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THE CIRCLE

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ASIA IN THE ARCTIC



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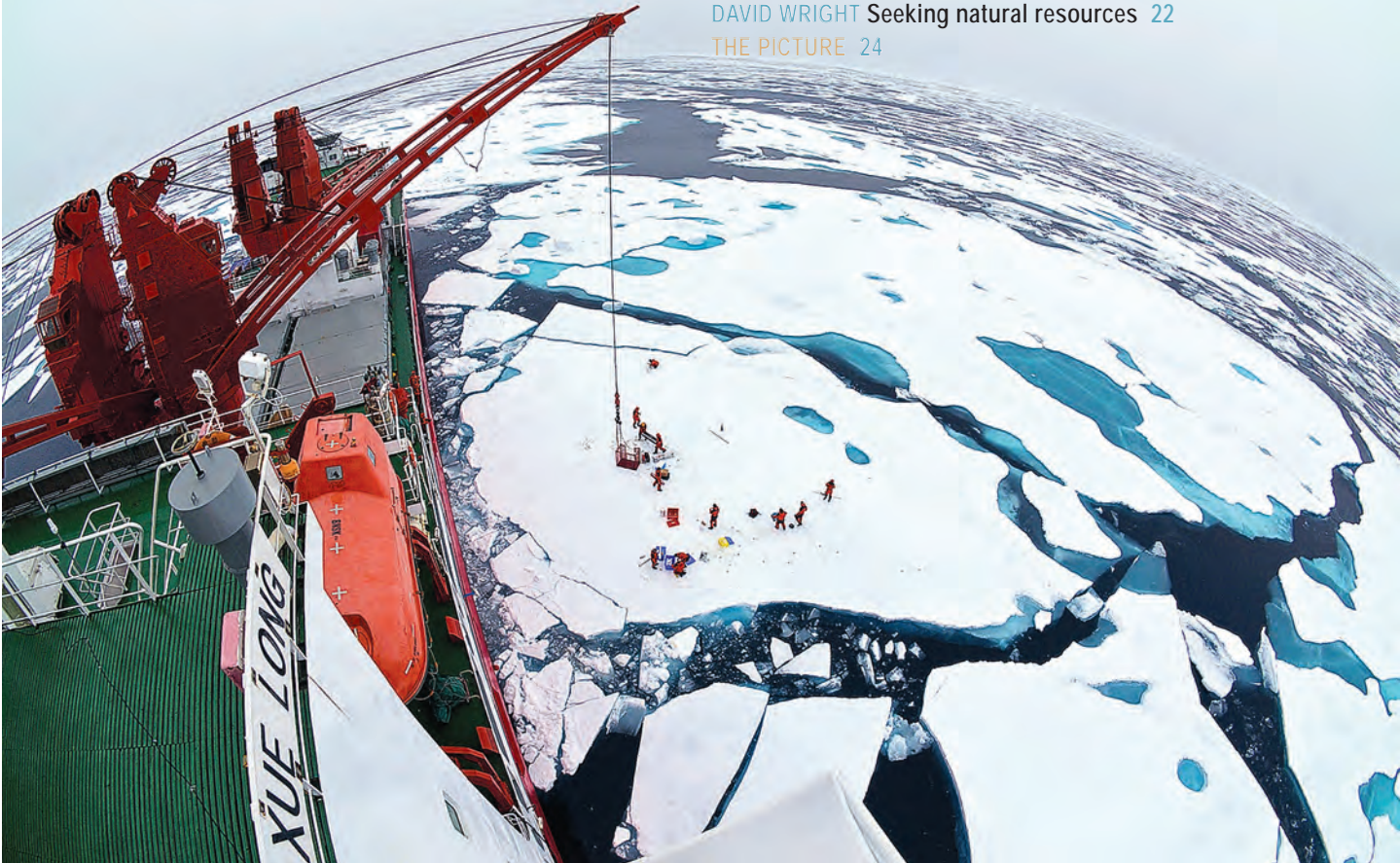
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ABOVE: Drift ice camp in the middle of the Arctic Ocean seen from the deck of Chinese icebreaker Xue Long (Snow Dragon).

Photo: Timo Palo, Wikimedia Commons.

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Asia and the Arctic

AS THE CHINESE government representative states in this edition of *The Circle*, China is a “near-Arctic country”.

This translates into an interest in the Arctic in terms of its potential use as a transit route for goods. It is also a potential source of raw materials. The Arctic is already home to four of the largest fisheries in the world, and their importance may expand as supplies dwindle elsewhere, and the Arctic ice recedes for longer periods. The Arctic is also thought to hold hydrocarbons—90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids according to a 2008 estimate by a United States government agency. These close-by routes and resources are of obvious interest to Asian countries.

But proximity to the Arctic is not really a prerequisite for states to affect the Arctic, either directly or indirectly, and for the Arctic to affect them in turn. Traces of pesticides used on cotton crops in Asia have showed up in the fat of Arctic animals. It was data from the Arctic, showing that chemicals from far away were showing up in the Arctic environment and in Arctic peoples, that helped drive an international response. Thankfully, the more toxic pesticides were dealt with by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic pollutants which has been ratified by all the Asian observer countries at the Arctic Council. This is a positive example of Asian countries realizing that they were having an unintended and indirect negative effect on the Arctic, and stepping up to take responsibility.

There is still a threat to the Arctic from new industrial chemicals, and we must be vigilant to ensure that they do not disrupt the environment or peoples' health. That threat is currently taking a back seat to the more im-

THERE IS STILL A THREAT TO THE ARCTIC FROM NEW INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

mediate challenge of climate change. Pressures for energy and economic growth in China and other Asian countries are playing an increasing role in driving greenhouse gas emissions. As Asian countries work to meet the legitimate aspirations of their populations to raise their living standards, they must also be careful that their route to more general prosperity does not prove to be short-term gain for longer term pain. While climate change is having faster, stronger and more visible impacts in the Arctic with the shrinkage of summer sea ice, those effects do not stay in the Arctic. Feedbacks from the shrinkage of

Arctic ice and snow will rebound on Asian countries and the rest of the world, accelerating warming and extreme weather on

a planetary scale, and raising sea levels. Cities such as Tianjin and Shanghai have already experienced rising water levels.

The Yangtze, the third longest river in the world, could be pushed beyond the bounds of sustainability by climate impacts piled on top of other human uses of the river system.

