woman to 2.0”.⁷⁰ Within the SIA, London Mining declared that, in order to realize the Isua project, 1,500 to 3,000 skilled and experienced workers were needed, and the approval of the *Storskalalov* increased local discontent, as it was argued that there would be fewer opportunities for locals to benefit from the project. Boersma and Foley (2014) have underlined that even though Chinese investments in Greenland remain limited, Chinese mining and energy companies have already made a series of high-profile overseas investments around the world which have met public opposition. Speaking about the possibility for Chinese investments in Greenland, the labor issue comes up as one of the main concerns for the employment of Chinese workers and Chinese labor standards, as well as the potential threat to block long-term access to strategic raw materials.⁷¹ However, Paragraph 18 of Greenland’s Mineral Resource Act establishes that: “[...] to the extent necessary for the activities, the licensee may use foreign labor if labor with similar qualifications does not exist or is not available in Greenland”.⁷²

The Isua project’s feasibility still needs to be verified and, due to the high cost, the deal seems to be unprofitable according to Wei Zengming, an industrial analyst at Mysteel.⁷³ However if the project will be launched in the near future, it may represent a good test case for Chinese mining companies working in high-technology projects in the Polar region.

Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit project

In recent years, rare earth element deposits have been well documented in Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit, an area at the southern tip of Greenland, which are believed to be some of the richest estimated deposits of uranium and zinc. The constantly increasing demand of new technologies in the 21st century, such as smartphones and renewable energy technologies, contributed to the rising interest in the Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit deposit. This influenced the Naalakkersuisut to lift the zero-tolerance policy imposed by the Danish government against the exploration and extraction of radioactive minerals by a narrow vote of 15 to 14 in the Greenlandic parliament in 2013. However, it still was not clear how the exploitation of uranium would be undertaken. An agreement was reached in 2016, which clarified the division of responsibilities between Denmark and Greenland and created special foreign policy conditions related to the extraction and export of uranium. When selling uranium, Denmark, in collaboration with Greenland, must enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the recipients in the buying country, which ensures that uranium is managed safely and that the recipient country respects its non-proliferation needs.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ (2020) Greenland: Large decline in Greenland’s working age population projected, but increase in bioeconomy jobs. *Nordregio*. n.d. <https://www.nordregio.org/nordregio-magazine/issues/state-of-the-nordic-region-2020/greenland-large-decline-in-greenlands-working-age-population-projected-but-increase-in-bioeconomy-jobs/>. Accessed February 7 2020.

⁷¹ Zeuthen J & Raftopoulos M (2018).

⁷² Mortensen B (2015).

⁷³ Du J (2015) General Nice Group to take over Greenland mine. *Chinadaily.com.cn*, 13 January, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-01/13/content_19301900.htm. Accessed 2 February 2020.

⁷⁴ Danish Institute for International Studies (2016) *New uranium deal between Denmark and Greenland clarifies competences*, 1 February, <https://www.diis.dk/node/20222>, Accessed 2 February 2020.

The Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit project has become symbolic in the debate and mobilization against uranium in Greenland. The project was met with opposition by many environmental organizations both in Greenland and Denmark including Urani Naamik (No to Uranium, Greenland), NOAH (Friends of the Earth Denmark), Avataq, The Ecological Council ('Det Økologiske Råd'), Sustainable Energy ('Vedvarende Energy') and Nuup Kangerluata Ikinngutai.

The Australian company Greenland Minerals & Energy, now Greenland Minerals, acquired the project in 2007.⁷⁵ In late 2016, Greenland Minerals announced a partnership with the Chinese mining enterprise Shenghe Resources, that bought 12.5% of the shares in Greenland Minerals, and the two companies agreed that Shenghe Resources could buy up to 60%.⁷⁶ As China is the world's main producer of rare earth elements, and more than 80% of the world's production is managed by China, it is quite difficult to find rare earth elements outside the Chinese market, and their involvement in the Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit project further solidifies that monopoly.⁷⁷

Environmental issues surrounding the Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit project seem to be the biggest problems. Greenland already experienced a nuclear disaster in 1968, when a US Air Force B-52 carrying four hydrogen bombs crashed, resulting in nuclear contamination around Thule Base.⁷⁸ This has raised the possibility of a referendum on uranium mining has been widely debated. Based on a survey conducted by WWF Denmark, "the Greenlandic population is fairly evenly split over the question of whether to allow the mining of uranium, however with a slight majority in favor".⁷⁹ Naalakkersuisut agrees in considering the opportunities that may derive from uranium mining by making the exploitation of rare earth elements a government priority:

The Government of Greenland wishes to promote the prosperity and welfare of Greenland's society. One way of doing so is to create new income and employment opportunities in the area of mineral resources activities. The Government of Greenland's goal is to further the chances of making a commercially viable oil find. In addition, Greenland should always have five to ten active mines in the long term.⁸⁰

The future of the project remains unclear as the Greenland Minerals' fourth version of the Environmental Impact Assessment is currently being evaluated.⁸¹ The rare earth element deposits are potentially extremely polluting since the separating process will first take place at the mining site, but Greenland Minerals has continued to push for their exploitation license for the Kvanefjeld/Kuannersuit project, and it remains to be seen what Naalakkersuisut will decide in this case.

⁷⁵ See: <https://www.ggg.gl/>

⁷⁶ Zeuthen J & Raftopoulos M (2018).

⁷⁷ Butler C (2014) Rare earth elements: China's monopoly and the implications for U.S. national security. *The Fletcher Forum of the World Affairs* 38(1): 23-39.

⁷⁸ Mortensen B (2015).

⁷⁹ (2016) *Måling: Grønlænderne vil have folkeafstemning om uran*, 24 June, <https://www.wwf.dk/?16960/Mling-Grnlnderne-vil-have-folkeafstemning-om-uran#>. Accessed 3 February 2020.

⁸⁰ Naalakkersuisut (2014) *Greenland's oil and mineral strategy 2014-2018*.

⁸¹ EJOLT (2019) Greenland Mineral Ltd.'s Kuannersuit/Kvanefjeld Rare Earth-Uranium Project, Greenland *Environmental Justice Atlas*. <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/greenland-mineral-ltds-kuannersuit-kvanefjeld-rare-earth-uranium-project-greenland>, accessed 12 January 2020.

Conclusion

As a permanent observer to the Arctic Council, China has found that the key to access Arctic governance is through cooperation. The strategy defined in China's Arctic Strategy is principally based on cooperation, including joint participation in scientific projects and the respect of the institutional and legal framework. However, what is improving China's status in Arctic governance is the win-win strategy based on bilateral relationships established with Arctic States. In the case of Greenland, the island's strategic location and abundant natural resources make it an attractive partner for China's Arctic strategy. Zinc, iron, uranium, and rare-earth elements arouse particular interest. From its side, Greenland is interested in foreign investors able to finance huge mining and infrastructural projects in order to diversify its economy, which currently relies greatly on the fishing industry. Despite a deep interest from both sides, the path for China's start to mining in Greenland has met impediments. Concerns related to the huge experienced and skilled foreign workforce needed, the environmental impact of extremely polluting exploitation processes, and the threats posed to traditional subsistence livelihoods that are important to locals, have been raised by Greenlandic communities that argue that a larger and more diversified economy should serve the locals first

The urgent need for Greenland to exploit its natural resources, China's interest in enlarging necessary natural resources supplies to sustain its development and to enhance its role in the Arctic region, its huge financial capacity, coupled with the Greenlandic local communities' will to develop, make the involvement of Chinese companies in Greenland's mining sector likely in the next future, and make the island a perfect example of China's exertion of its win-win strategy.

DEFINING THE CHINESE THREAT IN THE ARCTIC



BY YUN SUN

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The Arctic is emerging as a new domain for the strategic rivalry between the United States and China. As China expands its engagement in the Arctic, the implications of its presence and activities are an increasingly debated topic in the United States, among the Arctic states, and globally. China has claimed benevolent intentions in peace, development, and improving Arctic governance. However, given the opaqueness of China's decision-making and capability development, many American policymakers and observers, if not most, remain skeptical or even hostile toward China's potential in the Arctic. A solid strategy on China in the Arctic should begin with a well-defined and well-articulated concrete threat perception by Washington.

The concern about the Chinese threat in the Arctic is a manifestation of the rising strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China in the era of great power competition.⁸² American criticism of China's Arctic policy reached an unprecedented level in 2019. Both the U.S. Department of Defense and Secretary of State publicly cast doubt on China's self-proclaimed status as a "near-Arctic state". Strategic thinkers in the U.S. worry that China's economic engagement in the region could be a precursor to much more invasive political and strategic ambitions. China's Arctic infrastructure development has the potential for dual-use facilities, paving the ground to Beijing's permanent security presence in the region. In their view, the Sino-Russia commercial cooperation in the Arctic is also creating potential opportunities for security collaboration in the context of their strategic alignment vis-à-vis the United States. In addition, many liken China's intentions in the Arctic to that in the South China Sea, which has resulted in the South China Sea being "fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims."⁸³

China certainly has not helped its own case in the Arctic. Arctic policy-making in China is opaque at best, creating ambiguities in its priorities and ambitions. While Beijing publicly claims that its goals in the Arctic are about "knowledge, protection, development and governance"⁸⁴ of

PHOTO CREDIT: The Chinese icebreaking research vessel Xue Long – or Ice Dragon – has played a key part in Chinese capacity building in the Arctic since the 1990s. Photo: [Natalie Tapson](#)

⁸² Ciovacco, Carl (2018). "Understanding the China Threat." *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/understanding-china-threat-37502?>

⁸³ Hounshell, Blake (2019). "Pompeo Aims to Counter China's Ambitions in the Arctic." *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/06/pompeo-arctic-china-russia-1302649>.

