

## Call for PhD Research Fellowship at Fridtjof Nansen Institute: “China’s capacity building in the Arctic – relevance for Norway”

A position as PhD Research Fellow is available at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Lysaker, Norway. The purpose of the fellowship is research training leading to the successful completion of a PhD degree.

The Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) is an independent foundation engaged in research on international environmental, energy and resource management politics and law. FNI is the leading Norwegian research institute on international law and political cooperation in the Arctic and the Arctic interests of China and other Asian states.

The PhD student will collaborate closely with researchers at the institute involved in research on China, Arctic politics and Russia. The fellowship is for three years. It is financed by a grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence’s support scheme for security and defence related research at academic institutions and universities.

### Job description

Despite having long been characterized by international cooperation, the Arctic is emerging as a possible arena for great power rivalry with the US, China and Russia as the three major players. This development is relevant for Norwegian foreign and security policies.

In 2018, China launched its Arctic strategy, in which Beijing refers to itself as a "near-Arctic state". The policy document emphasizes climate change and polar research as important drivers for China's presence in the region. In addition, the strategy highlighted interest in the economic development of the High North, including the development, management and extraction of energy, mineral and living marine resources. Reference was also made to establishment of a "polar silk road", which would connect to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Capacity-building through new research vessels, technology innovations, and participation in Arctic cooperation contribute to making China an increasingly competent Arctic actor. In terms of security policy, such capacity building may lead to changes in the geopolitical constellations that today characterize the Arctic. China's ability to operate in Arctic waters, combined with an increasingly tense relationship between the US and China, implies new and difficult assessments for Norway as a NATO member. The Sino-Russian relationship is also a key driver of these dynamics. The debate on Chinese activity in the Arctic is increasingly characterized by considerations of economic benefit weighed against potential security risks. The analysis of China's political ambitions in the Arctic must be rooted in a broader understanding of Chinese foreign and security politics, including the development of the BRI and the role of the Arctic in this regard.

It is expected that these developments can be assessed with an ambition to explore which consequences this may have for Norwegian security policies in the High North. The PhD student is expected to conduct an empirical study, including data gathering from Chinese sources of information such as official documents, strategies, interviews with analysts and stakeholders etc.

The PhD student will be employed at FNI, and the position is contingent on admission to a PhD programme at a Norwegian University.

## Qualification requirements

### Formal qualifications

#### *Required*

- Master's degree or equivalent in social sciences or humanities in disciplines such as political science, human geography, sociology, social anthropology, economics, STS, history, or area studies
- Foreign completed degree (M.Sc.-level) corresponding to a minimum of four years in the Norwegian educational system
- Average grades at Ma level equivalent to B or better (by the Norwegian system). In some cases, exceptions can apply
- A Master's degree must be completed by the application deadline for the candidate to be considered
- Fluent oral and written communication skills in English
- Working proficiency communication skills in a Scandinavian language

### Personal attributes

#### *Required*

- Curious and creative
- Great communication and presentation skills – both written and oral
- The ability to collaborate, cooperate, and contribute as part of a team

#### *Desired*

- Language competence in Chinese
- Proficiency with qualitative methods
- Interdisciplinary work experience

## We offer

- Salary NOK 479 600 – 513 600 (Ltr. 54-58) per annum depending on qualifications and seniority as PhD Research Fellow
- A three-year contract of 100% PhD activity from July 2021 – June 2024
- Attractive welfare benefits and a generous pension agreement
- Vibrant academic environment
- Inclusion in the research group for Polar and marine issues
- Access to training facilities

## How to apply

#### *The application must include*

- Cover letter - statement of motivation and research interests
- CV (summarizing education, positions and academic work - scientific publications); maximum four pages
- Project description; maximum 10 pages
- Copies of the original Bachelor and Master's degree diploma, transcripts of records and letters of recommendation
- Documentation of English proficiency if English is not native language
- Publications and academic work that the applicant wishes to be considered; maximum of three attached to the application
- Names and contact details of 2-3 references (name, relation to candidate, e-mail and telephone number)

The fellowship requires admission to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences or Faculty of Humanities at UiO or other relevant Norwegian University. The application to the PhD programme must be submitted to the department no later than two months after taking up the position. For

more information about relevant PhD programmes at UiO, see:  
<https://www.sv.uio.no/english/research/phd/application/external-funding.html> and  
<https://www.hf.uio.no/english/research/phd/>

The application with attachments must be submitted by email to Head of Administration Claes Lykke Ragner, [claes.ragner@fni.no](mailto:claes.ragner@fni.no). Foreign applicants are advised to attach an explanation of their University's grading system. All documents should be in English or a Scandinavian language.

Applicants will be called in for an interview. Interviews, background and reference checks will be conducted after initial shortlisting has taken place. All candidates can expect to receive notification informing them of their status on the shortlist within three weeks of the closing date.

The Fridtjof Nansen Institute strives for a balanced gender composition in its workforce. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds or different abilities are encouraged to apply.

### Contact person

For further information please contact: Pål Wilter Skedsmo, phone: +47 990 38 286  
e-mail: [pskedsmo@fni.no](mailto:pskedsmo@fni.no)

**Deadline: 1 March, 2021**