

# Zdzisław Śliwa

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## Russian comprehensive approach toward arctic race

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Security Dimensions. International & National Studies nr 2 (12), 212-234

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2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## **RUSSIAN COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TOWARD ARCTIC RACE**

Col (ret) Zdzislaw ŚLIWA, Ph. D.  
*the Baltic Defence College, Tartu ESTONIA*

### **ABSTRACT**

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Arctic has lately slipped slightly from the radar of the International Community as a consequence of the Ukrainian, economic austerity, Ebola spread and also combating radicals like Islamic State. Even global warming is not major topic of news. In spite of this, the Arctic race is ongoing involving all the nations interested in that region considering future profits connected with resources, shipping routes and fishery. Among them Russia is currently a key player in many domains especially as it is treating Arctic very seriously and has already invested into grounding national position there. Present-day peaceful cooperation is very promising but growing military presence in Arctic, especially Russian build-up, is causing more and more concerns about the future.

The paper is discussing major reasons of the Arctic race, depicting briefly legal aspects e.g. UNCLOS, international organizations like the Arctic Council and also role of actors there. International disputes are also mentioned especially those related to the Russian Federation, being major player there. The main focus is on Russian interests, economy related competition and also military developments to support national interests. The Western sanctions are negatively influencing exploration of natural resources making Moscow nervous and the country must be treated very seriously to avoid creating new "Cold War" type icy relations and confrontation.

### **ARTICLE INFO**

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#### *Article history*

Received: 12.11.2014 Accepted 10.12.2014

#### *Keywords*

international security, the Arctic, Russian Federation, military developments in Arctic,

### **INTRODUCTION**

Arctic slipped slightly from the attention of the International Community lately as an effect of crisis in Ukraine, European struggle with economic austerity, Ebola spread and also fighting radicals like Islamic State. However, the nations involved in regional developments are still continuing their struggle for resources, shipping routes and fishery there. Although the global warming topic is not as hot as before it is still an issue with differing opinions of experts. As for now, a peaceful cooperation among involved nations is continued despite

the fact that military presence in Arctic is increasing with Russia in lead in implementing that instrument of national power. The recent Ukrainian crisis affected world's perception of Moscow's intents also in the High North and any scenario is seen as an option.

The Arctic is the complex region with eight countries possessing land borders there: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Canada and USA; five of them border the Arctic Ocean: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and USA and three have land above

Arctic Circle: Iceland, Finland and Sweden.<sup>1</sup> As historically a global competition among major powers is constant struggle in every dimension and is based on exploiting every opportunity to forward national interests such the number of actors could be a challenge. The recent global economic crisis has caused real concerns about energy security especially in Europe relying significantly on Russia as major supplier of gas and oil. That dimension of security has become important for European Union being afraid of aggressive stance of Russia during latest conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine. It was also clearly recognized that other than military instruments of power have been played skilfully by Moscow, being very pragmatic international actor. The energy security has triggered attention of other suppliers like USA, Middle East by latest discoveries in Arctic, being at the same time one of potential areas of international conflicts. The last region is not forgotten especially for Russia which needs it, especially its resources, to preserve notable role in the future energy games. The multi-vector capabilities' build-up is observed by other players, recognizing growing threat up there in the High North based on the fact that *"unlike ethnic, religious, or ideological conflicts, which involve non-divisible values such as identity and belonging, conflicts over resources are interest based contests over divisible goods."*<sup>2</sup> As every Arctic actor has something to gain or lose it makes them rather proactive than passive.

<sup>1</sup> B. Van Pay, *National Maritime Claims in the Arctic - Changes in the Arctic Environment and the Law of the Sea*, Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, U.S. Department of State, The 33rd COLP Conference Seward, Alaska 21 May 2009, [http://www.virginia.edu/colp/pdf/Van\\_Pay-Arctic-Claims.pdf](http://www.virginia.edu/colp/pdf/Van_Pay-Arctic-Claims.pdf) [accessed: 02 October 2014].

<sup>2</sup> K. Ballentine, *Beyond Greed and Grievance: Reconsidering the Economic Dynamics of Armed Conflict*, in: K. Ballentine, J. Sherman (ed.), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict. Beyond Greed and Grievance*, the International Peace Academy (London, 2003), p. 273.

The paper is discussing the development of politic – military situation in Arctic based on the multi-vector importance of the region in the context of national interest of main actors. It will be based on recognizing major facts about importance of the region and also legal aspects of the situation. Thereafter, selected nations will be discussed to recognize their current position toward the future of Arctic. The main attention is related to Russian role in Arctic in political, economy and also military domain and main activities in those domains are analysed. Moreover, changes within international relations, as an outcome of the crises in Georgia and Ukraine will be considered when presenting Moscow readiness to advance national interests in selected areas implementing all available options. Possible developments of the situation in Arctic shaping the future of the whole region will be also deliberated as the situation there will always have some broader international implications.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCTIC REGION

