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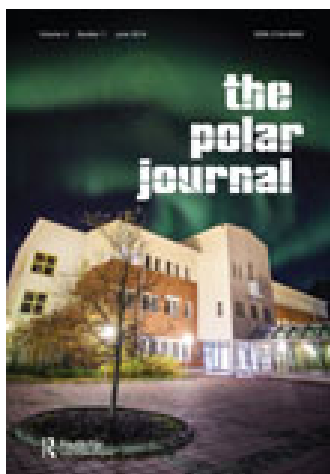
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Russia in search of its Arctic strategy: between hard and soft power?

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In contrast with the internationally wide-spread stereotype of Russia as a revisionist power in the High North, this paper argues that Moscow tries to pursue a double-faceted strategy in the region. On the one hand, such a strategy aims at defending Russia's legitimate economic interests in the region. On the other hand, Moscow is open to cooperation with foreign partners that are willing to partake in exploiting the Arctic natural resources. The general conclusion is that in the foreseeable future Moscow's strategy in the region will be predictable and pragmatic rather than aggressive or spontaneous.

Keywords: Russia; the Arctic; hard and soft power

Introduction

It became a common place to ascertain that in the post-Cold war era soft rather than hard power became important. The power of attractiveness is often seen as a more effective instrument than military or economic coercive tools. The Arctic seems to be a place where soft security agenda is becoming dominant while military issues tend to be of less significance for the key regional players.

The world academic and expert communities greatly differ by their views on Russia's Arctic strategy. Since the planting of a Russian flag at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean on the North Pole in August 2007, resumption of strategic bomber patrols in the High North and the publication of the Russian Arctic strategy of 2008 the Western experts have often described Russia's Arctic policies as expansionist and even aggressive.¹ According to them, because of its relative economic weakness and technological backwardness Russia tends to make an emphasis on military coercive instruments to protect its national interests in the Arctic and this will inevitably lead to the regional arms race, remilitarization of and military conflicts in the High North.²

On the other hand, there are authors (mostly Russian) who prefer to depict Russia's intentions in the Arctic in an apologetic way – as “purely defensive”,

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¹Schepp and Traufetter, “Riches at the North Pole: Russia Unveils Aggressive Arctic Plans”; Smith and Giles, *Russia and the Arctic*.

²Borgerson, “The Great Game Moves North”; Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*; Smith and Giles, *Op. cit.*

oriented to “protection of its legitimate interests”.³ This group of experts emphasizes the fact that Moscow’s primary interest lies in the development of the Russian Arctic Zone (RAZ) which is rich in natural resources and, at the same time, underdeveloped in terms of economy, infrastructure, communications and social institutions. According to them, Moscow does not pursue an expansionist policy in the Arctic. On the contrary, Russia wants to solve all disputes in this region by peaceful means, with the help of international law and organizations.

There is also a marginal group of Russian anti-Western political writers who are not afraid to call Russia a revisionist, expansionist or imperial state (not only in the Arctic but elsewhere).⁴ They believe that Moscow’s Arctic policy must be assertive and pro-active to resist the Western “encroachments” on “Russia’s Arctic” and numerous anti-Russian conspiracies.

As a matter of fact, most of the authors belong to the extreme schools: they are either too anti-Russian or overtly pro-Russian in their analysis of Moscow’s strategies in the Far North. There are quite few works that try to objectively analyse the Russian interests, motivation, behaviour and specific strategies in the Arctic.⁵

This paper aims to discuss the question whether Russia is really a revisionist power in the Arctic or, rather, it is a soft power that is interested in the region’s stability and open to international cooperation in the region?

To answer this question a number of more specific questions should be addressed:

- What are the Russian national interests in the Arctic?
- What are Russia’s bilateral relations with key Arctic and non-Arctic actors in the region?
- What is Moscow’s political course within international organizations and fora dealing with the Arctic issues?

Russian national interests in the Arctic

Russia’s interests in the Arctic were systematically outlined for the first time in Moscow’s strategy for the RAZ (2008). The significance of the High North for Russia was reiterated by the new Arctic strategy of 2013. These interests can be grouped into several categories:

Natural resources

Both – 2008 and 2013 – Russian Arctic strategies set a task to make the RAZ Russia’s “strategic resource base” because of its vast natural resources (see Figure 1). According to the US Geological Survey, the total mean undiscovered conventional oil and gas resources of the Arctic are estimated to be approximately 90 billion

³Alexandrov, “Labyrinths of the Arctic Policy”; Diev, *Arkticheskaya Strategiya Rossii*; Oreshenkov, “Arctic Diplomacy.”

⁴Dugin, *Metafizika I Geopolitika Prirodnykh Resursov*; Indzhiev, *Bitva za Arktiku*.

⁵Gorenburg, “Russia’s Arctic Security Strategy”; Konyshchev and Sergunin, “The Arctic at the Crossroads of Geopolitical Interests”; Laruelle, *Russia’s Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North*; Lasserre, Le Roy and Garon, “Is there an arms race in the Arctic?”; Voronkov, *Interesy Rossii v Arktike*.

