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WHITE PAPER: CHINA'S ARCTIC POLICY – PRESENT STRATEGY OF THE PRC IN THE ARCTIC

The article discusses Chinese Arctic policy, the country is ready to actively participate in resolving the issue of developing the Arctic together with all interested parties and jointly respond to global challenges, maintain and promote peace, stability and sustainable development of the region. The Arctic issue does not only concern the Arctic countries and peoples of the north, it also affects the interests of countries outside the Arctic and the common interests of the international community, also it is directly related to the common destiny of human survival and development. As a geographically “subarctic country”, China is an important player in Arctic affairs. The advantages in the field of diplomacy, economics, technology and market capacity allow China to play an active role in maintaining the security of the Arctic region, the environmental use of Arctic resources and balancing the interests of both Arctic and non-Arctic countries. It is noted that China's Arctic policy is aimed at protecting the common interests of all countries and the international community, promoting the sustainable development of the Arctic, promoting the economic and social development of the region and improving the living conditions of local residents in order to achieve common development.

Key words: *China's Arctic Policy, White Paper, global environmental issues, climate change, Arctic Affairs Office.*

Every year, global warming more and more changes the appearance of the Arctic by melting glaciers, so now the biodiversity of the ecological environment has become an important problem facing all mankind. The protection and development of the rich Arctic resources have been repeatedly mentioned on the international agenda. Possibilities for the development Arctic transportation routes are becoming more obvious. The region is undergoing historical changes that have a direct impact on the entire world community, including China, while economic activity in the Arctic is of great importance for the ecology and economic development of the Middle Kingdom.

Also, participation in international Arctic cooperation is a direct continuation of China's “One belt, one road” initiative and complements the formation of the “Ice silk road.”

Geographically, China is one of the countries closest to the Arctic Circle, so as an interested party, it has a great responsibility in the changes and economic activities of the Arctic region. In the “China’s Arctic policy” the PRC has defined the main policy goals, principles and initiatives on the issue of the Arctic. Occupying an important position in the modern world, China is actively engaged in international cooperation on Arctic management, jointly responds to global challenges and cooperates with interested states and international organizations on the development of the Northern Sea Route, as well as the building of the “Polar silk road” for the joint construction and use.

In combination with the current state of affairs in the Arctic and the development of the region, which is increasingly closely linked to China’s activities, the country has set out its political position on the participation in Arctic affairs and is providing appropriate opportunities for the further improvement and the systematic implementation of Arctic policy. On January 18, 2017, at the UN headquarters in Geneva Chinese President XI Jinping In his speech on “Building a global community with a common destiny,” once again emphasized that all interested parties should uphold the principles of peace, sovereignty, inclusiveness and joint governance in the Arctic region. This applies to the construction of deep-water sea routes, conducting communications and Internet communications to the Arctic, ensuring the quality development of the region, conducting scientific research, etc. All this should be done through collaboration, not competition [7]. This fully demonstrates XI Jinping’s ideas about global governance and mutually beneficial cooperation in the new strategic territories.

On January 26, 2018, the last day of the 2018 Arctic frontiers conference in Tromsø, Information Office of the PRC State Council issued a “White paper on China’s Arctic policy” (hereinafter, the “White Paper”). The main content of the document consists of five sections: introduction, the situation in the Arctic and recent changes, China and the Arctic, the goals of the PRC’s Arctic policy and its main principles, the country’s initiatives and position on participation in Arctic relations, and conclusions. The White Paper increases the transparency of China’s activities in the Arctic and emphasizes the key goals of cooperation [2]. First, the White Paper explains to the world China’s initiatives in the Arctic, as well as the country’s interests and goals. China looks forward to working with all parties. Second, it informs the relevant Arctic countries that China’s attention, interests and cooperation in the region do not have geopolitical goals: China promotes mutually beneficial cooperation in the Arctic [5]. Finally, the White Paper explains China’s policy goals and interests. The country shows itself as an active participant, contributing to the solution of issues in the Arctic region [3. P. 84].

