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

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**ARCTIC COOPERATION
OF THE NORDIC AND EAST ASIAN STATES**

Introduction²

Issues related to the unprecedented systematic changes, that have been taking place for nearly a decade in the Arctic circle have been constantly gaining international attention, and even popularity. Due to the multidimensional consequences of climate change and the processes of modernization and globalization, Arctic is no longer perceived solely as a remote, uninhabited “white desert”, but it begins to be regarded as an important part of the global climate and ecological processes³ as well as a component of political, social and economic order⁴. Approaches to assess the nature of this transformation are varied, because what some perceive as a promise of new forms of activity and benefits (e.g. trading of oil and gas extracted from the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean), the others see as a source of threats (e.g. to ecology). Pursuant to the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Arctic is a region largely subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of states, whose territories are situated north of the Arctic Circle. From the perspective of these countries balancing the risks and opportunities, that are currently identified in the Far North is extremely important, because the effects of any errors or negligence may affect mainly their territories. Therefore, according to the opinion, quite often expressed by some of the Arctic states, the activities

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² The research was funded by the National Science Centre (NCN) granted after obtaining the doctoral degree based on a decision number DEC-2012/04 / S / HS5 / 00172.

³ E. Elverland, *The Arctic System*, Tromsø 2009.

⁴ *Arctic Human Development Report*, Stefansson Arctic Institute, under the auspices of the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2002-2004, Akureyri 2004.

related to the Arctic belong exclusively to the sphere of their interest and competence.

On the other hand, it is emphasized, that what is happening now in the Arctic is mainly due to the processes taking place in other parts of the world, and which at the same time has an increasing influence on these processes. This somewhat global perspective of the situation in the High North is typical of the approach of non-Arctic states, which for various reasons express their keen interest in the changing Arctic. Among these countries there are also East Asian countries: China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, which under the decisions taken at the ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in Kiruna in Sweden in May 2013 were granted the observer status of the organization⁵. The issue of the involvement of these countries in Arctic cooperation is an utterly new area of research regarding international relations in the Far North. So far, the first analyses have indicated, that an important contributory factor strengthening the position of East Asian countries within the framework of Arctic cooperation are their relationships with individual Member States of the Arctic Council⁶. Given the importance of this issue for the functioning of international cooperation in the High North, which in turn may have an increasingly important impact on the global balance of power, it is worth to take a further, in-depth studies into this field.

The issue of Arctic cooperation of the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland) and East Asian observers in the Arctic Council is the main subject of a brief analysis presented in this paper. Its aim is to carry out a preliminary description of this cooperation, point out some of its examples and explain its significance, both in the context of bilateral as well as multilateral relations on regional scale. The starting point will be a synthetic analysis of the evidence of interest of the Northeast Asian countries in the High North. Next, the conclusions deriving from the analysis of the Arctic strategy of individual Nordic countries in terms of their attitude towards the interest of the partners from East Asia in the Arctic region will be presented. Furthermore, selected examples illustrating the unique nature and the main trends in the cooperation will be discussed. Finally, the research paper will provide conclusions indicating the importance of regional cooperation between the Nordic and East Asian states.

East Asian states towards the changing Arctic

Reasons and areas of interest in the Arctic of individual countries of East Asia at first glance seem to be the same, because, as noted by K. Kubiak (analyzing the approach of China, Japan and South Korea) the countries are in a similar situation in terms of conditions, however not in terms of the scale of the phenomena. First

⁵ D.C. Nord, Creating a Framework for Consensus Building & Governance: An Appraisal of the Swedish Arctic Council Chairmanship and the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting, "Arctic Yearbook" 2013, pp. 249-263.

