

## Why is there "strong smell of gunpowder" around poles of earth?

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A few Western scholars once predicted at the end of the Cold WAR that the globe we live will turn increasingly more orderly because of economic globalization. The reality today, nevertheless, has reminded us that the "ship of globalization" has taken us to the still more indefinite, unknown "sea area". In this maritime space, the "old turbulent waves", which have not yet subsided, are now merging swiftly with new, surging tide. Some recent occurrences around the North and South Poles are just a case in point.

Since August this year, repeated news of wrangles and disputes from both poles of the earth have been imbued with a "strong smell of gunpowder," instead of common stories merely about explorations and adventures. Russia held a massive military exercise at the North Pole area, which was followed by another military drill of a full scale by Canada "designed to assert its sovereignty in the north".

Moreover, the United States, Russia, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden sent teams of scientists to the Arctic area for scientific explorations, and Russia even planted a titanium alloy flag on the ocean floor, 4,261 meters under the Arctic Ocean surface at the North Pole.

Meanwhile, Britain has announced its plan to appeal to the United Nations to claim sovereign rights over a huge area of the seabed off Antarctica, a likely catalyst for a race for territory around the ice-covered continent and there are five claims in total it is hoping to put forward. So the quiet diplomatic battle for control of Antarctica has intensified with its decision to claim the potentially rich offshore continental shelf off Antarctica. This is the very area Chile and Argentina once set forth territorial claims, and Chile would naturally exerted itself to beat back the British claims.

Why has the "vast expanse of ice and snow" been turned into a "sweetie pie" all of sudden? The deep ices and snows around the poles of the earth start to melt with a global warming, scientists and experts acknowledge. This makes the ocean-going shipping more facilitating and the extraction of seabed resources much easier and more attainable. Beneath the vast ice-and-snow-capped wilderness around the Poles, there are rich, abundant reserves of oil, natural gas and numerous other resources, and the reserves of oil and natural gas stored in the Arctic Ocean floor alone are estimated to account for one quarter of the total global storage. "Oil has become a proxy for geopolitics right now, " said Norwegian energy expert Daniel Yergin, adding that the "oil-related situation was the principal motive force" behind contentions in the North Pole area.

An escalating rivalry around the poles of the globe represents a true portrayal of the current global situation, which at least indicate even such allies as Canada and Denmark will absolutely not compromise their core interests so off-handedly.

As for the ownership of the Polar regions, the United Nations has had relevant treaties, such as the Antarctic Treaty signed on Dec. 1, 1959 and entered into force on June 23, 1961. The treaty had only (temporarily) "frozen" territorial claims by the countries concerned but did not settle the very right for the potentially rich offshore continental shelf.

Furthermore, owing to a lack of evidence at present to affirm that any single nation has its offshore continental shelf extending to the North Pole, this Polar area has been designated as an international scope subjected to the monitoring and supervision by the Bureau of Ocean and International Environment, in strict compliance with the UN Oceans Treaty.

Along with the further development of economic globalization, it is foreseeable that a host of other similar issues would likely emerge in the years to come. So what we really need is a spirit of restraint and understanding as well as an outlook or concept on peace to cope with such problems. Nevertheless, what we need all the more is a new order with new norms to uphold and maintain peace and, an still more important is to call for the establishment of a mechanism capable of safeguarding peace and promoting cooperation. Otherwise, the rational and peaceful development and utilization of resources in the Polar areas on earth is nothing but lip service.