China and the other Asian countries have shown that they can be world leaders in innovation and manufacturing. These countries could and should harness those powers in the pursuit of renewable energy technologies. Creating and distributing such technology on a regional and a global scale could help us meet the need of keeping the planetary temperature increase well under two degrees, and slow the contribution of climate feedback from the Arctic. This would not only be in the interests of the Arctic, but also in the interests of China, the other Asian countries, and the world. ○



LO ZSE PING is CEO of WWF China.



Photo: Paul Nicklen

30% of its hidden natural gas reserves.

“This is important to Canadians, especially those in the north, as this is their future and prosperity at stake.”

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a coastal nation can claim exclusive economic rights to natural resources on or beneath the sea floor up to 200 nautical miles (370km) beyond their land territory.

But if the continental shelf extends beyond that distance, the country must provide evidence to a UN commission which will then make recommendations about establishing an outer limit.

Dr. Eric Dewailly

THE INTERNATIONAL science community is mourning the death of Dr. Eric Dewailly, who died in an accident while on holiday. As a professor at Laval University in Montreal, Quebec, Dr. Dewailly was renowned for his groundbreaking research into the presence of contaminants in Arctic peoples. His research uncovered the presence of record levels of PCBs in the breast milk of Inuit mothers from Nunavik (Northern Quebec). Further studies led by Dr. Dewailly and others were important in motivating the international community to negotiate a treaty on reducing and eliminating the production and use of some contaminants.

“The international Arctic science community has lost a dear friend and colleague.

Through the lens

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group, in celebration of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress, is inviting people to participate in the Arctic Biodiversity “Through the Lens” photography competition.

One grand prize winner will receive a trip to the Ilulissat Icefjord, in Greenland, a World Heritage Site. Selected images will be displayed at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress December 2-4th, 2014 in Trondheim Norway, and will be exhibited across Arctic countries. The competition includes a special prize for two young photographers, one under the age of 18 and one under the age of 14. The deadline for submission is October 5th 2014.

Further information can be found at www.arcticbiodiversity.is/photo-contest

Canada joins race

CANADA has launched a mission to extend its territory up to the North Pole.

Two Canadian icebreakers left St John's, Newfoundland, in August to collect data from an undersea ridge that starts near Ellesmere Island and runs to the Pole.

“Our government is secur-

ing our sovereignty while expanding our economic and scientific opportunities by defining Canada's last frontier,” said Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq.

The region is believed to include large oil and gas reserves.

Last December Canada filed an application with the UN seeking to vastly expand its Atlantic sea boundary.

Russia and Denmark have also made competing claims on a vast area of Arctic seabed around the Lomonosov Ridge.

All three countries are seeking scientific proof that the ridge is an underwater extension of their continental shelf.

The area is estimated to hold 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and up to



Photo: Isabelle Dubois

Dr. Dewailly led the 2004 Nunavik Health Survey on board the CCGS Amundsen.

We will greatly miss Eric's passion, commitment and significant contributions to Inuit health and well-being," said Russell Shearer, Director of Northern Science and Contaminants Research, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. "His research had an influential impact on achieving a global, legally-binding agreement on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) - the UNEP Stockholm Convention."

WWF tells Putin technology can't ensure safe Arctic drilling

WWF'S Alexey Knizhnikov met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to advise him on the risks of Arctic drilling. "Nowhere in the world

do we have the technology to safely drill for oil and gas in the Arctic", said Knizhnikov. "It's necessary to test methods for cleanup of oil spills in ice conditions before active development begins." Following the meeting Putin said all suggestions will be included in the government's action plan.

Putting a price on Arctic "services"

THE ARCTIC'S vast natural and cultural values are the focus of a project between the Arctic Council's CAFF working group, UNEP, WWF and Grid Arendal. Modeled after The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB), the project's objective is to get a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits biodiversity and ecosystems contribute to the well-being of Arctic residents and global citizens. The TEEB-guided effort will identify services that Arctic nature provides, and recognize their value. This can be done by acknowledging and accounting these services, although in some cases there may also be an attempt to place a monetary value on the benefits people derive from a particular ecosystem service. The most commonly known services are those that provide food, materials, or fuel such as firewood. Less prominent natural processes which safeguard clean drinking water, prevent coastal erosion or regulate the climate are often

overlooked and underappreciated. An extremely important and sensitive dimension of ecosystem services in the Arctic is the cultural value and living resources the land and sea represent to Indigenous peoples. The report from the scoping study will be presented to the Arctic Council Ministerial in spring 2015. For more information contact Joan Eamer. (joaneamer@gmail.com)

Norway sinks Chinese tycoon's ambitions on Svalbard

NORWAY has decided to buy a large tranche of private land on its Arctic island of Svalbard after a Chinese property tycoon said he wanted the land to build a resort for wealthy travellers.

Trade Minister Monica Maeland told the Associated Press that the "common good" is best served if the 216 square kilometres (83 square miles) is in public hands. Developer Huang Nubo had hoped to persuade hardy Chinese and Russian tourists to visit the icy island famous for its snow-covered mountains, fjords and glaciers. Huang's purchase would have given him a foothold along a potential Arctic shipping route that could cut weeks off the current trade route from the Far East to European and North American markets.



Photo: Brian Hoffman, Flickr, Creative Commons

Rock sandpiper nest, Rat Island, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

Alaskan birds laying earlier due to climate change

SEVERAL BIRD SPECIES are laying eggs earlier due to earlier snow melt, according to findings published in *Polar Ecology*. The research shows birds such as sandpipers have advanced their egg-laying dates over the past nine years by as much as a week. This adaptation allows for the young to hatch at the same time as when food is most abundant.

Steve Zack, a spokesman for the Wildlife Conservation Society, says the shifts in the birds' behaviour may not be sustainable. "We're concerned that there will be a threshold where they will no longer be able to track the emergence of these earlier springs, which may impact breeding success or even population viability."

Challenge and opportunity

Economic development and increasing commercial activity in the Arctic region is a contentious subject. But KOJI SEKIMIZU says the issue is not whether this is good or bad, but that it is happening, quickly. So how do we manage it so that commercial advantage is not gained at the expense of Indigenous peoples or the environment?



Photo: Patrick Kelley, U.S. Coast Guard

THE OPENING UP of the Arctic to greater maritime activity due to receding sea ice provides both an unusual challenge and a unique opportunity.