⁶ P. Solli, E. Wilson Rowe, W. Lindgren, *Coming into the cold: Asia's Arctic Interests*, „Polar Geography" 2013, vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 253-270.

of all, they are dependent on foreign energy resources - oil and gas, which are imported mainly from the Middle East⁷. What is more, the route of their transportation passes through areas periodically unstable (the so-called Strait of Malacca dilemma). In this situation, an access to energy resources in the Arctic could provide the East Asian countries with potentially significant increase in their energy security, both by diversifying the sources of oil and gas, and by using alternative routes of transport⁸. Besides, it is worth noting, that in the case of China, Japan and South Korea, where exports are an important component of their GDP, their majority go to the markets, which are accessed only by sea⁹. On the other hand, Singapore is an important link in the global marine transport network and a substantial part of its income depends on the functioning of this network¹⁰. Taking this into account, it is reasonable to conclude, that the use of Arctic shipping routes could be potentially relevant to these countries. The "opening up" Arctic Ocean seems to be also conducive to the development of fisheries, which definitely arouses considerable interest, particularly in China, Japan and South Korea¹¹. Of course, the economic sphere is not the only area of growing interest of the East Asian countries in the changes taking place in the Far North. All four countries emphasize, that climate and environmental issues are equally important to them, particularly the possibility of their systematic and comprehensive study. When analyzing the officially adopted positions and the already taken actions of individual countries, it can be noted, however, that while actually areas of interest are in principle very similar (in fact analogous), their goals, and in particular the measures to achieve them are multi-dimensional and diverse¹².

It is easy to notice this unique attitude by analyzing the evolution of China's approach to the Arctic and its involvement in the region over the last few years. The first Chinese scientific expedition to the Arctic, which involved fifty researchers representing various fields of earth sciences, took place in the summer of 1999. Then, in 2004, China established its own research station in Ny-Ålesund on Spitsbergen, which made it possible to carry out next scientific expeditions¹³. What is more, this step provided the authorities in Beijing with an important

⁷ K. Kubiak, "Nowi gracze" z Azji Wschodniej wobec Arktyki w pierwszych dekadach XXI wieku [in:] *Arktyka na początku XXI wieku. Między współpracą a rywalizacją*, ed. M. Łuszczuk, Lublin 2013, pp. 509-530.

⁸ An interesting analysis of this issue is provided by : D.A. Welch, *The Arctic and Geopolitics*, CIGI Papers: East-Asia Relations: Boundary, Security and International Politics 2013, No. 6, p. 2 [on-line], http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no6_1.pdf, [18.04.2014].

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ See: M. Rusli, *Protecting vital sea lines of communication: A study of the proposed designation of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore as a particularly sensitive sea area*, "Ocean & Coastal Management" 2012, vol. 57, pp. 79-94.

¹¹ L. Jakobson, *Northeast Asia Turns Its Attention to the Arctic*, NBR Analysis Brief, December 2013, p. 1 [on-line], http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/pdf/Brief/121712_Jakobson_Arctic_Council.pdf, [10.05.2014].

¹² K. Kubiak, *op.cit.*, pp. 509-510.

¹³ In 2012, China organized a sea expedition on their icebreaker "Xue Long", which sailed across the Arctic to Iceland, and then returned to China by the Northeast Passage.

argument, which is now often used to point to a primarily scientific nature of China's interest in the Arctic¹⁴. The study of climate change, however, does not have a purely cognitive value for China, as much evidence suggests, that an increase in the number of extreme weather events observed there in the past few years can be partly explained by climate change in the High North. In this context, it is noteworthy, that the deteriorating weather conditions in many parts of China not only create the need to develop the necessary resources in increasingly frequent and difficult situations of crisis, but also have a significant impact on the amount of food production and its availability for millions of Chinese people¹⁵.

An access and rights to exploit the marine areas of the Arctic beyond the jurisdiction of the Arctic Ocean coastal states is another important issue for Beijing¹⁶. Also, promising investment opportunities in the Arctic, in the area of both exploration and exploitation of energy resources, acquiring living marine resources or investments in the tourism sector cannot be forgotten¹⁷. This brief presentation of the position of China may be concluded with a remark, that the approach demonstrated by Chinese politicians and diplomats tends to emphasize their concern for the future of the Arctic and its general human and global dimension¹⁸. At the same time the Chinese rarely take an official position on any controversial issues related to the High North¹⁹, while constantly declare their support to all forms of Arctic cooperation, both multilateral and bilateral (especially with the Nordic countries²⁰). Undoubtedly, being part of the cooperation, as well as the observer status of the Arctic Council²¹ is both prestigious and is one of the components of a wider, global strategy²².

