

SUGGESTED READINGS

China and the Arctic: Literature Review

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China's interests, ambitions, and investments in the Arctic region are well known to many Western observers, although their scholarly discourse is less well known. The Polar Silk Road, as an extension of One Belt One Road, is not only essential to Chinese Arctic Policy, but also appears to be one of the most popular research topics among the Chinese scholars. In particular, there is a heavy emphasis on Chinese strategy and the economic importance of the Arctic, using regions and provinces as the main framework of analysis. This brief document provides an overview of some of the key literature, mostly in Chinese language, with regards to the Arctic. It does not claim to be exhaustive by any means but rather intends to highlight some of the sources that have been traditionally neglected by Western scholars. The notes below are summaries from each source and do not reflect any personal views.

Chinese Arctic Policies

Li, Zhenfu. [“‘冰上丝绸之路’再思考” \(Rethinking Silk Road on Ice\)](#), *Zhong Guo Chuan Jian* 1 (2019): 50-53.

- The four main goals of the Polar Silk Road are developing data science and big data, finance, energy, and sustainable development.
- The Polar Silk Road developments are stalled by Russian suspicion, where Russia sees China as a threat to their leadership and hegemony in Northern routes, legal development, and the use of icebreakers.
- China must clearly communicate Chinese national interests to relieve Russian suspicion.
- Low levels of technology hinder exploration of the Arctic. There is a need for increasing investments and funds at federal and provincial levels for ocean development. Better tax policies can also attract Northeastern provinces to promote tourism and sustainable development, as well as promoting Polar Silk Road among citizens.
- Polar Silk Road industries and their technological development would require support from a provincial and city level, with a focus on environmental development, and anti-pollution systems.
- Chinese coastal routes are old and outdated, mostly unusable for bigger fleets and would hinder Sino-Russian oil trade. China should prioritize ports that help facilitate Sino-Russian “Far East International Transportation Channels”.

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- To enable investment for the Polar Ice Road and for the investment foundation to be based in Asia, China needs to support financial institutions in developing financing industries, especially in Northern ports such as Qingdao and Dalian.

Li, Zhenfu, Xiangdong Li, Yan Peng, and Qi Bao. [“冰上丝绸之路’与北极命运共同体构建研究” \(Polar Silk Road and Shared Future of the Arctic Community\)](#), *Advances in Social Sciences* 8 no.8 (2019): 1417-1427.

- Based on discussions at the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party report and President Xi’s vision, China advocates “building a community with a shared future for mankind,” putting humanity and regions before countries. Such approach is also applied to Chinese Arctic policies, that are human- and community-driven rather than being driven by geopolitical interests.
- China maintains that it is a non-Arctic country that is driven by the greater good of humanity and will not support any hegemonic domination in the Arctic.
- The Arctic has 25% of the world’s fossil fuel and 30% of the world’s natural gas, which is attractive for economic development.
- Putin supported the Chinese integration of Polar Silk Road with One Belt One Road in multiple forums in 2017.
- Canada is a close ally of the U.S. in the Arctic. By developing Arctic shipping routes together, Canada can benefit from the Russian-American tension and gain control of Arctic routes to gain access between European countries. For Canada, the Northwestern route is not only important for transportation but also important for strategic reasons. However, the process of controlling the Northwestern route is complicated by great power competition and poor travel conditions.

Ruan, Jianping. [“国际政治经济学视角下的“冰上丝绸之路”倡议” \(Silk Road on Ice Initiative from an International Political Economy Perspective\)](#), *Hai yang kai fa yu guan li* 34, no. 11 (2017): 3-9.

- The vision of the Polar Silk Road is to develop the “one body two wings” strategy, connecting the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe on land; and the Indian Ocean Channel and the Pacific Ocean, to form the wings, i.e. forming an international transportation network that would use Eurasia as the centre.
- The Arctic population is 0.15% of the world's population, and 0.6% of the world's GDP, with great potential for growth.
- Canada is heavily involved in geopolitical conflicts in the Arctic, including its conflict with the U.S. regarding the border of the Beaufort Sea, ownership of Arctic islands, and Hans Islands with Denmark. China sees the need to prepare for the worst case scenario, should such conflicts affect the development of the Polar Silk Road.
- As a non-Arctic state, China sees itself as the champion for “relatively weaker” countries including Canada and other Scandinavian countries to balance the influence of the United States.
- The Polar Silk Road facilitates sustainable development for the world, equalizing economic development, and further Chinese cooperation with other countries.

Canadian attitude towards Sino-Canadian cooperation

Xie, Wei. [“加拿大驻华大使赵朴谈北极开发:北极航运比油气开发更重要” \(Canadian Ambassador to China Guy Saint Jacques on Arctic Development: Arctic Route is more important than petroleum exploration\)](#), *China Economy Weekly* 25 (2014): 76-77.

- Ambassador Saint Jacques' interview with *China Economy Weekly* on Canada's upcoming role as the chair of the Arctic Council, outlining the goals of Canada as the chair.
- Canada sees China as an important partner in research in the Arctic, with a focus on bird migration and starting a conversation on reduction of greenhouse gases.
- Ambassador Saint Jacques commented on the development of Arctic shipping routes that can stretch over the Atlantic Ocean, becoming the third Arctic shipping route in addition to the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the Northwest Passage (NWP), lowering shipping costs.
- Key Canadian goals are to protect Indigenous populations, establish systematic regulations regarding Arctic navigation, and promote sustainable development.

Xiao, Yang. [“竞争性抵制:美国对'冰上丝绸之路'的拒阻思维与战略构建” \(Competitive Boycott: The US's Resistance towards Silk Road on Ice and its Strategic Construction\)](#). *Taiping yang xue pao* 38, no.7 (2019): 66-75.