Last year, I was lucky enough to experience first hand the realities of navigation in this harsh, remote and environ-

mentally-sensitive region. I undertook a 1,700-mile voyage from the Kara Sea to the East Siberian Sea aboard the nuclear-powered icebreaker 50 Let Pobedy. During the voyage, I was able to closely observe the

operation of the vessel, communication systems, charts and other navigational aids, and to assess the development of the search and rescue coordination centres at Dikson in the Kara Sea and Pevek in the East Siberian Sea.



KOJI SEKIMIZU is the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization

I am most grateful to the Russian Government for giving me the opportunity to experience the challenges of shipping in that region. It reinforced for me how vital it is that regulators, governments, policy makers and administrators work together to create the conditions in which Arctic development can be safe, environmentally sound and sustainable.

A universally accepted regulatory framework is a prerequisite for sustain-

WE WILL NEED TO FIND WAYS TO MONITOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROPERLY ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF INCREASED COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

able development in shipping. The world looks to the International Maritime Organization to provide that framework. IMO measures are designed, among other things, to promote safety, protect the environment, improve efficiency and ensure a properly trained workforce. This contributes to the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, economic and societal.

Just as the Arctic Council recognizes the work of IMO in striving to ensure that developments in the Polar Regions are safe, secure and sustainable, IMO respects the responsible and entirely appropriate stance taken by the Arctic Council in these matters. I note with appreciation that the Arctic Council has already moved to include non-Arctic states in its discussions, through the conferring of observer status. This is a clear recognition that there is a wider, international dimension at play here in matters such as safety and environmen-

tal protection surrounding shipping in and through Arctic waterways.

The most important initiative for the development of appropriate safety and environmental regulation for Arctic shipping is the development of the mandatory polar code. Where existing guidelines for ships operating in polar waters are recommendatory, the IMO membership has agreed that the polar code will be mandatory, setting out internationally binding requirements appropriate for the severe environmental conditions of the polar areas, over and above those already contained in existing instruments.

Work to finalize the code by the end of 2014 is well underway, with IMO's committees and sub-committees making special efforts to ensure the completion date is adhered to.

It will provide a framework of international regulations for the safety of shipping and the protection of the environment from shipping activities in the Polar Regions. But we should not see that as the end of the process. There is a need for further cooperation and collaboration in a number of areas. The maritime infrastructure must be developed and strengthened. The provision of navigational charts, the establishment of search and rescue facilities under the Global Maritime and Distress Safety Systems, a comprehensive network of icebreaker support and the provision of Maritime Safety Information all need to be addressed in parallel with the implementation of the polar code by the shipping community.

The polar region constitutes a unique working environment. This means we also need to develop further specific operational guidelines for seafarers, beyond those already included in the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention.

We must also be ready to develop recommendations for new technology, and the shipbuilding and machinery sectors will need to invest in research and development to tailor new designs for harsh operating environments.

Specific operational procedures for

Arctic sea routes



passenger ships operating in the region may need to be looked at further. The only effective mechanism to implement any new operational measures is through discussion, consultation, adoption of measures and implementation under the IMO mechanism to ensure universal application over thousands of ships registered in various IMO Member Governments.

An effective response to emergencies, such as oil spills, requires preparation in advance. This, too, implies coordination and collaboration. We will need to find ways to monitor the environment and properly assess the effects of increased commercial activity.

IMO can offer the global forum for cooperation and the development of international measures. It already provides a tried and tested mechanism for such discussion and development, with

a series of highly specialized technical sub-committees reporting to the Marine Environment Protection Committee and the Maritime Safety Committee. It also has an effective enforcement mechanism, embracing the flag States enforcement and port State control. All stakeholders participate in the regulatory process at IMO – not just the Member States themselves but also non-governmental bodies in consultative status with IMO, representing the shipping industry, environmental interests, equipment manufacturers and those who make up the maritime infrastructure, such as ports and harbours, pilots, hydrographers and the seafarers themselves. ○

This article is an edited version of an address Mr. Sekimizu gave before the Senior Arctic Officials in Yellowknife, Canada in March 2014.

Making Arctic inroads

China's Arctic interests continually make headlines: a failed plan to purchase a section of remote Iceland farmland by Chinese investor Huang Nubo and news that the China Railway Corporation is considering a proposal to set up a highspeed rail linking China and the USA via the Arctic are just two examples. ANNE-MARIE BRADY says these reports beg the question: what are China's intentions in the Arctic?

IN THE LAST TEN YEARS China has steadily expanded its Arctic presence and is increasingly speaking out on Arctic issues. In the last twenty years, China has accumulated memberships

in all Arctic-related regional associations it is entitled to participate in; it applied to be and has become an observer at the Arctic Council (ongoing status from 2013); and has become an active participant in all international organizations whose

responsibilities cover the Arctic Ocean.

In 2011 the Deputy Head of the China Arctic and Antarctic Administration, Chen Lianzeng stated that the overall goal of China's current five year polar plan was to increase China's "status and influence" in polar affairs to better protect its "polar rights"

So what are China's Arctic *rights* and where can it exercise *influence*?

- Scientific and economic activities at Svalbard
- Observer status at the Arctic Council
- Access Arctic seas for scientific research, transport, tourism, fishing
- Cross-Arctic air routes

THE ARCTIC IS CENTRAL TO CHINA'S FUTURE STRATEGIC OIL AND MINERAL NEEDS

- Participate in international decision-making on Arctic matters under international governance
- Bid for mineral rights and other economic opportunities
- Potential to bid for deep-sea mineral rights

What are China's strategic interests in the Arctic?

- Security (traditional and non-traditional): China has economic; political; and military; security interests in the Arctic.
- Resources: China wants access to Arctic minerals and hydrocarbons; fishing; tourism; transport routes; and bio-prospecting.
- Science and technology: access to the Arctic is essential for the roll-out of the Beidou navigational system; China's space science programme; and accurate weather forecasting in China.

What is China's position on points of contention in Arctic affairs?

- Sovereignty: Outside the 200-mile zone of the littoral states, China points out that the Arctic Ocean is still an international space. The extended continental shelf claims of various Arctic states will require a combination of science and diplomacy to resolve, and China intends to be involved in this process.
- Sea routes: International straits.
- Strategic minerals and hydrocarbons: global resources that should be opened up to the global market.
- Environmental issues: China sees opportunity more than risk in Arctic climate change.

