

China and the Arctic

Natural Resources and Knowledge-Based Sustainable Development

13TH SHANGHAI SOCIAL STUDIES COLLOQUIUM – SSSC

Monday, 25 April 2016, 18:30h - ESSCA School of Management, Shanghai

Report

On Monday, 25 April 2016, the 13th **Shanghai Social Studies Colloquium (SSSC)** took place at the Shanghai campus of ESSCA School of Management. The SSSC is an initiative that provides a forum for international and Chinese scholars of various disciplines of the social sciences based in the city of Shanghai. The colloquium offers scholars a platform to present and discuss their research, so as to exchange critique and research ideas, improve their research output, network and socialise, with a view to developing collaborative research projects.

In recent years, China started to initiate its own Arctic strategy and policy even though it is not one of the Arctic coastal states. In 2013, it has gained permanent observer status on the Arctic Council, which strengthened China's claim and interests in the region. However, some countries are doubtful of China's intention. To better understand China's interests in the Arctic and the changing international relations in the region, the Shanghai Social Studies Colloquium welcomed

- Prof. Dr. **Rasmus Gejdsso BERTELSEN**, Professor & Barents Chair in Politics at University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway

Dr. BERTELSEN started his discourse by sharing some of his own experiences. He was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, but grew up and received his education in Reykjavik, the capital city of Iceland. He studied and taught in many countries, including Denmark, Norway, the U.S., Britain, the Netherland, and Switzerland; and he is affiliated with several institutions, including Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

To explore the emergence of the Arctic issue and China's participation, Dr. BERTELSEN first identified two grand shifts in the international relations in the past twenty-five years, which resulted in a power transition in global order:

- The collapse of the Soviet Union ended decades-long Cold War and bi-polar competition.
- Consequently, the promotion of liberal market economy by the West accelerated the process of globalisation. However, the political and economic development endangered the environment, a critical issue that is further emphasised as humans face the challenge of climate change today.

The development of emerging economies, such as China, exacerbated environmental problems. China's share of world gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 2 percent in 1995 to 12% in 2013 (as measured in USD terms). At the same time, it overtook the United States and became

the world largest energy consumer and green house gas emitter. These rapid changes provoked heated academic and political debate. Realists such as John Mearsheimer posited China's rise will not be peaceful and suggested that the U.S. should try to ally with other Asian-Pacific countries to contain China and maintain hegemony in the region. Joseph Nye on the other hand argued that the U.S. should avoid direct confrontation with China; thereby integrating China into the American-dominated system and hedge against the risk of China's growing influence and power within the 'system'.

Using these two paradigms, Dr. BERTELSEN analysed China's role in global governance, including its participation in Arctic affairs. His assessment was rather optimistic with regards to the integration and hedging, particularly in the sphere of scientific research cooperation between China and Nordic countries. He believes that the knowledge-based mutual interests through scientific collaboration between China and Nordic countries will boost economic ties; and he used 'science diplomacy' to describe such relations. He described science/technology/innovation has three roles in diplomacy.

- (1) Scientific research provides accurate data and advice for foreign policy formulation.
- (2) Science facilitates cooperation among different countries for common goals.
- (3) Increasing international science collaboration improves bilateral and even multi-lateral relations.

With regards to China's intentions in the Arctic, Dr. BERTELSEN analysed three main traits.

- China has a long history in polar studies and it aimed to expand its Arctic studies from both a scientific research and social studies perspective in order to ensure a right to research on the region.
- China sent a Chinese icebreaker to the Arctic in 2012 to explore alternative shipping routes to Europe cutting shipping time by more than half compared to conventional routes. Therefore, China is now establishing a posture on the right to free navigation in international waters.
- Although China has not claimed the right to resources in the Arctic, it could potentially be interested in energy and water resources in the region.

Dr. BERTELSEN then focused his presentation on the potential scientific and economic cooperation between China and Nordic countries as he considered both sides are pursuing sustainable development strategies. Since China does not have historically inherent political obstacles with most Nordic countries, the confidence-building measures between the two sides could be much easier.

However, he cautioned that although China's participation in Arctic affairs can contribute to the transnational development of science and the implementation of relevant international law, such as the Convention on the Law of the Seas, there are still two questions that remain:

- Is China ready to fulfil its responsibility as a global player, including responsibilities in environmental protection, climate change, and the respect for indigenous people's interests?



Créateurs d'avenirs



- China's appearance in the Arctic challenged the status quo in the region, particularly, the U.S.' interests when vectored from a realist perspective. It remains to be seen how politics especially between China and the U.S. will influence the region?

During the subsequent round of discussion, the audience suggested that China also pursues a policy of "integrate but hedge" vis-à-vis the U.S. Others focused on the potential economic cooperation and development between China and Arctic countries as they see great opportunities for local human capital development and the benefit from common goals.

The lively discussion in the plenary was followed by an informal exchange during a networking dinner.

The 13th SSSC welcomed researchers from a variety of institutions including East China Normal University, Free University of Brussels, Tongji University, and Antwerp Management School but also practitioners from the corporate world and media representatives. Please find the list of participants below.

All papers and the authors' profiles of the tenth and of previous SSSCs can be read and downloaded under <http://www.shanghai-review.org/sssc/>

The SSSC is an on-going event and takes place approximately every eight weeks. If you are interested in participating, please contact Maximilian.Rech@essca.fr.

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Title	Firstname	Name	Position	Institution
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Ms.	Rufina	KALAPOVA	Master Student	East China Normal University (ECNU)
Mr.	Nic	KRAPLES	Professor of Finance & PhD Candidate	East China Normal University (ECNU)
Ms.	Benedicte	MILLET	Master Student	Antwerp Management School & ESSCA School of Management, Shanghai
Mr.	Egill	NIELLSSON	Executive Secretary	China-Nordic Arctic Research Centre (CNARC)
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Mrs.	Thais Moretz	SOHN FERNANDES	Researcher	APEX BRASIL & East China Normal University (ECNU)
Dr.	Frank	TSAI	Regional Research Manager (Asia-Pacific)	Control Risk & ESSCA School of Management, Shanghai
Mr.	Peiran	WANG	PhD Candidate, the Faculty of Law and Criminology	Free University of Brussels (VUB)
Prof.	Chuanxing	WANG	Deputy Director, Center for Polar and Oceanic Studies	Tongji University

** Speaker of the 13th Shanghai Social Studies Colloquium*