

Arctic Governance and China's Claim of Near Arctic State



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Introduction

Despite its freezing cold temperatures and inhospitable climate, the Arctic is home to over four million people and a plethora of wildlife. In recent decades, the Arctic region has experienced unprecedented sea ice loss and rapid environmental change. Transformations taking place in the region have sparked the interest of international communities and stakeholders to protect the environment and uncover the mysteries of the once inhospitable environment. Non-Arctic states such as China have risen on the Arctic world stage with a goal to harvest its resources and position itself for long-term participation. In 2018, Chinese officials officially claimed the nation as a “near-Arctic state” with the rights to actively participate in research, resource development, and extraction. The statement by Beijing raised considerable questions regarding China’s participation in the Arctic under current governance structures and international law and created concerns regarding future implications for the United States. This paper assesses China’s activity in the Arctic, examples of Chinese international maritime relations as a reflection of potential future behavior in the Arctic, and implications for the United States and other Arctic states.

Background

Climate Change

Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution starting in the 1800’s, human industrial and agricultural activities have released unprecedented levels of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Thus far, atmospheric CO₂ concentrations have risen from baseline levels of 280 parts per million (ppm) to 416 ppm (Feely et al., 2009; US Department of Commerce, 2020). Current atmospheric CO₂ levels are expected to rise at an accelerated rate, one-quarter of which has already been absorbed by the world’s oceans (Canadell et al., 2007; Sabine, 2004). The Arctic is experiencing the impacts of climate change more than any other region on the planet: the region is warming at a rate unseen in other areas of the globe, with the average temperature rising three times faster (Yletyinen, 2019). Warming ambient air and ocean temperatures have caused vast melting of sea ice and glaciers. Over recent years, the warming and loss of sea ice has proceeded at an increasingly faster rate, exposing new areas of the sea and land. This change has been especially pronounced in the summer months, by uncovering regions of the high seas that were previously unnavigable. Retreating sea ice and glaciers are also providing access to precious resources such as oil, gas, and minerals including ore, copper, zinc, nickel, and diamonds. As climate change continues to progress, vast quantities of resources and new shipping lanes will become available for extraction and use. The understanding of current environmental trends and geopolitical situations are vital as Arctic and non-Arctic nations strive to have access to new commodities.

Arctic Governance

The Arctic region is governed by the Arctic Council which was founded in 1966 by the eight Arctic nations: the United States, Denmark (Greenland), Canada, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. The Council promotes cooperation and interaction among the Arctic states through collaboration on common issues such as sustainable development and environmental protection (*Ottawa Declaration*, 1996). The eight Arctic nations are the only permanent members of the Council given decision-making power. To incorporate the voices of Indigenous communities that often span national borders, the council established the category of permanent participants. Permanent participants are Indigenous community organizations that represent their interest during meetings and the decision-making process, although they are not

given full sovereign rights. The permanent participants and member nations' activities are centered around six working groups ranging from emergency prevention to environmental protection (Bloom, 1999).

To include the voices of non-Arctic nations, the council established the Observer category. Observer status can be granted to non-Arctic nations, intergovernmental organizations, or non-governmental organizations interested in Arctic affairs. Observers are permitted to comment and provide input on issues discussed by member nations, although they are not granted any decision-making power. If an organization or country wishes to participate in the Arctic council, observer status can be granted through an application process. The applicant must recognize several key factors before status can be granted. They must:

1. Accept and support the objectives of the Arctic Council;
2. Recognize the sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdictions of the Arctic;
3. Recognize the current international frameworks regulating the management and use of the Arctic;
4. Respect the values, interests, traditions, and cultures of the Indigenous communities;
5. Have the political will and financial ability to work conducted by the Council;
6. Have demonstrated interest in the Arctic, including relevant expertise; and,
7. Have the ability and interest to support the Arctic Council.