CHINA'S POLAR STRATEGY:

The Arctic is central to China's future strategic oil and mineral needs. Access to polar resources, as well as Arctic sea and air routes is crucial to China's future economic, political, and military expansion as a global great power. China is engaged in a 5-year assessment (2012-2016) of polar resources and governance that will help refine China's existing polar strategy, policy direction, and organization.

Beijing is encouraging a multi-level, multi-agency, engagement in the region; popularising knowledge about opportunities in the Arctic for Chinese citizens and companies, in order to increase



ANNE-MARIE BRADY is the Editor-in-chief of The Polar Journal and a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC.

CHINA TALKS DOWN ITS INTERESTS TO FOREIGN AUDIENCES WHILE TALKING THEM UP TO DOMESTIC AUDIENCES.

China's overall presence and influence in the region, and strengthen the right to speak (话语权) on Arctic affairs.

China talks down its interests in the Arctic to foreign audiences, meanwhile talking them up to domestic audiences. China does not yet have a fully-articulated Arctic strategy document (though the broad strokes of China's Arctic goals and interests are clearly articulated in internal publications). It is hesitant to put its cards on the table this early in the game, when many of the contentious issues in Arctic affairs are twenty years away from being resolved. The Chinese government aims to garner domestic support for China's initiatives, educate the population on Arctic affairs, and inspire patriotism and confidence among Chinese youth.

China is engaging in proactive diplomacy to susceptible Arctic states: Iceland, Greenland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. China avoids challenging Russia, Canada and the US who harbour concerns about China's engagement in the Arctic. China is trying to find a way to work cooperatively with the Arctic states – Canada, Greenland, USA, Russia – whose territories contain oil and gas, and strategic minerals.

China is building a global coalition of likeminded states who will vote with China on crucial issues (not just polar), such as the Group of 77 as well as bilateral relations with other non-Arctic states who share China's view on global rights to Arctic resources, high seas, and seabed resources.



Deploying the ice camp on sea ice during Chinese CHINARE expedition to the central Arctic in summer 2010 on board of icebreaker Xue Long

As in other global scenarios, where China cannot affect change, it makes the best out of the current order and quietly pursues its own interests; but where the possibility of creating new norms exists, Beijing acts assertively.

China should be encouraged to make a formal statement on its Arctic policy and interests. Transparency builds trust; while ambiguity breeds mistrust and suspicion. ○

The promise of involvement

In the West there is a long history of distrust of Asian countries. Questions have recently been raised around attempts by Chinese businessmen to buy properties in Iceland and Svalbard. In this context, how should the arrival of several Asian countries as Arctic Council observers be viewed? OLAV SCHRAM STOKKE argues deeper Asian involvement in Council activities can only be a win-win situation for Arctic and non-Arctic countries.

EVIDENCE OF Asian-state interest in the Arctic is ample and not really as new as many believe. Japan set up an Arctic research station in the early 1990s and funded the major share of the hitherto most comprehensive multinational research project on the physical,

economic and political conditions for broader use of the Northern Sea Route. China's ice-capable research vessel, the *Xue Long* ('snow dragon'), was acquired two decades ago, and the government agency responsible for polar activities added 'Arctic' to its name in 1996. Com-

panies from China, Japan and Korea are already at work on the Norwegian continental shelf, and Indian firms are reported to have engaged in commercial negotiations with Russian license holders in Western Siberia and Sakhalin. The world's shipbuilding industry is

Smog, Hong Kong. The air pollution can travel long distances. Many Arctic environmental challenges originate outside the Arctic.



now dominated by Asian firms, particularly Korea which has positioned itself for an Arctic market. The major Asian maritime states are also members of the correspondence group under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) tasked with negotiating a legally binding Polar Code that will upgrade today's voluntary guidelines for ships operating in ice-covered waters. In short, rising Asian attention to the Arctic Council is only one of many manifestations of their interest in this region.

Two of the concerns voiced about this interest deserve attention. One is that deeper involvement on the part of these powerful actors might, in the long term, undermine the primacy of regional states in Arctic affairs; the second is that it might jeopardize the unique and prominent position that Indigenous Peoples have obtained within the Arctic Council.

WORRIES THAT GREATER ASIAN INVOLVEMENT IN ARCTIC AFFAIRS MIGHT UNDERMINE THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF COASTAL STATES ARE UNFOUNDED

GEOPOLITICAL WORRIES

Regional worries over new players in Arctic politics derive from clearly discernible geopolitical and geo-economic shifts, reinforced by recent debate on the adequacy of the legal framework for Arctic governance. The USA is still well ahead of any Asian competitor in its capacity for military power projection and remains the world's strongest

economy by far, not least in terms of technology and innovation. Yet, many years of growth rates considerably lower than those achieved by several large 'emerging economies', such as China and India, have made clear that this ranking is not written in stone. Although another Arctic state, Russia, remains the world's number two military power, China is rapidly narrowing the gap, especially as regards conventional capability.

Some Arctic states are concerned with the tendency of some Asian observers and practitioners to approach Arctic



OLAV SCHRAM STOKKE specializes in international relations particularly institutional analysis, resource and environmental management, and regional cooperation.



affairs with concepts and arguments that imply communal ownership, notably 'the common heritage of mankind'. This argument lacks relevance in the economically attractive parts of the Arctic where coastal-state sovereign rights over natural resources is not at issue. Among the Arctic states, Russia and Canada generally place sovereignty issues higher up on their list of Arctic priorities than do other regional states – partly because theirs are by far the longest Arctic coastlines and partly because some of their unilateral and stricter-than-global Arctic shipping regulations have been challenged on legal grounds by other states.

However, any worries that greater Asian involvement in Arctic affairs might undermine the sovereign rights of the coastal states in the region are unfounded. Those rights derive not from Arctic activities or regional patterns of diplomacy, but from globally accepted and regionally applicable international law. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has 166 parties, with the USA as the sole major power not to have ratified. As the main provisions of UNCLOS reflect international customary law, they are binding on *all* states. As did China and India, the Arctic states supported and promoted the division of competence that emerged in the Convention; they were also among the greatest winners in terms of spatially extended jurisdiction. Altering the basic deal underlying the existing legal order for the Arctic would therefore go counter to the interests not only of Arctic states, but to those of the geo-economically ascendant Asian states as well.

THE INDIGENOUS VOICE

Also questionable are concerns that rising involvement of political and economic heavyweights such as the EU, China and India might divert the attention from Indigenous concerns, and affect their access to high-level decision-makers within the Council framework.