Japan, whose traditions of active involvement in the Arctic have been relatively long (it has been carrying out regular polar research since 1957, and since 1990 it has been a member of the International Arctic Science Committee), now focuses primarily on issues related to the disappearance of ice cover in the Arctic Ocean

¹⁴ C. Campbell, *China and the Arctic: Objectives and Obstacles*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research Report, April 13, 2012, p. 4 [on-line], http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-and-the-Arctic_Apr2012.pdf, [21.04.2014].

¹⁵ L. Jakobson, J. Peng, *China's Arctic Aspirations*, SIPRI Policy Paper 34, 2012, p. 1 [on-line], <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRI34.pdf>, [23.09.2013].

¹⁶ C. Campbell, *op.cit.*, p. 8. comp.: L. Jakobson, J. Peng, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁷ Comp.: E. H. Huijbens, D. Alessio, *Arctic 'concessions' and icebreaker diplomacy? Chinese tourism development in Iceland*, „Current Issues in Tourism” 2013, DOI:10.1080/13683500.2013.837867.

¹⁸ L. Jakobson, *China prepares for an ice-free Arctic*, SIPRI Insight on Peace and Security no. 2010/2, p. 2 [on-line], <http://books.sipri.org/files/insight/SIPRIInsight1002.pdf>, [16.02.2012].

¹⁹ This is the case with regard to, for instance, the issue of the status of the Northeast Passage. More, see: F. Lasserre, *China in the Arctic: Threat or cooperation potential for Canada*, Canadian International Council 2010, p. 8.

²⁰ O.V. Alexeeva, F. Lasserre, *The Snow Dragon: China's Strategies in the Arctic*, „China Perspective” 2012, no. 3, p. 63.

²¹ China already submitted its application in 2007.

²² D. C. Wright, *The Dragon Eyes the Top of the World: Arctic Policy Debate and Discussion in China*, China Maritime Studies Institute U.S. Naval War College Newport, Rhode Island 2011., p.2 [on-line], www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute.aspx, [18.11.2013].

and the use of Northeast Passage, and especially the Russian Northern Sea Route. After the nuclear disaster in March 2011, Japan's interest in the deposits of energy resources, including gas from methane hydrates has been increasing. At the same time Tokyo also clearly expresses its concern about growing, already existing tensions as well as challenges to regional security, particularly in the military sphere. This strategic approach is not only due to the relative proximity of the waters of the High North, but primarily because of the growing position of China and Russia not only in the region, but also outside it. It is worth noting, that three icebreakers are at the disposal of the authorities in Tokyo²³. At the same time Japan has been actively involved in scientific research conducted around the North Pole, and has been supporting the existing mechanisms for regional cooperation - in 2009, it submitted an application for the observer status in the Arctic Council. To conclude this short presentation of the Japanese approach to the changing High North, it should be emphasized, that the government in Tokyo made it clear, that the Arctic is part of the common heritage of mankind, and that the international community should protect this area for peaceful purposes²⁴.

Another East Asian emerging power is South Korea, whose interests in the High North focus on the natural resources of the region, new perspectives of Arctic shipping routes, as well as the opportunities to develop their own shipbuilding potential. Korea for many years, has been the world's leader in the production of ships and offshore platforms, so an increase in the demand for ships capable of using the current and potential Arctic routes as well as for the platforms used for exploiting raw materials from the bottom of the Arctic Ocean is undoubtedly of great importance²⁵. Finally, an important factor influencing South Korea's interests in the marine areas of the Arctic is the possible development of fishing industry in international waters of the Arctic. At the end of the presentation of the Korean approach to the changing High North it should be emphasized, that for the government in Seoul, Arctic cooperation is an important issue on its political agenda, which to a large extent, demonstrates, and also explains the increase in Korea's involvement in the relations with the Arctic countries. In 2012, the then President Lee Myung-bak visited Denmark (Greenland) and Norway. During the visit, four agreements on cooperation on the resources in Greenland were concluded and South Korea acceded the Svalbard Treaty²⁶. There are many indications, that Korea may become the first among East Asian countries, to develop a comprehensive Arctic strategy in the near future²⁷.