(The Arctic Council, 2016)

The Arctic is also governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The convention permits the inclusion of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending 200 nautical miles from a country's coastline that grants the country rights to explore, extract, and use the waters for conservation or extraction. Beyond the EEZ is the high seas which is deemed to be the "common heritage of mankind" in which international activities and fishing are permitted. Within the Arctic, the EEZs of Arctic nations form a circle in which, at the center, is a region of the high seas (Figure 1). By law, no Arctic nation has the exclusive right over the high seas, nor can they prevent non-Arctic nations from using those waters.

Faced with limited governing structures for the high seas area of the Arctic, the international community established a moratorium on fishing in 2018. China joined with the Arctic Five¹ alongside the European Union, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea to create regulation of potential Arctic fisheries. The Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean (the CAO Agreement) acknowledged the role of the melting ice and access to the high seas and the implications of opening resources in light of commercial fishing interests. The agreement banned commercial fishing for 16 years from the time of ratification until adequate scientific understanding can be reached to inform decision making and create a sustainable future fishery. Signatories are required to collect environmental, habitat, and species data on potential high seas fisheries in order to lay the foundations for a sustainable fishery (*Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*, 2018).

China in the South China Sea Region

Thus far, Chinese involvement in the Arctic has been within the boundaries of international law. However, critics of China's actions in the South China Sea note that China is

¹ The Arctic Five is the grouping of the five Arctic littoral states: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the US.

willing to take aggressive and unlawful steps despite claiming that it is abiding by international norms and policies. The Spratly Islands are an island chain within the heart of the South China Sea that have been claimed by China, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. They are strategically important, in that whichever country can lay claim to them may extend its EEZ. Due to the important resources within the area, the Spratly Islands have been hotly contested. While most nations have simply claimed several islands as their own, China escalated its assertion to the islands by building military bases on small underlying reefs. The man-made islands house Chinese naval forces used to patrol the outlying region to further assert their claim. Hostilities between the state claimants have flared in recent years and despite international intervention, no resolution has been reached. China's claims to the islands have not been approved by international law and the country has ignored previous directives from the United Nations to relinquish those claims (*South China Sea Arbitration*, 2016). Despite the ruling, China has largely ignored the result and continued claiming the islands often through what the United States has deemed to be aggressive measures. Despite this, China continues to assert its territorial claims are legal and that its actions are not aggressive. The actions and policies China has made in the South China Sea begs the question: does this behavior extend to other spheres of international interactions? China has pushed the boundaries of diplomacy in the South China Sea and has the potential to do the same in areas it deems as vitally important to its resource needs.



Figure 1: Map of central Arctic showing Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and HE. region of the High Seas (shaded grey)

Chinese Involvement in the Arctic *China's Resource and Security Needs*

China's involvement in the Arctic is spurred by resource demands at home and expected future demand for resources. Primarily, China is concerned with an issue deemed the "Malacca

dilemma” – the possibility that hostile opponents (such as the United States) block essential energy supplies (Wishnick, 2017). Fueling this fear is China’s reliance on foreign oil that is imported through the Middle East and the Strait of Malacca. Diversification of energy supply and shipping routes would sufficiently assuage this fear, especially considering China’s growing import demand of oil (Ahad et al., 2019; Wishnick, 2017). The possible cessation of foreign imports through Malacca poses a considerable security risk to China. However, China faces other resource and security risks within its borders, namely future food security issues related to fishing practices.

The contentions within the South China Sea stems from a desire to expand territorial rights and the ability to extract resources under international law. The most valuable resources are regional fisheries which are essential components of food security in the Indo Pacific. Fishery stocks in the South China Sea sustain 12% of all global fishing (Poling, 2019) and almost half of all global fishing vessels (Varley et al., 2020). In recent years, fish stocks in the South China Sea have dropped by up to 75% (CSIS Expert Working Group on the South China Sea, 2017) and are speculated to continue to decline due to Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing (IUU) and the impacts of climate change (CSIS Expert Working Group on the South China Sea, 2017; Varley et al., 2020). In response, China has launched international fishing fleets to meet domestic demand (Urbina, 2020; Wishnick, 2017). China’s resource needs in fisheries and energy security has led the nation to seek footholds in other resource-rich areas around the globe. Even with this global reach, Arctic states are concerned with China’s Arctic interests. Chinese involvement in the Arctic has been met with wariness and skepticism while, at the same time, some states have welcomed China’s financial investment in the region.