⁸⁴ (2018) "中国的北极政策." https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/tytj_674911/zcwj_674915/t1529258.shtml

the region, it has also declared China's "activities, assets and other interests"⁸⁵ in the polar regions as intrinsic to China's national security. China's record of incremental development of overseas power projection capability in the name of asset protections, attested by its naval base in Djibouti and dual-use facilities in the Indian Ocean, suggests a pattern repeatable in the Arctic.⁸⁶ And observers only get a glimpse of China's capability when Beijing chooses to publicize information on topics such as the state of its nuclear-powered icebreakers, exacerbating anxieties about what other capabilities are under development.

On a more strategic level, China's desire to expand outside its power-saturated neighborhood is understood as a rising hegemon's effort to export power and influence outside the overcrowded East Asia. Such efforts, as spearheaded by the Belt and Road Initiative, are integral to its bid for global hegemonic status. The Arctic may not be a power vacuum, but it represents a front where power export is still possible for China. For example, the infrastructure projects China has proposed in Russia and Iceland represent the Chinese effort to channel its financial wealth into footholds in the region.

Upon understanding the Chinese strategic thinking, the next step is to accurately define the Chinese threat in the Arctic specifically based on concrete evidence. Instead of speculating about China's potential, efforts should be focused on assessing probabilities and capabilities. We need to be vigilant about China's intentions and activities, but also vigorous in gauging the nature and depths of the threat it concretely poses.

Creating an accurate picture of China's threat in the Arctic is important for consensus building and alliance management with other Arctic states, such as the Scandinavian countries. Given their better negotiation positions vis-à-vis China compared to, for example, debt-ridden Africa countries, some may not feel as vulnerable or share the same threat perception about China with the U.S. Despite their unease with Sino-Russia cooperation in the High North on energy development in Siberia's Yamal Peninsula and the shipping lane through the Northern Sea Route, they may not be convinced of Beijing-Moscow military cooperation in the Arctic given the Russian territoriality about the region.

In addition, the clear definition of China's threat in the Arctic is also essential to the development of a counter strategy. Denying China access to the Arctic and preventing its activities there is not legal, sensible, or feasible. It should be acknowledged that susceptibility to the Chinese presence in the Arctic does not equate to vulnerability to Chinese dominance. Some Arctic states might be susceptible to the appeal of Chinese investment, but it does not mean that they will be compelled to embrace invasive Chinese activities. The question here is not whether China will try to expand activities in the Arctic, because it will. The question is how to develop sophisticated policies to identify and deny malign or ambiguous behaviors while managing and shaping other behaviors that are neutral or potentially constructive.

⁸⁵ (2015) "The Polar Issue Is Raised By China to the Height of National Security." *International Polar and Ocean Gateway*. <http://www.polaroceanportal.com/article/265>

⁸⁶ Sun, Yun. (2018). "Djibouti: China's Approach to Military Expansion." *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/djibouti-chinas-approach-to-military-expansion>

In this sense, the key to U.S. policy toward China's Arctic influence and activities should begin with solid assessment of China's concrete capabilities instead of speculations about its intentions and potential. A preemptive or complete denial of China in the Arctic may be desirable but not feasible. Chinese economic activities in the Arctic have been welcomed by some Arctic States. The scope and depth of China's military ambitions need much more research and deliberation before consensus could be reached and common actions be developed.

A FRAMEWORK FOR SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE ARCTIC



BY MARIIA KOBZEVA

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During the last twenty years of increased activity in the Arctic, China has become one of Russia's most successful Asian partners. The scale of the Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG 2 projects stimulates discussion on further strengthening of bilateral cooperation.⁸⁷ At the same time, during the analysis of this new area of relations, it is important to take into account several factors.

Territorial Factor

For both Russia and China, Arctic activities are associated with the development of territories, which has long remained a challenge. This factor, in spite of its high importance, is not discussed with the same thoroughness as the demand for having sources of energy supply and new routes.

However, the Russian Arctic today is inextricably linked with the development of the Russian Far East.⁸⁸ The Northern Sea Route along the circumpolar coast of the Arctic country attracts the transit of cargo by sea and Siberian rivers and helps to increase the connectivity of previously inaccessible and sparsely populated territories. The Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and the Arctic oversees infrastructure development projects aiming to unite the land.

For China, emergent Arctic logistics also promise to give new impetus to the economically lagging northeastern Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces. Both provinces actively cooperate with Russia's northern and Far Eastern administrations and strive to formalize their role within the northern branch of the Silk Road.

These domestic motivations add value to national politics in raising the GDP and seeking new routes for strategic maneuvering. This factor emphasizes the natural difference between the national interests of the two states.

PHOTO CREDIT: Novatek's Yamal LNG facility in Sabetta, northern Russia. Photo: [Novatek](#)

⁸⁷ Novatek, Proacts Yamal LNG (2019). <https://www.novatek.ru/en/business/yamal-lng/>

⁸⁸ Nazipova, Evgeniya (2019). "The Powers of the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East are Expanded to the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation." *Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East*. <https://minvr.gov.ru/press-center/news/21131/>

Bilateral Relations Factor

Sino-Russian collaboration in the Arctic remains a part of the general outline of bilateral relations. Today, the comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation of the two states, thanks to a series of joint statements, have included the Arctic as an important sphere of partnership. In the same context, the discussed docking of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with its polar branch also shapes a new framework for the implementation of Arctic projects.⁸⁹ Besides, for the reasons described above, Arctic cooperation is associated with border relations between the two countries. In this regard, for example, such projects as Primorye-1 and Primorye-2⁹⁰ turn out to be embedded in logistics focused on deliveries of cargo via the Northern Sea Route.⁹¹

All the above brings new political leverage for promoting Arctic cooperation. At the same time, it allows involving a larger bunch of international and bilateral mechanisms – from the already established, to the potentially effective for the reasons of security and regional cooperation.

Historical Factor

The legacy of bilateral affairs affects the relations between Russia and China in the Arctic. It would seem, quite rightly, that for Russia and China, cooperation in the Arctic has no historical precedents. With the exception of some exotic examples, such as activities of the Russian-American Company, which at one time included the delivery of Chinese goods to Alaska, the countries do not have enough experience of interacting in the region.⁹² Nevertheless, as part of bilateral relations, they are developing the hard-won principles of cooperation, which above all include the desire to be equal partners and remain independent from each other. China's pragmatic approach to the Arctic, even more, encourages Russia to adhere to these rules and develop interaction with other Asian partners. Therefore, the bilateral cooperation in the region inevitably remains a balance between the largest Arctic state with a developing resource-based economy and the Arctic newcomer riding the wave of the economic boom.

Arctic Factor

The strategic shifts in the Arctic affect Sino-Russian relations in the region. The climatic drive for circumpolar development opened up a new geopolitical environment.⁹³ The increase in shipping access to Asia through the Bering Strait involves the states of the North Pacific with

⁸⁹ (2019). "Joint Statement by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the Development of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Interaction Relations Entering a New Era." *Office of the President of Russia*. <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5413>

⁹⁰ (2017). "Russia, China Agree On Primorye-1 Corridor; Opens Up Heilongjiang To Asia-Pacific Markets." *Russia Briefing from Dezan Shira & Associates*. <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/russia-china-agree-primorye-1-corridor-opens-heilongjiang-asia-pacific-markets.html/>

⁹¹ http://fffi45a2a6b89f254f2cb38494f262931164hx5w5vxfo5v5f6xof.fahx.ntszy.org:8070/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=670436376&from=Qikan_Search_Index

⁹²Ed. A.V. Lukina (2013). "Russia and China, Four Centuries of Interaction: The history of the contemporary state and perspectives of development for russo-chinese relations." Moscow: Ves Mir Publishing House. <https://www.hse.ru/data/2015/04/06/1096295702/Russia-China-400.pdf>

⁹³ Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen & Vincent Gallucci. (2016). "The Return of China, Post-Cold War Russia, and the Arctic: Changes on Land and at Sea." *Marine Policy*. <https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/10757/article.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

strategic interaction. Thus, the determination of Russia and China intersects with the interests of Japan, North and South Korea, and the United States, bringing to life a new balance of power.

Another aspect related to the development of the circumpolar north is the emerging of a new international route from Europe to Asia. Both states are hoping to use this opportunity in their national interests: Russia strives to turn the Northern Sea Route into an international transport corridor, and China aspires to develop the initiative of the Polar Silk Road.

Conclusion

For these reasons, differences in approaches, the legal interpretation, discrepancies and the issues of the strategic balance invariably appear in documents and stay in the framework of bilateral cooperation in the Arctic.

Sino-Russian relations in the Arctic are of a complicated nature and are tightly bound to a whole scope of diversified factors – from the domestic motives of the territorial development to the historical background and strategic interests. In this regard, the nuanced approach to the analysis may provide a more precise and unbiased assessment of Sino-Russian relations in the Arctic.



The Emergence of a Sino-Russian Economic Partnership in the Arctic?