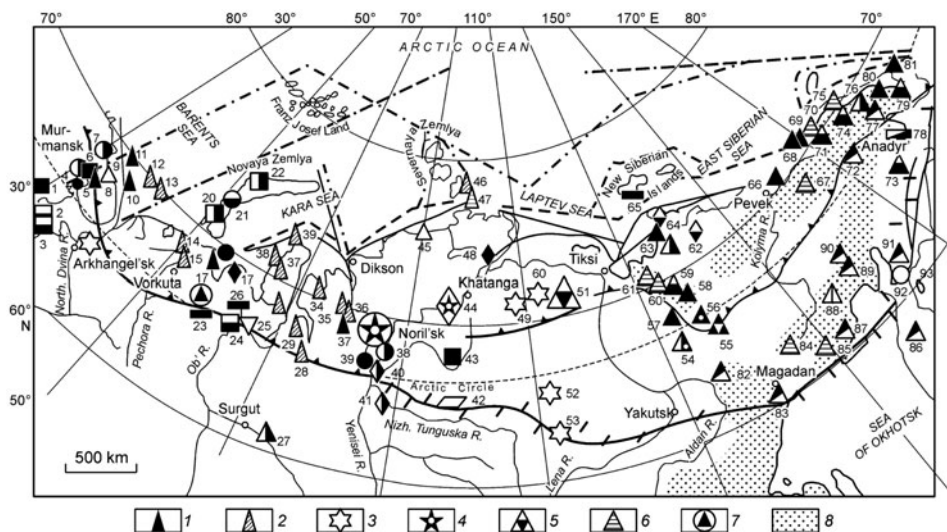


Figure 1. Location map of large mineral and hydrocarbon deposits in the Russian Arctic and subarctic areas. 1–2 – oil and gas fields, respectively; 3 – diamond deposits; 4 – Pt–Cu–Ni deposits (Norilsk, Kola Peninsula); 5 – Tomtor rare metal deposit; 6 – tin deposits; 7 – Middle Timan bauxites; 8 – placer gold mineralization. Note: Dobretsov and Pokhilenko, “Mineral resources and development in the Russian Arctic,” 101.

Table 1. Distribution of the undiscovered hydrocarbon resources among the Arctic coastal states, %.

Country	Oil	Natural gas
Russia	41	70
US (Alaska)	28	14
Greenland (Denmark)	18	8
Canada	9	4
Norway	4	4

Note: Naumov and Nikulkina, *Osobennosty Razvitiya Rossiyskoi Arktiki*.

barrels of oil, 1669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids.⁶ The Arctic deposits account for approximately 240 billion barrels of oil and oil equivalent natural gas, which is almost 10% of the world’s known conventional petroleum resources (cumulative production and remaining proved reserves). Nevertheless, most of the Arctic, especially offshore, is essentially unexplored with respect to petroleum.

The RAZ has the largest part of the Arctic hydrocarbon reserves (see Table 1). This region is the most prolific producer of Russian gas (95%) and oil (about 70%).⁷ The Russian geologists discovered about 200 oil and gas deposits in the RAZ. Twenty-two large deposits are located on the Barents and Kara Seas shelf and their development is expected in the near future.

⁶US Geological Survey 2008.
⁷Dobretsov and Pokhilenko, “Mineral resources and development in the Russian Arctic.”

The RAZ is also rich in other mineral resources. Its mining industries produce primary and placer diamond (99%), platinum group elements (98%), nickel and cobalt (over 80%), chromium and manganese (90%), copper (60%), antimony, tin, tungsten, and rare metals (from 50 to 90%) and gold (about 40%), in percent of Russia's total.⁸

Besides its mineral reserves, the Arctic is rich in bio-resources. More than 150 fish species can be found in the Arctic waters, including those ones which are important for the Russian (and international) fisheries, such as herring, cod, butterfish, haddock and flatfish. The RAZ produces 15% of Russia's seafood.⁹ The RAZ is also populated by some unique animal species such as polar bear, narwhal, walrus and white whale.

Industrial role of the RAZ

Since the Soviet time the RAZ has an impressive industrial base which includes the mining, oil and gas industries, pipeline systems, electric power stations and the Bilibin nuclear power plant, a huge transport infrastructure (rail and motor roads, airfields, river and sea ports, etc.). The RAZ hosts 46 towns with population more than 5.000 inhabitants, including four cities with population more than 100.000 residents which is a record among the Arctic coastal states. Having 1% of the country's population Arctic Russia is already responsible for 11% of the Russian gross domestic product and 22% of its export earnings.¹⁰ The Russian government and private business intend to restore and further develop the RAZ industries and infrastructure planning Russian and foreign direct investment for hundreds billion rubles to the regional economy sectors such as energy, mining, transport infrastructure and communications.

Developing transport system

If the Arctic continues to stay ice-free for a considerable part of the year there are good prospects for intensive exploitation of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) – the shortest connection between European and East Asian ports, as well as in important domestic route connecting Siberian river ports to each other and European and Far Eastern parts of the country. To regulate the NSR activities, a special federal law was adopted in July 2013 and the new rules of navigation in the water area of the NSR were issued by the Ministry of Transportation in January 2013.

The development of circumpolar air routes between North America and Asia (with transit via the Siberian airports) is another promising transport project. It should be noted that the circumpolar air traffic grows four times faster than the world one.

Climate change, environmental concerns

Moscow is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the RAZ. As a result of intensive industrial and military activities in the region many Arctic areas

⁸Ibid.

⁹Kochemasov et al., *Ekologo-ekonomicheskaya Otsenka Perspektivy Razvitiya Arktiki*.

¹⁰Ibid.; Schepp and Traufetter. Op.cit.