Observer Status Establishment

In 2007, China took the first steps to formal Arctic involvement by applying for observer status in the Arctic Council. When the Arctic Council member states formally considered the application in 2011, it warranted considerable debate related to state sovereignty. The three largest opponents to China’s inclusion were Russia, Canada, and the United States. Russian opposition stemmed from its desire to preserve sovereignty and prevent the internationalization of the Council leading to dissolution of Arctic state power (Wishnick, 2017). Similarly, Canada feared the increased number of international entities involved in the Council would degrade its control and authority over Arctic resources and people within Canadian borders. Specifically, Canada was concerned about the sovereignty claims over parts of the Northwest Passage which China had not stated it would recognize. Compounding these fears were statements made by previous Chinese officials calling the Arctic the “common heritage of mankind” and that “the Arctic does not belong to any particular nation, and it is rather the property of all the world’s people” (Wishnick, 2017). To assuage the fears of Canada and Russia, the United States proposed the inclusion of stipulation two regarding recognition of the sovereign right of Arctic nations into the requirements for observer status acceptance. In 2013, China agreed to recognize the sovereignty of Arctic nations and was accepted as an official observer to the Arctic Council (Wishnick, 2017).

“Near Arctic State” Claim

On January 26, 2018 China’s Arctic Policy was released. The white paper signified the first document released by Beijing regarding a region outside its own territory (Lajeunesse, 2018). The paper outlined China’s national interests in the Arctic including its policies and

positions regarding four key areas: resource extraction, science, Arctic governance, and shipping. China justified its role in the Arctic by claiming its importance as a stakeholder in Arctic affairs and labeling itself a “near-Arctic state.” China justified the claim by stating that it is “one of the continental states that is closest to the Arctic Circle” despite not having an Arctic border nor being situated near the Arctic (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018). The paper itself attempted to allay fears of Arctic nations by using language centered around cooperation, obeying sovereignty, and creating a “win-win” scenario for both Arctic nations and China through mutually beneficial investments. Despite these attempts to minimize the implications of its role in the Arctic, the claim as a “near-Arctic state” was not viewed favorably by several nations.

The largest vocal opposition of China’s claim as a “near-Arctic state” was made by the United States. In an unprecedented move in 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a speech to the Arctic Council stating: “there are only Arctic States and Non-Arctic States. No third category exists and claiming otherwise entitles China to exactly nothing” (Pompeo, 2019). The speech is the only official statement made by any Arctic nation contravening China’s claim, although no official acceptance has been made either. While initial reticence was displayed about China’s claim, especially within media outlets, other Arctic nations have taken proactive steps to incorporate Chinese interests within the Arctic, such as Canada and Russia which have actively sought Chinese investments.

