



**Studia i Materiały. Miscellanea Oeconomicae**  
Rok 18, Nr 2/2014  
Wydział Zarządzania i Administracji  
Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach

**The Arctic and Nordic  
Countries in the World of Economy and Politics**

**Joanna Grzela<sup>1</sup>**

## **ASIAN STATES' INTERESTS IN THE HIGH NORTH**

### **Introduction**

Thawing of ice in the High North is changing the geostrategic position of the Arctic. Activity in the region is demonstrated by the countries unrelated to it yet. These non-Arctic stakeholders make the range of interest in the Arctic extend considerably. Although the countries such as China, South Korea or Japan and India do not have territories in this region, they are more and more loudly “knocking at the door” of the Arctic Council seeking the position of permanent observers. It gives rise to questions – why is it happening so? And how far are “the Arctic frontiers” extending today?

The research conducted and published in February 2012 by NASA suggests that multi-year ice (the oldest and thickest being the main hindrance to navigation in the Arctic Ocean) is vanishing at a faster rate than the ice, which is younger and thinner. An ice-free season in the Arctic is to increase from approximately 30 days in 2010 to over 120 days in the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, it is likely that the North-East Passage, also known as the Northern Sea Route – NSR as well as the North-West Passage stretching from the Atlantic to the top of North America will be navigable for several months each year. New northern navigation routes will shorten greatly the distance between Europe and Asia. In 2011 a Russian super tanker assisted by two nuclear icebreakers was the first ship of its kind to traverse the North-East Passage around the Arctic reaching the Siberian coast (called by the Russian “the Northern Sea Route”). Cost savings resulting from shortening the shipping routes may reach 40 % compared to traditional navigation routes through the Suez Canal. Shorter distances enable considerable fuel economies, lower personnel costs and lower charges. Reducing the number of days at sea brings about an increase in revenues and potentially larger profits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Joanna Grzela, Ph.D., the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland.

## Asian countries and the Arctic

Climate change, new transport routes and a great demand for energy and mineral resources are the major factors that cause Asian players to become the part of “the Arctic puzzle”. American geologists of the USGS estimate that the Arctic contains 30% of the world’s natural gas reserves and 13% of still undiscovered oil deposits. Moreover, there is also: coal, iron, uranium, copper, rare-earth minerals, gemstones and many other resources including fish.<sup>2</sup> The resource-hungry economies of north-east Asia, Japan and South Korea cannot miss such opportunity.

Melting of ice is opening new possibilities for international navigation. Countries which are particularly dependent on export and import such as China, South Korea and Japan are adopting the perspective of new shipping lanes in the Arctic with great interest.

## China

China is a country hungry for the supply of energy and minerals. It is commonly known that China is seeking new areas from which it could extract natural resources<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the Arctic is a potential source of food and energy for this country<sup>4</sup>. China is looking at the Arctic as a possible source of: research conducted on climate change and marine species, new shipping routes and energy security. China has one of the world’s strongest scientific research potential, and the Arctic has become an area of interest since 1995 when a group of Chinese researchers and reporters travelled to the North Pole on foot and surveyed the Arctic Ocean’s icecap, in addition studying the climate and environment. The Chinese have a research station the Chinese Arctic Yellow River Station on the Svalbard archipelago – the northernmost part of Norway. In August 2012 the Xue Long (“Snow Dragon”), the world’s largest conventionally powered icebreaker (bought in 1993 from Ukraine) became the first Chinese ship to sail across the

---

<sup>2</sup> Estimates as to the extent of these deposits differ considerably, similarly the evaluations concerning profitability of extraction and prospection. As mentioned by the United States Geological Survey the Arctic’s seabed contains at least 90 billion barrels of oil and about 1,67 trillion cubic metres of natural gas. Deposits of methane clathrate are abundant as well; see more: *90 Billion Barrels of Oil and 1,670 Trillion Cubic Feet of Natural Gas Assessed in the Arctic*, in: <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1980> web. November 7 2012 ; comp.: T. Kijewski, *Competition for energy resources in the Arctic*, “National Security” 9-10/2009.

<sup>3</sup> China imports almost 52% of its demand for oil. Energy resources of this country are not sufficient to maintain the current rate of growth of the Chinese economy. See: P. Godlewski, *New “Silk Road”. Chinese economic policy of crude oil*, in: [http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artukul.1141.Nowy\\_Jedwabny\\_Szlak?Chinska\\_polityka\\_ekonomiczna\\_ropy\\_naftowej](http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artukul.1141.Nowy_Jedwabny_Szlak?Chinska_polityka_ekonomiczna_ropy_naftowej), web. November 6 2012 V. Sakhuja, *China: Breaking into the Arctic Ice*, in: <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/ib%20%20dr.pdf>, web. November 6 2012; C. Campbell, *China and the Arctic: Objectives and Obstacles*, U.S. – China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research Report April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> M. Humpert, A. Raspotnik, *The Future of Arctic Shipping*, in: <http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/2012/10/the-future-of-arctic-shipping.html>, web. October 23 2012.