Indigenous concerns have always been one of several matters deemed

IT CANNOT BE ASSUMED THAT THE NEW OBSERVERS WILL PROMOTE AN AGENDA THAT IS INSENSITIVE TO INDIGENOUS CONCERNS IN THE ARCTIC

highly important by the Arctic Council. The rising aspirations of this body to produce research-based policy on salient issues such as energy and shipping developments, and to improve capacities for search and rescue as well as oil-spill preparedness and response, reflect the priorities of Arctic states, not Asian ones. Second, it cannot be assumed that the new observers will promote an agenda that is insensitive to Indigenous concerns in the Arctic. Involvement in Council activities is among the factors likely to enhance such sensitivity. Third, the status of the six transnational Indigenous peoples' associations as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council is much stronger than that of the observers, who only have a right to submit documents and to make statements, the latter even being subject to the discretion of the chair.

Observer status therefore provides no formal or *de facto* basis for exerting pressure on Council decisions – only an opportunity for non-Arctic states to have their voice heard by those who make the decisions. Granting such status to the modest number of current new applicants is unlikely to detract significantly from the prominence of the Permanent Participants in the activities of the Arctic Council.

ASIAN INVOLVEMENT AND ARCTIC GOVERNANCE

Deeper involvement by Asian players has every potential to generate win-win situations. Much of the activity that gives rise to Arctic environmental challenges either occurs outside the region

or falls under the jurisdiction of non-Arctic states. This is true for a majority of the persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals that threaten to damage regional ecosystems, as well as the greenhouse gases that drive up Arctic temperatures. Shipping remains a high-seas freedom, also within the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) – sea zones in which the state has special rights over the exploration and use of marine resources. Dealing effectively with these key Arctic challenges requires regulatory action in broader international institutions, typically global ones like the Stockholm POPs Convention, the UN-based climate regime, and the IMO.

Such regulatory action in relevant broader institutions is more likely if leading Non-arctic States, including Asian ones, can have a clear understanding of the Arctic dimension of global issues and firm ownership in the research that has substantiated that dimension. The Asian states that are now permanent observers have significant and rising polar research programmes that can support the Council's core activities – knowledge-building and capacity enhancement. Consider for instance the cooperative assessments produced by the Arctic Council on how global change will affect regional opportunities and challenges, most recently the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment. The political energy inherent in these assessments serves to raise the saliency of the Arctic dimension of broader problems and helps to mobilize political energy in the broader international institutions that have regulatory compe-

DEEPER ASIAN INVOLVEMENT IN COUNCIL ACTIVITIES PROMISES TO STRENGTHEN THE POOL OF KNOWLEDGE

tence. Thus, by welcoming non-regional states into Arctic Council activities, the Arctic states may improve their ability to stimulate regulatory advances in broader institutions that are crucial to Arctic governance.

Such involvement makes excellent sense for Asian states as well. The Arctic Council is the hub of several transnational networks of Arctic researchers, officials, and political decision-makers. Those who contribute to the research and other working group activities under the Council gain access to these networks and to potentially useful information on how Arctic states and other important players think and plan concerning regional developments. Even in areas where rule-making authority rests firmly with the coastal states, such as offshore energy development, non-Arctic companies may obtain lucrative roles if they can offer globally competitive technological solutions, equipment, or venture capital.


CONCLUSIONS

The only potential influence conferred by observer status would be through persuasive arguments, which should always be welcome in international deliberations. Moreover, whereas the Council itself is gradually growing into a decision-shaping role, the Council can shape decisions in areas only where the Arctic states allow it in – and that will not happen in the many and politically salient issues where international law confers exclusive management authority to the coastal state. Asian states' greater access to the networks of research, business and governmental actors centred on the Council provides them with information on plans, developments, and cooperative opportunities in the region. For the Arctic states, deeper Asian involvement in Council activities promises to strengthen the pool of knowledge that underpins the Council's own policy recommendations, while supporting the persuasiveness of those recommendations in areas such as shipping, climate change and environmental toxins. ○

Asian states weigh in

■ **China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Singapore were granted observer status to the Arctic Council at its Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna, Sweden in May, 2013.**

■ **Observers have no voting rights in the Council, but unlike ad hoc observers they are automatically invited to the group's meetings.**

■ **Here representatives of some of the Asian states weigh in on why they feel it is important for them to be included at the Arctic Council.** 



MAP: Ketill Berger, Film & Form
SOURCE: Natural Earth

China in the Arctic

China's Arctic activities are drawing increasing attention from the international community and creating speculation about this country's motives. GUIDE JIA explains China's Arctic aspirations, interests and future plans.

CHINA IS A non-Arctic state. So when talking about China's participation in Arctic affairs, the question "what has China to do with the Arctic?" usually pops up. This could first be approached by the geographical location of China. The most northern part of the country is about 50 degrees north latitude, bordering an Arctic State, Russia. As a near Arctic state, the natural and social

changes in the Arctic have direct and significant impact on China's climate, ecological environment, and agricultural production as well as social and economic development. We often say, Arctic issues are mainly regional, but

some of them are trans-regional such as climate change, shipping, etc. These involve the interests of non-Arctic states and require the concerted efforts of both Arctic and non-Arctic states to address these issues. Finally, under the current legal framework of the Arctic, non-Arctic states enjoy certain legitimate rights in the Arctic, such as the right of scientific research and navigation, which has been recognized and respected by Arctic States.

China, along with 5 other states, was accepted as an accredited observer to the Arctic Council in the Ministerial Meeting of the Council in May, 2013. This is a very positive signal that the Council, comprising eight Arctic States and six Indigenous peoples' organiza-

tions, recognizes China as an important stake-holder in Arctic affairs and expects China to make contributions to the work of the Council.

The Arctic Council plays a very important role in coordinating Arctic scientific research, strengthening Arctic environmental protection, and promoting Arctic economic and social development cooperation. China highly values the Arctic Council, supports its objectives and is willing to actively participate in the work of the Council. Being an accredited observer is beneficial for China. It allows our country to closely follow the latest developments in the Arctic, promote China's Arctic research, be more deeply involved in Arctic affairs, and further strengthen the exchange and cooperation with relevant parties in addressing trans-regional Arctic issues under the framework of the Council.