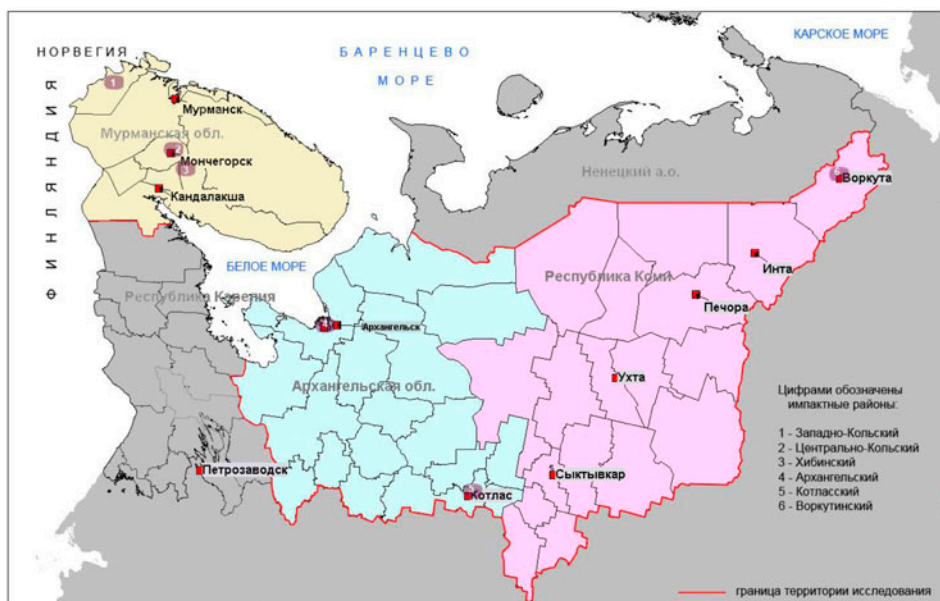


Figure 2. The map of impact zone in the Russian Arctic.
Note: Dushkova and Evseev. Op. cit., 2.

are heavily polluted and pose a threat to human health. The Russian scientists identified 27 so-called “impact zones” that were polluted or contaminated to extent that this led to environmental degradation and increased morbidity among the local population (see Figure 2).

The main “impact zones” include the Murmansk Region (10% of pollutants), Norilsk urban agglomeration (more than 30%), West Siberian oil and gas fields (more than 30%) and the Arkhangelsk Region (around 5%).¹¹ In sum, about 15% of the RAZ territory is polluted or contaminated.¹²

Russia – along with other Arctic states – is concerned about nuclear safety in the High North. Northern Russia has the largest concentration of nuclear installations – both military and civilian – in the world. More than 80 nuclear submarines were located there, with over 200 nuclear reactors stored within them. The operational risks of reactors in nuclear power plants in the RAZ (some of them are of the same RBMK type as at Chernobyl) also present a serious threat to the population and a large area of Russia and Europe. Spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste in Russia is also an extensive and worrying problem.

The RAZ is most vulnerable to nuclear contamination. Tens of thousands of cubic metres of seriously contaminated nuclear waste have been gathered here. Radiation emanating from nuclear munitions factories in Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Chelyabinsk used to float into the Arctic Ocean down the great Siberian rivers. From 1964 to 1991, fluid and solid radioactive waste has been dumped in the Barents and

¹¹Dushkova and Evseev, “Analiz Tekhnologicheskogo Vozdeistviya na Geosistemy Evropeiskogo Severa Rossii”; *Ekologicheskoe Sostoyaniye Impactnykh Raionov*.

¹²Kochemasov et al., Op. cit.

Kara seas. According to some reports, the Soviet Union dumped 13 nuclear reactors in the Kara Sea (including 6 with nuclear fuel). Also, three reactors and a container with nuclear waste from the icebreaker *Lenin* have been dumped in a similar fashion. General radioactive waste amounted 319.000 curie in the Barents Sea and 2.419.000 curie in the Kara Sea.¹³ Although Russia has stopped dumping, the remaining nuclear waste in the Arctic is still a serious problem for the country. With the help of Western partners (especially the Norwegian ones) Russia implements a number of projects on nuclear waste treatment in the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions.

Indigenous people

There are 27 indigenous ethnic groups, with the total number of about 200.000 persons, in the RAZ. In February 2009, a special document “The Concept for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” was released by Moscow. Although the document described the measures undertaken by Moscow to improve the indigenous peoples’ situation over the previous 15 years, it acknowledged the existence of serious problems in socio-economic development of the indigenous peoples (incongruity of traditional way of life to the current economic conditions, low level of competitive ability of the traditional economic activities, growth of diseases and pathologies, high infant mortality rate, alcoholism, etc.). According to some data, the unemployment rate among the indigenous people amounts to 30–60% which is 3–4 times higher than among other RAZ residents.¹⁴ The life expectancy is as low as 49 years while it is more than 60 years generally in Russia.

The document stipulated that its implementation should result in the creation of the favourable conditions for the sustainable development of the indigenous peoples, meaning the improvement of their quality of life by reaching the average Russian level and the reduction of the mortality of infants in at least two times compared with 2007, by 2025.

However, the implementation of the Concept-2009 has proved to be inefficient and this evoked a harsh criticism from the main indigenous peoples’ organization – the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON). The RAIPON has called for international support from bodies such as UN and Arctic Council (AC) blaming the Russian government for violating basic rights of the indigenous people. As a result of this conflict the RAIPON was suspended from its legal registration by the Russian Ministry of Justice in 2012 and had to undergo a rather painful procedure of re-registration and “cleansing” its leadership from “non-loyal elements”. Such a conflict has impeded the further implementation of the Concept-2009.

Strategic military importance

The Russian perceptions of the Arctic to a larger extent are based on security considerations. The Kola Peninsula and adjacent waters were, and still are, considered a military area of special importance to Russia’s security. Several conditions, such as

¹³Ekologicheskoe Sostoyanie Impactnykh Raionov.

¹⁴Kochemasov et al., Op. cit.

direct access to the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic, in relatively close proximity to potential targets, and an array of important elements of defence industry and infrastructure, make the area well suited for strategic naval operations. The strategic importance of the North is above all connected to sea-based nuclear forces deployed in the region. The nuclear deterrent remains not only a key element of Russian security policy and its military strategy, but serves also as a symbol and guarantee of Russia's great power status. Maintaining nuclear capabilities has, therefore, been given the highest priority in modernizing Russian defence.¹⁵

Both the Russian politicians and military repeatedly point to allegedly increasing political and military pressure from the US and NATO in the High North. They argue that the US and some other NATO countries (especially Norway) want to undermine Russia's position and reduce its presence in the region by actively penetrating the Arctic. They emphasize the fact that Russian conventional and strategic forces in the North are still facing NATO just across the border. NATO's military exercises in the immediate proximity of Russian borders, however small in scale, are observed and commented on with profound suspicion. The Arctic coastal states' armed forces modernization programmes are predominantly treated in the alarmist way.