Pole (in October 2009 the State Council of China took a decision on building a sister vessel to the Xue Long to be completed in 2013 and launched in 2014)<sup>5</sup>.

China finances a scientific programme, both for the Arctic and Antarctica. It maintains close contacts with the Kingdom of Norway in this field<sup>6</sup>. What is more, China is interested in estimating the yet untapped and probable energy resources and exploring the possibilities of transit through the Northern Sea Route. L. Jakobson, the author of a study devoted to the Chinese policy towards the Arctic, claims that there is a group of Chinese scientists who publicly encourage the government to prepare for taking advantage of commercial and strategic opportunities which will appear with melting ice of the Arctic. In the Chinese media and academia a debate on the Chinese “rights” to the Arctic is conducted. It is underlined that exploring this area has significance not only for scientific cognition of the Arctic system but it also gives a chance to understand its impact on China’s climate, agriculture, natural resources and environment protection. L. Jakobson quotes the comment of Li Zhenfu, a scientist of Dalian Maritime University: “Whoever has control over the Arctic route, will control the new passage of world economic and international strategies”<sup>7</sup>. Li and other Chinese researchers encourage the government to do as much as possible to secure Chinese interests in the Arctic. “The Arctic,” Li concluded, “has significant military value, a fact recognised by other countries.” And further: “Any country that lacks comprehensive research on Polar politics will be excluded from being a decisive power in the management of the Arctic and therefore be forced into a passive position”<sup>8</sup>. Professor Guo Peiqing of the Ocean University of China put it more directly: “circumpolar nations have to understand that Arctic affairs are not only regional issues but also international ones.” He also expressed disapproval of solely- Arctic- research-oriented Chinese attitude and said that it was not in China’s interest to remain neutral. China, which is transforming from regional into a global power, should be more active in the international debate over the Arctic<sup>9</sup>. Some emphasise the Arctic’s military value. In 2008 colonel Han Xudong of the People’s Liberation Army wrote that the

---

<sup>5</sup> Its estimated cost amounts to 300 million dollars. *China’s 1<sup>st</sup> icebreaker to be completed in 2013*, in: [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-10/25/content\\_13976000.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-10/25/content_13976000.htm) web. October 31 2012; F. Lasserre, *China and the Arctic: Threat of Cooperation Potential for Canada?*, in: <http://www.opencanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/China-and-the-Arctic-Frederic-Lasserre.pdf>, web. October 31 2012.; J. Viglundson, A. Doyle, *First Chinese ship crosses Arctic Ocean amid record melt*, in: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/08/17/us-china-environment-idUKBRE87G0P820120817>, web. November 6 2012.

<sup>6</sup> See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *China and Norway*, in: <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/xos/gilb/3346/t16984.htm>, web. October 2012.

<sup>7</sup> L. Jakobson, *China prepares for an ice-free Arctic*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2010/2 March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Torbjørn Næs Bertelsen, *China’s quest for the Arctic*, in: <http://gbtimes.com/past-present/government/chinas-quest-arctic>, web. October 29 2012.

<sup>9</sup> L. Jakobson, *CHINA: Potential benefits of Arctic melting*, in: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100528190101228>, web. October 29 2012.

“possibility of use of force cannot be ruled out in the Arctic due to complex sovereignty disputes”<sup>10</sup>.

The official view of the government is far more liberal in its rhetoric since these, occasionally aggressive opinions of scientists cause alarm in other countries because of China’s size and its status of emerging global power<sup>11</sup>. Chinese officials in their comments are trying to allay fears regarding Beijing’s aspirations in the Arctic: “China’s activities are for the purposes of regular environmental investigation and investment and have nothing to do with resource plundering and strategic control” – was the official view of the government presented in 2012<sup>12</sup>.

China wants to develop friendly relations with the Scandinavian countries, in particular with Iceland. “China is willing to make contributions towards the peace, stability and sustainable development of the Arctic region, and it is on that basis that China seeks cooperation with Iceland”, - Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Song Tao told reporters in April 2012 during the meeting with Icelandic Prime Minister J. Sigurdardottir. It resulted in a written agreement on cooperation in polar science and research and in geothermal energy. Premier Wen during the visit in Iceland conducted talks with President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson thanking for the support in Beijing’s efforts to obtain permanent observer status in the Arctic Council<sup>13</sup>. It is worth adding at this point that support for China was also offered by Denmark which additionally took a strategic decision concerning the priorities in the economic relations with China. Its results turned out the key gateway to Beijing’s commercial and strategic entering the Arctic. Friis Arne Peterson, the Danish ambassador to China, said in Beijing in October 2011 that China had “natural and legitimate economic and scientific interests in the Arctic, although it did not have a coastline in the polar region”<sup>14</sup>.

