

Russia's Arctic Policy: Current Trends and Future Prospects

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Between Arctic and Non-Arctic Nations”

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Russian Presence in the Region: Key Milestones

- 1910 - Russian Navy sent to explore the Northern Sea Route (NSR); first territorial claim made in 1916.
- 1926 - Moscow declared as Soviet territory any landmass inside the 5,842,000 sq. km triangle between the North Pole, the Bering Strait and the Kola Peninsula, in 1935 the USSR joined Spizbergen Treaty.
- Russia ratified UNCLOS in 1997 and submitted a continental shelf extension claim in 2001 (1st claim rejected).
- 2007 – expeditions sent to gather evidence that the Lomonosov and Mendeleev Ridges are extensions of the Russian continental shelf.
- May 2008 Greenland Summit and Ilulissat Declaration.
- Sept. 2008 - Security Council of Russia set up key priorities of the State Arctic Policy 2020.

Importance of the Arctic for Russia

- Climate change as a challenge and opportunity.
- Economic engine: the region produces 11 % of Russia's GDP and contributes 22 % to its growth.
- Resource base: up to 80 % of Russia's discovered industrial gas potential. Important deposits of other mineral and biological resources.
- Location: Open access to 3 oceans, base of strategic nuclear submarines and the Northern Fleet.
- Transport corridor - NSR reduces the distance between Rotterdam and Yokohama by 34 %.
- Protection of an extensive borderline (over 17,500 km).

Multilateral cooperation in the Arctic: Declared Russian Priorities

- Good relations with neighbors: delimitation agreement with Norway reached in September 2010.
- Importance of international organizations, such as the Arctic Council and Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)
- Protection of indigenous populations was one of the key priorities of Russian BEAC Presidency
- For Russia, environmental protection is the key pre-condition for a new 'sustainable economic growth'
- Russia initiated regional systems for prevention of technological disasters and supported U.S. (and originally Russian) initiatives on Search & Rescue (Sea & Air)

Current and potential issues of concern for the Russian Federation

- Excessive internationalization of the Arctic (Russia and Canada are ‘unhappy’ EU’s demand to become observer in the Arctic Council)
- Delimitation of the continental shelf and overlapping ‘extension’ claims in the Arctic.
- Border protection and militarization, involvement of NATO
- Possible future challenges to the sovereignty of (ice-free) NSR, now regulated by the Law “On Inner Sea Waters, Territorial Sea and Adjacent Zone of the RF” (1998)
- Implementation of the delimitation agreement between the U.S. and Russia in the Bering Sea.
- Economic activities in Spitsbergen’s 200-mile zone.

Russian State Arctic Policy 2020

Priorities

- The Arctic is set to become Russia's main resource base in the 21st century, thus defining the limits of the country's continental shelf and development of relevant legal basis become one of the top priorities.
- Sustainable use of natural resources, taking into account environmental imperative, rights of local populations and different national security concerns.
- Development of transport routes (Northern Sea Route), border protection infrastructure and regional information/telecommunication infrastructure.
- National Security Imperative: the region hosts the key element of Russia's Strategic Triad – Northern Fleet.

Russia's Arctic Potential and Its Shortcomings

- Large polar class field fleet (7 nuclear icebreakers), including the biggest “50 Years of Victory” plus a number of vessels owned by private companies.
- Extensive geological and geographic knowledge of the Arctic, comprehensive Arctic policy, polar class industry and relevant policy mechanisms. Good research and scientific capacity.
- Lack of practical industrial ‘know how’ and sufficient investment. Lack of clarity about implementation of the ‘Yamal Program’
- Border protection/territorial control issues, environmental protection issues, depopulation.

Questions for the future

- Would the UNCLOS be the single source of law for the delimitation?
- Which governance for the Arctic?
- How to deal with the third countries' presence (if any)?
- How would U.S. – Russia / EU - Russia relations impact the regional developments in the Arctic? Would it be possible for Moscow to spread positive trends in Norway – Russia relations to relations with other countries?

THANK YOU!

Q & A