



China's efforts to achieve energy interests in the Arctic region

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Abstract

The study examines Chinese efforts to obtain arctic energy interests during crises such as the melting of ice caps and not the ownership of much of the region itself. For the BRI to effectively facilitate the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises, alternative energy sources must be supported. However, it is challenging the policies of some countries in the arctic region. The study utilized qualitative methods and secondary data. Using Bernard D.D. Cole's energy security theories, we examine the challenges that China and Chinese diplomacy would face. China has utilized its diplomatic relations and cooperation to promote global energy diplomacy by scouring or exploiting existing resources through the first two stages of global energy diplomacy. Second, the birth of a policy is that of silk polar road. This is a tangible form of white paper released in arctic, which contained Chinese interests and objectives and Chinese responsibilities to the arctic region.

Key Words: Arctic, Energy challenge, Energy diplomacy, energy security, China.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chinese dream is Xi Jinping's vision for the party and the country (Liu Qibao, 2013). This is because this vision has developed into a strategic idea to develop socialism specifically tailored to Chinese circumstances. According to this vision, China is striving to become an existentially strong, prosperous, and welfare state free from foreign invasions, where domestic development free of foreign investment encourages China to become more independent (Wang, 2013). To achieve this goal, in 2013, Xi Jinping initiated the One Belt One Road initiative, better known as the Belt Road Initiative (Enright, 2016). Energy security is one of the principal objectives of national policy based on energy needs and energy demand for the industries that drive China's economic growth. There are many energy-rich countries in Asia, but the price of oil is high, and distribution routes are unsafe. The region's abundant supply in the Middle East, affordable prices, but even unstable political conditions could hit oil distribution routes.

For that reason China began looking for alternatives to meet energy needs and supply (Pelaudeix, 2018). In addition, China's interest in the Arctic may be driven by its potential energy, commercial, and geopolitical gains, each of which comes with its own challenges (Nakano, 2018). This region is significant to an energy alternative to China because of its geography and strategic potential. Apart from its natural potential, it is surrounded (Ademuty & Pakpahan, 2016) by eight countries scattered across the American continent, Asia and Europe. These countries are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Russia, Iceland, Sweden and the United States. Eighty-seven percent of the world's conventional oil reserves and thirty percent of its undiscovered gas are located in the seven boroughs. As this number suggests, the arctic has vast energy reserves that can serve as alternatives to China.

China has been present in the Arctic since the 1990s. However, it was not until 2007 that it became an observer on the Arctic Council. In 2013, it was granted observer status. Across the Arctic region, Chinese cooperation with Russia in the energy sector and Canada and improved relations with Denmark in the past year demonstrate its promotion of relations, diplomacy, and economic activity (Pezard, 2018; Pezard et al., 2022). For China, achieving energy interests in the region is a challenge because of Russian dominance through the new Arctic policy. The two objections from the United States strongly dispute China's 'arctic' claims and criticize the activities carried out in the Arctic.

Considering geography and the challenges China faces, China's participation and role in the Arctic is an imperative issue to discuss. Despite China's right and obligation to serve as observers, that doesn't mean it can easily access the Arctic

without hindrances. Therefore, this study attempt to discuss about the China's effort in achieving energy interest in the Arctic.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method or approach which attempts to explain the quality of a study, explaining meaning, conditions, and data that can't be answered by numbers. In this qualitative research, the approach employed is a descriptive approach, namely research that explains and explores social phenomena and the researcher explains it in words so as to produce a detailed and comprehensive report. To collect information, we used secondary data from books, journals, reports, and news based on the keywords such as Arctic region, China's foreign policy, energy interest, and China's diplomacy. After the information collected, we used energy security theories. Furthermore, we can draw the conclusion. Data then categorize as Chinese efforts and interest.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Among China's overall activities in the Arctic region are cooperation and scientific research due to the region's climate and weather conditions. The Chinese government has developed a new delivery route, energy activity, and lucrative trade in order to explore the region potential via China's expanded delivery routes, energy activity and lucrative trade (Alam et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2015). For China to establish cooperation or find a reliable partner, there are several ways, such as: first, the recognition and respect of Arctic and non-Arctic states under international law; second, developing mutual understanding and trust in its Arctic regions, while supporting solutions to problems and providing assistance; third, a broader transregional and comprehensive approach to addressing the transregional problem. And, lastly, promoting mutual interests in peace, stability, and sustainable development at the North Pole. By analyzing the information using the theory, the authors conclude that Chinese energy diplomacy is intended to promote Chinese energy worldwide through diplomatic relations and cooperation with several Arctic countries. Further, China released a policy regarding its energy interests with the support of an observer at the arctic council.