Michael Byers, a professor of politics and law at the University of British Columbia, said that China was very unlikely to overstep its powers in the region inhabited by NATO members: “Despite the concerns I have about Chinese foreign

---

<sup>10</sup> W. Minnick, *Beijing Shows Growing Ambitions in Warming Arctic*, in: <http://minnickarticles.blogspot.com/2010/03/beijing-shows-growing-ambitions-in.html>, web. October 29 2012.

<sup>11</sup> L. Jakobson, *China prepares for an ice-free Arctic*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2010/2 March 2010; see also: China’s View on Arctic Cooperation, in: <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/tyfls/tfsxw/t812046.htm>, web. November 6 2012.

<sup>12</sup> E. Rosenthal, *Race is On as Ice Melt Reveals Arctic Treasures*, in: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/science/earth/arctic-resources-exposed-by-warming-set-off-competition.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>, web. November 9 2012.

<sup>13</sup> I. Quaille, *China’s Arctic ambitions spark concerns*, in: <http://www.dw.de/chinese-premier-starts-europe-tour-in-iceland/a-15902814>, web. November 1 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Some are of the opinion that this assumption is doubtful as well as problematic since it suggests that the Danish ambassador try not only to obtain a stronger position in the Arctic Council, but also China’s capital which is to help the Danes extract Greenland’s natural resources. See: *Greenland open to China’s growing Arctic interest*, in: <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674china-enters-the-arctic-equation/>, web. November 1 2012.

policy in other parts of the world, I am certain that in the Arctic this country is behaving responsibly (...). They just want to make money”<sup>15</sup>.

It is worth stressing that China’s economy is heavily dependent on international navigation and foreign trade which contribute to producing 46 % of GNP of this country<sup>16</sup>. There are then vital commercial consequences of the melting ice sheet and opening new shipping lanes in the Arctic for Beijing. China is concerned about the “Malacca problem”, that is the fact that 4/5 of Chinese energy imports pass through the narrow channel near Singapore. The open Arctic Ocean constitutes unique opportunity for developing Chinese international trade, therefore the changes in the landscape the Arctic region will definitely have a profound impact on growing interest of the Chinese authorities in this area and, by the same token, the economic future of the country<sup>17</sup>. Being aware of the abovementioned conditions China submitted a request for obtaining permanent observer status in the Arctic Council<sup>18</sup>.

China shows some ambivalence towards the Arctic. On the one hand, the respect for state autonomy is the leading principle in international relations of this country, which does not allow to dispute sovereignty and internal affairs of the Arctic states, yet on the other hand, as L. Jakobson writes, there is quite popular opinion that the Arctic belongs to all humanity, not to one or group of countries<sup>19</sup>. According to this theory, a balance between interests of the states with a coastline in the Arctic Ocean and international community should be maintained, because the Arctic is not a private possession but inherited wealth of all humankind<sup>20</sup>. This viewpoint was clearly underlined by rear admiral Yin Zhuo in March 2010: “the Arctic belongs to all people around the world and no nation will rule it. (...) China must plan its role in exploration of the Arctic as we have a fifth of world’s

---

<sup>15</sup> E. Rosenthal, *Race is On as Ice Melt Reveals Arctic Treasures*, in: [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/science/earth/arctic-resources-exposed-by-warming-set-off-competition.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/science/earth/arctic-resources-exposed-by-warming-set-off-competition.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0), November 9 2012.

<sup>16</sup> J. Spears, *China and the Arctic: The Awakening Snow Dragon*, in: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34725](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34725), web. October 28 2012.

<sup>17</sup> See: Nong, Hong, *The melting Arctic and its impact on China’s maritime transport*, Research in Transportation Economics, [www.elsevier.com/locate/retrec](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/retrec) web. November 6 2012.

<sup>18</sup> “China wants to have a more powerful voice in the Council which is the only organisation to govern the Arctic’s issues”, said Chen Gang, a researcher at the National University of Singapore’s East Asian Institute; see: *China vies for seat at council on Arctic resources and trade routes*, in: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/china/120629/arctic-council-oil-natural-resources> web. November 11 2012. At the twice yearly ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in may 2013 in Kiruna, northern Sweden, the five Nordic states, US, Canada and Russia agreed to grant observer status to China, Japan, South Korea, India, Singapore and Italy.

<sup>19</sup> L. Jakobson, *China prepares for an ice-free Arctic*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2010/2 March 2010, p. 13. D. Curtis Wright, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World*, in: [http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8\\_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf](http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf), web. October 30 2012

<sup>20</sup> D. Curtis Wright, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World*, in: [http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8\\_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf](http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf), web. October 30 2012.

population”<sup>21</sup>. Zhuo supported his arguments with a statement that China’s rights to deposits of natural resources in the Arctic result from the fact the country is a rising global power and permanent member of the UN Security Council<sup>22</sup>. Although it is not the official attitude of China’s government, it seems that this one and similar theories will so long be proposed by representatives of various backgrounds until they are acknowledged as an accepted situation.