China has recommended eight experts to three working groups of the Council since it was admitted as an

CHANGES IN THE ARCTIC HAVE DIRECT AND SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CHINA'S CLIMATE, ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT, AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

China

Capital city: Beijing (39.55° N, 116.23° E)

GDP: USD 9.240 trillion, ranks #2

Area: 9,706,961 km²

Population: 1.351 billion

Source: World Bank (2013)



accredited observer. It is ready to make contributions in areas such as climate change, Arctic scientific research and environment protection.

China has yet to formulate a comprehensive set of Arctic policies. However, there is a principled position on Arctic affairs. First, China recognizes the Arctic States' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic, respects their unique role and special responsibilities on Arctic-related affairs. It also respects the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants. China recognizes that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean



GUIDE JIA is deputy Director-General of the Department of Treaty and Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.



Photo: Milos Gikar, Flickr, Creative Commons

including, notably, the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*.

China is a strong advocate of international cooperation regarding Arctic affairs be it an Arctic state, Indigenous peoples' organization, or non-Arctic state. Such cooperation ranges from scientific research, environmental protection to sustainable development of the Arctic at various levels, either bilaterally or within the frameworks of regional fora and international organizations. To this end, China also proposes to develop mutually beneficial and interactive partnerships between Arctic states and non-Arctic states.

Regarding Arctic development, China

is of the view that specific development activities should be carried out in a sustainable way that protects the environment, respects the interests and concerns of Indigenous peoples and abides by the domestic laws of the Arctic state concerned and relevant international conventions.

China is both willing and able to be a constructive player in contributing to Arctic affairs and to promote peace, stability and sustainable development of the Arctic.

With the accelerated melting of ice and snow in the Arctic, China is beginning to pay attention to the profound impacts Arctic shipping and develop-

Rice terraces in Yuanyang, Yunnan Province, South China.

ment could cause. However, due to the harsh natural conditions of the Arctic, Chinese enterprises are very cautious in its participation of Arctic development.

Scientific expeditions and research in the Arctic are highly important to gain thorough understanding of this region. China's current Arctic activities centre on scientific research, which, along with international cooperation on the Arctic, will remain our country's priorities. ○

Protection before development

Korea was admitted to the Arctic Council as an observer country last year, and also developed a national Arctic policy. CHO HEE-YONG says this is a prime example of the international community's recognition of Korea's capabilities and the constructive role his country has already played.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH Korea's admission to the Arctic Council, the Korean government adopted Korea's Arctic Policy at the end of last year. It outlines Korea's vision for the Arctic and its intention to "become a nation that contributes to opening up a sustainable Arctic future."

It contains three policy goals: build an Arctic partnership that contributes

to the international community; strengthen scientific research that contributes to addressing the common issues of human society; and create new Arctic opportunities that expand economic scope. It

should also be noted that Korea is committed to raising the welfare of the Arctic's Indigenous people, while protecting their rights, traditional knowledge, and culture.

With the belief that the Arctic needs to be protected before it is developed for economic gain, Korea is committed to actively participating in collaborative scientific research activities that aim to protect the environment and support sustainable circumpolar communities. With this in mind, Korea intends to strengthen and expand international cooperation at three levels: through

projects agreed to by Arctic Council working groups; through Arctic-related activities with international organizations such as the International Arctic Science Committee and the International Marine Organization; and through private sector cooperation, such as joint climate change monitoring programs using Araon, Korea's state-of-the-art icebreaker built in 2009.

For decades, Korea has been accumulating meaningful research outcomes and deepening its scientific knowledge of the Arctic. For example, Korea has been an active member of the International Arctic Science Committee since 2002. In addition, 2012 marked the 10 year anniversary of Korea's Dasan Arctic Research Station, which was established in Ny-Alesund, Norway. Likewise, in 2004, Korea created the

FOR DECADES, KOREA HAS BEEN ACCUMULATING MEANINGFUL RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND DEEPENING ITS SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE ARCTIC

Korea

Capital: Seoul (37.33° N, 126.58° E)

GDP: USD 1.305 trillion, ranks #14

Area: 219,140 km²

Population: 50,000,000

Source: World Bank (2013)



CHO HEE-YONG is the ambassador of South Korea to Canada.





Night, Seoul

Korea Polar Research Institute, which is a government-sponsored research operator dedicated to polar science and logistic support. Moreover, last September, four months after becoming an observer in the Arctic Council, Korea led the Canada-Korea-USA Beaufort Sea Geoscience Research Survey, contributing the Araon.

Moving forward, Korea has an interest in cooperating with Arctic states in the development of Arctic sea routes by accumulating navigation experience, conducting international joint research, and cooperating in the expansion of Arctic coastal ports.

It is also expected that the next wave of Arctic research needs and potential area for joint research cooperation will be highlighted in the State of Northern Knowledge in Canada report, which will soon be released by the Canadian Polar Commission. Korea is looking forward to this analysis, as well as the opportunity to engage in the work of the Arctic Economic Council, which will be launched under Canada's chairmanship in the Arctic Council. This will foster sustainable development, including economic growth, environmental protection, and social development in the arctic Region.

Taken together, these continued efforts demonstrate Korea's significant contributions to the Arctic. As a responsible middle power country, Korea anticipates that closer Arctic cooperation will become one of the important pillars for our strategic partnership in the international community. As the world's largest shipbuilding country, one of the world's top five shipping countries and a leading nation for innovation and technology, Korea is capable and ready to contribute to responsible Arctic development and a sustainable Arctic future for all of the Arctic states and ultimately for the world. ○

This article first appeared in *Embassy*, Canada's foreign policy newsletter. The views expressed in *The Circle* and the op-ed are solely those of the author and publisher, not *Embassy*.

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The third pole

At a time when the world is changing in many ways – whether in the way nations engage each other in a globalised framework or in the way man engages with nature – the rapidly changing Arctic region presents a unique situation. NAVTEJ SARNA says this underscores the need for active cooperation within the region and beyond for mutual and greater good.

INDIA IS THE WORLD'S largest democracy, a mega-biodiverse country with multiple climate zones. It is home to the Himalayas as well as 1300 islands and bounded by a 7,500 km coastline. India is also a fast re-emerging economy and a nation with proven Science & Technology and Research & Development expertise in areas as diverse as space research, nuclear energy, biotechnology, Information Technology, earth and planetary sciences and polar research. India has longstanding political and economic relationships with the Arctic states individually including trade and investment linkages, S&T collaboration and

research. We are also an active participant in the various United Nations platforms and other multilaterals for addressing global issues of common concern, be they trade, scientific cooperation, climate change, biodiversity or sustainable development.