BY CHRISTOPHER WEIDACHER HSIUNG

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The Sino-Russian strategic partnership has never been as comprehensive and stable as it is now. While the relationship certainly faces underlying challenges, such as deep-rooted memories of historical rivalry and a growing power imbalance in China's favor, it is remarkable how enduring bilateral relations have been since the end of the Cold War.⁹⁴ A major driver for closer ties has been perceived pressure from the US, but Chinese reassurance policies to mitigated Russian threat perceptions of a rising China have also contributed.⁹⁵

Long lagging behind more developed political ties, the economic dimension has expanded, particular in recent years. Sino-Russian bilateral trade has steadily grown, exceeding 100 USD billion in 2019. Today, China is Russia's largest trading partner and Russia is China's largest oil supplier. Energy trade constitutes the main pillar, but agricultural trade and cooperation in science and technology are growing. Notably, increased Sino-Russian economic engagement is also evident in the Arctic region. This begs the question, are we witnessing the emergence of an economic partnership in the Arctic? Early disclaimer: likely, but not without its challenges.

A New Venue of Economic Engagement

Arctic economic cooperation is frequently declared as a promising venture by both sides, particularly regarding energy and shipping. This was not always the case, as Russia has long cautioned against greater involvement from China, evident with its hesitant acceptance of China's permanent observer status in the Arctic Council (AC) in 2013. The aftermath of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 however changed some of Moscow's calculus. Russia had to cope with the impact of western sanctions, leaving many Arctic projects uncertain, leading Russia to accept Chinese involvement to a larger extent – although steps had already been taken towards more joint projects.

For instance, Chinese engagement has been crucial for the Novatek-run Yamal onshore LNG project in north-western Siberia. In 2013, China's National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) obtained a 20% share in the project and in 2015 China's Silk Road Fund acquired a further 9.9%

PHOTO CREDIT: Press meeting with Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping following Sino-Russia talks in Moscow, June 2019. Photo: [President of Russia](#)

⁹⁴ Rozman, G. (2014). *The Sino-Russian challenge to the world order: national identities, bilateral relations, and East versus West in the 2010s*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

⁹⁵ See: <https://www.sv.uio.no/isv/forskning/aktuelt/arrangementer/disputaser/2019/hsiung.html>

(French Total is the second foreign investor with 20%). In total, Chinese investors have provided up to 60% of the total capital. The LNG project is now operational, shipping natural gas to mainly Asian markets, China included, and it is hailed as the very cornerstone of Sino-Russian Arctic energy cooperation by both sides. Building on this apparent success story, it now also seems that the two sides want to develop another LNG project on the Gydan Peninsula not far from Yamal.⁹⁶

Shipping, or rather the use of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as transit route trade for China's important trade with Europe, constitutes another area of cooperation (and often motivated by the Chinese as a way to mitigate the "Malacca Dilemma").⁹⁷ In 2010 Russia's Sovcomflot and CNPC signed a commercial agreement for long-term oil shipments, and in 2015 Russia's Ministry for Development of the Russian Far East and China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) signed a MoU for cooperation on the NSR. Recently a joint venture between Novatek, Sovcomflot, China's state-owned shipping company COSCO and China's Silk Road Fund was established to manage Arctic ice-class vessels for LNG transport related to existing and planned Novatek projects. China could also be interested in cooperating with Russia to construct a nuclear-powered icebreaker.

More broadly, in 2017 Beijing and Moscow declared a joint ambition to develop something they call a "Polar Silk Road" as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While concrete projects still await, the political signaling is evident. Moreover, certain initiatives have been initiated. For instance, in 2018 a financial mechanism initiative was set up with a 9.5 billion USD credit line from China to finance projects within the larger cooperation scheme between BRI and the Russian led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) where collaboration on the NSR is a priority area.

Reality Check

At the same time, some caution should be exercised. Beyond the LNG Yamal project, little else of larger scope has materialized concretely for the time being. One major challenge is that Russia still remains skeptical about inviting China into energy projects, especially on the production side, despite the need of Chinese investments and the overall improvement of bilateral ties.⁹⁸ Another challenge is that Chinese companies still lack the necessary technical skills to operate offshore as many Western firms do, at least not yet.

Regarding shipping, China has expressed modest commercial interest. The usage of full NSR transits is still relatively low where most of the traffic is intra-regional and domestic, despite the media-hyped sailings over the years by COSCO vessels. The Chinese are also quite aware of the major difficulties Russia faces in turning the NSR into a realistic transit route, not the least with infrastructure capacity.⁹⁹ Moreover, as with energy and in the view of the Chinese, Russia remains unwilling to fully embrace Chinese involvement which of course also limits the Chinese

⁹⁶ Meilin, Zhou, Zeng Lingke, and Tang Ziyi. (2019). "Russian \$21 Billion Arctic LNG 2 Proacts Gets Investment Go-Ahead." *Caixin*. <https://www.caixinglobal.com/2019-09-07/russian-21-bln-artic-lng-2-project-gets-investment-go-ahead-101460093.html>

⁹⁷ Storey, I. (2006). China's Malacca dilemma. *China Brief*, 6(8), 4-6. <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-malacca-dilemma/>

⁹⁸ Bekkevold, J. I., & Lo, B. (Eds.). (2018). *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Springer.

⁹⁹ Moe, A., & Stokke, O. S. (2019). *Asian Countries and Arctic Shipping: Policies, Interests and Footprints on Governance*.

willingness to engage. In addition, most of China's global trade originates from its central and southern parts and were using the NSR to go to Europe makes less sense.

Future developments

These challenges notwithstanding, more is to be expected. Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic is, so far, mostly economically focused. On a general level, there is growing interdependence between the two economies with Russia providing commodities that China needs (notably oil and gas) and China contributing capital and increasingly advanced industrial technologies – all components of relevance to the Arctic and its development. More broadly, the impact of intensified global strategic rivalry between China and the US, which also affects the Arctic, coupled with persistent US/NATO- Russia tensions in Europe, are pushing Beijing and Moscow even closer together – which is underpinned further by an apparently close, or at least, mutually respectful personal relationship between China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin.¹⁰⁰ While the current Coronavirus pandemic has put some breaks on economic interaction, over time things will pick up again as China has become Russia's main economic and technological partner. If anything, the on-going COVID-19 crisis will only accelerate the incentives towards even more economic, and deeper strategic, Sino-Russian cooperation.¹⁰¹ This will likely also lead to a gradually expanded Sino-Russian Arctic economic partnership, albeit with certain fits and starts.

¹⁰⁰ See Yun Sun's "Defining the Chinese Threat in the Arctic" in this volume.

¹⁰¹ Gabuev, Alexander (2020). "The Pandemic Could Tighten China's Grip on Eurasia." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/23/coronavirus-pandemic-china-eurasia-russia-influence/>



ARCTIC TECHNOPOLITICS AND CHINA'S RECEPTION OF THE POLAR CODE

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The International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code),¹⁰² which entered into force on January 1, 2017, constitutes a regulatory milestone for shipping in the Arctic.¹⁰³ This article considers China's actions within the International Maritime Organization (IMO) leading up to the Code's entry into force in 2017, while also surveying how the Polar Code has been received in Chinese academic and industry circles. This inquiry takes place against the backdrop of, on the one hand, China's emerging interests in the Arctic wherein shipping plays a central role; and on the other hand, the introduction of the Polar Code as a mandatory international law instrument in a region characterized by intersecting sets of regional, national, and international regulations.¹⁰⁴

As the world's second-largest economy, with over 60 percent of its trade (in value) traveling by sea, China is obviously a major stakeholder in international shipping.¹⁰⁵ It is the world's third-largest shipowner in terms of vessel tonnage and the world's largest shipbuilder.¹⁰⁶ Shipping also figures prominently in Beijing's engagement with the Arctic. Most notably through the Polar Silk Road—the Arctic outgrowth of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—which envisions the development of commercial shipping lanes across the Arctic Ocean. As an example, in 2013, the director of the Polar Research Institute of China (PRIC) made the optimistic prediction that between 5 and 15 percent of China's international trade would use the Northern Sea Route (NSR) by 2020.¹⁰⁷ However, commercial traffic in the Arctic is likely to only see modest growth this decade, with destination shipping of hydrocarbons originating in the Arctic being the largest

PHOTO CREDIT: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II marks the 70th anniversary of the International Maritime Organization at IMO Headquarters, London, on March 6, 2018. Photo: [International Maritime Organization](#)

¹⁰² International Maritime Organization, *International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code)*, Res. MSC.385(94), November 21, 2014; and International Maritime Organization, *International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code)*, Res. MEPC.264(68), May 15, 2015

¹⁰³ Langlois K (2017) IMO in the Polar Environment: The Polar Code Explained, *The Arctic Institute*, 17

May. <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/imo-polar-environment-polar-code-explained/> Accessed 2 February, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of the 'legalization' of the polar regions, see Dodds, K., and Nuttall, M (2016) *The Scramble for the Poles: the Geopolitics of the Arctic and Antarctic*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 41.

¹⁰⁵ China Power Team (2019) How much trade transits the South China Sea? China Power. 2 August, 2017. Updated 10 October, 2019. <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/> Accessed 16 January 2020.

