



China Builds Icebreaker at Home

OE Watch Commentary: The *Xuelong 2* (Snow Dragon 2) apparently will be classified as another research icebreaker as the accompanying excerpted article reports, but it raises the issue of the commercial icebreaker monopoly that *Rosatomflot* currently has on the Northeast Passage (see: “If you build it, will they come?” *OE Watch*, September 2018). Perhaps China wants the *Xuelong 2* to break ice for its own ships in the Northeast Passage. China has a polar research institute in Shanghai and a 550-foot long research icebreaker, the *Xuelong 1*, in operation in Arctic waters (see: “Potential Chinese Foothold in the Arctic,” *OE Watch*, April 2014), though the *Xuelong 2* is much bigger than its predecessor. Additionally, China is taking bidders for a nuclear-powered icebreaker support ship for its expanding Arctic icebreaker effort (see: “China going nuclear in Arctic,” *OE Watch*, August 2018). The Arctic waters are warming up commercially and politically.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: “China Launches First Domestically Built Icebreaker,” *Global Times Online*, 10 September 2018. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1119098.shtml>

China launched ... its first domestically built polar icebreaker, the Xuelong 2, a ship that has strong icebreaking capability and is expected to reach thick ice-covered Polar Regions including the North Pole.... According to Zhang Xia, director of the Polar Strategy Center at the Polar Research Institute of China, the launch of the Xuelong 2 means that the ship's overall structure, power system and other main equipment are completed. After it finishes further interior building and sea trials, the ship will be delivered for use within the next year.... It has two-direction ice breaking capabilities at both its bow and stern...The Xuelong 2 is considered a medium-sized icebreaker with a strong icebreaking capability comparable to the US icebreaker Healy, and can reach most places in the Arctic and the Antarctic including the North Pole despite thick ice there... With the launch of the Xuelong 2, China has gained the know-how on building an icebreaker and will not be dependent on foreign technologies in the future.”

Dong Yue, a research fellow at the Polar Research Institute of the Ocean University of China, stated that “It is expected to participate in China's 10th Arctic expedition and 35th Antarctic expedition in 2019. It is equipped with intelligent sensors and covered with wireless data connection. The ship has six state-of-the-art laboratories to be used to gather data and manage samples...Polar regions are closely related to the entire world in fields like global climate studies and environmental protection. It is China's responsibility to take part in polar affairs and create a community with a shared future. Expeditions into the polar regions can not only boost China's science and technology capability, but also bring China commercial opportunities access to natural resources and tourism.”

“China's first domestically built icebreaker, the Xuelong 2, was launched from the Jiangnan Shipyard in Shanghai on 10 September. The vessel is 122.5 meters long and 22.3 meters wide, with a displacement of 13,990 tons and a navigation capability of 20,000 nautical miles.”



Xuelong 1, departing from the inner harbour of the Port of Fremantle, Western Australia (2016).

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