India brings considerable scientific and research capabilities and experience with an extensive and wide-ranging scientific institutional base and a very large number of qualified and trained scientists. We have developed considerable expertise in polar scientific

OUR OWN REGION DEPENDS TO A GREAT EXTENT ON THE HIMALAYAS MOUNTAINS IN NORTH INDIA, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS THE THIRD POLE

research, having embarked on Antarctic exploration more than three decades ago. Thirty expeditions have been sent to the region and our permanent research station, Maitri, has functioned as a successful scientific outpost. India is one of the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. Several of our research programmes have contributed directly to the experiments mounted under the aegis of the International Council of Science (ICSU).

In 2007 India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic. Our first Arctic research station, Himadri, was established shortly after that and continues to operate at the International Arctic Research Base at Spitsbergen in

India

Capital city: New Delhi (28.36° N, 77.12° E)

GDP: USD 1.877 trillion, ranks #10

Area: 3,287,590 km²

Population: 1.327 billion

Source: World Bank (2013)



Norway. In 2011, India joined the Arctic Science Summit Meeting as an Observer and was elected to the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) the following year.

There are several reasons for India's interest in collaborating with the members of the Arctic Council. Foremost is our motivation from the scientific

Nanda Devi Range of the Himalayas.



Photo: Allan Hopkins, Flickr, Creative Commons

and technological standpoint. Learning about the ongoing changes in the Arctic will help us better understand the climate processes of our own region which depends to a great extent on the Himalayas mountains in north India, sometimes referred to as the Third Pole. Similarly, the research on the Himalayas and other parts of India will

contribute to building a more holistic picture of global climate, including the Arctic. India is deeply interested in understanding the cross-cutting aspects of climate processes to better prepare for tackling the effects of global warming. India has also been an active and responsible participant in the global Climate Change negotiations. Our coun-

try is undertaking ambitious domestic actions for achieving sustainable growth and has voluntarily committed to reduce the energy intensity of its economic growth by 20-25% by 2020 over the 2005 levels.

India is also interested in learning about the best practices and experiences in developing special technologies in harsh environments, natural resource and biodiversity management, safer shipping, preserving the habitat, livelihoods and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local communities. With its own experience of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multicultural polity, India feels well-equipped to understand and respond to the needs and concerns of different communities. We have also noted the utility of the practical agreements that have emerged out of the Arctic Council on disaster risk reduction including oil spill management and search-and-rescue operations, which again have broad relevance.

Since joining the Arctic Council as an Observer last May, India has actively participated at the meetings of the Arctic Senior Officials and some of the Working Groups. India stands committed to continue its scientific research activities, including polar research, and to take them to a new level. We look forward to engaging closely with all partners within the Arctic Council, both by way of contributing to and learning about issues relating to sustainable development and environment protection.

The philosophy guiding the Arctic Council presents a unique and evolving model of confidence building and international collaboration by bringing together the eight Arctic nations and six organizations representing Indigenous peoples of the region. The observer countries and organizations add value through complementing the efforts of the members of the Council in analyzing and responding to the challenges facing the region by bringing their differing historical and scientific experiences to the table. ○

Capital: Singapore (1.17° N, 103.5° E)
 GDP: USD 297.9 billion, ranks #35
 Area: 716.1 km²
 Population: 5.3 million (2012)
 Source: World Bank (2013)



One degree north

As a small tropical country one degree north of the Equator, Singapore has neither territorial nor resource claims in the Arctic region. However, Singapore's Senior Arctic Official, SIMON WONG WIE KUEN says developments in the Arctic will have a critical effect on Singapore.

AS A LOW-LYING COUNTRY, Singapore's tallest natural peak is a mere 163 metres above sea level. Global warming and rising sea levels will have a profound and direct impact on our survival. Hence, as an observer in the Arctic Council, we are keen to lend our expertise to relevant areas of the Arctic Council's work, increase our Arctic capabilities, and monitor Arctic developments.

DEVELOPMENT OF A SAFE ARCTIC REGION

Situated along the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, one of the most important sea lines of communication, Singapore's port receives about 120,000

vessels each year. It is one of the world's busiest ports, trans-shipping one-seventh of the world's shipping containers, and is connected to 600 ports worldwide. The maritime sector is an economic necessity for Singapore due to its lack of land and natural resources. Hence, Singapore recognises the importance of maritime law and cooperation in ensuring navigational safety and the protection of the marine environment. With the opening up of the Northern Sea Route, Singapore is working with partners in the International Maritime Organisation on the development of a Polar Code. An international rules-based framework for Arctic shipping

based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea will help ensure safe and responsible polar shipping as the Arctic region develops.

Singapore is also ready to share its knowledge of oil spill prevention and maritime traffic management with Arctic stakeholders. Our country places strong emphasis on the safety of navigation and the security of vessels. Its advanced Vessel Traffic Information System (VTIS) ensures the safe and efficient navigation of ships, and has the ability to handle up to 10,000 vessel tracks at any one time. To this end, Singapore has participated in the meetings of the Arctic Council's Emergency Prevention, Protection and Preparedness (EPPR) and Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Groups, as well as the Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Singapore has neither the interest nor capabilities to engage in natural resources exploration and development. However, it can provide enabling technology for Arctic development. Singapore operates the most technologically

Singapore has one of the world's busiest harbours.



Photo: Shaun Versey, Flickr, Creative Commons

advanced and efficient rig-building, conversion, ship repair, and specialised shipbuilding facilities in Southeast Asia. Currently, Singapore holds 65% of the world's jack-up rig-building market, and 66% of the global floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) conversion market. A Singapore corporation, Keppel Singmarine, part of the Keppel Offshore & Marine group, was the first Asian shipyard to build icebreakers, completing two for Russian company LUKOIL in 2008. Keppel Offshore and Marine is also collaborating on the world's first Arctic-grade, environmentally-friendly "green" rig, in keeping

SINGAPORE IS WORKING WITH PARTNERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POLAR CODE

with the importance of protecting the fragile Arctic environment.

Singapore applauds the progress made by the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Officials in early 2014 on the creation of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), which aims to foster circumpolar cooperation and sustainable business development in the Arctic. We hope that the AEC will grow to serve as a platform facilitating flows of know-how and technology, as well as deeper business relations between observer states, Arctic states and Indigenous peoples.