¹⁰⁶ See UNCTAD (2019) Merchant fleet. <https://stats.unctad.org/handbook/MaritimeTransport/MerchantFleet.html> Accessed 16 January, 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Lasserre F (2019) Arctic Shipping: A Contrasted Expansion of a Largely Destination Market. In: Finger M & Heinen L (eds.) *The Global Arctic Handbook*: 84.

growth driver.¹⁰⁸ Chinese shipbuilders also stand to benefit from Arctic shipping, notably the development of the NSR, as this would increase the demand for new, ice-capable vessels.¹⁰⁹ Finally, the prospects of re-routing portions of its maritime trade through the Arctic bears security implications for China, as large shares of its westbound trade today transits the South China Sea.¹¹⁰ In the sections that follow, the notion of *technopolitics*, broadly defined as the “strategic practice of designing or using technology to enact political goals,”¹¹¹ offers a heuristic frame for examining the political underpinnings, as well as ramifications, of international standard-setting, especially as they pertain to global geopolitics. The development of international standards provides participating states with what some have argued to be an ‘anti-political’ venue for leveraging technical know-how in order to inscribe national interests into ostensibly technical issues.¹¹²

China’s Activities in the IMO

China participated in the initial correspondence group set up in 2009 by the IMO to develop the Polar Code.¹¹³ The public database of the IMO reflects China first addressing the Polar Code in 2012 at the 56th session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE). Here, China suggested that governmental ships and “public service ships” should be excluded from the competency of the Polar Code.¹¹⁴ Prior to this session, however, China had expressed support for a proposal made by the United States to oppose a Russian proposal to include a savings clause in the Code’s preamble that would retain the primacy of national shipping regulations until the IMO could adopt a fully harmonized framework.¹¹⁵ The Chinese delegation also called for a clarification of what the Code termed “category C” ships.¹¹⁶ The comment by the Chinese delegation problematized that the definition included both ice-class and non-ice-class ships. It subsequently asked for these two types to be differentiated, either in the definition of the category itself, or in subsequent technical provisions.¹¹⁷

China also commented on a draft chapter on environmental protection. It urged that a thorough differentiation be made between Antarctic and Arctic waters, emphasizing that while the former is a designated special area under several of the International Convention for Prevention of Marine Pollution (MARPOL) annexes, the latter was not. The Chinese delegation went on to suggest that the “general control level for environmental issues” and the attendant technical requirements concerning Arctic waters should first be decided in a committee or sub-committee

¹⁰⁸ Lasserre F (2019).

¹⁰⁹ Eiterjord T (2020) China’s Shipbuilders Seek New Inroads in Arctic Shipping, *The Diplomat*, 14

January. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/chinas-shipbuilders-seek-new-inroads-in-arctic-shipping/> Accessed 14 January 2020.

¹¹⁰ Lanteigne M (2008) China’s Maritime Security and the “Malacca Dilemma,” *Asian Security* 4(2): 143-161.

¹¹¹ Hecht G & Allen M (2001) Introduction: Authority, Political Machines and Technology’s History. In: Hecht G et al *Technologies of power: essays in honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press: 14.

¹¹² Barry, A (2002) The anti-political economy. *Economy and Society*, 31(2), 268–284

¹¹³ Stokke, O (2013) Asian Stakes and Arctic Governance, *Strategic Analysis* 38(6), 770-783.

¹¹⁴ International Maritime Organization, *Report to the Maritime Safety Committee*, Docs. DE 56/25, April 10, 2012, para. 10.10.

¹¹⁵ International Maritime Organization. *Development of a Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters: Report of the Working Group (Part I)*. Doc. DE 55/WP.4. March 24, 2011; Moe, A. and Stokke, O. (2019) Asian Countries and Arctic Shipping: Policies, Interests and Footprints on Governance. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 10: 42.

¹¹⁶ International Maritime Organization, *Report to the Maritime Safety Committee*, Docs. DE 57/25 April 25, 2013, para. 11.39.1.

¹¹⁷ The Polar Code classifies ships as either category A, B, or C, depending on their operational profile, with category A being ships operating in severe ice conditions, and C representing operations in mild or ice-free conditions. As for the adopted Code, it does not differentiate further between category C ships. Yet the technical regulations on ship structure do state that, at the discretion of the classifying authority, ice-strengthening is not required if the ship’s structure is deemed adequate for its intended operation. See Res. MEPC 68/21/Add.1 Annex 10, page 6, para. 2.2.

instead of “rushing into the development of specific requirements.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, China sided with Greece and various other flag states and shipping NGOs in arguing that there was, at the time, insufficient scientific evidence to justify the draft requirements.¹¹⁹ In addition to these interventions, China produced four proposals of its own, all of which were submitted after the Polar Code had been adopted by the Maritime Security Committee (MSC) during its 94th session in 2014. The timing of these proposals is significant, as by 2014, much of the Code’s content had already been developed by the DE sub-committee, leaving little room for any meaningful change. Of China’s four proposals, two were co-sponsored together with South Korea. Of note was the proposal to ease the administrative burden on ships conducting single or occasional voyages in the Arctic during the summer navigational season by lessening the requirement for these vessels to hold Polar Certificates.¹²⁰ The second co-sponsored proposal was submitted to the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), proposing an amendment to a draft of the Polar Code containing a loophole in the description of outer shell and cargo tank protection requirements of oil tankers and other vessels carrying oil.¹²¹ The two remaining, independently produced proposals were both submitted to the Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping Sub-Committee (HTW).¹²²

The two co-sponsored proposals with South Korea reflect an alignment of interests between the two countries as major shipbuilding states and user states. Moreover, China’s comments and proposals, taken together, indicate the wish for a leaner, less restrictive Code. Yet the country’s activity during the development of the Polar Code is, perhaps, best characterized by its inactivity. This relative inactivity reflects, in part, the country’s general behavior in the IMO. The Chinese delegation to the IMO has been described as “quiet and not that active,” and China’s attitude towards international maritime governance has similarly been characterized as conservative and passive.¹²³ Surveys of China’s submissions to the IMO show that the country has historically lagged behind most other major shipping states in terms of proposals.¹²⁴ Moreover, China’s absence during the drafting process appears emblematic of the East Asian shipping states who all have expressed interest in Arctic shipping—but none of which made any substantial contributions to the Code’s development.¹²⁵

Low-Key Geopolitics

¹¹⁸ IMO Docs. DE 57/25, para. 11.42.

¹¹⁹ IMO Docs. DE 57/25, para. 11.43.

¹²⁰ The two countries proposed that a short-term certificate could be issued to vessels whose operational envelopes did not usually include Arctic waters. This was argued on the grounds that such a provision would significantly reduce the economic and administrative burdens faced by the shipowner and the classification society. See China and the Republic of Korea, *Consideration and Adoption of Amendments to Mandatory Instruments: Comments on the Draft International Code of Ships Operating in Polar Waters*, Docs. MSC 94/3/15 October 3 2014.

¹²¹ China and the Republic of Korea, *Consideration and Adoption of Amendment to Mandatory Instruments: Proposed modifications to regulation 1.2.2 of chapter 1 of draft Polar Code, Part II-A*, Docs. MEPC 68/6/4 March 23, 2015. This amendment was later incorporated into the Code. See IMO, Report of the Marine Environment Protection Committee on Its Sixty-Eight Session, Docs. MEPC 68/21 June 26 2015, para. 6.6.

¹²² See China, *Development of a Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters: Proposed amendments to section B-V/g of STCW Code*, Docs. HTW 1/11/2 January 6, 2014; and China, *Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters: Proposed transitional arrangements for training and qualification requirements for seafarers on board ships operating in polar waters*, Docs. HTW 2/9/1 December 12, 2014.

¹²³ Liu N & Hossain H (2017) China and the Development of International Law on Arctic Shipping: Challenges and Opportunities, *Research Paper No.* 2017-38.

¹²⁴ Sun D (2012) 2011 年国际海事组织 A 类理事 2011 年国际海事组织 A 类理事 提交提案分析 [Analysis of the status regarding proposals submitted by the IMO Category A Council members in 2011], *Zhongguo Haishi* 2012, no. 2.

¹²⁵ Moe, A. and Stokke, O. (2019) Asian Countries and Arctic Shipping: Policies, Interests and Footprints on Governance. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics* 10: 43.

China's low level of engagement with the Polar Code becomes more conspicuous, however, when one considers Beijing's somewhat hubristic desire to go from a "rule-follower" to a "rule-maker" in the Arctic.¹²⁶ In its 2018 Arctic White Paper (WP), China states that it, in general, "has played a constructive role in the formulation of Arctic-related international rules and the development of its governance system."¹²⁷ The WP goes on to note that China "will participate in regulating and managing the affairs and activities relating to the Arctic on the basis of rules and mechanisms," including "relevant rules of the [IMO]."¹²⁸ The Polar Code is mentioned only once in a paragraph introducing Beijing's Polar Silk Road. Here, it mentions the Code as it re-emphasizes China's support for the IMO by stating that the country "abides by the [Polar Code], and supports the [IMO] in playing an active role in formulating navigational rules for the Arctic."¹²⁹

On this backdrop, China has arguably done very little to shape the future of Arctic shipping—despite it being a central component of its Arctic policy. The Code and the role of the IMO in governing regional shipping have, nevertheless, been well received as ordering forces that help smooth out the geographical hierarchy of Arctic and non-Arctic stakeholders. Moreover, observers have deemed the Code to be an important opportunity for China "to better understand and better grasp the rules of the game in Arctic affairs."¹³⁰ Most significantly, Chinese law scholars have summarized the entry into force of the Polar Code as a positive development in Arctic governance, exactly because it makes certain aspects of Arctic governance less regional—describing it as a "hardening of international law" in the region.¹³¹ Others have noted the "fragmented nature of Arctic governance" and the "geographical advantage of the Arctic states" as factors limiting China's foray into the Arctic.¹³² On the former point, the criticism has been that the majority of competent governance bodies and instruments in the Arctic are regional and non-binding. Although more adaptable, these are perceived to be less effective when compared with hard law instruments and are "prone to be biased against China and other law-abiding states."¹³³

To this end, the country's shipbuilding experts have prescribed that China should work within the framework of international law to "strengthen [the Polar Code's] uniformity and coherence and prevent the regionalization of the behavior of individual Arctic states," referring to Russia and Canada. They further argue that "already-certified ships [navigating the Arctic] should not be subject to the regulations of coastal states," and that any obstruction of regular ship traffic

¹²⁶ Eiterjord T (2019) China's Busy Year in the Arctic, *The Diplomat*, January 30. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/chinas-busy-year-in-the-arctic/> Accessed 30 January 2019.