²³ A. Tonami, S. Watters, *Japan's Arctic Policy: The Sum of Many Parts*, „Arctic Yearbook” 2013, vol. 2, p. 95.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 97

²⁵ The main corporations are: Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering, STX Offshore and Shipbuilding Company, Hyundai Heavy Industries. See: Y. K. Park, *Arctic Prospects and Challenges from a Korean Perspective*, The Centre for International Governance Innovation 2013, p. 7.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²⁷ J-D. Kim, *Arctic Policy Development - Republic of Korea*, speech delivered at the conference Arctic Circle, Rejkavik, 14.10.2013.

Singapore is another country in the group of East Asian states, that loudly expresses its interest in the changing Arctic. The main reasons for this interest are the concerns about the impact of the development of Arctic sea routes on the use of the existing routes south of Asia and a possible decline in the importance of Singapore as an important port in this part of the world. Moreover, the authorities in Singapore point out, that climate change in the Arctic, particularly the melting of the ice caps and glaciers in Greenland could result in rising water levels on a global scale, which may pose a threat and a challenge also to this country. It should be noted, however, that, although Singapore has no experience in polar issues, it has significant experience when it comes to efficient logistics operations, especially running seaports, as well as the extraction of raw materials from the seabed and the development of marine technology. Using these advantages in the High North could become for Singapore the source of additional benefits. Quite an interesting thread emerging from the Singapore's relations with the Arctic is its care about the Arctic indigenous peoples and the possible support, that it can offer to this group of residents of the High North thanks to its valuable experience. Singapore submitted its application for observer status in the Arctic Council in December 2011²⁸.

Closing this synthetic analysis of the circumstances and trends in the approach towards the Arctic of the four East Asian countries, one should agree with Jakobson and Lee, that although closer cooperation of these countries to coordinate their plans regarding the Arctic would certainly be a valuable initiative, however, taking into account the differences and sometimes a tension between them, currently it seems impossible to achieve²⁹.

The Nordic states towards the increasing involvement of the East Asian states in the Arctic

The reconstruction and analysis of the position of each of the Nordic countries towards the increasing interest and involvement of East Asian countries in the High North, which is the subject of this part, will be based mainly on examining the content of their so-called Arctic strategy³⁰, as well as on the identification and evaluation of selected examples of existing projects of cooperation. As noted in the introduction, the growing number of links, mostly of a bilateral nature between individual Nordic and East Asian countries was one of the main factors

²⁸ S. Watters, A. Tonami, *Singapore: An Emerging Arctic Actor*, „Arctic Yearbook” 2012, pp. 104-113.

²⁹ L. Jakobson, S-H. Lee, *The North East Asian States' Interests in the Arctic and Possible Cooperation with the Kingdom of Denmark*, SIPRI, Stockholm 2013, p. 36 [on-line], <http://www.sipri.org/research/security/arctic/arcticpublications/NEAsia-Arctic.pdf>, [19.04.2014]

³⁰ These documents - published over the last few years - are an interesting subject of study, that allow for better understanding of the Arctic states' approach to the changing Arctic and the resulting consequences. See: for example, A.J.K. Bailes, L. Heininen, *Strategy papers on the Arctic or High North. A comparative study and analysis*, the Centre for Small State Studies, Institute of International Affairs, University of Iceland, Reykjavik 2013.

contributing to strengthening the position of the latter ones on the forum of the Arctic Council. It also indicates the development of a global network of relationships linking the High North to other parts of the world. This situation is not always welcomed by the Arctic countries such as Canada, Russia and to some extent the United States. Bearing this in mind, the attitude of the Nordic countries - although it is difficult to speak of a common attitude - to the East Asian countries should be considered at least as open, if not favourable. Individual cases will be outlined below.

The strategy, presented by Finland in August 2013³¹, indicates, that the Arctic region is increasingly affected by global economic change, including the growing position of the East Asian states. At the same time, the Finnish Government has formulated the postulate of strengthening the role, which Finland could play, thanks to its location, in the development of trade between Europe and Asia. An example of a concept reflecting this trend is the idea of Arctic Corridor³². It is also worth to note, that steps to facilitate relationships between Finnish companies and partners from different East Asian countries have been taken. For instance in the Autumn of 2013 Sino-Finnish Maritime Arctic Forum³³ was held in Tjanjin in China. Selected research centers of Finland have been invited to closer scientific cooperation.