Arctic research is important to the sustainable development of the region. To strengthen Singapore's Arctic capabilities, the National University of Singapore (NUS) has set up an Arctic Affairs Programme which awards a research fellowship on Arctic legal issues (under the NUS Centre for International Law), as well as a study by the NUS Centre for Maritime Studies on trans-Arctic shipping routes.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Singapore lies on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), a major flight path for migratory waterbirds. Sites like

the Sungei Buloh Wetlands Reserve and other protected sites in Singapore serve as important stops for Arctic migratory birds during the northern winter. These birds are threatened by habitat loss and overharvesting and conservation

efforts are essential to ensure their survival. Singapore's National Parks Board (NParks) has been actively involved in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership and also the Arctic Migratory Birds (AMBI) Initiative, under the umbrella of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)

Working Group. In particular, Singapore aims to develop a plan under the AMBI for co-operation on Arctic migratory bird conservation in the Southeast Asian region. NParks is also working with the Arctic Council and other partners to track Arctic waterbirds' migratory habits along the flyway. This is part of Singa-



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pore's efforts towards implementing the agreements in IUCN World Conservation Congress Resolution 28, 'Conservation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea'.

DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL

Singapore recognises the need to engage the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, who are most affected by the changing Arctic landscape. Singapore's Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs, Ambassador Tony Siddique, visited several Arctic capitals to better understand the concerns and needs of the Indigenous peoples. Through these visits, we have gained a deeper appreciation of the Arctic, and hope to use our newfound knowledge to contribute more effectively to the region.

In June 2012, Singapore took the first step in organising a week-long study visit for representatives of Arctic Indigenous communities. The participants visited Singapore and were shown various aspects of Singapore's governance, such as urban planning, port management, and water recycling. The visits were well-received, and a second study visit to Singapore for the Arctic Council Permanent Participants is planned for late 2014.

The Arctic Council is in a unique position to play a leading role in managing the integration of different stakeholders and interested parties in the Arctic. As a "little red dot" close to the Equator, Singapore does not pose any threat to the strategic interests of Arctic Council member states or Indigenous peoples. Rather, Singapore has real and substantive interests in the Arctic and, as an observer, can make positive contributions to the Arctic Council's work. An inclusive approach towards observers will not only benefit the sovereign Arctic states and Indigenous peoples, but also ensure that non-Arctic countries with extensive experience and knowledge can better contribute to the future of the Arctic region. ○

Seeking natural resources

Asia in general and China in particular are increasingly interested in the Arctic for its natural resources and navigation routes. More than half of humanity lives in Asia (broadly defined as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia), and Asian economies are growing at astonishing rates. Since 2012 there have been more billionaires in Asia than in North America, and China will likely surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy sometime between 2020 and 2030. DAVID WRIGHT says these burgeoning economies actively seek out energy resources anywhere they can find and buy them.

ASIAN ECONOMIES will eagerly pay handsomely for the Arctic's natural resources. They are also interested in newly navigable Arctic Ocean routes. Indeed, much of Asia seems to view climate change as more of a beckoning economic opportunity than an impending environmental catastrophe.

China regards the Arctic as an essential strategic region, according to a Chinese comprehensive strategic assessment report of the year 2013, issued by the National Defence Policy Research Centre of China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Academy of Military Science. The report is long and has six main parts: an analytical introduction to global strategic trends; Asia-Pacific competition and cooperation; new trends in cyberspace security; development and cooperation in the Arctic region; international territorial competition in outer space and trends in guided missile defences. It affirms that China has important strategic interests

in the Arctic region that include participating in Arctic affairs and developing natural resource exploitation there, as well as safeguarding the common interests of international society. The report maintains all of these have long-term significance for China in terms of its propping up of sustainable national development and national security.

INDEED, MUCH OF ASIA SEEMS TO VIEW CLIMATE CHANGE AS MORE OF A BECKONING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY THAN AN IMPENDING ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE.



Arctic sea-ice, Nunavut, Canada.

Coming from the highest-level research institute of the PLA, this is significant. China (or at very least the PLA) is reiterating that its participation in Arctic affairs and access to the region's resources have major bearings on China's sustainable development and national security. So, if Arctic access is indeed this essential to China, might China one day declare Arctic access one of its "core interests"? This seems unlikely. China will not for the foreseeable future actually commit military assets to defend its Arctic interests. I think concerns about China possibly attempting to establish a permanent and substantial military presence in Iceland or elsewhere in the Arctic are greatly overblown. China's approach to the Arctic is much more economic than military or geopolitical.

Politically, of all the non-Arctic states in the world, China has been by far and away the most vocal and assertive about the rights of non-Arctic states to Arctic access. China is looking out for its own national interests in the Arctic, something only to be expected of any great

power. Whether by chance or design, China also seems to have arrogated to itself the role of standing up for the rights and interests of all non-Arctic states in the Arctic. It could well be that the other non-Arctic states are content to allow the Chinese colossus to play this role and draw the resultant concern and flak. But China has recently calmed its strong domestic rhetoric about the Arctic. Just a few years ago, some Chinese commentators made extreme and ill-considered comments about what Chinese Arctic policy should be. One Chinese scholar actually suggested that China should stake its own territorial claim in the Arctic, and a military officer argued publicly that since China has 20% of the world's population, it should have 20% of the Arctic's natural resources!

There is no officially articulated Chinese Arctic policy, and there may never be one, given the difficulties of squaring its arguments for a global commons in the Arctic with its own controversial stances regarding territorial claims in the South China Sea. China's increasing involvement and activity in the Arctic

will not have disruptive political ramifications (much less military ones) in the short and medium run. But some concern about economic and especially environmental stakes is warranted.

China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea are all enormously wealthy and productive economies. Their demand for energy resources will be insatiable, and their enormous wads of ready cash may well prove strongly appealing to Arctic states and economies – perhaps, alas, even to the extent of tempting them to look the other way and allow environmental concerns to slide – maybe this once, maybe for just a little while – and then, before long, one shudders to contemplate the environmental future of the Arctic. ○



DAVID CURTIS WRIGHT studies imperial Chinese diplomatic and military history, and current Chinese Arctic policy. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World: Arctic Policy Debate and Discussion in China*.

THE PICTURE

Roads less travelled



Photo: Benoit Hostens/Flickr/Creative Commons

Iceland thwarted attempts by Chinese developer Huang Nubo to lease land to create a playground for the wealthy.



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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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