## Japan

Japan issued an official statement about the Arctic policy in April 2010. The country declares a wide range of interests in the region from natural environment, navigation (diminishing of ice-covered areas will widen the zone and thus lengthen the season of navigation in the Arctic Ocean<sup>23</sup>). As a result the distance between Yokohama and Hamburg will be cut by 62 % compared with the route through the Suez Canal. However, the Japanese government underlines that due to the problems related to security and limitations resulting from the seasons of the year when shipping is possible, cutting the distance will not result in equally large decrease in the cost of transport<sup>24</sup>), natural resources to the international legal framework (Japan admits that legal issues connected with the Arctic Ocean ought to be settled under the UNCLOS Convention; in case of commencing the work on establishing new rules, the occurring changes should be considered with significant participation of interested states – not only the coastal ones).

Japan’s involvement in problems regarding the Arctic is noticeable at a few levels: scientific research (Japan is one of the thirteen countries with permanent research stations located in the Svalbard archipelago. Since 2009 it has worked together with Norway on placing sounding rockets in the Norwegian part of the Arctic, which help learn more about atmospheric conditions and factors that influence climate change<sup>25</sup>); the Arctic Council (Japan supports the Council’s goals and therefore it decided to obtain observer status. The formal request was submitted in 2009).

The Japanese government emphasises that the Arctic should be recognised as part of the common heritage of humankind and the international community ought to protect this area, use it for peaceful purposes and have access to potential

---

<sup>21</sup> Expanding on this attitude was a statement that since China has 20% of the world’s population, then it should have 20% of the Arctic’s resources; Official China News Service, March 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon G. Chang, *China’s Arctic Play*, *Diplomat*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010; in: <http://thediplomat.com/2010/03/09/china%E2%80%99s-arctic-play/>, web. October 30 2012.

<sup>23</sup> It will allow to avoid pirates’ attacks in the Indian Ocean.

<sup>24</sup> Japan is currently using an icebreaker Shirase II, launched in 2008, until now only used in Antarctic expeditions (like the previous five).

<sup>25</sup> See: Written Statement by the Delegation of Japan at the Second Meeting of Deputy Ministers of the Arctic Council 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012 Stockholm, Sweden, in: [www.arctic-council.org/.../118-deputy-ministers-meeting-stockholm-15-may-2012? ... japan](http://www.arctic-council.org/.../118-deputy-ministers-meeting-stockholm-15-may-2012?...japan), web. October 27 2012]; <http://www.jcar.org> [web. October 27 2012].

resources, offered by the region, and hence to care for its sustainable development and environment protection<sup>26</sup>.

### South Korea

In September 2012, the president of the country Lee Myung-bak made his first journey to the Arctic where he underlined political, commercial and logistic interests of Seoul. An important stop on this Arctic route was Greenland. The Korean President and Greenland's Prime Minister Kuupik Kleist during their meeting announced a plan of commencing joint "green growth and resources development projects" – actions for the purpose of boosting economy and creating jobs through investments in clean technologies and industry<sup>27</sup>. Both politicians signed memoranda regarding common navigation routes, exploration of resources and conducting geological research in the North. The meeting became an opportunity to conclude specific agreements as well. And so, the Korean state-owned concern – Korea Resources Corporation (KORES) signed a contract with a mining enterprise from Greenland – NunaMinerals for the purpose of joint prospecting for minerals, carrying out projects, exploiting the deposits of rare earth elements and other strategic metals<sup>28</sup>. The next country on the South Korean leader's route was Norway. South Korea's President and Norway's Prime Minister at a meeting in Oslo came to an agreement that they would work together to counteract climate change threatening the Arctic and develop this resource-rich region, including the polar shipping routes, without harming the indigenous people and environment. The Korean President Lee Myung-bak and Norwegian Premier Jens Stoltenberg signed a memorandum of understanding in which they committed themselves to helping their shipping companies in the launch of new maritime lanes in the Arctic. Both politicians agreed to form a partnership so as to counteract climate change as well as to protect the environment and biodiversity of the Arctic<sup>29</sup>. An undertaking to cooperation on shipbuilding, which is the main area of economic exchange between both countries and constitutes half of their trade, was also signed. It is worth pointing out that South Korea is the second largest Asian trading partner of Norway. "It takes about 30 days to go from South Korea to Europe by ship, but if Arctic routes are created, I think travel time will be halved. If that happens, economic exchanges between Europe and Asia will become very brisk. In particular, if Norway cooperates with us, Asian routes will

---

<sup>26</sup> See: *Japan and the Arctic*, Mr Hidehisa Horinouchi Deputy Director-General, International Legal Affairs Bureau Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Japan – Norway Polar Seminar Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>27</sup> *President Lee steps into the Arctic Circle for South Korea's Arctic initiative*, in: <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=102568>, web. October 29 2012

<sup>28</sup> See: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/10/greenland-korea-minerals-idINL5E8KAAKP20120910>, web. October 28 2012.