The strategy published by Norway in 2009³⁴ indicates, that the development of the navigation of the Northeast Passage may primarily create an opportunity to strengthen the position of Norwegian companies in the East Asian markets. Referring to the phenomenon of increased activity of the Far East countries in the Arctic, the authorities in Oslo clearly expressed the need for research in this field, its specificity and the expected consequences³⁵. The results of these studies will definitely serve their role in the area of Norwegian diplomacy, since the development of the political dialogue with the new actors from Asia is, according to the authors of this strategy, an extremely important condition allowing Norway to influence the situation in the Arctic. Finally, the objectives of the Norwegian Arctic policy include numerous references to the merits of the development of cooperation with Asian partners in areas such as scientific research, maritime

³¹ *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region: Government resolution on 23 August 2013* [on-line], <http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2013/j-14-arktinen-15-arktiska-16-arctic-17-saame/PDF/en.pdf>, [11.04.2014].

³² See. M. Bennet, *Interview with Arctic Corridor Spokesman Timo Lohi*, Cryopolitics Blog [on-line], <http://cryopolitics.com/2014/03/27/interview-with-arctic-corridor-spokesman-timo-lohi/> [19.04.2014].

³³ Turku City, *The Arctic competence of Turku's marine industry presented in China* [on-line], <http://www.turku.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=477413&contentLan=2&culture=en-US&nodeid=23>, [13.04.2014].

³⁴ *The High North: Visions and strategies*, Norwegian Government 2011 [on-line], http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Nordomr%C3%A5dene/UD_nordomrodene_EN_web.pdf, [11.04.2014].

³⁵ An example of these research studies may be AsiArctic Programme project implemented by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute. More information on this topic is available on the project website: <http://www.asiartic.no/>.

transport, shipbuilding (construction of drilling platforms), exploitation of energy resources. Arctic cooperation of Norway with individual East Asian states is clearly dominated by its relationship with the Republic of China. These relations have significantly deteriorated in recent years, due to the strong reaction of the Chinese regime to the decision of awarding in 2010 the Nobel Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo³⁶. This situation has had a significant impact on the Arctic cooperation between the two countries, and has also provoked speculation concerning the possibility of supporting or blocking by Norway the application of China for observer status in the Arctic Council. Eventually, however, the authorities in Oslo supported the application, and their susceptibility to pressure from China found its expression in avoiding an official meeting with Dalai Lama, who at the beginning of May 2014, visited Oslo in connection with the anniversary of awarding him the Nobel Prize in 1989.

Taking into account political context, Norway's trade relations with Japan are much easier and their significance lies in the sale of Norwegian gas developed from the Barents Sea bed and its transportation through the Northeast Passage. In 2012, the LNG carrier "Ob River", and in 2013 the tanker "Arctic Aurora" (both owned by the Greek company Dynagas) delivered, respectively, 150,000 and 155,000 cubic meters of LNG³⁷ to Japanese terminals. Although the volume of these transactions does not significantly affect the overall export of Norwegian gas, their pioneering nature is worth highlighting.

Another example of the activity of Norwegian and East Asian partners is the project to produce a vessel called Goliath, designed to extract, pre-purify, store and finally carry out transshipment of the gas in one of the most promising oil-bearing areas in the Norwegian part of the Barents Sea. Italian corporation ENI, together with the Norwegian Statoil decided to commission this platform in the Korean shipyard in Ulsan, owned by Hyundai Heavy Industries. Unfortunately, filling this order is not progressing smoothly, as the completion date has been rescheduled several times³⁸.

Relationships between Norway and Singapore, which are currently establishing, seem to be promising. Their specificity, however, is perfectly illustrated by the joint seminar on the Arctic, which was held in Singapore in March 2014. The main guests of this forum were Else Berit Eikeland, Norwegian senior Arctic Official of the Arctic Council, Ole Kristian Bjerkemo, the chairman of the Emergency Prevention and Preparedness Response (EPPR) Working Group of the Arctic Council, Andrew Tan of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore and Haakon

³⁶ Alexeeva, Lasserre, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

³⁷ M. McGrath, *Gas tanker Ob River attempts first winter Arctic crossing*, BBC news [on-line], <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-20454757>, [14.04.2014]; T. Nilsen, *Hammerfest LNG set sails for Japan via Arctic route*, BarentsObserver [on-line], <http://barentsobserver.com/en/arctic/hammerfest-lng-set-sails-japan-arctic-route-06-11>, [14.04.2014].