Infrastructure Investments

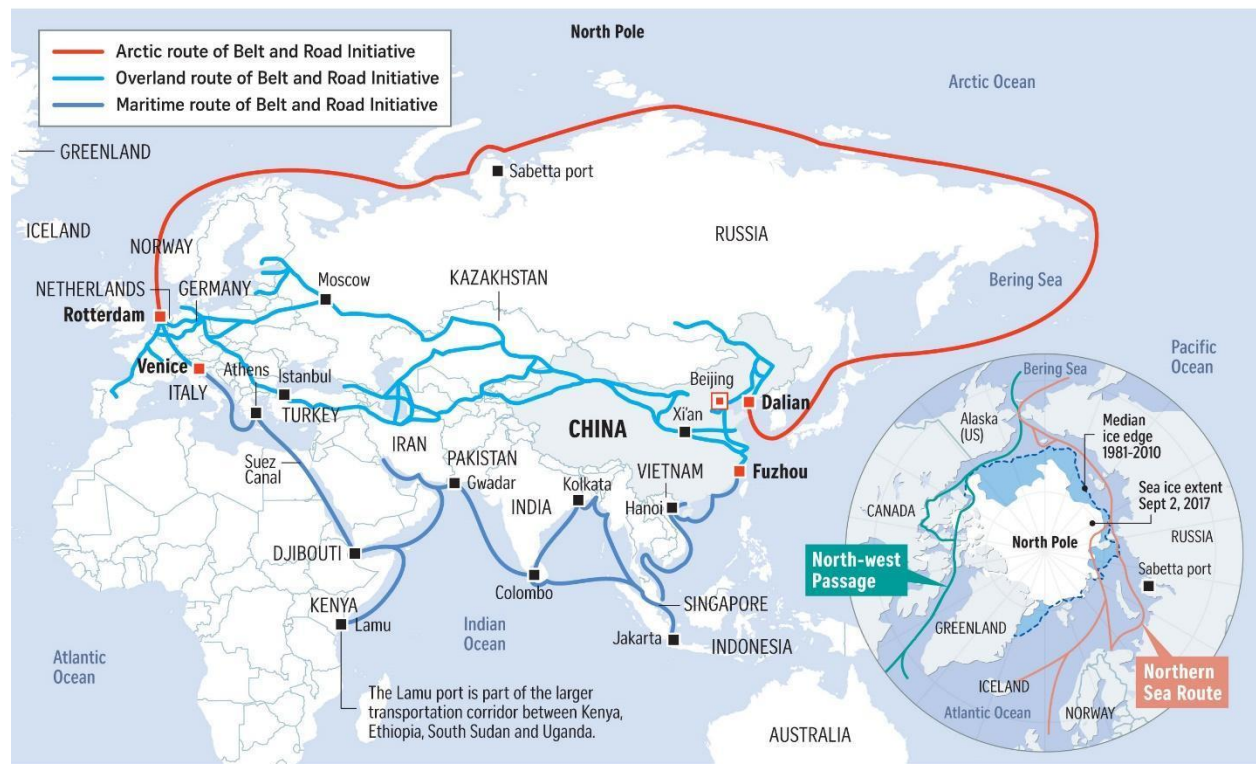
The 2018 China Arctic Policy paper outlined the government’s intention to abide by and uphold international law in the region. The paper also outlined the government’s intention of building China’s presence through infrastructure and the development of the “Polar Silk Road,” an extension of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is a global infrastructure investment strategy to build expansive railways, highways, shipping lanes, and energy pipelines across Southeast Asia, Europe, and South America (Figure 2). By extending the reaches of the BRI into the Arctic, China not only can protract its global influence, but also enhance its ability to increase its global trade. Currently, Chinese shipping must travel through the Suez Canal, a port controlled by United States allies that adds considerable shipping expenses and hinders Chinese ability to avoid inspections and fees (Goodman & Maddox, 2018). The Northwest Passage along Canada’s coastline and the Northern Sea Route (NSR) along Russia’s coastline are currently the only navigable commercial shipping routes in the north. In 2012, China’s polar icebreaker *Xue Long* (Snow Dragon) traversed the Northern Sea Route from Asia to Europe, making it the first Chinese ship to cross the Arctic Ocean (Hedrick, 2020). Despite this success, considerable challenges exist to shipping route utilization, however, due to a lack of sufficient infrastructure such as port facilities and search and rescue teams (Liu & Hossain, 2017). In addition, these waters are only navigable during ice-free summer months and even then, unpredictable and severe weather conditions make navigation timely. The compounding issues involved with navigation throughout the Arctic have rendered Chinese development difficult. However, by investing in infrastructure projects with Arctic nations, China is increasing its ability to develop commercial shipping lanes.

Within China’s BRI framework, infrastructure investments have spanned from port construction to energy investment. To date, it is estimated that China has invested \$90 billion in Arctic infrastructure projects with additional investment expected (Grady, 2018). In 2018, China invested over \$3 billion in Swedish infrastructure projects such as the expansion of the port of

Lysekil and corresponding railroads and bridges (Peleschuk, 2019). China also launched a joint project with Norway and Finland called the “Arctic Corridor” to build ports and railways along the Scandinavian section of the NSR (Tillman et al., 2018).