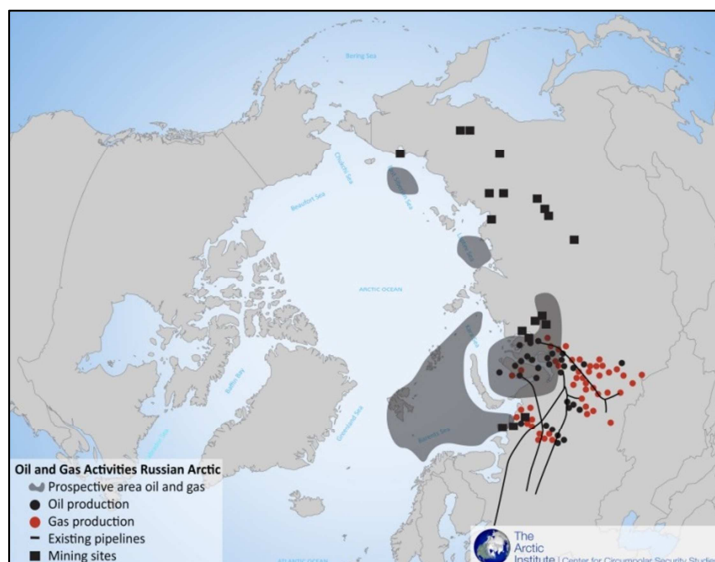
The global warming is still an issue but opinions in regard to that phenomena are differing, nevertheless that process is changing the geopolitical importance of Arctic influencing shifts in national geostrategic of nations rooted there. Currently, the Arctic Ocean's summer ice cover is only half of what it was 50 years ago<sup>3</sup> influencing better shipping options and easier access to natural resources. Although, the ice cover seemed to expand steadily again in 2013, the next year it diminished quite significantly<sup>4</sup>. Even though the estimates differ, in general ice declining

<sup>3</sup> L. W. Brigham, *Think Again: The Arctic*, Washington, 16 August 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think\\_again\\_the\\_arctic](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/think_again_the_arctic) [accessed: 22 September 2014].

<sup>4</sup> Y. Uutiset, *Pohjoisnavalla vähän jäätä (A little ice at the North Pole)*, the Finnish News Agency Yle 1 Uutiset, Luonto 17 January 2014 [http://yle.fi/uutiset/pohjoisnavalla\\_vahan\\_jaata/7037199](http://yle.fi/uutiset/pohjoisnavalla_vahan_jaata/7037199), [accessed: 10 October 2014].

trend is common in research findings as “*the rate of increase in surface temperature has been accelerating.*”<sup>5</sup> The environmental transformation is linked with improving access to natural resources, which are vast including gas reserves (estimated to be 30% of the world’s undiscovered resources), and oil, (some 13% of world’s undiscovered supplies).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there are large nickel, zinc and iron ore deposits there. Again, data are varying in sources but there is widespread agreement that the region is rich enough to invest in it when considering the needs of national economies in the long run. Moreover, following climate changes, the shipping along

the Northern Sea Route (NSR) has lately increased, although it is not regarded as a serious competitor to Suez Canal in the nearest future. The challenges are related to the extreme weather, short period of navigation and underdeveloped infrastructure. Such the complex importance is grabbing attention of every regional nation and also others considering future profits. Even though military conflicts are not very likely in the area, specifically increase of military presence is creating more and more concerns about the future.



**Fig. 1.** Oil and Gas Activities Russian Arctic

**Source:** J. Mitchell, *Russia’s Territorial Ambition and Increased Military Presence in the Arctic*, the Foreign Policy Journal, 23 April 2014, the picture by permission of the Malte Humpert, the Arctic Institute who is the author, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/04/23/russias-territorial-ambition-and-increased-military-presence-in-the-arctic/> [accessed: 06 September 2014].

<sup>5</sup> The WIRE’s Climate Change report covers the period 1981 to 2012 recognizing that sea ice extent has been declining at the rate of ~3.8%/decade. The same is referring to declining snow cover (-2.12%/decade for the period 1967–2012), the Greenland ice sheet and mass of glaciers worldwide also declined. The process will continue. See in details: J. C. Comiso, D. K. Hall, *Climate trends in the Arctic as observed from space*, WIREs Climate Change 2014, Volume 5 pp. 389–409. doi: 10.1002/wcc.277 [accessed: 23 September 2014].

<sup>6</sup> There are opinions that that „*Driving much of the new interest in the Arctic, however, are the stores of oil and gas that lie beneath the water — amounting to an estimated 22 percent of the earth’s remaining supplies*”, Read: S. Borgerson, C. Antrim, *An Arctic Circle of Friends*, report in the New York Times, 28 March 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/28/opinion/28borgerson.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/28/opinion/28borgerson.html?_r=0) [accessed: 02 October 2014].

Arctic is much broader subject than just resources and sea lines of communication as recognized by Michael Byers as it is, what is important, also “*about domestic politics*”<sup>7</sup>; it makes possible challenges more serious. Similar understanding was mentioned by Phil Steinberg, who, when talking about Canadian and Russian scientists working closely together to map the frozen region, suggested that “*it’s more a symbol of national pride*.”<sup>8</sup> Such the understanding is presenting the region in broader sense as not only hub of resources but also a tool of foreign policy toward achieving national prosperity and cohesion when focusing on common interests of any state. It is related mainly to Canada, Norway and Russia and their efforts to enhance presence including military domain. USA has not been very active, but lately it has paid more interest in this hemisphere as presented in the Department of the US Navy’s ‘*NAVY Arctic Roadmap*’<sup>9</sup> published in November 2009. As a result, “*due to the changes taking place in the Arctic, the High North is moving from the outskirts to a new geopolitical centre of gravity*”<sup>10</sup>. New developments pose new challenges and give rise to new opportunities as stated in the Norwegian White Paper ‘*The High North: Visions and strategies*’ published in the

autumn of 2011. It is recognized in the document that “*the strategic picture is changing: the traditional climate of confrontation between East and West is giving way to greater cooperation with, and signs of interest from, more actors – North American, European and Asian. They are interested in new transport routes, access to resources and knowledge about climate change, the melting ice and changes in the marine environment.*”<sup>11</sup>

### INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL MAJOR PLAYERS

As for now, no major conflict occurred in Arctic and nations are following international law, especially the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which “*comprises 320 articles and nine annexes, governing all aspects of ocean space*” including legal right to support “*settlement of disputes relating to ocean matters*”<sup>12</sup>. The document recognizes that Coastal States exercise sovereignty over their territorial sea and rights in a 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with respect to natural resources and certain economic activities, and also exercise jurisdiction over marine science research and environmental protection. Moreover, the Coastal States have right for exploring and exploiting continental shelf (at least 200 nautical miles from the shore) and to regulate marine scientific research in the EEZ and on the continental shelf<sup>13</sup>. A very important is recognition of the right of ships and aircraft for “*transit passage*” through straits used for international navigation, which is playing a role in disputes. The UNCLOS is basic reference document and it is shaping national

<sup>7</sup> L. Harding, *Russia to boost military presence in Arctic as Canada plots north pole claim*, the Guardian 10 December 2013,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/russia-military-arctic-canada-north-pole> [accessed: 06 September 2014]. M. Byers is the professor of the University of British Columbia.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Phil Steinberg is director of the International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham University.

<sup>9</sup> *U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap*, Department of the Navy, Washington, October 2009.

<sup>10</sup> J. Store, *The High North and the Arctic: The Norwegian Perspective*, the Arctic Herald No 2/2012, Moscow 15 June 2012,

[http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/stoltenberg-ii/ud/taler-og-artikler/2012/hord\\_arktis.html?id=685072](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/stoltenberg-ii/ud/taler-og-artikler/2012/hord_arktis.html?id=685072) [31 October 2014].

<sup>11</sup> *The High North: Visions and strategies*, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo 18 November 2011, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982*, UN Office of Legal Affairs, updated 22 August 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

efforts and legal aspect related to disputes and national claims. Such the framework has been ratified by 166 nations and is supported by as many as 145 agreements related to the implementation Part XI of the Convention (signed 10 December 1982)<sup>14</sup>. The Part XI provides regime related to minerals on the seabed outside any state's territorial waters or EEZ; the major nation, which has not signed the UNCLOS, is US as it has some objection in relation to specifically the Part XI. Russian Federation has ratified UNCLOS on 12 March 1997 and it has the greatest claims in Arctic area, believing that the Lomonosov Ridge stretches all the way to the Northern Pole giving it rights to claim this sector of continental shelf.

The complexity of situation and involvement of a few nations has inevitably led to creation of transnational organizations to look for common solutions based on consensus rather than improperly understood competition. Among them, the important entity is the Arctic Council, initiated in 1996 by signing the Ottawa Declaration<sup>15</sup> by eight founding states: Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Its credibility is supported by participation of six organisations representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples with permanent participant status.<sup>16</sup> It is important to notice that military security domain is not included in the agenda of the Council. Although the Council has not made bonding agreements or

treaties, its status has been improved in recent years “*producing tangible results*.”<sup>17</sup> Some concerns were related to the ‘*the Ilulissat Declaration*’ signed in 2008, as it states that “*by virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean the five coastal states are in a unique position to address these possibilities and challenges. In this regard, we recall that an extensive international legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean as discussed between our representatives at the meeting in Oslo on 15 and 16 October 2007 at the level of senior officials*.”<sup>18</sup> The declaration was carefully read by other non-circumpolar countries as it has made an impression that they are intended to be excluded from shaping the future of Arctic. The organization is and will be important as “*the Arctic Council is the only circumpolar body and the leading political body for Arctic issues*”<sup>19</sup> as recognized by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Arctic Council is recognized by all the competitors as it was mentioned during an international workshop in Moscow in 2013 organized by the SIPRI's Arctic Futures project and the Russia's Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). The participants included officials and experts from Russia, other parts of Europe and North America and, for the first time, also from North East Asia including Korean Republic and China.<sup>20</sup> In the speech Ambassador Anton Vasiliev emphasised “*the*

<sup>14</sup> *Chronological lists of ratifications of, accessions and successions to the Convention and the related Agreements as at 3 October 2014*, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations, last updated 03 October 2014, [accessed: 30 October 2014]. [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference\\_files/chronological\\_lists\\_of\\_ratifications.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/chronological_lists_of_ratifications.htm)

<sup>15</sup> For details see: *Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council. Joint Communiqué of the Governments of the Arctic Countries on the Establishment of the Arctic Council*, Ottawa, 19 September 1996.

<sup>16</sup> The Website of the Arctic Council, Tromsø, 29 June 2011, <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/member-states> [accessed: 22 October 2014].

<sup>17</sup> J. Store, *The High North and the Arctic*,..., op., cit.

<sup>18</sup> *The Ilulissat Declaration*, Arctic Ocean Conference, Ilulissat, 27 – 29 May 2008, Greenland, [http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Ilulissat_Declaration.pdf) [accessed: 16 October 2014].