<sup>29</sup> M. Bennett, *South Korea and Norway sign memoranda of understanding on Arctic shipping and shipbuilding*, in: <http://eyeontheartctic.rcinet.ca/blog/148-mia-bennett/2383-south-korea-and-norway-sign-memoranda-of-understanding-on-arctic-shipping-and-shipbuilding>, web. October 29 2012.

be established, which will be very good for its future” – admitted President Lee Myung-bak during the Korea – Norway summit<sup>30</sup>. Premier Stoltenberg emphasised that “Norway appreciates South Korea’s interest in development of Arctic areas.” He also gave his endorsement to South Korea’s efforts to attain permanent observer status in the Arctic Council<sup>31</sup>.

The Arctic also has considerable scientific importance to Korea. The country is developing its research in a research station in Spitsbergen created in 2002 and called the Arctic Dasan Station. In 2004, in the Korean city of Incheon a scientific centre – Korea Polar Research Institute, created by separating a research unit from Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute, began its work. The agreement, concluded in May 2012, between Canada and Korea enables the first South Korean icebreaker (Araon) to explore, in summer next year, the Canadian part of the Arctic Ocean (in the Beaufort Sea) – the coastal areas of permafrost and seabed in terms of gas hydrates reserves. Araon will also research into the effects of releasing methane on the Arctic’s natural environment<sup>32</sup>.

Korea became interested in the Arctic quite late. Despite its late accession and lack of energy majors, it can still take advantage of its shipbuilding and engineering in one of the last unexplored corners of the world. Furthermore, Korean fishing industry needs new fisheries in the Arctic Ocean and stable supply of cold-water fish such as Pacific cod. Arctic fishing can contribute to the development of the Korean fishing sector<sup>33</sup>.

## India

India is eyeing the High North with hope and concern. This country became a “stakeholder” in the Arctic under the Svalbard Treaty (at the time it was part of the British overseas dominions). Its exploration is important to India and serves strengthening economic and political position in the region. There are three reasons of India’s interest in the Arctic. They are: the environment protection, economy and politics. Among the detailed goals are: developing multilateral cooperation with Arctic countries not only in the area of economy and science, but also its extension to political and strategic aspects; studying political environment in the Arctic and working out a special India’s strategy towards the Arctic; decreasing confrontational style of maintaining contacts in the region; promoting

---

<sup>30</sup> See: Zob.: <http://barentsobserver.com/en/arctic/south-korea-ties-norway-arctic-shipping-12-09>, web. October 28 2012.

<sup>31</sup> See: [http://www.norway.or.kr/News\\_and\\_events/koreanorway/President-Lee-met-with-Norwegian-Prime-Minister1/](http://www.norway.or.kr/News_and_events/koreanorway/President-Lee-met-with-Norwegian-Prime-Minister1/), web. October 29 2012.

<sup>32</sup> See: <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/business/2012/05/15/64/0501000000AEN20120515002800320F.HTML>, web. October 28 2012.

<sup>33</sup> See more: Seon-hee Eom, *The Arctic Fisheries Regime and Its Implications to Korea*, International Journal of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Volume 3 Issue 1 June 2011, p. 33-48, in: [http://www.kmi.re.kr/data/PUB/%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8%EC%A0%80%EB%84%9003\\_201102.pdf](http://www.kmi.re.kr/data/PUB/%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8%EC%A0%80%EB%84%9003_201102.pdf), web. November 10 2012; Shin Hyon-hee, *Korea seeks bigger role in Arctic*, in: <http://nwww.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20120515001396>, web. October 28 2012.

the Arctic as a nuclear weapon-free region (India supports global nuclear disarmament and due to this it can play an important role in promoting this idea). India is concerned that opening up new shipping routes in the Arctic will bring about diminishing the significance of the country. Today it is controlling traditional shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean where it wants to become the main force. India is also worried about fast melting of Arctic ice that recently has speeded up. Indian scientists reckon this phenomenon can impede the absorption of carbon dioxide and it will consequently lead to accelerating global warming. On the other hand, thawing of Arctic ice can have influence on chemical composition of the oceans, the unique marine environment (with implications for the economic growth), sea level rise, ocean currents, and thus weather conditions all around the world including the force of monsoons which are of a primary importance for India's inhabitants' survival. These fears have intensified research work in the country. The Arctic studies in India date back to 1981 when the Department of Ocean Studies was established on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's initiative and then the Arctic research programme was drawn up. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century India negotiated and signed a special polar research programme with the Norwegian Polar Institute. In August 2007 the Norwegian part of the Spitsbergen archipelago was visited by the first Indian scientific expedition. Since then, every year India has been sending a few scientific expeditions to the Arctic and in July 2008 "Himadri" – the Indian research station in Ny-Alesund on Spitsbergen was officially opened.

India wants to take active part in the exploration of polar resources counting above all on cooperation with Russia.