China’s largest joint investment initiative to date is with Russia. While many projects are aimed at oil and gas extraction, the projects also bolster infrastructure along the NSR. Jointly, the NSR infrastructure projects amount to a \$10 billion dollar investment as of 2018. Projects include the revitalization of the Russian deep-water port of Arkhangelsk, a new deep-water port on the Dvina river, and a new railway between the White Sea and the Urals (Tillman et al., 2018). Building new port infrastructure along the NSR and expanding transportation networks lays the groundwork for future commercial shipping and resource extraction.

China’s polar extension to Silk Road



NOTE: September is the end of summer in the North Pole when the frozen lid of sea ice tends to shrink to its smallest. Unlike the Antarctica, there is no land under the frozen Arctic ice.
Sources: CHINA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM COMMISSION, THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE, NATIONAL SNOW AND ICE DATA CENTRE, REUTERS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Figure 2: Global map of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (blue) and China’s Arctic extension (red) through the Northern Sea Route and North-West Passage.

Resource Investments

Climate change poses considerable financial gain for countries involved in the Arctic due to the region’s vast untapped resources. A 2008 U.S. Geological Survey report estimated that approximately 30% of undiscovered natural gas and 13% of undiscovered oil reserves are located within the Arctic Circle (Gautier et al., 2009). As climate change progresses, not only will these resources become more readily extractable, but other resources such as rare earth

minerals will become more available. Nowhere is this more apparent than in current investments being made by China in Greenland. Ice erosion in Greenland has opened access to the mining of copper, gold, iron, titanium, rubies, diamonds, and “rare earth minerals” (Ping & Lanteigne, 2015). Three Chinese Arctic mining projects have been initiated in Greenland since 2009, most notably for copper, zinc, and lead. While the projects are not profitable now, the continued exposure of new and rare earth minerals will situate China in a strategic position to extract in the future.

The U.S Geological Survey report instigated considerable interest by China to invest in energy partnerships. China’s largest and most significant collaboration is with Russia. The largest section of undiscovered Arctic hydrocarbons is in Russia and considerable joint Chinese-Russian investments have been made (Hedrick, 2020). The Yamal Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project is a \$27 billion dollar project with 20% ownership by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and 10% by China’s Silk Road Fund. The project is not only tied directly to the polar silk road, but China has directly invested in transportation along the NSR. In addition, China is funding the Yamal LNG’s icebreaker Arc7 class tankers to bring energy directly to China (Hong, 2018).

Scientific Research Investments

China’s Arctic Policy specifies the desire to add to the existing body of scientific knowledge in the Arctic. The voyage made by *Xue Long* in 2012 was not only an exploratory shipping mission but one designed to solidify China’s role in Arctic science. The vessel collected oceanographic data along its journey to elucidate the oceanic environment and future exploration (Hong, 2018). Since the early 1990’s, the vessel has conducted over nine research cruises and has attempted to further its vessel research over the last decade (Brady, 2017). Under international law, the *Xue Long* was permitted access across Arctic waters under the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty (originally the Svalbard Treaty) and under UNCLOS; China also uses these agreements to claim that the Arctic is a “global common” (Sun, 2018). China’s justification for research throughout Arctic waters also allowed the justification for building the Yellow River Research Station in Svalbard, Norway in 2004. In 2012, China built an additional research station as a joint project in Iceland called the Aurora Observatory (Brady, 2017). To date, all the research institutions and cruises conducted by China have centered around the impact of climate change on China and fisheries. The fisheries research is conducted under the ordinance of the CAO fishing moratorium to establish baseline understanding and data on current fish stocks.

Arctic Fisheries

China’s Arctic Policy declared its interests in extracting Arctic resources through legal avenues. It stated that marine living resource extraction should be governed in a scientific manner with the inclusion of rational use (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2018). Because the high seas portion of the Arctic is widely covered in ice for the entirety of the year, fishing is not yet viable. By working within the fishing moratorium, China has taken legal actions to situate itself to participate in future fisheries. The legality of the high seas area is stipulated under UNCLOS, providing non-Arctic states the ability to participate in future fisheries. China has pushed the utilization of UNCLOS in regulating future fisheries because as an observer on the Council, they would have no legal decision-making power. Regulation under UNCLOS gives China the legal recourse to not only participate in future fishing, but to actively make decisions regarding catch limits.

China's Antarctic Policy

While there are differences between the Arctic and Antarctic regions - namely that the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents while Antarctica is a continent surrounded by oceans - an understanding of China's approach in Antarctica is instructive. Unlike the Arctic, Antarctica has been set aside for peaceful exploration and scientific research and does not belong to any nation. The Antarctic Treaty was established in 1959 to set aside the continent for "peaceful purposes," specifically excluding militarization and resource extraction. Signed by 54 countries, including China, the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) applies to the land and sea to ensure peaceful cooperation through science (Shusterich, 1984; *The Antarctic Treaty*, 1961). The only aspect of resource extraction is included in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) that regulates offshore fisheries and creates marine protected areas. CCAMLR is one of the most regulated fisheries in the world, known especially for its use of the precautionary approach and low catch limits. China has been active in the ATS despite becoming a signatory later than other active participants such as the United States, Australia, and Russia. A provision to the ATS system permits a renegotiation of terms in 2048 to allow for further resource exploitation. On land, the continent holds a wealth of resources such as minerals, freshwater, oil, coal, and hydrocarbons. In the sea, fisheries regulated under CCAMLR include high value items that fishing nations seek. The investments and involvement by China in Antarctica mirror those within the Arctic, namely positioning China for future exploitation once opportunities legally arise.

Research Bases

China has yet to announce any political strategy in Antarctica, perhaps arising from the lack of nations to dissuade from their participation. China has one of the fastest growing presences in Antarctica, through the rapid proliferation of research bases and research cruises around the continent. There are currently four Chinese research bases, with a fifth scheduled to open in 2022 (Liu, 2018). In fact, the current COVID-19 pandemic has seen an influx of Chinese activity in Antarctica, compared to rapid defunding efforts from countries such as Australia and the United States. This signifies an effort by China to make a further political presence on the continent to position itself for commercial dominance in the future (Wilson & Feiger, 2020). As climate change makes resources more available for extraction, including utilizing shipping lanes, China will likely implement the continent within its belt and road initiative. China will also look to gain a better foothold into potential mineral and gas extraction at the next Antarctic Treaty Review.

Fisheries

As a part of its Antarctic activities, China recently joined CCAMLR to initiate activities in the krill fishery. Their participation began in 2007 and marked China's growing expansion of global fishing in the world's oceans because of declining resources in the South China Sea. Despite CCAMLR setting strict catch limits, Chinese catch in the fishery increased from 1,956 tonnes to 54,303 tonnes (Liu, 2019). Annual meetings of CCAMLR participants have seen a distinct increase of pressure for catch limits to be raised (Liu & Brooks, 2018). Historically, CCAMLR has bent to these pressures as increased market demand for krill products and Chinese activities have swayed decision-making. In fact, China recently launched the world's largest vessel for Antarctic krill, indicating its increased reach into the polar regions (Godfrey, 2019).

Chinese actions in Antarctica reflect the nation's approach in the Arctic. The expansion of military bases in both regions solidifies China's continued presence in the area as geopolitical situations and policies shift over time, including in areas such as fisheries and mineral extraction. In Antarctica, the eventual re-evaluation of the Antarctic treaty could render greater fishing catch yields and access to new mineral sources that have been highly sought after. Similarly, in the Arctic, China has positioned itself so that research initiatives can be designed to further fishing interests when the moratorium expires. China's increased presence in the Arctic also gives it a smoother path toward future access to extraction of minerals and other resources.