In this way, China has outlined and made public its main positions regarding the changes taking place in the Arctic. The “Introduction” states that, against the background of continuous deepening of regional integration and economic globalization, the situation in the Arctic region is closely linked not only to the

interests of the Arctic countries, stakeholders and the interests of the international community as a whole, but also to the common fate of human survival and development. As a country that is actively engaged in the development of the society, China takes an active part in the development and financing of Arctic relations, as well as contributes to the Arctic's quality development. The Chinese government encourages initiatives aimed at more active participation in the Arctic governance system and works with the international community to ensure and strengthen peace, stability and sustainable development in the region [1].

The Arctic is a kind of indicator of climate change caused by global warming. The region has abundant resources, an extreme climate and a fragile environment, and it is a key area for the solution of global problems through international cooperation [8. P. 2]. The White Paper indicates that the biological environment in the Arctic is undergoing fundamental changes. According to scientific forecasts, the Arctic Ocean may almost completely lose ice within the next 50 years. According to researchers from the University of California, by about 2050, for some part of each year, the Arctic will be completely free of ice if current global carbon emissions remain unchanged. As a result of historic development, each September, when Arctic ice melts to its lowest level, it covers about six million square kilometers. But over the past decade, that number has dropped to four and a half million. Thus, changes in the natural environment of the Arctic can lead to an acceleration of global warming, sea level rise, violation of biodiversity, an increase in the number of extreme weather events and other global problems.

According to the Government of China, countries beyond the Arctic region do not have territorial sovereignty in the Arctic, but they have the right to scientific research, shipping, air travel, fishing, laying of underwater cables and pipelines in the open sea and other relevant sea areas of the Arctic Ocean. Moreover, under international law and regulations such as UNCLOS, they have rights to explore and develop resources in the Special Zone. In addition, the parties to the Svalbard Treaty, to which China acceded in 1925, enjoy freedom of access and entry to certain areas of the Arctic, and have the right, on equal terms and in accordance with the law, to carry out scientific research, production and commercial activities, such as hunting, fishing and mining in these areas [1]. In fact, on the basis of international law, the Svalbard Treaty confirms that Chinese citizens, as citizens of a contracting state, can enter the Islands of Svalbard independently, conduct scientific research, trade, tourism and other activities [4. P. 38].

However, it is worth noting that China's participation in the Arctic affairs is limited and does not require special rights [4. P. 39]. The White Paper defines China as an important participant in the Arctic relations. As a "subarctic state" and one of the continental states, China is the closest to the Arctic Circle [1]. The status of the subarctic state primarily determines that the PRC belongs to the non-Arctic countries and in addition to its legal rights under the relevant international law, China does not own territory and sovereignty in the Arctic. Secondly,

the status of the Arctic state expresses geographical proximity. As one of the largest countries in the Northern hemisphere, China is experiencing climate change in the Arctic directly. The climate situation in the Arctic region is closely linked to the exploitation of China's ecosystem, which, in turn, is linked to the stability of the ecosystem and the security of China's agricultural production [1]. Thus, the natural environment of the Arctic directly affects China's economic interests in agriculture, forestry, fishing, marine industry and other areas. A number of Arctic issues are important not only for the region itself, but also for the existence and development of all countries and humanity as a whole. Among them: climate change, the environment, the use of sea routes, exploration and development of resources, scientific research, security and international governance and other [1]. China, as a fast-growing economy, actively enjoys the freedom and rights of scientific research, navigation, air travel, fishing, laying of underwater cables and pipelines, as well as exploration and development of resources, etc. in public areas, including the Arctic ocean.

China's interests in the region are integrated and have a common affiliation with all countries of the world. China and the Arctic states have common interests and a future in the Arctic. Arctic deposits and natural resources are also a critical point of Arctic cooperation and joint participation in their development can become the basis for the development of bilateral energy cooperation in the Arctic [6]. China is an active participant in Arctic relations, so it also acts as a responsible person in Arctic Affairs. From a political point of view, China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and carries out an important mission of jointly maintaining peace and security in the Arctic region and the world as a whole. In economic terms, China is a major energy consumer and a country with a rapidly developing economy and a large volume of foreign trade. The development and use of routes and resources in the Arctic region can have a huge impact on China's energy strategy and economic development. In terms of providing public goods for the management of the region and its economic development, Chinese funds and investments, technology, as well as knowledge and experience, certainly play an important role. As a country with a rapidly growing economy and an important participant in the global community, China has an obligation to participate in Arctic cooperation to further explore the Arctic, protect it, and work for sustainable development.

The history of China's participation in Arctic affairs can prove that China has opportunities to participate in Arctic affairs and play a more active role in them [4. P. 38]. In 1925, China joined the "Svalbard Treaty", which defined the legal status of China in participating in the affairs of the region. Since then, China's activities in the Arctic have continued to increase, and cooperation has deepened. Since 1999, China has officially started scientific research in the Arctic. In 2004, the Chinese research station "Huanghe" was built on the Svalbard Islands in the Arctic. As of 2020, the country has successfully conducted ten scientific

studies of the Arctic Ocean. With the help of the ship station platform, China has gradually created a multi-disciplinary system for monitoring the sea, ice, climate change, atmosphere, and the biological and geological system of the Arctic. In 2013, China became an accredited observer in the Arctic Council. The country has held talks on Arctic affairs in various fields with Russia, Canada, the United States and the Nordic countries, and has actively participated in important international forums on the Arctic, such as the Arctic Circle Assembly, the Arctic Frontiers international forum, International Arctic forum “Arctic is the territory of dialogue” and a Ministerial meeting on the development of science in the Arctic. China has proposed the “One belt, one road” initiative and the joint construction of the “Ice silk road” with all interested parties, which will provide opportunities for cooperation in promoting connectivity and sustainable economic and social development of the Arctic region.

China conducts research and cooperation in the Arctic in many areas. After many years of hard work, the country managed to create a multidisciplinary system of comprehensive monitoring of the climate, fauna, biological and geological system of the Arctic region [1]. Today, China’s focus is on the research, environmental protection and cooperation in the Arctic, as well as on global governance and regional cooperation and covers such disciplines as environmental change, climate change, scientific research, economic development, and cultural exchanges. It is also important to note that, most likely, as a result of global warming, Arctic shipping routes will become important transport routes for international trade in the future. At the moment, Chinese economists have begun to actively explore the commercial use of the Arctic sea routes, while shipbuilding companies have begun to develop technologies for extreme weather conditions.

The White Paper determined China’s position in the global governance system and from a higher point of view explained the need for China’s participation in the management of the Arctic and the importance of promoting cooperation and mutual benefit. On the one hand, China needs to officially “join” the Arctic and gradually clarify its basic rights and interests in the region. On the other hand, it is necessary to coordinate China’s interests in the Arctic region and promote international exchanges and cooperation in all aspects of Arctic issues, as well as work with relevant countries to address the non-traditional security issues, which appear in connection with the Arctic problems, in order to maintain peace and commonwealth in Arctic regional cooperation, promote the sustainable development of the region’s governance system, and through these efforts to consolidate and strengthen China’s voice in this matter [10. P. 169].

The White Paper defines China’s political initiatives in the Arctic: to understand, protect, promote and participate in the region’s governance system, and put forward basic principles: “respect, cooperation, win-win results of stakeholders and sustainability.” The main course and position on China’s participation in the Arctic relations have been developed [1]. The White Paper is a policy

document that guides the activities of the relevant Chinese government departments and agencies in their work on the Arctic issues. China considers respect as the main principle of participation in the Arctic development cooperation as the only way to participate, mutual benefit as the desire to participate, and sustainability as the goal. In the future, China plans to strengthen cooperation with the international community and organizations in order to take advantage of the unique opportunity to participate in the development of the Arctic, combat environmental problems caused by the changes in the region, promote mutually beneficial cooperation related to the Arctic within the framework of the “One belt, one road” initiative, and thus jointly build the “Ice silk road” with partners, to achieve a society with a common future for humanity and through participation in the development of the Arctic, to contribute to the establishment of stability and sustainable development of the whole world [1].