Shyam Saran – India's former foreign minister claims that the Arctic Ocean is owned jointly like Antarctica. And non-Arctic countries, such as India, should have voting rights to manage the Arctic. In his opinion it cannot be the exclusive privilege of the Arctic littoral states, and Indian politicians ought to mobilise international public opinion for recognition of the Arctic as the common heritage of humanity and promoting the idea of creating the international legal system following suit the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. India should spur, following the example of Antarctica where territorial claims of the states were postponed for the duration of the Treaty, so that the international community could accept such discipline with reference to the Arctic<sup>34</sup>. However the officials of India's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to this proposal maintain that it cannot be applicable because geography of both polar regions is quite different: "Antarctica is a continent surrounded by an ocean, whereas the Arctic is essentially an ocean but surrounded by land mass"<sup>35</sup>.

---

<sup>34</sup> S. Saran, *India's stake in Arctic cold war*, in: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/article2848280.ece>, web. November 3 2012.

<sup>35</sup> See: D. Mitra, *Taking cue from China, India eyeing Arctic region*, in: <http://newindianexpress.com/nation/article1282303.ece>, web. November 3 2012

## Conclusion

There are three separate “resources” in the Arctic: maritime routes which are opening up to commercial traffic along the northern coastline of Russia and Canada; potential oil and gas deposits as well as clean water. Due to climate change North-East Passage and North-West Passage will probably be accessible to shipping longer these years already. Using those lanes can considerably reduce transport costs from Asia to Europe and the eastern coast of the United States (distance cuts will be approximately 6,400 km and 7,000 km respectively). Professor Yang Bin of Shanghai Maritime University estimates that the Northern Sea Route will allow China to save from 60 to 120 billion dollars per year<sup>36</sup>. This reflects Asian states’ growing interest in the Arctic since Arctic transport is in the national interest of the countries dependent on import and export such as China, Japan or South Korea. Asia’s states want to win a position in the Arctic not because of military security but for economic reasons. Beijing highlights that the access to the resources is an important element of China’s Arctic policy. India and Japan support scientific interest in the region. Yet for South Korea its own interests count above all, and the key one is shipbuilding so it is here that the country sees new business opportunities.

## Bibliography

1. *90 Billion Barrels of Oil and 1,670 Trillion Cubic Feet of Natural Gas Assessed in the Arctic*, <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1980> [07.11.2012.].
2. Belogolova O., *Arctic Gas Project With Japan Off to Fast Start*, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy-report/arctic-gas-project-with-japan-off-to-fast-start-20120502>, [25.10.2012].
3. Bennett M., *South Korea and Norway Sign Memoranda of Understanding on Arctic Shipping and Shipbuilding*, <http://eyeontheartctic.rcinet.ca/blog/148-mia-bennett/2383-south-korea-and-norway-sign-memoranda-of-understanding-on-arctic-shipping-and-shipbuilding>, [ 29.10.2012].
4. Bertelsen Torbjørn Næs, *China's Quest for the Arctic*, <http://gbtimes.com/past-present/government/chinas-quest-arctic>, [29.10.2012].
5. Byers, M., *The Dragon Looks North*, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/20111226145144638282.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/20111226145144638282.html), [11.11.2012].
6. *Cabinet Okays Merger of ONGC's Russia Assets with Sistema Firms*, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-06-20/news/29679979\\_1\\_russneft-imperial-energy-bashneft](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-06-20/news/29679979_1_russneft-imperial-energy-bashneft), [02.11.2012].
7. Campbell C., *China and the Arctic: Objectives and Obstacles*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research Report April 13, 2012.
8. Chang Gordon G., *China's Arctic Play*, *Diplomat*, 9 March 2010, <http://thediplomat.com/2010/03/09/china%E2%80%99s-arctic-play/>, [30.10.2012].
9. *China's View on Arctic Cooperation*, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/tyfls/tfsxw/t812046.htm> [06.11.2012r.].

---

<sup>36</sup> Quoted after: M. Byers, *The dragon looks north*, in: [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/20111226145144638282.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/20111226145144638282.html), web. November 11 2012.

