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CHINA'S "WHITE PAPER" ON THE ARCTIC AND EUROPEAN STATES

***Abstract.** The article analyses the content, features and main ideas of China's «White Paper» on the Arctic, published at the end of January 2018. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the current situation in the Arctic. The aims, principles and policy of China concerning the participation in Arctic affairs in the 21st century is considered. Russian-Chinese relations, as well as China's policy towards European countries in the Arctic, at the present stage, is examined. The article highlights Russia's strategy and policy in the Arctic. It is emphasized that the current foreign policy of Beijing towards Russia in the Arctic region is positive, business-like and benevolent in its nature.*

***Keywords:** China, "White Paper" on the Arctic, Arctic, Russia, European countries, Arctic Council.*

On the 26 of January 2018 the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (PRC) published the "White Paper" on the Arctic (hereinafter - the Document). Structurally, it consists of an introduction, four sections and a conclusion.

This great work was written under the coordination of the Arctic and Antarctic Administration of China, which is responsible for the implementation of the governments scientific programs and the development of strategic plans in the Arctic region.

The main ideas, statements and innovations of the Chinese "White Paper" on the Arctic. The introduction of the Document states that in recent years global warming has accelerated the melting of ice and snow in the Arctic. According to the "White Paper" in the future this will have a major impact on global shipping, international trade and energy supply, which will lead to significant socioeconomic changes in the Arctic region. Working and living conditions of residents of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples will be significantly affected.

The first section of the Document discusses the current status of the Arctic. It is noted that currently the significance of the Arctic already goes

beyond the Arctic states or the Arctic region as such. In addition, it is stated that non-regional states, although lacking territorial sovereignty in the Arctic, have the right to conduct scientific research, take part in navigation, overflight, fishing, lay submarine cables and pipelines on the high seas and other marine areas in the Arctic Ocean. All the states are also free to explore and exploit resources in the Arctic region in accordance with general norms of international law.

In the second section of the Document, an attempt is made to present a "new point of view" on the role and purpose of China in the Arctic. In this section, China calls itself a "Near-Arctic State"- one of the continental states situated the closest to the Arctic Circle. It is quite obvious that with this statement, the Chinese authorities are attempting to consolidate the status of the PRC as an interested party in the Arctic.

Moreover, the statement that China is actively involved in solving trans-regional and global problems in the Arctic, especially in such areas as climate change, environmental protection, scientific research, use of sea lanes, exploration and exploitation of resources, security and global governance, in our view, demonstrates the Chinese intentions and ambitions for the future, especially given that the PRC is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and has an important mission of promoting peace together and security in the Arctic.

This section also lists events and facts that point to the role, importance and success of China in the study and development of the Arctic. It is emphasised that since 1998, Beijing has been conducting regular Arctic expeditions. By the end of 2017, a total of eight expeditions have already been conducted.

In the third section of the document, for the first time, the political goals and basic principles of China's policy towards the Arctic have been publicly formulated. It is noted that China's political goals in the Arctic are to understand, protect, develop governance mechanisms, and participate in them. All of this is done in order to defend the common interests of all the states and the international community, as well as to contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

In order to achieve these goals, it is planned:

- to increase the volume and potential in the field of scientific research in the Arctic;
- to actively respond to climate change in the Arctic region;
- to protect its unique natural environment and ecosystem, to encourage its climatic and ecological sustainability and to respect the diverse cultural and historical traditions of the indigenous peoples of the North;
- to increase the volume and utility of cutting-edge Arctic technologies, to strengthen the innovative technological base, to make

environmental protection more robust and to increase the use of resources and develop navigable waterways in the Arctic;

- to contribute to the economic and social development of the Arctic, to improve the living conditions of the local population and strive for shared development;

- to participate in the development of projects related to the Arctic and their implementation on the basis of compliance with the existing framework of international law, paying due attention to the interests of other countries and the broad international community, taking into account the importance of the protection and development of the Arctic and maintaining an appropriate balance of current and long-term interests in order to promote sustainable development.

Finally, it is also emphasized that to achieve its political goals, China will participate in Arctic affairs in accordance with the principles of "respect," "cooperation," "win-win result," and "sustainability."

The fourth section of the Document is the most substantive. It gives in detail the policy and position of China on participation in scientific research, environmental protection, legal management and the development of international cooperation in the Arctic. At the same time, the PRC undertakes to maintain a peaceful, safe and stable order in this region. It should be noted that the policy issues discussed in this section (about 60% of the text) are written carefully and in detail, while taking into account the country specific and historical features, as well as the desire to dominate the Arctic region.

China's cooperation with Russia in the Arctic region. In the "White Paper" on the Arctic, cooperation with Russia, transportation of cargoes along the Northern Sea Route (NSR), development of hydrocarbon fields are emphasised as having great importance.

Firstly, cooperation with Russia is seen as a central requirement for the merging of the initiative of the Great Eurasian Partnership and the Chinese project "One Belt - One Road". China looks at the NSR as a potential branch of its new "Silk Road".

Secondly, without a doubt it can be stated that the "Yamal LNG" project is one of the main driving forces behind cooperation [1]. In December of 2017 the first technological line for the production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) was launched at the Yamal LNG plant on the Ob Bay in the port of Sabetta. At the occasion of the dispatch of the first gas carrier of the "Yamal LNG" company from the port of Sabetta on December 8, 2017, the president of Russia Vladimir Putin at a meeting with representatives from China stated: "The Silk Road has reached the North. By uniting it with the Northern Sea Route we will have what is needed, and Northern Sea Route will be made into a Silk one "[2]. All of this contributes to the annual growth of the volume of cargo transported along the Northern Sea Route.

Moreover, in 2014, PJSC Rosneft and the Chinese oil and gas corporation CNPC agreed to jointly explore the Zapadno Prinovozemelsky site in the Barents Sea, as well as the Yuzhno-Russky and Medyn-Varandeyky sites in the Pechora Sea. Moreover, there is also an agreement between CNPC and Gazprom on exploration of oil and gas fields in the Arctic. Chinese investors have expressed their readiness to invest in the construction of a new deepwater Arkhangelsk commercial sea port and the Belkomur (White Sea - Komi - Ural) railroad, which will cut the path from Siberia to the White Sea by 800 km. The cargo turnover of the new section of the port will be up to 30 million tons per year [3].

For the PRC the use of the NSR would signify an operational expansion of its largest ports. According to Chinese forecasts, by 2020, up to 15% of China's foreign trade traffic will go through the Northern Sea Route, mainly in the form of container traffic, which corresponds to approximately 800 billion euros [4].

China understands that participation in the development of the Arctic and the NSR is possible only through cooperation with Russia. As a consequence, within the framework of its Arctic doctrine, China stated that it will play by the already existing rules in accordance with the requirements of international law. In addition, fiercer interstate competition and the complexity of the current international situation caused by US and European Union sanctions against Russia has caused both states to view each other as allies.

However, it is also obvious that for China the multilateral approach for the development of the Arctic as a whole, is the most important goal. If there ever is a time when Beijing will not be able to extract benefit from the use of the NSR, in our view, this will work as a catalyst for the weakening of the spirit of cooperation between the two states. The main reason for such a development may be the forthcoming global decision on the division of the continental shelf of the Arctic Ocean between the Arctic states.

China views Russia as only one of many sources of energy resources. It is successfully pursuing the policy of diversifying its suppliers. Consequently, no country, including Russia, has a dominant position in the Chinese energy market.

The PRC is also using contradictions between the major powers in the region. Beijing hints to Moscow that the prospects of mutually beneficial projects in the face of the threats and economic sanctions from the West are more important than its counteraction to China's penetration into the Arctic. China persistently attempts to persuade Russia that it will not be able to independently master the resources of the Arctic. It offers investments to create tripartite joint ventures with the use of advanced Western (Norwegian) technologies, without which the Russian Federation is allegedly unable to extract raw materials from great depths.

Beijing also seeks to supply its geophysical and drilling equipment to Russian enterprises. Chinese manufacturers want to carry out technical support of their products themselves, as well as to monitor the use of the drilling equipment in the difficult arctic conditions. China also intends to acquire a permanent "polar" fleet and accelerated work on its creation is already underway. The PRC also expects to have a special aviation force, whose aircraft will be able to land at the North Pole. Thus, the scope of China's activity in the Arctic is growing, as it has scientific, economic and financial capabilities to expand it.

Taking into account all of these factors it can be stated that when building relations with China, we should maintain and observe our national interests and the corresponding level of national security.

China and the European countries in the Arctic. Dissatisfaction with the Chinese activity in the Arctic is expressed by the Arctic countries, as well as by the European observer countries of the Arctic Council, who consider it a potential and dangerous competitor. Ignoring the discontent of these countries, Beijing prefers to team up with states who do not have a strong position in the Arctic when compared to the major powers in the region, and to achieve benefits by actively working with "small" countries [5, 6].

One of the most attractive partners for China is Norway. Both sides are actively discussing cooperation in the energy sector. Chinese companies are very interested in the experience of Norway in deep-sea drilling, and for their part they are ready to invest in Scandinavian projects [7].

Cooperation between Denmark and China, which initially expressed itself in the strengthening of trade relations between the two countries, is gradually evolving into a close partnership. The reason for such an evolution is the abundance of mineral resources in Greenland. Copenhagen hopes to benefit from the reduction of the ice cover of Greenland, which will allow it to extract rare-earth metals. At the same time, China intends to become the main buyer of these resources [8].

Iceland is important for Beijing as a springboard into the Arctic. In the midst of the financial crisis of 2008 China provided the country with a currency swap of 406 million euros to support the banking system and issued several significant loans on extremely favourable terms. In 2012, China signed an agreement with Iceland on cooperation in the Arctic, as well as an agreement on a free trade zone, which entered into force in 2014. Consequently, today Iceland is the main lobbyist for Chinese interests in the Arctic council.

In 2016, in the Swedish city of Kiruna China launched its first satellite communication station situated outside of China, which is capable of operating under all weather conditions [9].

In recent years the representatives of the PRC and Finland have started to actively discuss the issues related to cooperation in the study of environmental problems in the Arctic. With respect to a number of European observer countries of the Arctic Council (Germany, Great Britain, Spain, Netherlands, Poland, France) [10-13], Beijing has not yet decided what position to adopt. It is studying their strengths and weaknesses in the Arctic region.

By developing relations with European states, as this analysis has shown, China seeks to avoid conflicts, support favourable conditions for cooperation and create the necessary material and political prerequisites for changing the situation in its favour.

In China's "White Paper" on the Arctic global conditions affecting the arctic are analysed. The possible role of China in the Arctic is discussed. This document also presents for the first time China's political goals and main principles of activity in the Arctic. Special attention is given, as well to its policy and long-term ambitions in the Far North.

Analysing the content of the "White Paper" is important for the understanding of both the formal and the objective aspirations of China in the Arctic. It indicates a change in China's perception of its own image in the international arena. One of its aims is a full or at least a partial revision of the views of the Arctic states, as well as national elite and business structures of these states, on the place of the PRC in the Arctic.

In the Arctic, the PRC intends to make greater use of its capabilities for implementing regional and global political goals. One of the main features of China's foreign policy in the Arctic is avoiding conflicts by waiting for favourable conditions and creating the necessary material and political prerequisites for changing the situation in its favour.

The current Chinese foreign policy in the Arctic in relation to Russia can be described as positive, business-like, mostly benevolent and aiming at long-term goals. The arising problems and difficulties are solved through negotiations. It is important that on the issues of development and exploitation of the Arctic China emphasizes its commitment to the principles and norms of international law. This provides some hope that the Arctic will remain a zone of peace and constructive cooperation between states.

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