Implications for US Policy

China's claim of "near-Arctic State" does not represent a legal claim to the Arctic. However, the claim is also not explicitly illegal. This generates a legal grey area in which China can operate and increase its presence and influence. By following legal avenues of activity in the Arctic such as joint infrastructure investments, signing onto the fishing moratorium, and building research bases, China is operating within the existing legal framework and with the support of Arctic nations. Acceptance and encouragement of China's activities by countries such as Canada and Russia may unintentionally reinforce China's efforts to have a more significant role than observer.

Despite several Arctic nations welcoming China as an Observer and investor, no nation has formally accepted China's "near-Arctic state" claim. To preserve the existing Arctic Council governance structure, applicable law under UNCLOS, and international legal norms, it is important that the claim not be acknowledged. Acknowledging or accepting China's claim as a "near-Arctic state" may create a path to legal recognition of the claim as a norm under international law. Creation of a norm under international law requires, among other things, acceptance and recognition by the international community which would take many years and recognition by many nations. The long-term concern is that legal recognition of a new legal or governance category in the Arctic region may create a legally binding situation in which China could claim access to the myriad of Arctic resources and disregard the established rights of Arctic nations. This could also create a dangerous precedent: other states with the means to access the Arctic could make similar claims. The continued denial, denouncement or simple ignoring of this claim is consistent with international law and recognizes the governance structure of the Arctic Council and sovereignty of littoral Arctic states, including the United States.

China's activities and investments in the Arctic are indicative of a long-term strategy, one in which China is positioning itself to have access to resources such as oil and gas, minerals, fisheries, and shipping lanes. While this strategy does not represent a direct threat to the United States, its allies, or Arctic nations, China's previous behavior in international marine law offers indications of possible future actions. For example, actions taken in the South China Sea are deemed to be illegal by the United States, UNCLOS, and China's neighbors. However, China has made no efforts to rectify illegal behavior and has continued to illegally claim parts of the South China Sea and conduct aggressive military behavior. Within the context of the Arctic, China has abided by all international laws; however, its approach in the South China Sea indicates a willingness to defy international law, especially when shipping and resources are at stake. China has positioned itself to participate in key resource extraction industries in the Arctic such as fishing by pushing for a new fishing agreement on the high seas that is outside the jurisdiction of the Arctic Council. Furthermore, China's activity in Antarctica exposes its drive

to expand resource expansion across the globe. Taking into account China's approach in the Arctic, South China Sea and Antarctica, it is possible China will select the international laws and norms that best suit its position, without due regard for previous contravening behavior.

Maintaining the stability of international laws, especially on the high seas and within EEZs, is important for the stability of treaties, resource sustainability and national security. China's behavior in the Arctic is reflected by similar behavior in Antarctica. By positioning itself strategically on both poles, China is positioned to meet its long-term resource extraction goals in light of a changing climate. Arctic nations including the United States may use this information to extrapolate China's long-term plans in the Arctic region. Continued analysis of China's approach around the globe is essential for the continued security of the Arctic.

Conclusion

China's investments in the Arctic indicate a long-term strategy aimed at future access to and utilization of key resources that will ensure its security needs. Investment in key industries throughout the entire Arctic positions the state for resource utilization and normalizes its activity. Although its presence has been initially met with considerable reticence, Arctic nations are accepting China's willingness to participate through the creation of important infrastructure, research, and resource projects. Through key collaborations, China is normalizing its presence so that when future resources are exposed, its participation will not be unwarranted.

China's participation, however, must be met with continued skepticism given its previous behavior in the South China Sea and similar projects implemented in Antarctica. China's actions indicate a global strategic positioning for resources in a changing climate. Maintaining the current Arctic governance structure by denying or ignoring China's legal claim of "near-Arctic state" also prevents non-Arctic nations from claiming a special status under normative international laws in future. Despite the wariness of many nations regarding China's actions, many are also accepting of increased Chinese investment. This may be a compromise in order to preserve the peace of the region and advance scientific understanding of the Arctic environment. This response must be balanced with the need to maintain the governance established by the Arctic Council and international law and norms that secure the sovereignty of Arctic nations.

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