The Russian strategists are also concerned about the future US/NATO plans in the Arctic. Given the ice-free Arctic in the foreseeable future (at least for the part of the year) the Russian military analysts do not exclude the possibility that the US could permanently deploy a nuclear submarine fleet and sea-based anti-ballistic missile systems in the Arctic Ocean. In this case, the US will create capabilities for intercepting Russian ballistic missile launches and making a preventive strike.

For the above reasons, this school of strategic thought recommends Russia not only to keep its strategic forces at the present level but also to regularly modernize them.¹⁶ Several large-scale programmes were recently launched to modernize the Northern Fleet (especially its nuclear submarine component). To provide the Russian air with increased military capabilities in the Arctic several air bases have been reactivated in Anadyr, Monchegorsk, Oleniye, Tiksi, Vorkuta and most recently on the New Siberian Islands (although with quite limited capacities).

To conclude, Russia has quite substantial reasons to play an active role in the Arctic. It has important economic, social, environmental and military-strategic interests in the region and it is proclaimed at the official level that these interests will be protected.

Russia's relations with major Arctic players

Russia's international partners in the Arctic can be grouped into four major categories – (1) coastal states (Arctic-5); (2) three sub-Arctic countries (Finland, Iceland and Sweden); (3) non-Arctic states (where the East Asian countries (EAC) such as China, Japan and South Korea are most important) and (4) international organizations and fora dealing with the Arctic issues (primarily the UN, AC, Barents-Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and Nordic institutions). The analysis below addresses Russia's policies towards the first, third and fourth groups of the key

¹⁵Zysk, "Russian Military Power and the Arctic," 81.

¹⁶Khranchikhin, "Stanet li Arktika teatrom voennykh deistviy po poslednemu peredelu mira?"

Arctic players. The second group is not a much of a problem for Russia: Moscow has quite constructive relations with these countries, lacking any territorial disputes and developing working relations with them within the subregional fora. That's why our analysis focuses on other, more problematic, Arctic actors.

US–Russia

With increased competition for the Arctic natural resources, it is important for Russia to build a policy of cooperation with such influential countries as the United States. Is there any potential for such cooperation? Or is the US focused on a unilateral course of action in this region?

Obvious and hidden differences between the US and Russia on Arctic issues can be found in several areas. Like many other countries, the US seeks to ensure that the status of the NSR, running along the Arctic coast of Russia, becomes international. According to prevailing Russian views, if these plans are implemented, Russia would not only lose significant revenues for the use of the route by other countries, but this will objectively increase Russia's military and strategic vulnerability from the North.

Russia is worried about the new US military strategy in the Arctic that envisages Washington's increased military activities in the region.¹⁷ As a reaction to this move, President Putin ordered the Russian Defence Ministry to accelerate the creation of the Arctic group of forces and modernization programmes for the Russian navy and air force which is deployed in the region.

Moscow and Washington see the AC, the leading regional organization, in different ways. Russia is interested in expanding the powers of this Council and making the AC a full-fledged regional organization, while the US considers the Council only as a forum for discussion and opposes to giving it the status of an international organization that makes binding decisions.

On the other hand, the US strongly supports the strengthening of NATO's presence in the Arctic, actually pushing out other international organizations (the AC and the BEAC, in which the US is not a member). Given the current nature of relations between Russia and NATO, Moscow is afraid that such steps would have negative consequences for Russia with no reliable allies in the Arctic.

Until the US ratifies the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), there remains the possibility of new US–Russian tension on maritime and continental shelf boundaries. It should be remembered that the US negatively views Russia's attempts to expand its shelf's external boundary to the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges. According to the popular Russian version, Moscow's application for the expansion of its continental shelf in the Arctic was rejected in 2001 by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf mostly because of the pressure from the US State Department. Russia has not ratified its treaty with the US on the Bering Sea boundary line (1990).

Despite the above tensions, the US–Russian relations have a significant potential for cooperation in the Arctic. According to experts, such relations are based on the Ilulissat Declaration signed by the “Arctic five” in May 2008, which states that the UNCLOS was recognized as the legal basis for drawing borders, and that the parties intended to resolve problems through negotiations. In keeping with the general

¹⁷US Department of Defense, *Arctic Strategy*.

aspirations of Barack Obama to restart relations with Russia, there were statements including that of the US President himself and Secretary of State on US intentions to cooperate with Russia in the Arctic. However, it is likely that cooperation will only be in those areas where the US cannot do without Russian participation.

In particular, this concerns the US–Russian cooperation on search and rescue operations (SAR) in the Arctic in accordance with an international agreement that was signed under the AC auspices in May 2011.

There are also plans for a large-scale cooperation in the development of the natural resources of the RAZ. *Rosneft* and *Exxon-Mobil* – Russian and American companies, respectively – in April 2012 signed an agreement on cooperation in the exploration and development of oil and gas deposits in the Kara Sea.

Russia benefits from attracting the badly needed financial resources (*Exxon-Mobil* has capitalization of \$400 billion) and modern technologies for exploration and drilling in the northern latitudes. *Rosneft* and *ConocoPhillips*, an American multinational energy corporation, are implementing another joint project at Nenets Autonomous District where they are developing the promising Ardalinskoye field.