¹²⁷ State Council Information Office (2018) Full text: China's Arctic Policy. http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm Accessed 21 December 2019.

¹²⁸ State Council Information Office (2018).

¹²⁹ State Council Information Office (2018).

¹³⁰ Xue Y & Tong K (2019) 《极地水域船舶作业国际规则》的法律属性析论 [Analysis of Legal Attributes of the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters]. *Jidi Yanjiu* 31(3): 335.

¹³¹ Liu H & Sun K (2018) 演进中的北极治理以及中国参与北极事务的立场选择 [Emerging Arctic Governance and China's Choice of Positioning when Participating in Arctic Affairs]. In Sun, H. (eds.) *北极蓝皮书：北极地区发展报告 [Arctic Blue Book: Report on Arctic Regional Development]*.

¹³² Yang Z et al (2015) 我国增强在北极地区实质性存在的障碍与挑战 [Obstacles and Challenges for China's Growing Material Presence in the Arctic Region], *Shandong Shehui Kexue* 240: 134.

¹³³ Yang Z et al (2015).

would constitute “an interference with international law.”¹³⁴ On this point, maritime law scholars have recommended that China “must use international law to ward against coastal states who might abuse their regulatory powers to disrupt Chinese maritime traffic.”¹³⁵ Reflecting on this, the director of PRIC has called the Polar Code a “double-edged sword,” referring to the compromise between Arctic coastal states’ ability to regulate shipping in their exclusive economic zones and the sustainable regulation of polar shipping.¹³⁶ Others have expressed hope that, following the entry into force of the Polar Code, “Russia’s administration of its NSR will gradually become more in line with international conventions.”¹³⁷ These statements are marked by a concern over the potential interdiction by Arctic coastal states to the detriment of international maritime traffic in the region. From this perspective, then, the advent of the Polar Code supports Beijing’s vision of the Arctic as an international space by uniformly regulating shipping in the region and anchoring this authority in a specialized body under the UN.¹³⁸ This would, at least in theory, give Beijing a bigger seat at the table to influence Arctic governance as amendments to the Code are negotiated by the IMO in the future.

Turbulent Technopolitics

Experts have emphasized the technological challenge posed by the Polar Code. The new regulatory regime has precipitated a new barrier of entry to polar shipping in the form of mandatory technical requirements for the construction and operation of polar-going vessels.¹³⁹ In this context, the Polar Code provides compulsory technical standards “that present great challenges to the Chinese polar shipping industry”¹⁴⁰ by constituting a “technological threshold”—at once underscoring the still-nascent state of China’s polar seafaring, and its position as a major user and shipbuilding state.¹⁴¹ Representatives from China’s shipbuilding sector have repeatedly called for greater engagement by domestic stakeholders and “actively take part in drawing up the Polar Code and boost its research on polar ship design and relevant regulations.”¹⁴² China’s Maritime Safety Administration have similarly urged the shipbuilding sector to pay closer attention to new developments and to “more actively promote national interests,”¹⁴³ while others have called for the industry to “take a thorough inventory of its capabilities” in order to better argue its case in the drawing up of the Code.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁴ Wu C et al (2014) IMO极地规则和未来极地船舶发展趋势分析 [Analysis of Developing Trend of the IMO Polar Code and Future Polar Ship], *Zaochuan Jishu* 2: 9.

¹³⁵ Han J & Zhang S (2015) 极地规则制定进程对我国参与国际海事事务的启示 [Lessons from the Development Process of Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters for China Participating in International Maritime Affairs]. *Zhongguo Hanghai* 38(2): 99

¹³⁶ Zhang J, Yang H & Wang L (2016) 我国北极航道开拓的战略选择初探 [A Preliminary Study of China’s Strategic Choices in Developing Arctic Sea Routes] *Jidi Yanjiu* 28(2): 275

¹³⁷ Guo N & Hu M (2018) 北极航道利益研究综述 [A Review: Interests Brought on by the Arctic Sea Routes] *Haiyang Kaifa Yu Guanli* 10: 53

¹³⁸ Bennett M (2015) How China Sees the Arctic: Reading Between Extraregional and Intraregional Narratives. *Geopolitics* 20(3): 645-668

¹³⁹ Yan N & Sun Y (2019) ‘冰上丝绸之路’面临的问题和挑战 [Problems and Challenges Facing the ‘Polar Silk Road’]. *Shangye Jingji* 509(1): 82-84.

¹⁴⁰ Li W (2016) International code for ships operating in polar waters: challenges to polar shipping safety rules in China. *Advances in Polar Science* 27(3): 150.

¹⁴¹ Zhang J et al Strategic Choices: 275.

¹⁴² Wang T (2017) 智能装备助力智取海洋 [Smart Equipment To Outsmart the Ocean], *Zhongguo Haiyang Bao*. 28 February, 2017.

¹⁴³ Yan H & Huang L (2018) 关于《极地规则》防污染要求的提案解读和利益相关方分析 [An Interpretation of Proposals on Pollution Prevention to the Polar Code and Analysis of Stakeholders]. *Hanghai Jishu* no. 5: 65-68.

¹⁴⁴ Han J & Zhang S (2015) 极地规则制定进程对我国参与国际海事事务的启示 [Lessons from the Development Process of Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters for China Participating in International Maritime Affairs]. *Zhongguo Hanghai* 38(2): 99.

Academic and industry experts have shown to be particularly cognizant of the technopolitics that played out within the IMO as the Polar Code was being drafted. Law scholars have argued that “due to the IMO being a specialized agency, countries with the most advanced technology speak with the strongest voice (*huayuquan*),” and will “use the IMO as a platform to spread their own standards.”¹⁴⁵ Others have argued that since “all international cooperation is based on national strength”—and seeing as shipping stands particularly prominent in the Arctic—China should make concerted efforts to improve its polar shipbuilding capabilities.¹⁴⁶ The country’s shipbuilders have stressed China’s geographical context as a non-polar state as well: “By being a non-polar state, Chinese ships have to traverse large distances of open water before reaching the ice-infested waters of the polar regions.” Therefore, these ships “should not need to be able to operate in polar areas independently to the same extent as those of polar states,” and as its polar shipbuilding capabilities mature, “China should emphasize these conditions in the drawing up of the Polar Code.”¹⁴⁷ Shipbuilders have also expressed worries over an eventual ban on the use and carriage of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), echoing China’s position during deliberations in the IMO, arguing that the Code “must strike a balance between commercial shipping and environmental protection and not simply adopt an outright ban.”¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the clearest articulation of these technopolitical dynamics is the prescription that China should adhere to a “principle of moderation” when participating in the future work of the Polar Code: its delegation to the IMO ought to remain within the “category of technology (*jishu de fanchou*)”¹⁴⁹—seeing as the technical nature of the IMO negotiations provide China with room to further its interests without becoming embroiled in regional politics and issues of sovereignty. To this end, argue that China should use “technology” to circumvent “political principles (*zhengzhi yuanze*).” On matters not in China’s interest, it should adopt a “principle of procrastination (*tuoyan de yuanze*)” in order to buy more time.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

Albeit only a cursory review, this look at China’s reception of the Polar Code reveals that, while having taken a back seat during its development, the Code is nevertheless recognized as a development favorable to Beijing’s interests in the region by anchoring the regulation of Arctic shipping in the IMO. Its development has partially been framed as a technopolitical competition, wherein technological competency can be leveraged for political gains. This accords in many ways with the observation that China, as a geographical outsider, must resort to being a “norm entrepreneur” as it attempts to grow its position in the Arctic.¹⁵¹ Paralleling this observation, Chinese International Relations scholars have explored the concept of “creative involvement” and identified the Polar Code as a “technological route” through which Beijing can gain a greater

¹⁴⁵ Han J & Zhang S (2015) 极地规则制定进程对我国参与国际海事事务的启示 [Lessons from the Development Process of Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters for China Participating in International Maritime Affairs]. *Zhongguo Hanghai* 38(2): 98.

¹⁴⁶ Han L & Song S (2016) 北极海域的国际法规制及对中国利用北极航线的影响 [The Regulation of Arctic Waters by International Law and Its Effects on China’s Utilization of Arctic Shipping Lanes]. *Zhongguo Haishangfa Yanjiu* 27(3): 62.

¹⁴⁷ Wu C, Wu G & Wang X (2014) IMO极地规则和未来极地船舶发展趋势分析 [Analysis of the Development Trend of the IMO Polar Code and Future Polar Ships]. *Zaochuan Jishu* no. 2: 9.

¹⁴⁸ Wu C, Wu G & Wang X (2014).

¹⁴⁹ Han J & Zhang S (2015).

¹⁵⁰ Han J & Zhang S (2015).

