

# 2016/4/2: The Arctic

## The Arctic

### Test field for a new, global and geopolitical architecture in special consideration of China (part 1)

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The geopolitical importance of the Arctic had disappeared after the end of the Cold War, but it had never been forgotten. Nevertheless, because of Canada's opposition, NATO still has no security-political mandate to pool the interests of the members involved. Due to the consequences of the climatic change the Arctic Circle is getting into the focus of the public world. The „Arctic Circle Conference“ in Reykjavik, which was founded by the Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in 2013, and which has taken place every year since then, bears witness to this. In October 2015 more than 1.500 participants from almost 50 countries convened once again, thus verifying the grown importance of the Arctic. In Reykjavik the maritime key powers from Asia meet the Arctic adjacent states, as well as the European states Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, which now demonstrate presence, too, and document their own claims. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> „Arctic Circle Conference“ also the Federal Republic of Germany presented itself as a player on the Polar Circle. Seven soldiers in uniform from all three services, led by an admiral, were part of the German delegation. France even underlines its ambitions with the attendance of its President François Hollande. China, Korea and the United Arab Emirates also were represented with presentations in Reykjavik. Contrary to the time of block confrontation after the Second World War, today the topics in the Arctic are not radio detection and ranging early warning systems and strategic areas of disposition for submarines any longer. If the forecasts of climate researchers are true, a new navigable ocean will come into being because of the thawing of the Arctic ice, a sea shortening the already existing trade and transit routes between Europe, Asia and America. This article analyses how the melting off and possible disappearance of the ice of the Arctic might influence the geopolitical balance within the next decades, and which conflicts might arise from it. Here, the main focus of the analysis will be China. So far China's appearance in the Arctic has not been appropriately appreciated in literature. So, for instance, in the study of the Science and Politics Foundation on „China's Rise: Return of Geopolitics“ published in 2006, there is no chapter about China's interest in the North Pole. Only since 2012 some articles concerning China have been listed in the „NATO Multimedia Library“, which is publicly accessible and supported by the internet. With the analysis by the China-experts Linda Jakobsen und Jingchao Peng from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) from 2012, China is identified as a late beginner on the arctic chessboard. Here, however, like with other authors, the focus of observation is on the opening sea routes in the far north and the exploitation of the arctic resources to be expected. Additionally, one has to question critically how realistic a generally expected „new silk road“ on the Arctic Ocean and the exploitation of the abundance of resources in the Arctic will become anyway in foreseeable future. By the focussing on new sea routes and the abundance of resources another more important question is still neglected for the most part: What are the consequences of a spatially foreign power emerging in the far north for the geopolitical architecture there, and for the trans-Atlantic „lines of communication“? This question was first posed in a short essay in the „National Intelligence Fellow at the USA Council on Foreign Relations“ by Paula Briscoe in February 2013: „Greenland - China's Foothold in Europe?“ Thus, a strategic dimension is accosted which will be of pivotal for the future of trans-Atlantic geopolitics. Notwithstanding, up to now most authors have above all dealt with the current conflict potential existing between Russia and the West. The appearance of China, together with its consequences on the arctic chessboard, astonishingly remain underexposed.