Another venue for the bilateral cooperation is the development of circumpolar air routes, involving development of communications infrastructure and maintenance, upgrade and construction of new airports in Russia.

Cooperation between the US and Russia in the fields of Arctic research and environment protection was and remains mutually beneficial. It is obvious that any decisions relating to the economic development of the Far North should be based on scientific analysis of the vulnerability of the northern nature and difficult weather, social, domestic and other conditions. In this respect, Russia can offer icebreaking fleet and its rich experience in Arctic expeditions.

In the military-political sphere, it is advisable for the two parties to develop confidence and security-building measures in the regions. Such CSBMs could include early warning on naval forces deployment in “sensitive” zones as well as the limitation of the US and Russian military presence in the Arctic.

At present, it is difficult to predict how relations between the US and Russia in the Arctic will develop. This will depend, first, on the general spirit in the US–Russian relations, which may change if the domestic situation in one or both countries alters. Secondly, it will depend on the effectiveness of Russia’s economic policy in the Arctic on attracting foreign investments and technology. Some positive steps have already been taken in this regard. Thirdly, it will depend on whether the US will stick to its present course of predominantly unilateral action in the region or, rather, opt for multilateral cooperation.

Canada–Russia

To begin with the areas of contention the following problems in the Russian–Canadian relations in the Arctic can be identified.

Territorial disputes

Along with Russia and Denmark, Canada claims the underwater Lomonosov Ridge. In December 2013 Canada filed its application to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. According to the Canadian Foreign Minister, the country

spent nine years and 200 million dollars to collect the geological evidence which is necessary to prove that this ridge is an extension of the North American continental platform.

Canada's increased military activity in the Arctic

To ascertain its sovereignty over the Arctic, Ottawa has recently expanded its military presence in the region. For example, it plans to build a military training centre on the bank of the Northwest Passage (NWP) in the town of Resolute Bay (595 km from the North Pole) and maritime infrastructure facilities. To strengthen the capacity of the Coast Guard, the country plans to build deep-water berths (in the city of Nanisivik), a new icebreaker named "Diefenbaker", and three patrol vessels capable of operating in ice conditions. The latest Canadian space satellite RADAR-SAT-II, the joint Canadian–American system NORAD, intelligence signals interceptor station in the town of Ehlert (Ellesmere Island, Canadian Arctic Archipelago) will all be used to monitor Arctic spaces. Programmes have been implemented to modernize and increase the units of Canadian rangers to 5000 people. They are largely recruited from the local indigenous populations and are expected to carry out SAR operations in the Arctic.

In 2010, the Canadian government announced it was buying 65 new F-35 Lightning II fighters from the US for a total of \$16 billion, including aircraft maintenance for 20 years. However, it is not quite clear for what purpose Canadians are going to use these fighters in the Arctic. The fact is that F-35 is designed to perform tactical missions in support of ground operations, bombing and conducting close air combat. However, none of the Arctic players has plans to land troops in the Canadian north. According to experts from the Canadian Defense and Foreign Affairs Institute, these purchases are more likely a security guarantee for the future than a response to today's challenges. According to other estimates, Canada has other crucial tasks: patrol aircrafts for coast monitoring and a robust naval capacity. These and other initiatives have led to a doubling of Canada's total military spending compared to the late 1990s.¹⁸

From 2008, Canada conducts regular military exercises in the Arctic, including those with the participation of NATO member states (Denmark and US). The stated purpose is to protect Canadian sovereignty over the Far North. Russia is not invited to such exercises.

Nevertheless, experts urge not to overestimate the importance of these Canadian military preparations, as, in their opinion, it is rather a demonstration of readiness to protect its economic interests and respond to the "non-conventional" (non-military) challenges in the region and not a preparation for a large-scale military conflict. Canadians have neither desire for a large-scale military conflict nor the logistical capabilities. Ottawa still intends to rely on the US in the area of strategic defence.

Despite the above-mentioned potential for a conflict, Russia and Canada have many opportunities to establish Arctic cooperation in the following areas:

Trade and economic cooperation

The Northern Air Bridge project involves the creation of an integrated communications system in the Arctic (for example, by launching satellites into highly elliptical

¹⁸Blunden, "The New Problem of Arctic Stability," 127.

orbits and developing the necessary ground infrastructure) to ensure air communication between the airports in Krasnoyarsk and Winnipeg. Another project – Arctic Bridge – involves cross-polar shipping between the port of Murmansk and the port of Churchill.

The largest joint investment projects in the Russian Arctic are:

- purchase and development of the Kupol and Dvoynoe gold mining fields in Chukotka (Kinross Gold company);
- development of the Mangazeyskoe silver-polymetallic mining field in Yakutia (Prognoz CJSC/Silver Bear Resources);
- execution of design work and supply of equipment for the third phase of the construction of the Koryaga Oil Fields project in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Globalstroy Engineering/SNC LAVALIN);
- development of the Fedorova Tundra field (Murmansk Region);
- mastering the Canadian “cold asphalt” technology in the construction of roads under the extreme climatic conditions of the Arctic (Yakutia);
- design and production of Arctic navigable all-terrain vehicles on air-inflated caterpillars;
- promotion of the deployment of wind-diesel systems that is adapted to operate in the Arctic conditions in the Nenets Autonomous District, etc.

Scientific and technological cooperation

The two parties cooperate in the areas of energy and energy efficiency, nanotechnology, biomedical technology, climate research and the Arctic as a priority. In the absence of icebreakers, special vessels for research in ice conditions and reliable space communications systems, Canada is interested in attracting the relevant potential of Russia to conduct joint research in the region. The numerous scientific and educational projects of Russia and Canada also include cooperation between Canadian universities and the Northern (Arctic) Federal University (Arkhangelsk).