¹⁵¹ Lanteigne M (2017) ‘Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?’ China as a norm entrepreneur in the Arctic. *Polar Record* 53(2): 117-130.

voice in Arctic affairs.¹⁵² Future studies should explore China’s activities in the IMO more in-depth than what this article has been able to do. They should also examine how industrial policy is being configured to meet the concerns outlined here. More generally, then, this article hopes to highlight how negotiations over technical issues can serve as fruitful venues for exploring broader, geopolitical contentions – particularly as they, in the case of Arctic shipping, gather both Arctic and non-Arctic states. The anti-political qualities of such processes can be productive for states and non-state actors who lack the geographical or political legitimacy to argue their cases in other forums. This sentiment was, perhaps, best captured by the title of an article in the trade publication *China Ship News*: when it comes to emerging maritime regulations, “asking questions beats answering them.”¹⁵³

¹⁵² He G & Song X (2013) 创造性: 中国参与北极地区事物的条件与路径探索 [Creative Involvement: Analysis of the Circumstances and Channels of China’s Participation in Arctic Affairs], *Taipingyang Xuebao* 21(3): 51-58.

¹⁵³ Li Q (2014) 应对海事新规：“答题”不如“出题” [Responding to new maritime regulations: “asking questions” beats “answering” them]. *Zhongguo Chuanbo Bao*. August 29, 2014.



REDUCING CHINA'S BLACK CARBON EMISSIONS: AN ARCTIC DIMENSION

BY YULIA YAMINEVA

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Black carbon emissions (soot) reduction is critical for global climate, air quality and human health. Black carbon is the second most important individual climate-warming agent after carbon dioxide (CO₂), and it also contributes to air pollution as a component of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).¹⁵⁴ Research suggests that black carbon has played a significant role in the recent warming in the Arctic: this includes emissions from countries outside the region, particularly in Asia.¹⁵⁵

China's black carbon emissions are significant on a global scale: its contribution accounted for 20 to 24% of the global total – the highest proportion – during the period from 1990 to 2007.¹⁵⁶ China's emissions of black carbon mainly originate from using biomass, coal or oil for cooking and heating in residential and industrial sectors, diesel transportation, and open agricultural burning.¹⁵⁷ These emissions were steadily declining in 2010-2017;¹⁵⁸ however, the 2019 data shows an increase of coal consumption of 3.3 per cent from the previous year, which points to a possible increase in associated black carbon emissions.¹⁵⁹ This emissions data implies that any measures China adopts to limit its black carbon emissions have a significant impact on the global climate and the Arctic.

Globally, attention to black carbon emissions is on the rise with cooperative efforts concentrating under Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) and the Arctic Council.¹⁶⁰ The CCAC is a voluntary government-led partnership with the goal of raising awareness and improving scientific understanding of short-lived climate pollutants (including black carbon), building capacities, strengthening national and regional actions, and promoting best practices. The Arctic Council has been proactive in addressing black carbon emissions not only among its member states but also among observer states.¹⁶¹ For non-Arctic states, the Council aims to raise

PHOTO CREDIT: Chinese university students come and go in the dense air pollution. Photo: vtpoly

¹⁵⁴ Bond, T. C., Doherty, S. J., Fahey, D. W., Forster, P. M., Bernsten, T., DeAngelo, B. J., ... & Kinne, S. (2013). Bounding the role of black carbon in the climate system: A scientific assessment. *Journal of geophysical research: Atmospheres*, 118(11), 5380-5552.

¹⁵⁵ AMAP(2015). AMAP Assessment 2015: Black carbon and ozone as Arctic climate forcers. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Oslo, Norway. vii + 116 pp.

¹⁵⁶ UNEP (2015). The Climate and Environmental Benefits of Controlling SLCPs in P.R. China. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya.

¹⁵⁷ UNEP (2015).

¹⁵⁸ Zheng, B., Tong, D., Li, M., Liu, F., Hong, C., Geng, G., ... & Liu, Y. (2018). Trends in China's anthropogenic emissions since 2010 as the consequence of clean air actions. *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, 18(19), 14095-14111.

¹⁵⁹ For more information, see: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/PqFhntNwkljP98Tk_NV1sg

¹⁶⁰ Climate and Clean Air Coalition (2020). <https://ccacoalition.org/en>

¹⁶¹ Arctic Council (2019). Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane - Summary of Progress and Recommendations 2019. 88 pp.

awareness and encourage participation in the development and improvement of emissions inventories. In addition, under the Paris Agreement several countries have mentioned reducing black carbon emissions in their Nationally Determined Contributions.¹⁶²

China's engagement in these initiatives has been low so far. Its relatively passive attitude towards global cooperation efforts on black carbon can be partly explained by the immaturity of its domestic discussion and policy approach to the issue. There has been limited attention on the part of policy-makers to black carbon emissions. The main challenge for the country is insufficient data on black carbon emissions and limited understanding of their sources, impacts, and mitigation pathways. Consequently, there are no policies in China specifically targeting these emissions. At the same time, black carbon is indirectly addressed through targets for reducing emissions of PM_{2.5} which have been successful in dramatically improving air quality in the key cities in China.¹⁶³ Synergies between air quality and climate policy goals are also acknowledged in recent policies, for instance in the new Three-Year Action Plan for Winning the Blue Sky War (2018–2020). However, in general air pollution policies lack a black carbon focus.

The same holds for China's climate policies. China's domestic policy has primarily focused on CO₂ emissions and its Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement includes only CO₂ emissions reduction targets.¹⁶⁴ In principle, as CO₂ and black carbon are often co-emitted by the same sources, measures to reduce CO₂ emissions led to reductions in black carbon emissions; yet the degree of such reductions is unclear. Therefore, black carbon emissions have not yet received sustained policy attention in China. This represents a lost opportunity to realize significant co-benefits from tackling these emissions for climate, air quality and human health. With improving emissions inventories, strengthening science-policy interface and the recent transfer of the climate change policy portfolio to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, there is a high potential to increase synergies between climate and air quality policy portfolios.

What does this mean for the global community? Active cooperation on the science, and emissions monitoring and inventories as well as knowledge sharing about possible solutions should be the focus of current dialogues with China. These can take place both bilaterally and under international or global fora such as CCAC, UN Climate Change Convention and Arctic Council. Reducing black carbon emissions is a promising area of cooperation because emissions reductions carry immediate benefits both for the world at large and for China.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ross, K., T. Damassa, E. Northrop, A. Light, D. Waskow, T. Fransen, and A. Tankou. 2018. "Strengthening Nationally Determined Contributions to Catalyze Actions That Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants. Working Paper. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at www.wri.org/publications/reducing-SLCPs.

¹⁶³ Greenpeace East Asia (2018). "PM_{2.5} in Beijing Down 54%, But Nationwide Air Quality Improvements Slow as Coal Use Increases." *Greenpeace*. <https://www.greenpeace.org/eastasia/press/978/pm2-5-in-beijing-down-54-but-nationwide-air-quality-improvements-slow-as-coal-use-increases-2/>

¹⁶⁴ (2015). China's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution: *Enhanced Actions on Climate Change*. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/China%20First/China's%20First%20NDC%20Submission.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ This commentary draws on the following work: Yamineva, Yulia, and Zhe Liu. *Cleaning the air, protecting the climate: policy, legal and institutional nexus to reduce black carbon emissions in China*. In *Environmental Science and Policy*, 95 (May 2019), pp. 1-10. And Yamineva, Yulia, and Kati Kulovesi. *Keeping the Arctic white: the legal and governance landscape for reducing short-lived climate pollutants in the Arctic region*. In *Transnational Environmental Law*, 7 (July 2018), pp. 201-227.

'PREPARED TO GO FULLY KINETIC': HOW U.S. LEADERS CONCEPTUALIZE CHINA'S THREAT TO ARCTIC SECURITY



BY JACQUELYN CHORUSH

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Recent U.S. defense allocations show just how concerned U.S. leaders have become regarding Chinese activities in relation to Arctic security. U.S. Senate bill 1790, *The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*, allocates \$738 billion to national defense and clearly reflects the U.S. focus on enhancing defensive capabilities in the Arctic. It details a process to report on Chinese and Russian military activities in the Arctic and evaluate “the extent to which these activities affect or threaten the interests of the United States and its allies.” U.S. defense personnel are also instructed to closely monitor Chinese FDI in the region. The bill reflects the general tendency of U.S. leaders to stress the likelihood of a military confrontation with China in the Arctic. As a result, the U.S. stance prioritizes a build-up in military defenses. But critics argue that this approach is inadequate and too narrow, instead advocating for a more coordinated, multi-faceted approach to stemming China’s growing influence.¹⁶⁶

While others in the region have also expressed concerns over Chinese ambitions, most perceive a threat of a different nature. China’s Arctic presence primarily involves the avid pursuit of investment opportunities, active participation in the Arctic Council, and other non-military means of involvement. Marc Lanteigne, an expert in the field, writes, “To date, China’s conservative approach to developing an Arctic strategy has been successful, as the country is now widely viewed as a significant Arctic player after only a few short years of intensive regional engagement.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, the threat is that China, a country with an abusive, authoritarian government, has attained a disproportionately large share of power and influence in the Arctic.