³⁸ A. Staalesen, *"Chaos at Goliath"*, BarentsObserver [on-line], <http://barentsobserver.com/en/energy/2014/02/chaos-goliath-12-02>, [23.04.2014].

Svane representing the Norwegian Shipowners' Association³⁹. The list of speakers clearly indicates the main areas of interest of partners from Singapore, as well as Norway's aspiration for developing cooperation, which, pursuant to the recommendations contained in the Arctic strategy, aims to promote political dialogue and strengthen the position of Norway in the context of the broader Arctic cooperation.

Less extensive, however similar in content to the Norwegian approach is the Arctic strategy of the Kingdom of Denmark⁴⁰, which also highlights the opportunities and potential gains from cooperation with Asian countries. It specifically indicates possibilities of obtaining icebreakers as well as opportunities for scientific cooperation. It is worth adding here, that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned a report, published in the spring of 2013, devoted exclusively to issues of intensification of the presence of East Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea) in the Arctic and the possibilities of Denmark's cooperation with them. The authors of the report recommended, that the government in Copenhagen should focus its attention to the following issues: (1) strengthening political communication related to the Arctic; (2) encouraging the Arctic scientific cooperation; (3) facilitating the access to expertise and developing skills necessary for functioning in the Arctic; (4) encouraging joint scientific- economic projects aimed at the development of the areas of the Arctic, particularly Greenland; (5) increasing East Asian societies' knowledge of the Arctic and Denmark⁴¹. These demands are already, at least partially implemented, for example, in Denmark's relations with China. In 2010, Denmark hosted the first delegation of Chinese investors and entrepreneurs; the meetings have resulted in numerous contracts and declarations of cooperation in the area of energy, green economy, agriculture and food security, whose value is estimated at about 740 million dollars⁴². Greenland remains a particular area of interest of Chinese companies, mainly due to the rare element deposits located in this area⁴³. The latest episode in the Danish-Chinese relations has been an arrangement to borrow from China two giant panda bears by the zoo in Copenhagen. This step referring to the ancient tradition of Chinese diplomacy - of giving these rare animals to selected partners in exchange for future concessions has been immediately interpreted as a prelude to strengthen Arctic cooperation, especially with regard to Greenland⁴⁴.

³⁹ Norway - Singapore Arctic Symposium, Press Information [on-line] http://www.norway.org.sg/News_and_events/Events/Norway---Singapore-Arctic-Symposium/#.U35SeihlsSk, [09.05.2014].

⁴⁰ Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands: Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020 [on-line], http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/raw-materials/files/docs/mss-denmark_en.pdf, [10.05.2014].

⁴¹ L. Jakobson, S-H. Lee, *op.cit.*, pp. 36-51.

⁴² Alexeeva, Lasserre, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

⁴³ Zob. M. Nuttall, *Zero-tolerance, uranium and Greenland's mining future*, „The Polar Journal” 2013, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 368–383,

⁴⁴ Andreas Lindkvist, *From China, with strings attached*, „The Arctic Journal”, 1 May 2014 [on-line], <http://arcticjournal.com/politics/590/china-strings-attached>, [10.05.2014].

No reference to East Asian countries is included in the Arctic strategies, presented by Sweden and Iceland. However, while the details of the cooperation between Sweden and East Asian states (except for the data on scientific cooperation and the visit of Chinese Prime Minister in 2012) are difficult to obtain, the situation is quite different in the case of the relations of Iceland, particularly with China.