<sup>19</sup> *The High North: Visions and strategies*, op., cit., p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> The topic of the workshop was: ‘Russia's Strategy for Developing the Arctic Region Until 2020: Economics, Security, Environment and International Cooperation’, see: 1 Oct. 2013, *Russia's Strategy for Developing the Arctic Region Until 2020*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI, Moscow 01 October 2013, <http://www.sipri.org/research/security/arctic/arcticevents/russia-strategy-for-developing-the-arctic-region> [accessed: 16 October 2014].



positive, stable and predictable” situation in the Arctic region and highlighted the role of the Arctic Council, as “central institution of cooperation in the Arctic”<sup>21</sup>. Strategic interests of Russian Federation, as one of key actors, were specified by Dmitry Afinogenov as follow: national defence, economy and business and energy security.<sup>22</sup> As for now, international law and mutual cooperation of Arctic actors, including countries and organizations, is producing encouraging results and as long as those priorities are foundation of solving disputes the future is rather promising.

Other major actors in the region are USA and Canada as they are possessing, especially latter one, instruments of power to challenge other competitors. Canada has vast claims in

the Arctic and as stated by Prime Minister Harper, “has a choice when it comes to defending our sovereignty over the Arctic. We either use it or lose it” as “Arctic is central to our national identity as a northern nation. It is part of our history. And it represents the tremendous potential of our future.”<sup>23</sup> Referring to “...national identity as a northern nation” for domestic politic reasons<sup>24</sup> is similar to the Russian rhetoric about Arctic. Such the state of affairs is expected to put Canada in confronting position toward Russia and possibly also other actors. It includes USA being worried about the Northwest Passage status as an international waterway.<sup>25</sup> However, Ottawa is also aware that alone is not strong enough to balance Moscow, so only option is to unite efforts with other major players.



**Fig. 2.** Canadian claims in relation to the continental shelf.

**Source:** L. Harding, *Russia to boost military presence in Arctic as Canada plots north pole claim*, the Guardian 10 December 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/russia-military-arctic-canada-north-pole> [accessed: 06 October 2014].

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Anton Vasiliev was Russia's Senior Arctic Official to the Arctic Council.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. D. Afinogenov was a representative of the Apparatus of the Security Council of the Russian Federation,

<sup>23</sup> A. Lytvynenko, *Arctic Sovereignty, Policy Review*, Prepared for the Ad Hoc Committee of Deputy Ministers on the Arctic, 05 April 2011, <http://www4.carleton.ca/cifp/app/serve.php/1355.pdf> [accessed: 14 October 2014].

<sup>24</sup> K. Drummond, *Cold wars: why Canada wants to claim the North Pole*, The Verge, 09 December 2013, <http://www.theverge.com/2013/12/9/5191740/canada-russia-fight-over-north-pole-arctic> [accessed: 14 October 2014].

<sup>25</sup> *The Arctic: Canada's legal claims*, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Publication PRB 08-05E, Parliament of Canada 24 October 2008, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0805-e.pdf> [accessed: 14 October 2014].

Canada is carefully observing Russian force build-up and to respond it introduced an army training centre at the Resolute Bay and deep-sea port at the Nanisivik Naval Facility<sup>26</sup>. It looks as arms race will take this or another form as the region is requiring specific capabilities, equipment and training to operate effectively. Harper position is clear regarding militarization of Arctic as in August 2014 he said “*cautious yes*” concerning funding military domain, explaining “*cautious in the following sense: that we haven’t seen, obviously, the kind of aggressive moves in the Arctic that we have seen in Eastern Europe by the Russians.*”<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, so far Russian aircraft has already tested boundaries of Canadian airspace causing concerns and being recognized as a warning.

USA focus on Arctic is growing as presented in the ‘*National Strategy for the Arctic Region*’ released in May 2013 by the White House aiming to: advance US security interests, pursue responsible Arctic region stewardship and strengthen international cooperation<sup>28</sup>. It was followed by the US Department of Defence’s new ‘*Arctic Strategy*’ (November 2013) covering interests and need to “*pursue comprehensive engagement with allies and partners to protect the homeland and support civil authorities in preparing for increased human activity in the Arctic*”<sup>29</sup>. It strengthens the message that there is the

core national interest in preserving “*rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea and air space recognized under international law.*”<sup>30</sup> Also U.S. Navy (USN) revised the Arctic Roadmap (2014) and the strategy paper ‘*U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap 2014 – 2030*’ is highlighting the need to ensure US Arctic sovereignty and to strengthen homeland defence.<sup>31</sup> Although the focused approach could be challenged by US budgetary cuts, it is important factor from Russian perspective, especially as the US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel ensured that “*US intends to be ‘very involved’ in the Arctic*” and US Navy intends to be able to operate there by 2025.<sup>32</sup> Such the statement is also recognized by academics claiming that without “*U.S. leadership to help develop diplomatic solutions to competing claims and potential conflicts, the region (Arctic) could erupt in an armed mad dash for its resources.*”<sup>33</sup> This is linked with the obvious fact that no other major actor is able to face Russia alone if the country will decide to do any hostile acts. There are some disputes about the sea territory between USA and Canada in Beaufort Sea and between Canada and Denmark in Baffin Bay, but common perception of possible challenges could make nations closer allies. The important fact is also that both nations are NATO members and the Washington Treaty, especially Article V, is making obligations to support each other if endangered or attacked. This is a reason why both NATO and EU are also international actors as they are obliged to respect rights of their member states.

<sup>26</sup> Военные базы в Арктике – сигнал к новой ‘холодной войне’ (Military bases in Arctic – signal for new ‘cold war’), ИноСМИ.ru 13 August 2007, <http://inosmi.ru/world/20070813/235988.html> [accessed: 26 September 2014].