Global energy supply promotion efforts are being made by China

China's policy and its activities in the Arctic region were analyzed through three aspects of energy security: energy availability, affordability for the nations, and military capabilities. Related to some of the problems found in the Arctic region, such as: (a) a large area with no ownership status. (b) the Arctic has other natural resources, and there are many minerals that are untapped, such as gold, copper, iron, tin, platinum, nickel, zinc, and diamonds in the region, and (c) melting of ice in much of the Arctic. As part of this, China began to focus its energy several years ago on forging or strengthening existing partnerships.

The authors later found out that there were promotional efforts made by China. Due to unstable domestic demand and production, China began to invest in both petroleum and natural gas from 2003. Some regions such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East are the dominant areas for China's importing energy (Lai, 2007), but there are some factors like prices, the distribution of oil as well as the politicisation of some unstable region countries encouraged China to seek alternative areas such as the arctic. The presence of China in arctic international cooperation has increased significantly since 2007 and beyond, when it began sending delegates to the arctic council's senior council meeting (Koivurova et al., 2019).

China's promotion efforts, in turn, through diplomatic relations and cooperation are as follows:

As a first step, China and Russia should cooperate. In the 1990s and 2000, a number of partnerships were formed in the oil and natural gas sectors, including Rosneft's partnership with the Chinese national petroleum company (CNPC) and Rosneft's partnership with Sinopec. NOVATEK, CNPC and several foreign companies, including the French, are part of the LNG project which involves the development of gas fields on the east side of the Yamal peninsula in western Siberia and the construction of LNG factories and terminals (Mazneva, 2017). Moreover, Russia offers China participation in many oil and other energy projects as well as offers to export some of the oil as agreed. Furthermore, China offers a number of long-term loans to support several projects which make it easier for China to invest in Russian companies until the Chinese Silk Road Fund has a stake of 9% in the Russian company (Moe, 2017)

Second, promotion through Chinese and Canadian cooperation. For Canada, China is the largest partner and investor in some projects. Through a number of other partnerships, Canada gained investments in order to fund its company. This partnership offers China the opportunity to be active in some projects. It could even

become the largest shareholder in a Canadian oil company. This could help meet the country's energy needs. Moreover, through this relationship, China could pursue access to the Arctic and participate in activities related to it (Jiang, 2005)

Third, a renewed relationship with Norway benefits both sides. For China, looking further to improve relations as easier access to the north and the ability to use the Arctic Sea route to transport goods to Europe, it would cut between 12 and 15 days in transport time, with enormous economic advantages (Jiang, 2005). Norway must have made an investment in China and made China a manufacturing market.

Fourth, China became a lucrative partner after it entered into a three-way partnership with the Danish state. Both Denmark and China have benefited from this partnership. China has invested in Denmark to promote smooth development and infrastructure renewal. China has access to regions that have adequate energy resources for its energy supply, such as land metals and possible rights to Arctic ports (Tillman et al., 2018). Fifth, China and Iceland have established a joint Arctic science observatory since 2021. Plans expanded in 2017, with work in observatories now including the atmosphere, oceans, glaciers, geophysical, remote sensing and biology (Chun, 2020).

The sixth promotion involves collaboration with Finland. Accordingly, China proposes that the two countries utilize China Railway Express and other facilities to increase two-way trade, engage in third cooperation, discuss the possibility of Arctic delivery routes, and jointly create a polar silk road. There is also a collaboration between China and Finland in the field of climate research, monitoring the Arctic environment and navigation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

From the foregoing it can be seen that China was very active in carrying out this promotion. During the period 2003-2007, oil was imported from some areas, including the Arctic. In the period of 2010-2019, China did a number of collaborations with large countries such as Russia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and Finland. As previously discussed, China and some countries have been able to maximize their profits through established relationships and partnerships. In exchange for the investment, China was given access and a chance to participate in some existing projects. Some countries have used Chinese investment as a way to fund projects.

This indicates that China is pursuing global energy promotion and has sustained such an effort over a long period of time. It is especially intense because this

promotion is not only done annually. By holding part of the shares of a number of companies it has worked with, China has demonstrated its power.

Release of Policy In the Energy Interests

Through China's position as an observer on the arctic council (Graczyk & Koivurova, 2014). Acknowledged by the countries of the Arctic region, China is the pinnacle of energy diplomacy for the region. China released a white paper with a policy of focusing on the arctic and declaring itself "stakeholders" in the arctic and "arctic state arctic. China describes itself as 'one of the continental countries closest to the Arctic Circle,' although there is no region of China above the Arctic Circle or the northern border (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018). The Chinese white paper on its arctic policy was published in early 2018 amid worries and concerns about China's role as an observer of the arctic council. This document provides stronger international cooperation in the construction of infrastructure and operations of the arctic sea route by together building the silk road (Tillman et al., 2018).

The interests of China can be seen as two principal objectives: first, to contribute to the governance of environmental problems that are of global concern and, secondly, to benefit from the economic potential of the Arctic region (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2012). Observers are generally regarded as weak actors, as they have no vote in the decision-making process of the Arctic Council. As an external actor outside the region, China's participation as an observer remains the ideal and perhaps the only way that allows China to gain formal access to the Arctic government and the decision-making process (Graczyk & Koivurova, 2014).