10. *China Vies for Seat at Council on Arctic Resources and Trade Routes*, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/china/120629/arctic-council-oil-natural-resources>, [11.11.2012].
11. *China's 1st Icebreaker to Be Completed in 2013*, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-10/25/content\\_13976000.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-10/25/content_13976000.htm), [31.10.2012].
12. *Chinese Premier Starts Europe Tour in Iceland*, <http://www.dw.de/chinese-premier-starts-europe-tour-in-iceland/a-15902814>, [01.11.2012].
13. Godlewski P., Nowy „Jedwabny Szlak”. *Chińska polityka ekonomiczna ropy naftowej*, [http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artykul.1141.Nowy\\_Jedwabny\\_Szlak?Chinska\\_polityka\\_ekonomiczna\\_ropy\\_naftowej](http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.info/artykul.1141.Nowy_Jedwabny_Szlak?Chinska_polityka_ekonomiczna_ropy_naftowej), [06.11.2012].
14. Graczyk P., *Observers in the Arctic Council – evolution and prospects. International Legal Status of State Observers in the Arctic Council on the Background of the Council's Internal Regulations*, 30.10.2010 not printed material.
15. *Greenland Open to China's Growing Arctic Interest*, [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674china\\_enters\\_the\\_arctic\\_equation/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674china_enters_the_arctic_equation/), [01.11.2012].
16. Holmes J., *China's Monroe Doctrine*, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/06/22/chinas-monroe-doctrine/>, [31.10.2012].
17. Humpert M., Raspotnik A., *The Future of Arctic Shipping*, <http://www.thearcticinstitute.org/2012/10/the-future-of-arctic-shipping.html>, [23.10.2012].
18. Jacobson L., *China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2010/2 March 2010.
19. Jacobson L., *CHINA: Potential Benefits of Arctic Melting*, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100528190101228>, [29.10.2012].
20. *Japan Latest Non-Arctic Country to Claim Stake in North Pole*, <http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2010/09/03/15241971.html>, [25.10.2012].
21. *Japan and the Arctic*, Mr. Hidehisa Horinouchi Deputy Director-General, International Legal Affairs Bureau Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan At the Japan-Norway Polar Seminar Monday, 26 April 2010.
22. Kijewski T., *Rywalizacja o surowce energetyczne w Arktyce*, „Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe”, 9–10/2009.
23. Lasserre F., *China and the Arctic: Threat of Cooperation Potential for Canada?*, <http://www.opencanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/China-and-the-Arctic-Frederic-Lasserre.pdf>, [31.10.2012].
24. Lunev S., *India goes to the Arctic*, [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=281](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=281), [02.11.2012].
25. *Meeting between the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and Observers/Ad-hoc Observers Stockholm*, Sweden November 6, 2012 Statement by Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Mr. Shuji Kira, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/svm/pdfs/statement121108.pdf>, [09.11.2012].
26. *Major Deals between India and Russia, New Delhi*, December 22, 2010, [http://www.rusembassy.in/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2122&Itemid=102&lang=en](http://www.rusembassy.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2122&Itemid=102&lang=en), [02.11.2012].
27. Minnick W., *Beijing Shows Growing Ambitions in Warming Arctic*, <http://minnickarticles.blogspot.com/2010/03/beijing-shows-growing-ambitions-in.html>, [29.10.2012].
28. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China and Norway*, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjlb/zjzg/xos/gjlb/3346/t16984.htm>, [31.10.2012].

29. Mitra D., *Taking Cue from China, India Eyeing Arctic Region*, <http://newindianexpress.com/nation/article1282303.ece>, [03.11.2012].
30. Nong Hong, *The melting Arctic and Its Impact on China's Maritime Transport*, Research in Transportation Economics, [www.elsevier.com/locate/retrec](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/retrec), [06.11.2012].
31. *Official Visit of Prime Minister to the Russian Federation*, [http://www.indianembassy.ru/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=797%3Apress-release&catid=53%3Avisits&Itemid=625&lang=en](http://www.indianembassy.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=797%3Apress-release&catid=53%3Avisits&Itemid=625&lang=en), [02.11.2012].
32. *President Lee Steps into the Arctic Circle for South Korea's Arctic Initiative*, <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=102568>, [29.10.2012].
33. Quaille I., *China's Arctic Ambitions Spark Concerns*, <http://www.dw.de/chinas-arctic-ambitions-spark-concerns/a-15911711-1>, [01.11.2012].
34. Rosenthal E., *Race Is On as Ice Melt Reveals Arctic Treasures*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/science/earth/arctic-resources-exposed-by-warming-set-off-competition.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>, [09.11.2012].
35. Sakhuja V., *China: Breaking into the Arctic Ice*, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/ib%20%20dr.pdf>, [06.11.2012].
36. Sakhuja V., *The Arctic Council: Is there a Case for India*, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/policy%20briefs%20dr.pdf>, [02.11.2012].
37. Saran S., *India's Stake in Arctic Cold War*, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/article2848280.ece>, [03.11.2012].
38. Seon-hee Eom, *The Arctic Fisheries Regime and Its Implications to Korea*, International Journal of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Vol. 3, Issue 1, June 2011, pp. 33-48, [http://www.kmi.re.kr/data/PUB/%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8%EC%A0%80%EB%84%9003\\_201102.pdf](http://www.kmi.re.kr/data/PUB/%EC%98%81%EB%AC%B8%EC%A0%80%EB%84%9003_201102.pdf), [10.11.2012].
39. Shin Hyon-hee, *Korea Seeks Bigger Role in Arctic*, <http://nwww.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20120515001396>, [28.10.2012].
40. *Significance of Arctic Research Expedition*, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/40961.htm>, [05.11.2012].
41. *South Korean Delegation Visited the Ministry of Defence*, <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fd/aktuelt/nyheter/2012/sor-koreansk-delegasjon-besokte-forsvars.html?id=698671>, [29.10.2012].
42. Spears J., *China and the Arctic: The Awakening Snow Dragon*, [http://www.Jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34725](http://www.Jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34725), [28.10.2012].
43. Støne Jonas Gahr, Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, speech at China Institute for International Studies, Beijing, 30 Aug. 2010, [http://www.regjeringen.no/eu/dep/ud/whats-newspeeches/-and-articles/speechesforeign/2010/arctic\\_vierijing/html?id=613162](http://www.regjeringen.no/eu/dep/ud/whats-newspeeches/-and-articles/speechesforeign/2010/arctic_vierijing/html?id=613162) [10.11.2012].
44. Viglundson J., Doyle A., *First Chinese Ship Crosses Arctic Ocean Amid Record Melt*, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/08/17/us-china-environment-idUKBRE87G0P820120817>, [06.11.2012].
45. Wright D. Curtis, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World*, [http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8\\_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf](http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-8_The-Dragon-Eyes-the-Top-of-.pdf), [30.10.2012].
46. Written Statement by the Delegation of Japan at the Second Meeting of Deputy Ministers of the Arctic Council 15 May 2012 Stockholm, Sweden, [www.arctic-council.org/.../118-deputy-ministers-meeting-stockholm-15-may-2012? ... japan](http://www.arctic-council.org/.../118-deputy-ministers-meeting-stockholm-15-may-2012? ... japan), [27.10.2012]; <http://www.jcar.org>, [27.10.2012].