Ecology

Moscow and Ottawa implement a range of projects under the bilateral programme entitled “Conservation and Restoration of the Biological Diversity of Northern Territories and the Environmental Protection, Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and Forestry”.

In 2011, the Russian government decided to allocate in 2011 to 2013 €10 million for the Project Support Instrument being created under the auspices of the AC. Thus, a collective fund, which will be used to eliminate sources of environmental pollution and the so-called environmental “hot spots” in the Arctic was “launched”. In the AC context, Canada and Russia sponsored a legally binding agreement on preparedness for fighting oil spills in the Arctic that was signed in May 2013. Among the Council’s major new projects for the next period is creation of mechanisms for ecosystem management of the Arctic environment, integrated assessment of multilateral factors of changes occurring in the region and trends in human development in a changing Arctic.

Indigenous peoples

In accordance with the Russian–Canadian Declaration on Cooperation in the Arctic (2000), several programmes aimed at creating favourable conditions for the life of the indigenous peoples of the North are being implemented. Under the AC, Russia and Canada are working to establish a public Internet archive of data about the development and culture of the Arctic (“Electronic Arctic Memory”), supporting young reindeer breeders of the North, working with organizations of indigenous peoples to clear the area of sources of environmental pollution, etc.

Resolving territorial disputes

Despite the Russian–Canadian competition on division of the Arctic spaces, they adhere to some general principles, which make their cooperation possible even in this problematic area. First of all, the two countries favour resolution of territorial disputes through negotiations and on the basis of the international law, including the dispute on the underwater Lomonosov Ridge, potentially rich in oil and gas. Moreover, Russia and Canada understand and support each other in the case of keeping their control on the Arctic sea routes (NSR and NWP, respectively), which would fetch the two countries considerable economic benefits.

Cooperation within international organizations

Both countries assign a special role in this regard to the AC created at Canada’s initiative in 1996. The main common goal of the two countries is to transform the Council into a leading (and full-fledged) international organization with the right to make binding decisions for its members. According to Moscow and Ottawa, it is the AC, which should be the body where all the major problems of the Arctic region – from environmental and transportation issues to protection of the indigenous peoples’ rights and cultural cooperation – should be solved.

Russia and Canada have developed a common approach to the definition of the AC permanent observer status (POS) which was approved by the AC Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk, Greenland (May 2011). The Kiruna AC Ministerial Meeting (15 May 2013) decided to grant a POSs to six non-Arctic states.

To enhance the influence of the AC, Moscow and Ottawa have long proposed that a standing secretariat should be established and funded for a more efficient operation of the working groups of the Council. It was under the Russian and Canadian influence at the ministerial meeting in Nuuk that it was decided to create a full-fledged AC secretariat, located in Tromsø (Norway). The secretariat’s budget is relatively small. Most of the budget is money to be paid for the work of 10 employees, including the head of the secretariat. The budget also provides for their maintenance and payment of business travels to various events. The approximate amount is €1 million. For programme projects, contributions will be used in addition to the regular budget.

Security

Moscow and Ottawa have taken certain steps to cooperate in this area. Since 1994, there has been an interdepartmental memorandum on cooperation in the military

area, according to which the parties exchange visits by high-ranking military officials and conduct military staff talks. Since 2002, Canada has been participating in the Global Partnership programme under which, in 2004, the two countries signed a bilateral intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the destruction of chemical weapons, dismantlement of nuclear submarines decommissioned from the Navy, accounting, control and physical protection of nuclear materials and radioactive substances. Canada announced it was allocating one billion Canadian dollars over 10 years (100 million Canadian dollars annually) for this purpose. Most of these projects are being implemented in the RAZ.

Along the lines of Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech Ottawa launched an initiative to establish an Arctic nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ). In principle, Moscow reacted positively to the Canadian initiative but questioned the geographical scope of such a zone. Russia agrees to the establishment of an Arctic NWFZ, provided that it would not cover the Russian Northern Fleet that is stationed near Murmansk and hosts 2/3 of Russia's strategic submarines equipped with nuclear weapons.

In recent years, the Russian–Canadian cooperation in the field of the so-called “soft security” (new threats and challenges posed by climate change and expansion of economic activity in the Arctic) has been growing. Issues such as navigation safety, the danger of pollution of the marine environment, expansion of the scale of illegal migration, transnational organized crime and terrorist activities are increasingly taking the central stage.

Given such an impressive bilateral agenda there are good grounds to suggest that the two countries will intensify their Arctic cooperation to their mutual benefit.

Russia–Norway

Russia and Norway are direct neighbours in the Arctic and, therefore, have many overlapping interests and goals. Until recently, the Norwegian–Russian relations were complicated by the disagreement over their maritime border. However, with signing the 2010 treaty on the delimitation of the maritime territories in the Barents Sea the most serious obstacle to the bilateral cooperation has been removed.

This treaty, however, did not settle the questions pertaining to the Svalbard Archipelago: Russian fishery rights in the adjacent area; taxation of Russian companies that plan extract oil on the Svalbard shelf; Russian economic and research activities on the archipelago, etc.

Along with the conflictual there is also a cooperative potential in the Norwegian–Russian bilateral relations.

As leading energy suppliers in Europe, Russia and Norway have a good foundation for a strategic partnership in the field of exploration and production of oil and gas. The first step in this direction was made in 2008, when the Russian *Gazprom*, the Norwegian company *Statoil*, and the French company *Total*, signed an agreement establishing the company *Shtokman Development AG* for the development of the Shtokman gas-condensate field. Unfortunately, due to various reasons the final investment decision on this project has been postponed for indefinite future and the whole project was put on hold. The signing of an agreement on 5 May 2012 between *Rosneft* and *Statoil* on cooperation in joint development of parts of the Russian shelf of the Barents Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk can also be regarded as the promising developments in Russian–Norwegian economic relations in the Arctic.

