

Rare earth elements: Mining industry for exotic materials developing

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Abstracts

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SUMMARY

Rare earth elements (REE) are now essential to produce a plethora of high-tech goods, from jet engine turbine blades to smartphones and sophisticated batteries contained in electric cars. Demand is soaring, and the need for companies and countries around the world to gain a suitable supply is shining a light on developments in the REE mining industry. China continues to dominate consumption and production of rare earth elements, but signs production is expanding outside of the leading Asian economy are growing in number. Yet this has helped to create a tense geopolitical global environment, meaning the market for rare earth elements is unlikely to behave as traditional markets normally would.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Chinese mining industry gained in importance considerably due to controlling approximately 90% of rare earth element production. Aware of the obvious geopolitical problems, leading companies across industries situated in the US, Europe and in Asia-Pacific (most notably Japan) have been seeking to reduce reliance on exotic materials rarely found in significant quantities but which are essential to achieving modern high-performance standards.

The 2009 decision from the Chinese government to shrink exports of rare earth elements by 40% serves as an example of the extreme control Beijing holds over what is now a vitally important part of the international mining industry.

Such is the economic significance of rare earth elements that the mining, processing and distribution of REE materials are subject to a never-ending game of high-stakes international politics. China has not always been far ahead of the rest of the world when it comes to mining for materials such as neodymium and cerium, as well as other REE. The United States Congress has many reasons to act.

SCOPE

Examines how industrial use of rare earth elements is changing.

Looks at whether alternative sources to China can be developed.

Assesses the impact of China on the global market.

Examines the influence of geopolitics on the mining of rare earth elements.

REASONS TO BUY

What is happening regarding demand for rare earth elements?

Will Chinese dominance be eroded?

What is the state-of-affairs regarding geopolitics and rare earth elements?

Are finds being found outside of China?

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