47. <http://minnickarticles.blogspot.com/2010/03/beijing-shows-growing-ambitions-in.html>, [29.10.2012].
48. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/10/greenland-korea-minerals-idINL5E8KAAKP20120910>, [28.10.2012]
49. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/10/greenland-korea-minerals-idINL5E8KAAKP20120910>, [28.10.2012]
50. <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/business/2012/05/15/64/0501000000AEN20120515002800320F.HTML>, [ 28.10.2012].
51. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>, [02.11.2012];
52. [http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/media/weowebsite/2009/weo2009\\_es\\_polish.pdf](http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/media/weowebsite/2009/weo2009_es_polish.pdf), [02.11.2012].
53. [http://polish.ruvr.ru/2012\\_05\\_29/76362407/](http://polish.ruvr.ru/2012_05_29/76362407/), [12.11.2012].
54. <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=77270>, [23.10.2012].

### **Abstract**

Thawing of ice in the High North has resulted in changing the geostrategic position of the Arctic. Activity in the region has been demonstrated by the countries unrelated to it yet. These non-Arctic stakeholders make the range of interest in the Arctic extend considerably. Although the countries such as China, South Korea or Japan and India do not have territories in this region, they are more and more loudly “knocking at the door” of the Arctic Council, seeking the position of permanent observers. Asian states want to win a position in the Arctic not because of military security but for economic reasons. Beijing highlights that access to the resources is an important factor of China’s Arctic policy. India and Japan support scientific research in the region. Yet for South Korea its own interests count above all, and the key one is shipbuilding, so it is here that the country sees new business opportunities. China, Japan, South Korea and India – want to use shorter commercial maritime routes, access new fisheries and above all potential natural resources. It gives rise to question how far are “the Arctic frontiers” extending today?

### **Zainteresowanie państw azjatyckich Daleką Północą**

Topnienie lodu na Dalekiej Północy spowodowało zmianę geostrategicznej pozycji Arktyki. Aktywność w tym obszarze wykazują kraje formalnie niezwiązane z Arktyką. Ci nie-arktyczni potencjalni udziałowcy, wpływają na znaczne zwiększenie obszaru zainteresowań Arktyką. Mimo, że kraje takie jak Chiny, Korea Południowa i Japonia i Indie nie mają tam swoich terytoriów, coraz głośniej „pukają do drzwi” Rady Arktycznej ubiegając się o pozycje stałych obserwatorów. Państwa Azji chcą zdobyć swą pozycję w Arktyce nie z powodu bezpieczeństwa militarnego, ale ze względów ekonomicznych. Pekin podkreśla, że dostęp do zasobów jest ważnym czynnikiem Chińskiej polityki arktycznej. Indie i Japonia wspierają badania naukowe w regionie. Jednak dla Korei Południowej

liczą się przede wszystkim jej własne interesy, z których kluczowym jest przemysł stoczniowy, więc właśnie tutaj kraj widzi nowe możliwości biznesowe. Chiny, Japonia, Korea Południowa i Indie – chcą korzystać z krótszych morskich szlaków handlowych, mieć dostęp do nowych łowisk, a przede wszystkim do potencjalnych zasobów naturalnych. Budzi się więc pytanie, jak daleko dzisiaj sięgają granice Arktyki?

Joanna Grzela, Ph.D., the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland.