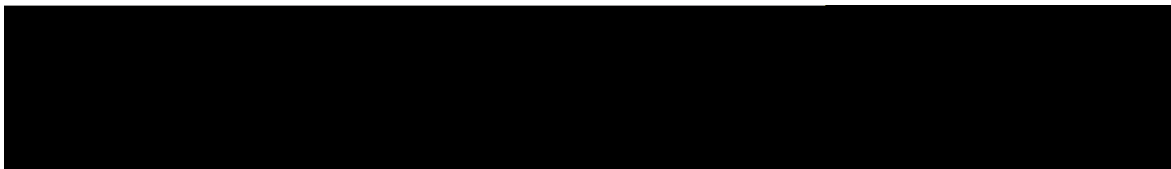


CHINA'S EXPANDING ANTARCTIC INTERESTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW ZEALAND

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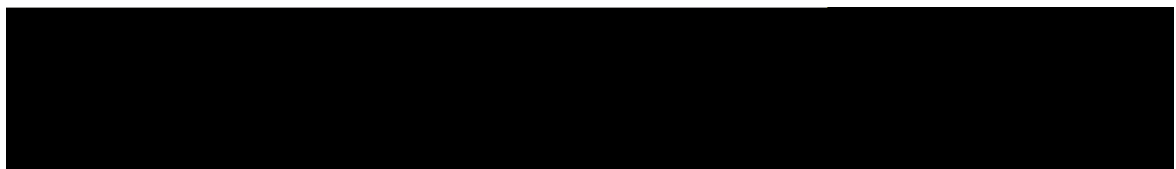
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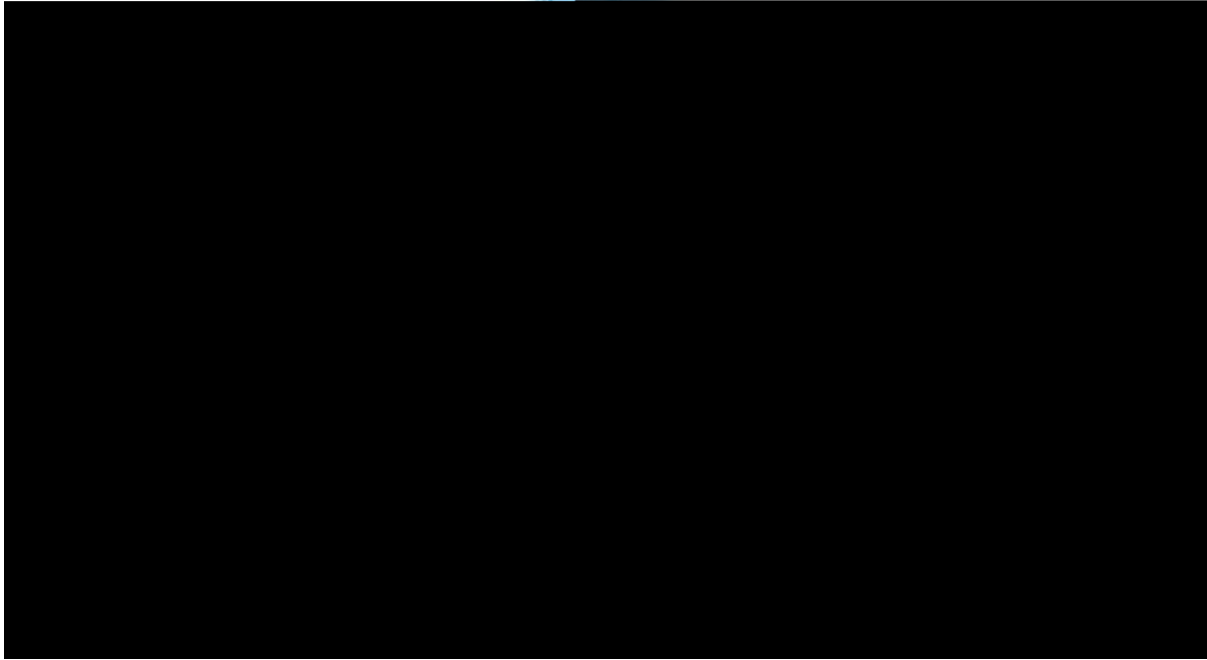
Presented at the conference: 'Small States and the Changing Global Order: New Zealand Faces the



interest in the maintenance of regional security and have benefited from existing security arrangements.³

The focus of New Zealand's relationship with China in the last 9 years has been on economic issues, but the time has come to face up to the difficult political challenges in the relationship. Some of China's interests and activities in Antarctica appear to breach the terms of the Antarctic Treaty and have the potential to undermine New Zealand's stated interests there. New Zealand has a 15 percent territorial claim in Antarctica, the Ross Dependency, and relies on the Antarctic Treaty to protect its interests in Antarctica. As the 2016 White Paper on Defence noted: "It is a fundamental





China's vertical world map, an official map used since 2004 by China's State Oceanic Administration to chart voyages to the Arctic and Antarctic and, since 2006, by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as an official military map, was released to the public in 2014. The new world map



What should be done?

New Zealand needs to face up to the new strategic environment in Antarctica, the challenges in maintaining its interests in Antarctica, and to reassess the risk. The heightened attention to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in the 2016 White Paper on Defence, the plans for a stepped up investment in New Zealand Defence Force Antarctic capabilities, and further initiatives to maintain a credible presence in Antarctica through budgetary increases to Antarctica New Zealand are a step in the right direction. However, they will be insufficient to maintain New Zealand's policy priorities of: maintaining New Zealand's right of sovereignty in the Ross Dependency,¹⁷ and the commitment to keeping Antarctica peaceful, nuclear free and its environment protected.¹⁸ Previous calculations have not had access to detailed evidence of China's military activities in Antarctica, its efforts to build up a case for a territorial claim, or its extensive minerals exploration activities.

New Zealand can respond to the new strategic environment by expanding and deepening its Antarctic capacity and institutional expertise, increasing the brief of government agencies with existing Antarctic capacity, partnering with like-minded countries to raise China's potential breaches of the Antarctic Treaty at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and other diplomatic fora, and offer assistance to China to better meet the terms of the Antarctic Treaty. Speaking out on the military-use capabilities of China and other states in Antarctica will ensure that the continent remains peaceful.

New Zealand must stop hovering at the crossroads of the changing global order and respond to the new challenges it poses. As the 2016 White Paper on Defence noted, US global influence is continuing to decline.¹⁹ This has escalated considerably under the Trump administration. China is stepping into the power vacuum of global leadership, preparing to shape the new world order and protect international security.²⁰ There are many advantages for New Zealand of China's more proactive foreign policy, but also some distinct disadvantages. As a small state—one with the world's fourth largest maritime zone, significant maritime responsibilities through our Pacific partnerships and search and rescue (SAR) responsibilities, and as a nation with an existing claim in Antarctica—China's flouting of international maritime law in the South China Sea, apparent disregard of Antarctic Treaty rules, and efforts to exploit gaps in maritime and polar governance, should be of concern.

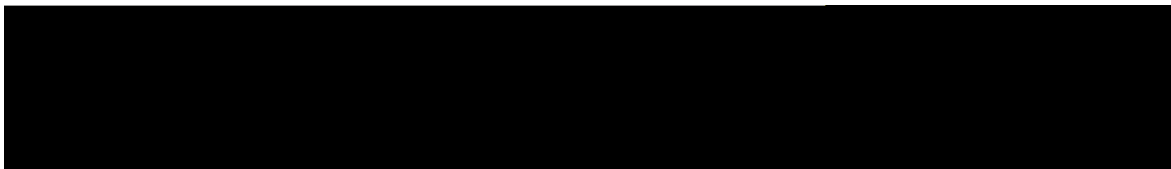
With careful diplomacy and strategic investments in capacity, New Zealand can better manage its economic and political relationship with China, while protecting its own national interests. New Zealand can also do a lot more to partner with Australia and other like-minded states in the Asia Pacific, in Oceania, as well as in Southeast Asia, to protect its interests both in Antarctica and in the Indo-Asia-Pacific.

¹⁷ Defence White Paper 2016, 19.

¹⁸ "New Zealand Statement of Strategic Interest in Antarctica Revised 2002."

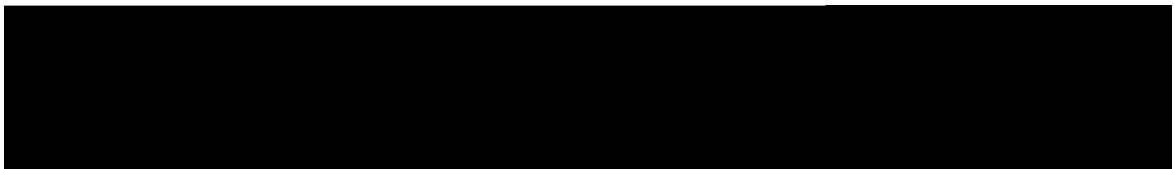
¹⁹ Defence White Paper 2016, 50.

²⁰ "Xi Jinping ti "liangge yindao" you shenyi" [The profound significance of Xi Jinping's first mention of 'double guidance'], CCP Central Party School, February 21, 2017, <http://www.ccln.gov.cn/hotnews/230779.shtml>.



China's expanding Antarctic capacity and interests

China's official definition of Antarctic sovereignty is that it is "a continent with no attribution of sovereignty" (zhuquan meiyou guishu de dalü).²¹ Article IV(1) of the Antarctic Treaty deals with the issue of Antarctic sovereignty claims by putting them on hold. China's official stance on the Antarctic Treaty and its associated agreements is that they are currently the best means to safeguard China's interests and to ensure stability and security in Antarctic affairs. The Antarctic Treaty is very advantageous to the major powers. It enables any country with the requisite economic might unfettered access to the whole of the Antarctic continent and ocean without having to consider the rights of the seven claimant states. China's view is that for the next twenty to thirty years, the Antarctic Treaty will continue to suit their interests,

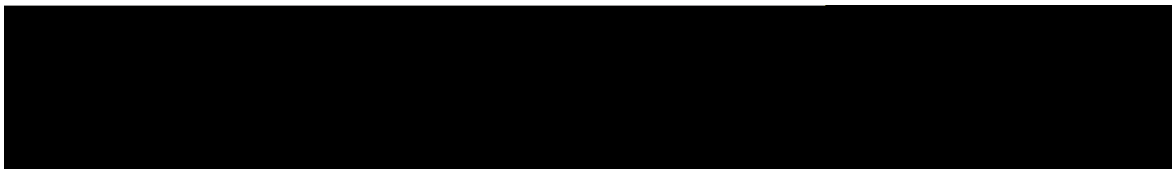


Despite the restrictions in the Antarctic Treaty on making any further sovereignty claims, China reserves the right to make a claim in Antarctica,²⁶ however it does not publicise this. Article IV(2) of the Treaty precludes any party from making a new claim or enlarging an existing claim, yet it does not expressly preclude a state from reserving the right to make a claim. China's claim of potential sovereign rights in Antarctica is based on Chinese exploration and occupation of sites in Antarctica



site.²⁸ The site China chose, Inexpressible Island, in Terra Nova Bay, was one on the list of seven possible new base site locations in the Ross Sea area that the New Zealand government had given to China in 1984, in the hope of getting the Chinese authorities to recognize New Zealand's territorial rights in the Ross Dependency.²⁹ In 2013, China Arctic and Antarctic Administration (CAA) head Qu Tanzhou told journalists that the new base site had been selected because the Ross Sea area will be "one of the hottest locations in Antarctica" in the future.³⁰ Senior polar glaciologist Sun Bo stated that the new base was located close to areas of "resource potential,"³¹ and the Polar Research Institute of China's internal newspaper stated that "resource exploration and climactic studies" would be the main tasks of the base.³²

China's fifth base will be a permanent all-year station. As a result, China was required to submit a Comprehensive Environment Evaluation (CEE) report to the Antarctic Treaty's Committee for Environmental Protection, and receive and respond to the feedback of other Antarctic states with a final CEE to be issued sixty days before it began work on the new base. China's draft CEE for the new base was published in January 2014. The draft CEE did not mention China's interest in exploring minerals or other resources in the Ross Sea area; instead, it highlight



necessary from a scientific point of view; and an assessment of scientific priorities for the new base.³⁶ Funding has been approved for the new base and officials have said it will be built within the next five years. China will be looking for support from the other Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties before it begins construction. This makes the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting being held in Beijing from May 22-June 2, 2017 extremely important for the Chinese government.

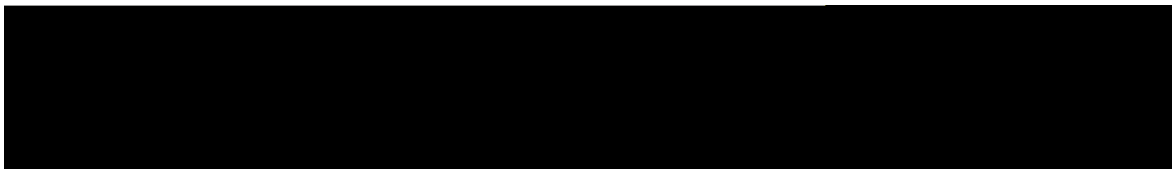
China's bases are all in areas of Antarctica that it has identified as strategically important and rich in resources. The Chinese National Development and Reform Commission document authorizing the



China's strategic interests in Antarctica

China's strategic interests in the polar regions can be divided into three core categories, ranked as follows:

- Security (Traditional and Non-traditional): China has economic, political, and military interests in the polar regions.



dominance in the Asia-Pacific was set up in the 1950s to defend a series of island chains against the spread of communism.

The island chain concept links the North Pole to the South Pole, extending US strategic control over the gateways to the seas and skies of the Asia-Pacific region from the entrance to the Arctic at the Bering Sea chokepoint, all the way down to Antarctica and as far as the South Pole where the United States' Scott-Amundsen Base is located. Breaking the US military's strategic dominance in the Asia-Pacific would greatly enhance China's security and enable it to gain the upper hand in multiple



governance and resources.⁵⁴ PLA analysts of all forces frequently publish on polar strategic issues in military open-source journals. A search of Chinese-language, open-source military-related journals published between 2000 and 2013 identified close to sixty articles discussing various aspects of the Arctic and Antarctic from a military perspective.

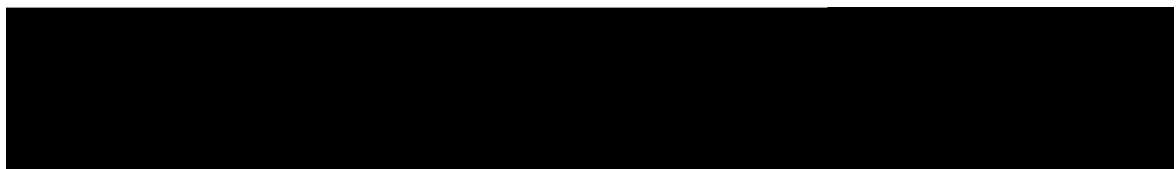


and Africa.⁶¹ China is setting up an intercontinental Antarctic air route and can be expected to utilise PLA-Air Force planes in due course to expand capacity and build polar experience.

Polar equipment and support is another venue for Chinese military involvement. China's Antarctic expeditions' helicopter support is contracted to Ha Air, a subsidiary of one of China's top ten military companies.⁶²



Polar Research Institute of China (



significant reserves in order to help China in its bid to gain rights to these resources.⁸² The most recent large study included a “preliminary exploration of mineral resources in Antarctic waters” and “surveyed coal reserves.”⁸³

A further important Antarctic resource of interest to China is fishing. Southern Ocean fishing is managed by an Antarctic Treaty organisation, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), based in Hobart. China has the third-largest catch of Antarctic krill after Norway and South Korea, and it sends five boats, more than any other state, to the



New Zealand must face up to the new challenges of the emerging global order. With careful diplomacy, a clear-headed strategy and leadership, and strategic investments in capacity, New Zealand can better manage its economic and political relationship with China, while protecting peace and security in Antarctica.