As a major supplier of mineral raw materials especially to the EACs, Norway is objectively interested in using the NSR as the shortest way between Europe and this region. There could also be the elements of the Norwegian–Russian competition in this area because Norway is equally interested in developing its northern ports of Tromsø, Narvik, Kirkenes, etc. to receive and reprocess the goods going to and from EAC via Russia by rail. For example, the Norwegian proposal to construct a 40 km railway from Nikel to Kirkenes got a cold reception from the Murmansk authorities because they were afraid that this new railroad can switch a considerable part of cargo traffic from Murmansk to the Kirkenes harbour making the latter an ocean class port.

Russia and Norway develop a quite dynamic cross-border cooperative schemes, including a number of pilot projects such as, for example, the twinning project between Kirkenes and Nikel launched in 2008 or joint educational programmes (masters programme in border studies run together by local universities).

The intensified contacts between border regions of Finnmark and Murmansk have entailed the need for liberalization of the visa regime for the border residents. In that context, agreement has been reached on a local border traffic zone and the introduction of a border resident ID card (2 November 2010). Those who live within the 30 km border area on the Norwegian and Russian sides are eligible to get a three-year ID card and able to cross the border without a visa and stay on the other side up to 15 days each time (<http://www.barentsobserver.com/first-opening-in-the-Schengen-regimewith-Russia.4838145-16149.html>).

Speaking generally, the Norwegian–Russian bilateral relations develop in a very dynamic and creative way and it is safe to assume that the residual problems (such as Svalbard-related issues) will be successfully resolved in a foreseeable future.

Russia–Denmark

Having a status of a coastal state because of Greenland Denmark has high stakes in the Arctic. This is acknowledged by the 2011 Danish Arctic strategy.¹⁹

However, the Danish Arctic strategy envisages quite limited possibilities for cooperation with Russia. For example, it is suggested under the auspices of the Danish–Russian governing council, to closer cooperate on strengthening the safety of navigation in Arctic waters. An enhanced cooperation with Russia could also incorporate scientific collaboration, for example, on the continental shelf. It could also include the research cooperation in areas such as socio-economic development, environment and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The paper also calls for the development of confidence and security-building measures in the region.

It should be noted that Copenhagen takes the hardest line against Russia in terms of delimiting the Arctic shelf. Denmark itself lays claim on the Lomonosov Ridge trying to prove that it is an extension of the Greenland Platform. After the Russian expedition of 2007, Denmark (together with the US) hastened to send its own expedition to the Arctic to search for scientific evidence in its favour. In November 2013, Denmark and Greenland have submitted a claim for 62,000 square km of Arctic sea floor. The experts, however, point out that Denmark intends to solve all territorial disputes on the basis of the Ilulissat Declaration, i.e. in a peaceful way.²⁰

¹⁹Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

²⁰Koptelov, *Strategy for Denmark in the development of the Arctic*.

Russia's relations with EACs

Given their significant interests in the exploitation of natural resources and sea routes in the Arctic, the EACs pursue quite aggressive strategies in the region. This was manifested not only by the growth of bilateral contacts between the EACs and Arctic countries but also their active policies within the regional institutions such as the AC and BEAC.

Russia has diverged with the EACs on issues such as:

- Internationalization of the Arctic. Moscow has opposed to the *leitmotif* of the EAC Arctic policies that the North is a “human treasure” which should be exploited and preserved together.
- Internationalization of the NSR, providing EACs (especially China as Russia’s “strategic partner”) with some special rights (or bypassing the existing routes due to ice meltdown). This, however, does not preclude the EACs from the active use of the NSR which started on the regular basis since 2010. For example, in 2013 the NSR Administration gave eight permissions to the cargo vessels from China and Hong Kong to use the passage, while dozens of ships from Europe travelled the same route in the opposite direction (<http://asmp.morflot.ru/en/razresheniya/>).
- Upgrading the EACs’ status in the AC by providing them with a POS.

The latter issue has become topical because the EACs and some other non-Arctic states put pressure on the AC member states to consider their applications for the POS. The Russian (and Canadian) concerns in this regard were explained in the following way:

- The EACs did not contribute enough to the regional/ sub-regional cooperation as required by the AC rules.
- Their future roles in and potential contribution to the AC’s activities were unclear.
- The upgraded status can legitimize EACs’ demands on their “share” of the “Arctic pie” (natural resources).
- An extended AC can be even less efficient than now.
- Providing even one applicant with the POS will inevitably result in displeasure of others and unhealthy competition among them.

However, with time the Russian opposition to providing the EACs with the POS has waned because these countries promised big investments to the RAZ. There was also a possibility that, if neglected, the EACs can align with other rejected countries to establish an alternative organization that could undermine the AC’s effectiveness.

As mentioned above, at the Kiruna AC ministerial meeting China, Japan, South Korea, India, Singapore and Italy were granted the POS.

The potential venues for the EAC-Russian cooperation could include areas such as investment in the RAZ mining, oil and gas industries; development of the NSR infrastructure; introduction of the environmentally friendly maritime fuel; support for the Arctic environment-related research; cooperation in the AC’s working groups.

It should be noted that in its relations with the EACs Moscow faces an uneasy choice between the need to keep cooperative relations with them (especially with China, Moscow's most important "strategic partner") and protect its national interests in the Arctic.

Russia and NATO in the Arctic

Since 2008 NATO has substantially expanded its activity in the High North. The alliance's most prominent representatives have made a series of statements on the Arctic; meetings and expert seminars have addressed its problems. NATO defined its priorities in the region most clearly at a conference on security prospects in the High North held in Reykjavik at the end of January 2009. In formal terms, NATO will focus its attention on so-called "soft" security – the ecological consequences of global warming and of human activity in the Arctic, the risks of ecological and man-made disasters and so on. This focus does not, however, exclude a purely military component of NATO policy, as reflected in a series of exercises conducted under the aegis of the alliance.