The divergence of views has been increasingly clear of late. In a recent speech delivered to the Arctic Council, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned attendees of China’s interest in

PHOTO CREDIT: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivers a speech to the Arctic Council on May 6th, 2019, during which he warns of Chinese and Russian ambitions as a threat to Arctic security. Photo: [U.S. Department of State](#)

¹⁶⁶ Rosen M (2019) Will China Freeze America Out of the Arctic? *Washington Post*, 14 August, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-china-freeze-america-out-arctic-73511>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

¹⁶⁷ Lanteigne, M (2019) China’s Emerging Strategies in the Arctic. *High North News*, 24 April, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/chinas-emerging-strategies-arctic>. Accessed on 14 January 2020.

subverting the rule of law in the Arctic for its own nefarious purposes.¹⁶⁸ His comments were met with shock and sharp criticism.¹⁶⁹ Many attendees considered his condemnation to be aggressive, as well as inappropriate for the Council, which intentionally excludes security matters from the agenda in order to promote an atmosphere of peace and cooperation.

Pompeo's behavior does reveal a lack of familiarity with the geopolitical context, institutions, and codes of conduct in the Arctic. But if his *faux pas* stemmed solely from ignorance, one might expect U.S. rhetoric towards China to evolve. It has not. Top U.S. officials continue to insist that Chinese activities signal military aggression. Roughly six months after Pompeo's speech, U.S. Secretary Richard V. Spencer stated "From the Arctic to the South China Sea, we're seeing increases in the challenges to Freedom of Navigation and Law of the Sea...aggressive behavior that remains in the grey zone just below kinetic activity."¹⁷⁰

There is more to this than simply ignorance or myopia. The Arctic's close geographical proximity to the United States, as well as prevalent imaginings of the Arctic as a barren wilderness, trigger the application of a U.S. narrative dating back roughly two centuries. The narrative emerged soon after the U.S. was founded and was forever enshrined in a foreign policy principle known as the "Monroe Doctrine." Today, the doctrine involves an expectation that foreign powers will not pursue imperialist ambitions in the Western Hemisphere and that "any intervention by external powers in the policy of the Americas is a potentially hostile act against the USA."¹⁷¹

The History of the Monroe Doctrine

Originally, this doctrine targeted European powers eyeing further conquest in the Americas. Less than fifty years prior, the U.S. had gained its independence from Britain. By 1823, many colonies throughout the Americas had gained independence from Europe and the U.S. sought to keep it that way. There was also consideration of the "northwest question," as Russia had claimed lands in the North American Arctic, and the U.S. and Britain shared the jointly occupied Oregon territory just below it.

Throughout his presidency, the fifth American president James Monroe contemplated a foreign policy stance that would deter intervention by foreign powers. He oscillated between a unilateral stance, singly guaranteeing protection for the entire Western Hemisphere, or a joint declaration with Britain, which had already been discussed with British minister George Canning. Given U.S. founding principles, an isolationist approach was the more appropriate choice, but the U.S. lacked the naval and military power to enforce non-intervention on its own. Assistance from Britain would be necessary for enforcement.

¹⁶⁸ Pompeo M (2019) Looking North: Sharpening America's Focus. *The Arctic Council*, 6 May, <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>. Accessed on 7 January 2020

¹⁶⁹ Lanteigne M (2019) The US Throws Down the Gauntlet at the Arctic Council's Finland Meeting. *Over The Circle*, 7 May, <https://overthecircle.com/2019/05/07/the-us-throws-down-the-gauntlet-at-the-arctic-councils-finland-meeting/>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

¹⁷⁰ Spencer R (2019) Halifax Address. *Halifax International Security Forum*, 23 November, <https://halifaxtheforum.org/forum/2019-halifax-international-security-forum/saturday-november-23/#agenda>. Accessed on 7 January 2020

¹⁷¹ No Author (2019) John Quincy Adams. *Oxford Reference*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095349797>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

Monroe favored the latter but solicited advice from former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Both encouraged a joint position with the British.¹⁷² Jefferson concluded in a letter to Monroe, “I am clearly of Mr. Canning’s opinion, that [a joint declaration] will prevent instead of provoking war... all Europe combined would not undertake such a war.”¹⁷³

But Monroe’s Secretary of State John Quincy Adams was fervently against a joint declaration. According to Dexter Perkins, a preeminent scholar on the Monroe Doctrine, Adams’ communications in the years leading up to 1823 reflect consistency in his general attitude towards colonialism, which “only needed a slight further step to produce a generalization on which a doctrine might be founded.”¹⁷⁴

He cites a heated exchange between Adams and British Minister Canning, as recounted by Adams in his diary. While discussing land claims in the American northwest, Adams remarked in frustration, “I do not know what you claim nor what you do not claim. You claim India; you claim Africa... We know of no right that you have here.”¹⁷⁵ Adams feared what he considered British imperialist ambitions in North America, and also had expansionist dreams for the U.S.

According to Perkins, Adams thought of the Americas as “a special preserve of the United States, from which the rest of the world ought to be excluded.”¹⁷⁶ Adams even stated in 1819 that, “Until Europe shall find it a settled geographical element that the United States and North America are identical, any effort on our part to reason the world out of a belief that we are ambitious will have no other effect than to convince them that we add to our ambition hypocrisy.”¹⁷⁷ This view was not unique to Adams; there was a widespread belief in *manifest destiny*, the idea that the United States was predestined by God to expand across the entirety of North America.¹⁷⁸

Adams ultimately proved himself more persuasive than his contemporaries, as Monroe’s doctrine was a clear articulation of complete non-intervention. Thus, the Monroe Doctrine formally introduced unilateralism and isolationism as the status quo of U.S. foreign policy and also offered a convenient defense rationale to push competitors from the Western Hemisphere.

As anticipated, the doctrine was rhetorically powerful but sparsely enforced when European powers eventually did resume intervention in the Americas.¹⁷⁹ Still, Adams believed that in the long term, establishing this principle was more valuable than something immediately enforceable. His ideas about American identity and U.S. sovereignty over North America formed the doctrine’s ideological bedrock.

¹⁷² Hughes C (2019) Monroe Doctrine. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 December, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Monroe-Doctrine>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

¹⁷³ Thomas J (1823) To the President of the United States (James Monroe). Monticello: 24 October, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/thomas.htm>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

¹⁷⁴ Perkins D (1927, p. 10) *The Monroe Doctrine 1823-1926*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹⁷⁵ Perkins D (1927, p. 9) *The Monroe Doctrine 1823-1926*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹⁷⁶ Perkins D (1927, p. 9).

¹⁷⁷ Perkins D (1927, p. 9).

¹⁷⁸ *History.com* (2019) Manifest Destiny. *History.com*, 19 November, <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/manifest-destiny>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

¹⁷⁹ Hughes C (2019) Monroe Doctrine. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 December, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Monroe-Doctrine>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

Evidence of the Monroe Doctrine's Enduring Narrative in the Arctic

The Monroe Doctrine's greatest impact was its formal articulation of an enduring narrative regarding the U.S. identity and role in the Western Hemisphere, which remains deeply embedded in the American consciousness. U.S. national security expert David Rothkopf puts it well: “[The American] system has evolved the way it has because for almost all of U.S. history, back to the days of the founders’ admonitions against foreign entanglements, the bias among America’s leaders has been the view that we are not part of the world at large, that overseas events are indeed ‘foreign,’ and that we are better off remaining apart.”¹⁸⁰ While this narrative has evolved over the years to reflect shifts in international geopolitics and the status of U.S. power, it still retains five major elements:

1. The Americas are a coveted wilderness with vast resources and untapped potential.
2. Envious foreign nations are actively plotting to secure American riches by force, depriving the rightful owners of their freedom and wreaking havoc in the process.
3. These inherently nefarious, subversive forces ultimately intend to overtake the United States—the only way for them to truly succeed in destroying the free world.
4. The U.S., with its superior moral code, must protect itself and the free world by taking defensive military action.
5. Instilling fear through demonstrations of U.S. military strength is the most effective way to drive foreign conquerors from vulnerable, impressionable American lands.

China’s behavior suits the narrative well. It has demonstrated aggressive, imperialist ambitions in the South China Sea. It is rapidly enhancing its own military and defensive capabilities, and there is reason to believe that its worldwide influence will continue to grow. U.S. leaders are aware of this, and also suspect nefarious intentions underlying China’s Arctic engagements. This encroachment links up with fears of a direct threat of attack on the free world, and especially the United States. To drive China from the region and deter attacks, the narrative would call for threats against Chinese aggression.

Upon closer inspection, Pompeo and Spencer’s recent statements contain the elements of this narrative structure. A longer excerpt of Pompeo’s speech reads:

“The world has long felt a magnetic pull towards the Arctic, but never more so than today... We’re entering a new age of strategic engagement in the Arctic, complete with new threats to the Arctic and its real estate, and to all of our interests in that region... We know from experience that free and fair competition opened by the rule of law produces the best outcomes... China has observer status at the Arctic Council, but that status is contingent upon its respect for the

¹⁸⁰ Rothkopf D (2006, p. 460) *Running the World: the inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

sovereign status of Arctic states. The U.S. wants China to meet that condition and contribute responsibly in the region. But China's words and actions raise doubts about its intentions. Beijing claims to be a "near-Arctic state." Yet the shortest distance between China and the Arctic is 900 miles. There are only Arctic states and non-Arctic states. No third category exists, and claiming otherwise entitles China to exactly nothing... Let's just ask ourselves: Do we want Arctic nations broadly, or indigenous communities specifically, to go the way of former governments in Sri Lanka or Malaysia, ensnared by debt and corruption? Do we want crucial Arctic infrastructure to end up like Chinese-constructed roads in Ethiopia, crumbling and dangerous after only a few years? Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims?"¹⁸¹

Pompeo describes the Arctic as a coveted source of resources and a vast wilderness yet to be developed, which is all the more valuable given Earth's rising temperatures. These changes attract attention from foreign powers, which behave in ways that threaten the best interests of Arctic littoral states and create competition for resources. As a result of Chinese intervention, Pompeo foresees rule of law the Arctic devolving into "competing territorial claims," despite the widely cited, resounding evidence that the Arctic already has a clear, largely unchallenged legal structure.¹⁸²

Pompeo points to China's self-characterization as a "near-Arctic state" as proof of this threat, meriting "doubts about [China's] intentions." While some may not find this particularly offensive, it suggests Pompeo's discomfort with what he considers to be defiance of a clear binary: local versus foreign. To him, the term signals China's refusal to acknowledge its geographical separation from the region, directly denying the proper degree of deference to the sovereign rights of Arctic states. He reminds attendees of this by pointing out that China is located 900 miles away.