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Harper concerned by Russia’s growing military presence in Arctic, the Canadian Press 22 August 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/stephen-harper-concerned-by-russia-s-growing-military-presence-in-arctic-1.2744499> [accessed: 24 September 2014].

<sup>28</sup> *National Strategy for the Arctic Region*, the White House, Washington May 2013, p. 2, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat\\_arctic\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf) [accessed: 14 October 2014].

<sup>29</sup> *Arctic Strategy*, US Department of Defence, Washington November 2013, p. 7, [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2013\\_Arctic\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2013_Arctic_Strategy.pdf) [accessed: 14 October 2014].

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>31</sup> *U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap for 2014 to 2030*, Department of the Navy, Washington February 2014, [http://www.navy.mil/docs/USN\\_arctic\\_roadmap.pdf](http://www.navy.mil/docs/USN_arctic_roadmap.pdf) [accessed: 17 October 2014].

<sup>32</sup> J. M. Cole, *Militarization of the Arctic Heats Up, Russia Takes the Lead*, the Diplomat 06 December 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/12/militarization-of-the-arctic-heats-up-russia-takes-the-lead/> [accessed: 14 October 2014].

<sup>33</sup> L. W. Brigham, *Think Again: The Arctic*, op. cit.



## RUSSIAN INTERESTS AND POLITICS

The election of the President Putin in 2000 was linked with a shift in national policy toward Arctic, as Russia restored interests in Arctic but was using all the 'soft' tools to forward own agenda and to avoid conflict. It lasted until 2011. Following the UNCLOS definition of Arctic "*Russia got started early, sending two major scientific expeditions into the deep Arctic to collect evidence that the sea floor all the way up to the North Pole, known as the Lomonosov Shelf, is actually a continuation of the Siberian landmass and thus, Russian territory.*"<sup>34</sup> Using legal framework to claim its rights, supported by the scientific data in December 2001, the application was presented to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in respect to four areas: two in Arctic and two non-Arctic ones. Those out of Arctic received supportive recommendations, but regarding Arctic claims the UN commission required additional data<sup>35</sup>. So, the country made decision to continue research projects and delimitate outer limits of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean region, and it was declared top priority task to be accomplished by 2015, again entirely within the framework of international law.<sup>36</sup> Russia highlighted core interests in Arctic in 2007 when national flag was placed on the seabed at the North Pole and samples to prove the rights were taken; it was also wake up call for other nations interested in the region causing angry comments. Such the undersea expedition was

a part of the carefully designed strategy "*to collect scientific evidence for resubmitting to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) its request to confirm that some 460,000 mi<sup>2</sup> of underwater terrain between the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges are the continuation of the Siberian shelf and thus could be added to Russia's exclusive economic zone.*"<sup>37</sup> Again, the legal framework was applied to forward national agenda.

The rhetoric however changed when Russia implemented the national Arctic Strategy in 2008<sup>38</sup> and emphasized ambitions to enhance global role, including Arctic as a vital constituent of strategic interests. The document "*emphasizes the region's importance to Russia's economy as a major source of revenue, mainly from energy production and profitable maritime transport. A main goal is to transform the Arctic into Russia's top strategic base for natural resources by 2020, and preserve the country's role as a leading Arctic power.*"<sup>39</sup> Other objectives are "*...in the sphere of socio-economic development, to expand the resource base of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, which is capable in large part of fulfilling Russia's needs for hydrocarbon resources, aqueous biological resources, and other forms of strategic raw*

<sup>34</sup> F. Weir, *Arctic resource race heats up, as Russia, Canada stake new claims*, The Christian Science Monitor, Boston 11 December 2013,

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/2013/1211/Arctic-resource-race-heats-up-as-Russia-Canada-stake-new-claims-video> [accessed: 20 September 2014].

<sup>35</sup> B. Van Pay, *National Maritime Claims in the...*, op., cit.

<sup>36</sup> Read: K. Zysk, *Russian Arctic Strategy. Ambitions and Constraints*, Joint Force Quarterly, Issue 57, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2010, Fort Lesley, April 2010, the author is a senior fellow at the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS), [http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=100](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100) [accessed: 15 September 2014].

<sup>37</sup> P. Baev, *Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole*, The Jamestown Foundation, Washington, October 2007,

[http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/Jamestown-BaevRussiaArctic\\_01.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/Jamestown-BaevRussiaArctic_01.pdf) [accessed: 28 September 2014].

<sup>38</sup> About Russian global role in energy security read: J. Perovic, R. Orttung, *Russia's Role for Global Energy Security*, in: A. Wenger, J. Perovic, R. Orttung, *Energy and the Transformation of International Relations*, the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Oxford, 2009, pp. 117-147.

<sup>39</sup> K. Zysk, *Russian Arctic Strategy*, GeoPolitics in the High North 2014,

[http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=100:russian-arctic-strategy&catid=52:uncategorised](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100:russian-arctic-strategy&catid=52:uncategorised), [accessed: 24 September 2014].

*material*<sup>40</sup> as recognized by the president. In late March 2009, the Kremlin released the revised text of the strategy presenting “*dramatic expansion of official Russian sovereign interests in what was previously agreed-upon as part of the so-called ‘global commons’.*”<sup>41</sup> It stressed the importance of two major regional domains: the North Sea Route and natural resources. Next, preservation and protection of the natural ecosystem; formation of a unified information space, and the importance of „*international cooperation, guaranteeing mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Russian Federation and other Arctic states on the basis of international treaties and agreements to which the Russian Federation is a signatory*”<sup>42</sup> are also presented there. The document was divided into four main chapters:

1. Russia's national interests in the Arctic;
2. Main goals and strategic priorities;
3. Fundamental tasks and means of realization of the state policy; and
4. Fundamental mechanisms of realisation of the policy.

The strategy did not provide any clear differentiation between the various terms employed in the document (e.g. “interests”, “goals”, “priorities”, “tasks”, “means”, “mechanisms”). The first chapter „*Russia's national interests in the Arctic*” (or „*National Interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic*”) described five main goals in the Arctic. First paragraph presented importance of expanding the resource base in the region to fulfil „*need for hydrocarbon resources, aqueous biological resources, and other forms*

*of strategic material.*” The second one deals with national security, stability of borders and military capabilities for their protection. Next chapters are concerned about “*the preservation and protection of the natural ecosystem of the Arctic*” and “*formation of a unified information space in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation*”. The final one expresses the importance of „*international cooperation, guaranteeing mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Russian Federation and other Arctic states on the basis of international treaties and agreements to which the Russian Federation is a signatory.*”<sup>43</sup> It was important document released ahead of some other actors and it provided foundation for future policy and developments in Arctic. It was based on ambitious guidelines for governmental bodies asking them to create their branch plans to complement the overall concept. However, it was very complex challenge and “*as experience with the previous ambitious plans shows, achieving the goals may take longer than scheduled, if they are achieved at all.*”<sup>44</sup> It was very true prediction especially in the context of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and international sanctions. Meanwhile, Russia was continuing attempts to solve other disputes with real progress. On 15 September 2010 Norway and Russia “*ended a bitter 40-year dispute over their maritime borders and signed a treaty that will allow for new oil and gas exploration*” on the Barents Sea recognized by president Medvedev as “*a ‘constructive’ model of how rival Arctic nations should settle their differences.*”<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Canadian hard stance, USA growing concerns and China's emergence in the “Arctic Race” has made Russia worried.

<sup>40</sup> Translated from the Russian by M. Rusnak and I. Berman, *Russia's New Arctic Strategy - The Foundations of Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond*, Courtesy of the American Foreign Policy Council, The Journal of International Security Affairs 2010, [http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2010/18/russia's\\_new\\_arctic\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2010/18/russia's_new_arctic_strategy.pdf) [accessed: 12 September 2014].

<sup>41</sup> M. Rusnak and I. Berman, *Russia's New Arctic Strategy*,..., op., cit.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> K. Zysk, *Russia's Arctic Strategy - Ambitions and Constraint*, op., cit.

<sup>45</sup> L. Harding, *Russia and Norway resolve Arctic border dispute*, Guardian 15 September 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/russia-norway-arctic-border-dispute> [accessed: 10 October 2014].

According to statements made by Admiral Vysotsky, Russia is not going to back one inch in the Arctic area it considers its own.<sup>46</sup> Also NATO's role in the area has alarmed Vysotsky who estimated that *"Russia's economic interests are threatened by the activities of NATO and a number of Asian countries in the Arctic"*<sup>47</sup> recognizing the need to support Arctic policy with all instruments of power including military one. The NATO presence was also criticized by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who stated that *"NATO doctrines and analysis from time to time mentions that the military factor in the Arctic will grow as the struggle for resources intensifies. We are firmly convinced that there is no such problem in the Arctic that would require NATO participation."*<sup>48</sup> Russia supported political statements by reinforcing its Northern Fleet, one of country's four fleets, also two special Arctic forces brigades are to be established in the area. The most recent clash of statements has been that of Russia and Canada, as Ottawa has announced that it will expand its territorial zone all the way to the Pole. This again caused Russian president to react and he tasked Russian military, during a meeting of the Defence Ministry Board in Moscow, *"I would like you to devote special attention to deploying infrastructure and military units in the Arctic"*<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> *Russian navy chief warns of China's race for Arctic*, the Telegraph, 04 October 2010,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/8041997/Russian-navy-chief-warns-of-Chinas-race-for-Arctic.html> [accessed: 13 September 2014].

<sup>47</sup>V. Baranov, *Russia concerned by NATO, Asian states' activities in Arctic*, RIA Novosti, 06 July 2011, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20110706/165057023.html> [accessed: 15 September 2014].

<sup>48</sup> I.Sekretarev, *Lavrov: No Need for NATO Presence in Arctic*, RIA Novosti, 20 October 2011, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20110706/165057023.html> [accessed: 10 September 2014].

<sup>49</sup> *Russia fires back at Canada's Arctic claims, vows increased military presence*, the Canadian Press, the Province 11 December 2013, <http://www.theprovince.com/news/Russian+president+fires+>

Still, any discussion condemning rights is triggering strong reactions e.g. by stating, that *"the Arctic is an unalienable part of the Russian Federation that has been under our sovereignty for a few centuries" and "it will be so for the time to come."*<sup>50</sup> Such the perception is still present e.g. according to Associated Press president Putin: *"... angrily dismissed suggestions that the Arctic should be placed under the jurisdiction of the international community"*, as it *"is an unalienable part of the Russian Federation that has been under our sovereignty for a few centuries"*.<sup>51</sup>

The main foundation is still valid as stated by President Putin: *"More often the interests of the Arctic powers, and not only them, cross here - countries that are far away from this region are also expressing interest (in the Arctic)"* so *"in these conditions we must take additional measures not to fall behind our partners, to keep our influence in the region and in some aspects be ahead of our partners."*<sup>52</sup> It means that proactive policy will be continued to stay at the forefront of the race for resources and national prestige. Russia will again try to forward its legal right to the UN in 2015 related to expansion of the Arctic shelf, although such the attempt failed in 2001. Such the address is based on the results of the expedition by the Akademik Fedorov research vessel, which lasted from July to October 2014 performing

[back+after+Canada+salvo+Arctic+claims/9270757/story.html](http://www.back+after+Canada+salvo+Arctic+claims/9270757/story.html) [accessed: 13 September 2014].