China has developed its relations with Iceland in the period of acute economic crisis in 2008 and pretty soon their shape has been determined⁴⁵, particularly thanks to the frequent visits at the highest level. In April 2012, during the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao six agreements were signed, including two on Arctic cooperation⁴⁶. A few months later, a Chinese icebreaker “Xue Long” arrived in Reykjavík (after completing the route across the north pole). It was the only port entered by this Chinese vessel, which also had a symbolic meaning; this manifestation of co-operation, dubbed as “icebreaker diplomacy” has become the next step in the development of mutual relations. As part of the re-visit of the Icelandic prime minister in Beijing free trade agreement between China and Iceland was signed on 14 April 2012. It is worth noting, that the visit took place at the time of the negotiations between Iceland and the European Union, concerning accession agreement, which were ultimately broken by Iceland. Icelandic openness to cooperation with East Asian countries is also illustrated by the initiative to organize, in the autumn of 2013, the so-called Arctic Circle. Bearing in mind the initially vague nature of this idea, announced in April 2013, i.e. shortly before the ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in Kiruna, and above all the related speculations about establishing a new Arctic organization, made some observers consider it as a form of indirect pressure on the Member States of the Council to approve the applications of Asian countries. When that happened, the Arctic Circle in Reykjavík became “only” a platform for a broad discussion on the future of the Arctic, where the Asian states actually play an important role.

Closing the presentation of Arctic Icelandic-Chinese cooperation, it is worth to mention, that in January 2014 the Chinese company CNOOC International Ltd was granted oil and gas exploitation and exploration concession in Dreki Area, where Icelanders expect to exploit rich deposits of hydrocarbons⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ It should be noted, however, that the first Chinese initiatives, such as an application of a Chinese entrepreneur Huang Nubo for a permission to purchase the property of an area of 300 km² in order to build a tourist resort were rejected by the Icelandic authorities.

⁴⁶ Prime Minister Office, *Agreements and declarations signed following a meeting between Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir and Premier Wen Jiabao*, Press Information [on-line], <http://eng.forsaetisraduneyti.is/news-and-articles/nr/7144>, [9.05.2014].

⁴⁷ I. Tang, *China's CNOOC starts preparation work to explore for oil and gas offshore Iceland*, Platts [on-line], <http://www.platts.com/latest-news/oil/singapore/chinas-cnooc-starts-preparation-work-to-explore-26748948>, [24.04.2014].

Conclusions

Summing up the presented analyzes of the factors generating East Asian states' interest in the Arctic as well as the approach of the Nordic countries faced with the possibility of cooperation with partners from China, Japan, Korea and Singapore, considering also the already implemented projects, three major observations can be made.

First, the transformation of the Arctic provides an opportunity for the cooperation between the Nordic and East Asian states. This cooperation between individual partners is neither uniform nor symmetrical. On the one hand it is dominated by Iceland, Norway and Denmark, on the other by China. Currently, Arctic cooperation still remains more an objective rather than a task. However, it is already clear, that its potential is very large.

Secondly, the results of the analysis indicate a rather complementary system of needs and capabilities of the Nordic and East Asian countries. However, the existing asymmetries of potentials, particularly evident in the case of China show, that cooperation does not have exactly the nature of the partnership and in the long term, it may be disadvantageous for less important partners. Of course, it will be subject to the general possibilities of using the potential of the Arctic in the future.

Thirdly, regardless of the development of the Nordic-East Asian cooperation in the long term, it already has a significant impact on the functioning of the mechanisms of cooperation in the Arctic region. Moreover, Asian countries obtained the observer status in the Arctic Council only a year ago and right now they are trying to recognise the opportunities arising from their new role. It is however quite easy to predict, that after the years of attempts, they will make every effort to gradually increase their role in making decisions regarding the international importance of the High North.

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Abstract

The article analyzes the conditions and examples of the Arctic cooperation of the Nordic countries and China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore. It also offers assistance in better understanding of its regional significance. The results of the research indicate, that the transformation of the Arctic has been an opportunity for establishing cooperation of the Nordic and East Asian countries in recent years. However, this development is neither balanced nor symmetrical, because it is clearly dominated on the one hand by Iceland, Norway and Denmark, and on the other, by China.

Arktyczna współpraca państw nordyckich i wschodnioazjatyckich

W artykule dokonano analizy uwarunkowań oraz przykładów arktycznej współpracy państw nordyckich oraz Chin, Japonii, Korei Południowej i Singapuru. Zaproponowano także wyjaśnienie jej głównie regionalnego znaczenia. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań wskazano, iż transformacja Arktyki stanowiła okazję do istotnego rozwoju współpracy państw nordyckich i wschodnioazjatyckich. Rozwój ten nie jest równomierny czy też symetryczny, gdyż wyraźnie dominują w nim z jednej strony Islandia, Norwegia i Dania, a z drugiej zaś strony Chiny.

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