The circumstances and natural conditions of the Arctic region had a direct impact on parts of China. . China has experienced sudden climate change due to the depletion of arctic sea ice. This has changed atmospheric circulation at high altitudes, contributing to sudden climate change. During 2007-2008, extreme fog contamination and global warming caused severe snowstorms in central and south China. Due to loss of Arctic sea ice and snow in previous autumn, poor ventilation conditions were found on the east China plains in 2013 (Steinveg, 2020; Zou et al., 2017). Not just the environment, the Chinese interest in the arctic region is seen from the economic sector. The Arctic has a strategic location with abundant energy resources and is likely to be a pathway for international trade. As the world's largest energy consumer, China needs a constant supply of energy resources to sustain its economic growth. An untapped supply of natural gas and oil in the north could meet China's demand for energy resources and the need to supply them (Gavrilov et al., 2017).

In addition, China claims that the arctic is a 'golden route or passage' for delivery (Brady, 2017). The arctic route provides the shortest delivery route connecting east Asia to Europe and North America. It is estimated that arctic shipping via the northern sea route would cut short the shipping trip between north China and northern Europe and at least 40% compared with the conventional route through the Suez Canal or the Panama Canal (Chen, 2012). As a result of melting the arctic ice sheet, three major shipping routes will be opened all the way to China.

First, the use of the northern passage, which is intended for commercial ocean transport during the summer, will offer a more than 6,400 km (4,000 mi) route to Europe and alleviate China's Malacca dilemma. Secondly, it facilitated Chinese access to the snow dragon (*xue long*) for such trips as learning about navigation through the Arctic Sea passage and ocean environments, as well as exploring practices useful to Chinese ships. In addition, China's lucrative trade process was boosted by a short delivery route. In this case, the China trade plan will see an increase of about 5-15% of China's international trade using the 2020 Arctic delivery route (Kopra, n.d.)

In 2017, China was doing an updated its Belt Road Initiative program for the Arctic region. The silk polar road or polar silk road policy is part of a massive strategy for building BRI in arctic regions by utilizing Arctic Ocean pathways as one of China's 'blue economic pathways' that extend China's economic corridors with north Asia, the Balkans, Russia, Europe and North America (NDRC, 2017). The silk polar road (PSR) vision is a product of globalization to facilitate global trade and economic integration, based on Chinese cooperation with Arctic countries. An example is the Chinese-Russian cooperation on the Yamal project. This northern silk road would enable China to classify its maritime routes while reducing travel time and fuel costs. The opening of Arctic delivery routes was essential for China to boost its economy driven in part by exports. This unopened northern sea route can cut 15 days out of shipping time and allow ships to navigate Russian waters into the western European sea.

In addition, two main routes, northwest passage (NWP) and northeast passage (NEP), provide faster alternatives. This route can be traversed by cutting the Arctic region between NWP and NEP through international waters, although only accessible by the toughest icebreaker. By reducing delivery time, fuel costs and emissions are generally lower (Nakano, 2018).

Through the silk polar road policy China can do some things like; First, China has access to most of the arctic. Second, it facilitated shipping by way of the North Sea Route (NSR), which reduced both time and cost Third, this policy demonstrates

China's ambition to achieve its interests in the Arctic in an indirect way. It is clear that while some components of the Polar Silk Road (PSR) are in operation, others remain firmly within the formulating council. The success and delay of PSR could be determined not only by looking at the finance and logistics of its components but also by major differences in political thinking among potential arctic countries that may or may not have formed building blocks for the northern road or route.

China drafted the PSR regulation well. Through PSR policies, opportunities for cooperation with Arctic countries. The policy was developed with a commitment to instilling a "fair, reasonable, and well-organized system of government" throughout China. Therefore, the BRI unit must be able to support the development of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses. As for precautionary measures, such as coordinating development strategies with arctic countries, encouraging mutual efforts to build the blue economic pathways linking China and Europe through the arctic ocean, increasing arctic digital connectivity, and building global infrastructure networks (Xinhua, 2018)

CONCLUSION

As part of its BRI initiative, China is positioning the Arctic as an alternative region to meet its energy needs. This is because the arctic is a vast, free region accessible to anyone and any country because it includes the high seas. However, some arctic regions border major power like Russia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the United States. This would be a separate barrier to China's participation and activity in the Arctic. Since the 1990s, China has gradually entered the Arctic region and re-entered in 2013 with observer status gained successfully. This was done in order to secure access to the region and exploit it. Through soft, energy-intensive diplomacy, efforts to achieve Arctic energy interests have succeeded with strong cooperation between China and the Arctic nations. Then, with the policies adopted by the arctic council and the region states.

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