<sup>50</sup> V. Isachenkov, *Putin: Russia to Expand Arctic Presence*, Real Clear Defence 03 October 2013, reprint from the Associated Press, [http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2013/10/03/putin\\_russia\\_to\\_expand\\_arctic\\_presence\\_106898.html](http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2013/10/03/putin_russia_to_expand_arctic_presence_106898.html) [accessed: 14 September 2014].

<sup>51</sup> V. Isachenkov, *Putin: Russia to Expand Arctic Presence*, op., cit.

<sup>52</sup> A. Anishchuk, *Russia's Putin wants beefed-up presence in Arctic*, Reuters Moscow, 22 April 2014, [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/22/us-russia-putin-arctic-idUSBREA3L1BN20140422\\_](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/22/us-russia-putin-arctic-idUSBREA3L1BN20140422_) [accessed: 11 September 2014].

“comprehensive studies to establish the geological and geophysical basis for assessing the petroleum potential of the continental shelf beyond Russia’s exclusive economic zone.”<sup>53</sup> When saluting researchers, after their arrival to St. Petersburg, the Russian Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology Sergey Donskoy, said “I’m confident that it’s our shelf. All the specialists are saying that we have a very good application. The acceptance of this application by the Commission is virtually an acceptance of our geological model by the specialists from all other Arctic interests.”<sup>54</sup> Such the statement supported by self-motivated research has been a signal of the multi-vector approach to Arctic. Not only military card is played but it is very pragmatic part of overall strategy, which is linked with Russian Arctic strategy of 2008 envisioning that region to become strategically important resources hub. It is really worth of an effort to get resources estimated to be some 106billiards tons of oil and some 70billions cubic meters of gas.<sup>55</sup>

The last events in Ukraine are not excluding potential military pressure also in the case of Arctic, which is of great importance in the long-term survival of Russia. It is also pointed out that Moscow does not trust the other actors in the Arctic and would be ready to use military force to protect and defend its interests in the area. Such the perception is supported by official statements as highlighted by president Putin in August 2014 during a meeting at a pro-Kremlin youth camp when he reminded that Russia is nuclear power and “Russia’s partners ... should understand it is best not to mess with us” and “our interests are concentrated in the Arctic. And of course we should pay more

attention to issues of development of the Arctic and the strengthening of our position.”<sup>56</sup> The message was very clear presenting strong political will to use all available means to support national interests in every area they are located. However, some contradictory signals could be found in relation to intentions, as Vice Prime Minister Rogozin stated, that “it’s crucially important for us to set goals for our national interests in this region. If we don’t do that, we will lose the battle for resources which means we’ll also lose in a big battle for the right to have sovereignty and independence” but Aleksandr Gorban, a former representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, mentioned “war for resource ... in the Arctic will never happen.”<sup>57</sup> Such intentional leakages are showing that there is a will to continue peaceful cooperation, but the military units disposition is showing decisiveness in preserving own vital interests, especially as Russia will establish dominant forces and capabilities in the short time, based on developed strategy and funds to support such the program.

## ARCTIC AS RUSSIAN OPTION TO CONTINUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economy is important for Russia for both domestic and international policy reason, and it was hit significantly as the result of the annexation of Crimea and the follow-on sanctions are still devastating for economy. It was the most important tool to force Moscow to rethink cost and effect of such the violation of international law. The gas agreement between Russia and Ukraine facilitated by EU and signed at the end of October 2014 proved however that Moscow is flexible and

<sup>53</sup> 1.2 million sq.km, 5 billion tons of fuel: Russia to apply for Artic shelf expansion, RIA Novosti, 29 October 2014, <http://rt.com/news/200555-ussia-arctic-shelf-un/> [accessed: 30 October 2014].

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> In the text the numbers are presented in the British English.

<sup>56</sup> S. Walker, L. Ragozin, M. Weaver, *Putin likens Ukraine's forces to Nazis and threatens standoff in the Arctic*, the Guardian 29 August 2014, [accessed: 11 September 2014].