The Russian experts disagree over the reasons and motives underlying NATO's involvement in the High North. According to one view, NATO, sensing challenges from other international organizations dealing with European, trans-Atlantic and global security (UN, EU, OSCE, AC, BEAC, etc.), is trying to uphold its role as a main provider of regional and global security and thereby prove that it can adapt to a changing world. NATO is trying to demonstrate that, while it still has the potential to deter any military threat, it is actively transforming itself into an organization with new missions in areas such as coping with the consequences of natural and man-made disasters, SAR, fighting illegal migration and drug trafficking and other "soft" security challenges.

Opponents of this view believe that NATO is unlikely to conduct an effective policy in the Arctic region. First, it has limited scope and resources for rapidly creating the necessary infrastructure (especially amidst the global economic crisis). Second, the alliance is itself driven by internal discord on matters concerning the Arctic. A number of NATO member states have their own ambitions and claims on this region, which has led to US–Canadian, Danish–Canadian and Danish–Norwegian conflicts over specific Arctic policy issues (definition of exclusive economic zones, division of the continental shelf, etc.).

Another version of this view paints NATO as an instrument by which individual states strive to advance their own interests in the Arctic rather than the vehicle of a united policy for the Western community.

Finally, a third point of view presents the first two approaches as mutually complementary rather than exclusive.

On the whole, both Russian practitioners and experts are unanimous in the expectation that NATO will continue to expand its activity in the Arctic. This can have some negative implications for Russia (at least at the perceptual level). The Russian strategists believe that there is a risk of that NATO can try to sideline Russia in the emerging Arctic security system as it does, for example, in Europe. They also fear that some NATO member states such as Norway and Denmark will continue to use the alliance to strengthen their positions in the region vis-à-vis Russia. Anyhow, Russia has to therefore prepare itself for an uneasy dialogue with NATO to find acceptable forms of cooperation in the Arctic.

Russia and the EU in the Arctic

Since the 1990s, the EU has shown an active interest in the Arctic, citing as justification its concern over the competition among various powers for the natural resources of the High North, over territorial disputes and the claims of several countries to control the Arctic sea passages, and over ecological “hot spots” in the region.

In November 2008, the European Commission released a communication on “The European Union and the Arctic Region”, which was the first document that described the main contours of the EU’s Arctic strategy. The document set goals and made recommendations for the organization of Arctic research and dealing with indigenous peoples, fishing, extraction of hydrocarbons, navigation, political and legal structures, and interaction with regional organizations.²¹

One year later, in 2009, the EU Council of Foreign Ministers has approved the Commission’s communication. In January 2011, the European Parliament in its resolution called for a more active EU Arctic policy.

It should be noted that despite the “multilateralist” rhetoric, these documents hardly mentioned Russia and the BEAC which are considered as important regional players who are indispensable for the success of regional cooperation in the Arctic.

For this reason, Russia (along with Canada and the US) did not support the EU application for the POS at the 2013 Kiruna AC ministerial meeting. The prospects for the EU-Russian cooperation in the region remain quite indefinite.

Conclusions

As Russia’s both strategic documents and practical policies demonstrate Moscow has extremely important national interests in the region. These interests include the access to and exploitation of the RAZ natural resources (mineral and biological ones). Russia tries to modernize and further develop the RAZ’s industrial base which makes a significant and valuable contribution to the country’s economy. Moscow is also interested in opening up of the NSR for international commercial traffic and developing circumpolar air routes. Moscow is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the RAZ. Russia still has considerable military-strategic interests in the region and tries to modernize its armed forces located there. Similar to other coastal states Moscow sees its military presence in the region as an efficient instrument to demonstrate its sovereignty over and protect its national interests in the High North.

In general terms, Moscow’s Arctic policies represent a combination – sometimes quite eclectic – of the hard and soft power approaches. On the one hand, Moscow is quite assertive as regards its claims on the Arctic continental shelf. The Russian military modernization programmes in the High North are seen by other Arctic players as excessive and destabilizing the regional strategic balance. The Russian international partners are also concerned about the lack of serious progress in Russia’s environmental strategies and its policies toward the indigenous people.

However, on the other hand, it is possible to identify a number of positive changes in Moscow’s Arctic policies. Conceptually, the Russian leadership now realizes that most of threats and challenges to the RAZ originate from inside rather than outside of the country. These problems are caused by the complex of factors such as

²¹Commission of European Communities, *The European Union and the Arctic Region*.

the degradation the Soviet-made economic, transport and social infrastructures in the region, the current resource-oriented model of the Russian economy, the lack of funds and managerial skills to develop the RAZ, etc. For this reason, Russia's current strategy aims at solving existing domestic problems rather than focuses on external expansion.

To conclude, in contrast with the internationally wide-spread stereotype of Russia as a hard power in the Arctic, there are serious grounds to believe that in the foreseeable future Moscow will pursue quite pragmatic and responsible policies in the region. On the one hand, such a strategy will aim at protecting Russia's legitimate economic and political interests in the High North. On the other hand, Moscow says that it is open to a mutually beneficial cooperation with foreign partners in areas exploiting the Arctic natural resources, developing sea routes, Arctic research and environmental protection. Russia clearly demonstrates that it prefers to use soft power (diplomatic, economic and cultural methods) rather than hard power (coercive) instruments, as well as to act via international organizations. It should be noted that to consolidate the soft power "pattern" of Russia's behaviour and make it sustainable a proper international environment in the Arctic should be created by common efforts. Other regional players should demonstrate their responsibility and willingness to solve existing and potential problems in a quiet/friendly way and on the basis of international law.

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