International Collaboration, Policy, Indigenous Peoples Session

What the new icebreaking research vessel would mean for the international Arctic research community: A Korean, future generation, social scientist's perspective

Jihoon Jeong
Korea Polar Research Institute

[Abstract]
This presentation aims to offer insights into the significance of the new research vessel with icebreaking capabilities for the international Arctic research community, also exploring ideas to optimize its use from the perspective of future generations and social scientists.

Constructing and operating an ice-class research vessel is a valuable contribution limited to select countries. Governments willing and capable of bearing significant costs, even post-completion, can operate such vessels. Interestingly, non-Arctic countries sometimes build vessels better suited for scientific research and education, freed from the responsibility to respond to sovereignty missions. These research icebreakers play a crucial role in filling knowledge gaps in the higher latitude Arctic Ocean, enhancing observation coverage and frequency—a particularly critical aspect in the current geopolitical situation.

Upon becoming operational, the new Japanese research vessel is expected to set a positive example of an international Arctic research collaboration platform. Participating in initiatives such as the Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS) and contributing to the Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring (JPSRM) within the efforts of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA) is highly anticipated and desirable. The vessel may also offer opportunities for younger generation experts, fostering education and training through floating university-like programs combined with research voyages. Additionally, it is expected to demonstrate greater respect for Arctic Indigenous peoples by managing underwater noise, inviting young Indigenous students for education, and conducting prior consultations with community members near the research voyage.