

# China won't be frozen out of Arctic

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Chinese Arctic officials can sigh with relief. China, along with South Korea, Japan, India, Singapore and Italy, were welcomed as permanent observers into the Arctic Council on Wednesday.

Any other decision at the ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden would have complicated, even hindered Beijing's desire to continue to engage internationally on Arctic developments.

As a permanent observer of the Arctic Council, China will not have voting rights, but it is assured the right to participate in discussions about the Arctic future.

The Arctic is not a priority of China's foreign policy. Yet the Chinese government has over the past five years increased investment in Arctic research.

It wants to deepen Chinese specialists' knowledge of the Arctic and strengthen China's capacity to take advantage of the opportunities and mitigate the challenges, which the changing Arctic environment poses. Many governments are doing the same.

The melting of the Arctic ice will have profound effects on climate patterns, affecting China's agriculture. The changed environment will potentially transform global shipping routes, on which China as a major trading nation relies.

During the next 20 years the northern sea route across the northern coast of Russia is expected to become a commercially viable shipping route during summer months. This has direct relevance for China, Japan and South Korea, all of which have flourishing trade ties with Europe.

The opening-up of the Arctic is also expected to provide access to new reserves of energy and other natural resources.

However, media commentary about Arctic resources often fails to point out that nearly all of the known energy and mineral resources are located within state borders or the universally agreed upon 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone of the coastal states and thus not subject to dispute.

China has repeatedly said it respects the sovereign rights of the Arctic states. At the same time, China has advocated that the Arctic states take into consideration the interests of non-Arctic states when deciding on future Arctic governance structures.

China emphasizes that the Arctic poses global, not just regional challenges. China's neighbors Japan and South Korea hold the same view. The melting Arctic ice will impact countries near and far.

China's increased activities in the Arctic have evoked suspicions abroad of Beijing's intentions.

Why? In part, it is due to the uncertainty surrounding China's rise.

No one knows with certainty how China will use its power. Uncertainty causes anxiety, even fear.

Historically, rising major powers have caused jitters in the international community. This is a reality which Chinese policy-makers will grapple with, even when dealing with the remote Arctic.

In part, some of the suspicions directed toward China's growing Arctic activities have been a result of assertive public remarks by Chinese commentators about the Arctic belonging to all of mankind.

These remarks, as well as others made by a retired Chinese PLA officer, have been interpreted to mean that China contemplates challenging the sovereign rights of the Arctic states.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea states that the area of the ocean beyond national jurisdiction, and its resources, are the "common heritage of mankind."

No doubt China is concerned that the international waters of the Arctic will shrink considerably if all the claims by the Arctic states to outer-continental shelves are deemed legal. But it is hard to imagine that China would contest the sovereign rights of the Arctic states.

Complicating perceptions further is the difficulty outsiders have in understanding that media commentary by one official does not represent the policies of the Chinese government. Hence the many misunderstandings about China's intentions.

In part, some of the doubts about China's Arctic ambitions also relate to the uncertainties surrounding the Arctic. No one knows with certainty how the Arctic environment will develop and what problems it will pose.

Thus, there are two sets of uncertainties related to any discussion of China and the Arctic - the rise of China and the future of the Arctic.

China's successful bid to be accepted as a permanent observer in the Arctic Council will hopefully spur China to more actively participate in the working groups and discussions within the Council. On the basis of its own activities China can allay anxieties about its Arctic intentions.

China will hopefully contribute to the Arctic Council's efforts to protect the fragile Arctic environment and livelihood of indigenous peoples. These were, after all, the motives for its initial establishment in 1996.

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# 林达：中国不再被排斥于北极之外

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周三，中国与韩国、日本、印度、新加坡和意大利一起当选为北极理事会永久性观察员国。作为永久性观察员国，中国将不会拥有投票权，但确保有权利参加有关北极未来的讨论。

北极在中国外交政策中并非优先选项。尽管如此，中国政府在过去5年中加大了对北极研究的投资。希望加深中国专家对北极的了解，并加强中国应对北极环境变化带来影响的能力。北极冰面的融化有可能使全球航道发生变化，而作为主要贸易国家的中国恰恰依赖于航道。

中国不止一次表示尊重北极国家的主权，但同时表示，北极国家在未来决定北极管理架构时需要考虑到非北极国家的利益。中国强调说，北极带来的是全球挑战，而非地区挑战。日本和韩国也持相同观点。中国在北极圈活动的日益增多引发外界猜测。这源于外界对中国崛起的不确定感，不知道中国会如何利用自己的力量。这种不确定感会引发担忧，甚至恐惧。

从历史上讲，崛起的大国会在国际社会引发紧张。这是中国决策者必须要面临的现实。外界对中国加大在北极活动猜测的部分原因是，中国评论人士有关北极属于全人类的公开言论。这些言论被外界解读为，中国意图挑战北极国家的主权。毫无疑问，中国担心如果北极国家对外大陆架地区的要求合法化，北极的国际水域将会大幅缩水。但很难想象，中国会挑战北极国家的主权。让事情进一步变复杂的是，外界难以明白，一名官员在媒体上的评论并不代表中国政府的政策。因此，外界便出现了许多有关中国意图的误解。

一些针对中国的猜测也与北极圈的不确定性有关。没人确切知道，北极的环境将如何发展，会带来什么问题。于是，围绕中国与北极出现了两个不确定因素——中国的崛起和北极的未来。中国成功当选北极理事会永久观察员国可能使中国更加积极地参与该理事会的工作和讨论。中国可以通过自己的行动减轻外界的担忧，或许未来能在保护北极生态环境方面做出贡献。（作者 Linda Jakobson 是澳罗伊国际政策研究所东亚项目总监，本文由王晓雄翻译）