An important function of the White Paper is to clarify China's policy, increase confidence, and eliminate doubts. The White Paper in principle responded to some foreign comments that insist on China's concern about the existing order in the Arctic. First, the book consistently emphasizes that China's activities in the Arctic comply with current legal norms. Second, when participating in Arctic affairs, China adheres to the principle of “partnership and non-alignment,” emphasizing the importance of a dialogue with all Arctic countries and key stakeholders to promote stability and international cooperation in the Arctic. Third, China respects the role and functions of the Arctic Council and other major Arctic governance mechanisms. On January 26, 2018, at a press conference, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyu stressed that China's participation in the Arctic affairs is based on the principle of “not offside or lack of action,” where “not offside” means that China, as a non-Arctic country, will not be involved in issues that are directly related to the Arctic countries. China's participation in Arctic affairs will be within the framework of the relevant laws. “Not lack of action” means that China will actively play a constructive role in Arctic trans-regional and global issues [9]. In relation to the concern and pressure that China's economic activities in the Arctic have on the environment, the White Paper emphasizes the “principle of sustainability” of China's activities in the region. The PRC's activities are conducted strictly in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the law of the sea and the relevant rules of International Maritime organizations, as well as the internal laws on environmental protection of the Arctic countries. At the same time, the Chinese government has promised to require all Chinese legal entities and citizens involved in activities in the Arctic to comply with the relevant environmental protection laws. In response to the comments about “excessive acquisition and consumption of Arctic resources,” the White Paper sets out the Chinese government's thoughts on participating in the development and use of Arctic resources: eco-friendly and shared use in strict accordance with the laws and commercial regulations. The Chinese government,

like many other governments around the world, believes that the use of Arctic resources should be based on environmental protection.

Arctic sea routes, oil and gas, fishing and other resources are an integral part of global economic development. In China, Arctic resources are used in two types. The first is to link the market with the resources and products of the respective Arctic countries and conduct bilateral trade in accordance with the framework and rules of world trade. For example, oil and gas from Arctic countries such as the United States are imported to China, while Arctic Ocean water products from Iceland, Denmark, and Norway enter the Chinese market, and so on. Bilateral trade has not only enriched China's market supply, but also contributed to the development of the local economy and employment of residents of the Arctic region. The second type of China's economic activity in the Arctic zones of the respective countries is participation as a shareholder and investor. For example, China participated in the Russian Yamal LNG project as one of the investors, it also participated in the Greenland mining projects. The White Paper also highlights international collaboration aimed at joint exploration of clean energy, such as wind power, to achieve global low-carbon development.

As a non-Arctic country geographically close to the Arctic, China respects the international legal framework relating to the Arctic and the basic Arctic governance system, respects the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Arctic countries, respects the interests of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, and at the same time hopes that the Arctic countries can respect the rights and freedoms of non-Arctic countries when conducting activities in the region in accordance with the international law and respect the common interests of the international community in the Arctic territories.

The Chinese government confirms that it will jointly study, protect, develop, and participate in the Arctic governance system and assume international responsibility through international cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. The White Paper reflects the coordination of the Chinese government and China's political goals in addressing Arctic issues, promoting a joint response to the global challenges such as climate change, increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the Arctic management, and the desire to jointly find a point of intersection of interests and create a base for sharing benefits.

Conclusion. The White Paper on the China's Arctic policy fully demonstrates the positions, views, political and economic principles, goals and areas of cooperation between China and the world community in various fields and is a solemn statement of China on the Arctic problem. This document laid the foundation for an in-depth cooperation between China and the Arctic countries. Expanding China's participation in the Arctic issues does not contradict the interests and sovereignty of the Arctic states in the Arctic, nor does it negate or weaken the priority interests of the Arctic countries, it is aimed at improving the protection of China's own rights and interests in the region and contributes to the effective participation

of all parties in the cooperation, thereby seeking a fairer opportunity to coordinate the options that countries can use in managing the Arctic.

Within the framework of global governance, as a participant and investor, China contributes to the use and protection of the environment and response to the climate change in the Arctic. Thus, after analyzing the activities and Arctic initiatives of the PRC as a whole, we can conclude that the main goal of China is to strengthen cooperation with the interested countries and international organizations for the mutually beneficial and joint work in the interests of sustainable development of the world.

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