He also borrows from the narrative's implied power dynamic, characterizing China as a destructive, imperialistic power set on ensnaring Arctic communities, extracting resources, and leaving a "crumbling and dangerous" region. Local populations, "Arctic nations broadly" and "indigenous communities specifically" are characterized as vulnerable and helpless targets of this abuse. Ultimately, in his view, Chinese intervention in the Arctic will transform the Arctic Ocean into a "new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims." Thus, it threatens the free and utopian society that the U.S. seeks to protect. Spencer's statement dovetails with Pompeo's line of reasoning:

"From the Arctic to the South China Sea, we're seeing increases in the challenges to Freedom of Navigation and Law of the Sea. These kinds of changes are increasingly defining our age: aggressive behavior that remains in the grey zone just below kinetic activity. And this is different for us. We used to be expecting blow by blow. The blows might not come in this level of threat. It will be a continual threat on a lower basis. And we must be prepared for that, but also prepared to go fully kinetic. 'Cause why do we have the militaries we have? It's so our state departments

¹⁸¹ Pompeo M (2019) Looking North: Sharpening America's Focus. *The Arctic Council*, 6 May, <https://www.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/>. Accessed on 7 January 2020.

¹⁸² Rosen M (2019) Will China Freeze America Out of the Arctic? *Washington Post*, 14 August, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-china-freeze-america-out-arctic-73511>. Accessed on 14 January 2020

can do what they do best. And we buy them one more day, one more week, one more month, to avoid kinetic activity. For our part, the U.S. Department of Defense is committed to ensuring that the rest of the government has that option. One more day, one more week. But I will tell you, with firm resolve, we are ready to act tonight and deliver the fight if so called. I want to make it very clear that this room is a table for all nations that benefit from a rules-based, international order if they so by agree by it.”¹⁸³

Spencer sees the threat of attack as imminent, as subversive forces are on a perpetual mission to destroy the peaceful adherents to this “rules-based, international order.” His reasoning suggests that the U.S. and its allies maintain a superior moral code, inherently making them peaceful, military power is only employed defensively to protect “rules-based” channels. Thus, the presence of aggressive entities keeps the region in a “grey zone just below kinetic activity.” Spencer then reassures attendees, insisting “with firm resolve” that the U.S. is prepared to “deliver the fight” should things go “fully kinetic.”

Both officials believe Chinese aggression as an irrepressible characteristic of the Chinese state, and anticipate a military conflict in any arena in which China is involved. As a result, current Chinese activities in the Arctic are seen as a means to an end—destruction. Their assumptions dismiss the reality that conquest is no longer the dominant form for amassing regional influence and power. Also, conquest and war are incredibly destructive. If China does seek to extract value from the Arctic, then it would not make sense to launch a destructive and costly attack, especially if Chinese investors are funding large-scale infrastructure and other projects.

Considering a Better Path Forward

In a well-functioning national security apparatus, strategy drives the foreign policy narrative—as was the case when the Monroe Doctrine was originally delivered in 1823. The narrative offered a simple but compelling rationale that not only provided for military defense, but also the protection of economic and other interests. But the current U.S. fixation on inevitable war in the Arctic, despite evidence to the contrary, suggests that the narrative is driving strategy. Unchecked, it has blinded U.S. leaders to the true nature of this particular national security threat.

While there is still debate over the ultimate ends that China is pursuing in the Arctic, the means are clear. It is leveraging all opportunities to ingrain itself into the social, political, and economic fabric of the Arctic. China’s lack of sovereignty claims in the Arctic make it quite vulnerable to being “locked out,” so the Chinese government has every interest abiding by the general Arctic code of conduct. China has closely adhered to the Arctic Council’s utopian vision to build a region of peace, tailoring its language and efforts to echo values of cooperation, peace and sustainability.

But the Chinese government’s behavior is limited by its degree of influence in the Arctic. The more that China integrates itself, the more powerful an actor it becomes in the region and the

¹⁸³ Spencer R (2019) Halifax Address. *Halifax International Security Forum*, 23 November, <https://halifaxtheforum.org/forum/2019-halifax-international-security-forum/saturday-november-23/#agenda>. Accessed on 7 January 2020

more liberties its government may be willing to take in pushing boundaries and pursuing more selfish interests. At the moment, U.S. leaders cling to a belief that threats and projections of military power can vanquish China from the Arctic. This belief is misguided. The U.S. view that it deserves a heightened degree of deference in the Arctic is also outdated and superseded by international law. Appeals to that narrative and the expectation of deference only make the U.S. appear aggressive.

For now, the most strategic defensive action that the United States can undertake to limit Chinese influence is by competing for it. The United States has a strong economy, a robust R&D infrastructure, and vast non-military and military capabilities. It should be engaging in the Arctic on all of these levels, and more. The private and public sectors in the U.S. could easily step up their engagement in mutually beneficial, long-term relationships that carry the added benefit of a heightened sense of regional stability in the Arctic.



CHINA AND ITS ARCTIC TRAJECTORIES: FINAL REMARKS

BY SANNA KOPRA

When we began to put together The Arctic Institute’s China series in the beginning of this year, little did we know about what was about to happen due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Today, it is not difficult to imagine that far-ranging consequences of the pandemic will reshape economic and political dynamics in the Arctic region. Will the pandemic constitute an exogenous shock that triggers fundamental change in international order, including the regional order in the Arctic? What kind of role will China play in the reconstruction of the Arctic economy and what are geopolitical and environmental consequences?

As the articles of our China series demonstrate, China’s regional role has grown long before the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese investors are involved in economic projects in many parts of the region, including Greenland where Chinese investors have stakes in two mining projects. Beijing partakes in international frameworks, such as the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code), that support its globalist view of the Arctic. What is more, China has constructed an Arctic identity and developed bilateral Arctic partnerships in general, and with Russia in particular (albeit its partnership with Russia remains complicated). It is difficult to estimate how big an amount of airborne and marine pollutants coming to the Arctic originate from China.¹⁸⁴ What is clear, however, is that China’s contribution to international climate politics is highly insufficient¹⁸⁵ and that Beijing has not paid enough attention to the country’s black carbon emissions.¹⁸⁶ Hence, reducing black carbon emissions constitutes an important area of cooperation between China and the Arctic states.

Although China’s growing regional engagement has raised speculations and concerns among regional actors and stakeholders, there is no shared threat perception about “China threat” among the eight Arctic states. While some Arctic states are concerned about political and economic risks related to the Chinese investments in the region, the US is “prepared to go fully kinetic”. Thus, it seems that traditional security issues and great power competition¹⁸⁷ are making a comeback to the Arctic security discussions, especially due to the tightening geopolitical tensions between the United States and China.¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic seems to have fostered deep mistrust between the two countries. It remains to be seen whether,

PHOTO CREDIT: World’s largest ice sculpture at Harbin Snow and Ice Festival. Photo: [Emma Gawen](#)

¹⁸⁴ Kopra, S., Hurri, K., Kauppila, L., Stepien, A., & Yamineva, Y. (2020). China, Climate Change and the Arctic Environment. In *Chinese Policy and Presence in the Arctic* (pp. 62-89). Brill Nijhoff.

¹⁸⁵ See: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/china/>.

¹⁸⁶ UNEP (2015). The Climate and Environmental Benefits of Controlling SLCPs in P.R. China. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya.

¹⁸⁷ Holmes, James (2020). “Great Power Competition is Racing to the Arctic.” *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/501117-great-power-competition-is-racing-to-the-arctic>

¹⁸⁸ Lanteigne, Marc (2019). “The Changing Shape of Arctic Security.” *NATO Review*. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/06/28/the-changing-shape-of-arctic-security/index.html>

and how, the growing mistrust will affect Arctic cooperation and undermine the important work done by the Arctic Council, the intergovernmental regional body, on promoting sustainable development in the region.¹⁸⁹ Presently, it is too early to anticipate whether or not China will emerge a stronger regional player in the Arctic in the aftermath of COVID-19. For the purposes of such anticipations, the articles of our China series offer a comprehensive account of China’s policies and interests in the Arctic – highly recommended reading if we are to enhance international cooperation and assure that the Arctic remains an international zone of peace in the future.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Muzik, Val and Nina Joffe (2020). “A Brief History of the Arctic Council – Infographic.” *The Arctic Institute*.
<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/brief-history-arctic-council-infographic/>

¹⁹⁰ Gorbachev, M. (1987). “Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech In Murmansk At The Ceremonial Meeting On The Occasion Of The Presentation Of The Order Of Lenin And The Gold Star To The City Of Murmansk.” https://www.barentsinfo.fi/docs/Gorbachev_speech.pdf

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