- Canada is an important part of American Arctic security policies against the Chinese' Polar Silk Road.
- Canada benefits from American anti-Chinese policies through the strengthening of the Norwegian-Canadian-Danish alliance and increasing geo-political regional competitiveness by hindering Sino-Russian trade and enforcement of NAFTA.
- Canadian and Russian domination of the Arctic Council incentivized the U.S. to create legal documents such as the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated Commercial Fishing on the High Seas of the Central Arctic Ocean, using the Arctic Council to minimize Chinese influence in shaping the Arctic's future.
- Canada is included in one of the strategies adopted by the U.S., where Canada and other allies would form a “C-shaped” blockade around China, hindering Chinese access to Arctic shipping routes.
- China should promote the creation of a common future in the Arctic for the international community while actively promoting friendly Sino-Canadian relations, for instance through participating in Canadian resource extraction projects and establishing renewable energy structures in Canada.

Sino-Canadian relations in Arctic development

Jiang, Yinan. [“冰上丝绸之路”多边合作:机遇、挑战与发展路径” \(Silk Road on Ice - International Development: Road to Opportunities, Challenges, and Development\)](#), *Taiping yang xue bao* 27, no. 8 (2019): 67-77.

- Canada may resist Chinese involvement in the Arctic as Canada is among the biggest beneficiaries under the current structure of governance for the Arctic. Therefore, the Polar Silk Road may be seen as a threat to Canadian-claimed sovereignty in the Arctic.
- The Arctic Council is an important part of the Polar Silk Road and the project must follow some 50 agreements including the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil pollution.
- China can use Japan and South Korea (the second and third largest LNG import country, making up more than half of LNG import together with China) to attract North America, especially the U.S.
- Existing Chinese literature focuses on governance and legal aspects of the Polar Silk Road, Sino-Russian cooperation, and concrete research in the Arctic. Research on international relations in the construction of the Polar Silk Road is limited, especially when the success of the project relies on collaboration from “Blue Economic Pathway,” Northern Europe, and Arctic countries in addition to Russia.

Lu, Naxi, Shanbing Lu. [“共建北极航道开发“冰上丝绸之路” \(Jointly Building the Arctic Waterway and Developing "Silk Road on Ice"\)](#), *Xi bu da kai fa* 6 (2018): 71-73.

- China sees itself as a great power and is responsible for getting other countries to collaborate on the Polar Silk Road.
- Northern China will make great use of the Arctic routes to save time and costs and North America would become a more significant trade partner.
- Canada became the leader in the development of the Northwestern Arctic route when Nunavik became the first cargo ship to arrive in China through Deception Bay, marking the readiness of the route.
- China’s Ministry of Transportation published an extensive “Arctic Route (Northwestern Route) 2015” to provide Chinese ships with comprehensive Northwestern route information protection services including shipping routes, ocean, and weather.

Legal discussions

Zhang, Cheng. [“中国海外安全利益视角下的北极区域治理法律问题” \(Arctic Governance and Law from the Chinese Foreign Security Interests Perspective\)](#), *Journal of Yunnan University for Nationalities* 34 no.5 (2017): 138-145.

- Zhang argues for the inadequacy of the UNCLOS with land disputes among the members of the Arctic Council, including how Canada benefits from the “fan-principle” whereby Arctic Council countries bar other states from accessing the Arctic.

- Since “territorial sea is measured or shall not exceed 100 nautical miles from the 2,500 metre isobath,” this allows Canada exclusive access to natural resources including fishery and fossil fuels, which is necessary for economic development.
- Canada is among the first countries to suggest using the Antarctic Treaties as a model for UNCLOS.
- As a non-Arctic country, China needs to revolutionize the Convention to include non-Arctic countries, one that is not modelled after the Antarctic Treaties.

Chinese economic interests in the Arctic

Zhao, Xianjin; Jingzi Huang. [“中国参与共建“冰上丝绸之路”的动力、制约与路径选择” \(The Motivation, Restrictions, and Choice of Route in Chinese Participation in Joint Construction of "Silk Road on Ice"\)](#), *Dui wai jing mao shi wu*, 11 (2019): 32-35.

- Outlines more concrete ways to promote “respectful, cooperative, and sustainable” development as per the White Paper, with a heavy focus on the Polar Silk Road.
- Sino-Russian cooperation on the Polar Silk Road was consolidated in the 20th Sino-Russian leaders summit in 2015, and once again by Putin in the Belt and Road Forum of 2017.
- China is set to be the largest fossil fuel consumer in 2030, thus it is important to secure Arctic energy resources.
- The Polar Silk Road can create more opportunities for China to export primary and secondary goods and import technology products and fossil fuels.
- The author sees open conversations, promoting Arctic development and infrastructure, and Chinese participation in creating Arctic laws as the best way to protect and promote Chinese interests.

Zhang, Tao and Linqiang Wu, Jingjing Xu, Chengzhu Jiang. [“基于“冰上丝绸之路”的我国油气能源战略,” \(China's Gas Energy Strategy based on Silk Road on Ice\)](#), *Hai yang kai fa yu guan li* 26, no. 2 (2019): 37-39.

- The Polar Silk Road refers to the Northeastern route that is the shortest route that connects Northern Asia and Western Europe. It was estimated to allow for six months of navigation time in 2020 and for the whole year in 2030.
- China sees the Arctic as “the New Middle East.” China currently accounts for over 80% of imports in Yamal LNG and there is great risk in the lack of diversification of energy resources.
- UNCLOS established a basic legal framework, but there is a need for renewal given the existing conflicts within the Arctic Council.
- It can be argued that China sees the past governance of the Arctic Council as inadequate, offering an opportunity to use Chinese experience and initiative to engage in the Arctic.

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