<sup>57</sup> J. Mitchell, *Russia's Territorial Ambition and Increased Military Presence in the Arctic*, 23 April 2014, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/04/23/russias-territorial-ambition-and-increased-military-presence-in-the-arctic/> [accessed: 09 September 2014].

pragmatic in politics and is also concerned about budget income coming from selling natural resources. In that context Kremlin plans toward Arctic are more important to preserve supplier role especially as European nations are focusing now on the diversification of supplies looking to remove monopoly of the single supplier. Good example is Lithuania as because of liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage vessel 'Independence' it will be able to stop dependence on Russia having alternative sources and will buy gas at market prices. So, Russia needs Arctic and international financial and technological sanctions toward oil companies are hampering that effort. Such limitations are also hurting European businesses (e.g. French Technip and Total, Dutch Shell, Italian Saipem, Norwegian Statoil) as they have had planned to cooperate with Russians. Nevertheless, in August 2014 American giant ExxonMobil started exploration of oil in the region in cooperation with Rosneft based on estimate that „beneath the Kara Sea, north of Russia's Siberian coastline, lies more oil than can be found in the whole of the Gulf of Mexico.“<sup>58</sup> According to Rosneft, the oil field Universitetskaya is used to “test the potential of the unexplored the Arctic Ocean. The geological structure targeted by the drilling is roughly the size of the city of Moscow and may contain as many as 9 billion barrels of oil.”<sup>59</sup> The cooperation was an effect of a contract to hire the rig, which was signed before the conflict in Ukraine and as such was not a matter of any sanctions. That teamwork has been beneficial for ExxonMobil as its

production drop to record low in last five years and the 'Universitetskaya' has been supposed to be worth some 700mln USD. The drilling equipment was provided by the SeaDrill Company. Moscow was vitally interested in the continuity of cooperation and access to technologies as “Arctic region and its deposits are of crucial importance – at stake it is to maintain oil production level above 10 million barrels a day.”<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the ExxonMobil finally stopped cooperation in October 2014 as an effect of international sanctions, but the cooperation will be continued as soon as it will be an option.

According to Grigoriy Birg, gas and oil analyst at Investcafe, “sanctions could not last that long to seriously affect the long-term strategic partnership of Rosneft and ExxonMobil,” and “both sides are investigating options available to them on how to continue cooperation without breaking the sanctions.”<sup>61</sup> The US concern in cooperation with Rosneft, Sodeco and ONGC is still continuing the Sakhalin-1 project to develop „three oil and gas fields off the northeastern coast of Sakhalin Island in Russia's Far East“ and also LNG terminal.<sup>62</sup> For the government the continuity of production by Rosneft is important as the company, exploring some 40% of overall oil production in the country, is important provider of funds to the national budget. So, the lack of loans and new

<sup>58</sup> G. Chazan, J. Farchy, *Russia Arctic energy ambitions jeopardised by western sanctions*, Financial Times 01 September 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/41d19b16-31c9-11e4-a19b-00144feabdc0.html#slide0> [accessed: 05 September 2014].

<sup>59</sup> S. Bierman, E. Gismatullin, *Exxon Drilling Russian Arctic Shows Sanction Lack Bite, Sanctions, what sanctions?* Bloomberg L.P. (08 August 2014), <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-08-08/exxon-drilling-russian-arctic-shows-sanction-lack-bite.html> [accessed: 05 September 2014].

<sup>60</sup> T. Grymkiewicz, *Sankcje? Amerykanie razem z Rosjanami szukają ropy. Putin dał znak, by zacząć odwierty*, (Sanctions? Americans together with the Russians are looking for oil. Putin gave the signal to start drilling), BIZTOK.pl 09 August 2014, [http://www.biztok.pl/gospodarka/sankcje-amerykanie-razem-z-rosjanami-szukaja-ropy-putin-dal-znak-by-zaczac-odwierty\\_a17210](http://www.biztok.pl/gospodarka/sankcje-amerykanie-razem-z-rosjanami-szukaja-ropy-putin-dal-znak-by-zaczac-odwierty_a17210) [accessed: 05 September 2014].

<sup>61</sup> A.Nikolsky, *Western Sanctions on Russia Will Not Affect Rosneft-ExxonMobil Partnership: Oil Analyst*, RIA Novosti, 01 October 2014, <http://en.ria.ru/analysis/20141001/193501667/Western-Sanctions-on-Russia-will-not-Affect-Rosneft-ExxonMobil.html> [accessed: 05 October 2014].

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



technologies could cause even its collapse in long-term. It has already supported the company by borrowing some 40bln USD to pay debts connected with purchasing (55bln USD) the TNK-BP (Tyumenskaya Neftyanaya Kompaniya) and next year there is still a significant instalment to pay (12bln USD). However, there are restrictions for exploration projects as they are costly e.g. the oil production in Gazprom Neft's Prirazlomnoye oil field (estimated 530mln barrels of oil) has been economical profitable only due to the special government tax discounts.<sup>63</sup>

Looking into developments and challenges to the exploration of Arctic it is still in its introductory phase and it will take time to achieve desired outcome from gas and oil fields; so it will not support the Russian economy in short time. Especially as the progress and utilization of resources requires cooperation and investments of international oil and gas companies, which are possessing required technologies. In that context the situation in Ukraine might scare, and sanctions discourage, the companies causing even their withdrawal from some projects, although they have already invested significant funds.<sup>64</sup> As result, the sanctions will have long-term effect on Russian intensions influencing budget revenues, which are heavily related to natural resources. Especially as technologies for exploration of such deep water deposits are not available. Moreover, shale gas discoveries within Russia will be probably stopped as only USA companies are possessing modern technologies to enable exploration, so Arctic is even more important. Another risk is related to ageing gas and oil infrastructure requiring

huge funds to continue export, and the flow of funds coming from new sources is rather critical to ensure investments. Additionally, the money is linked with future plans to develop infrastructure to process raw materials and to export high quality processed products, as long term strategy. It is especially linked with oil and the strategy will significantly suffer as effect of the West Europe and USA political and economic pressure. What is important the sanctions are less affecting gas companies as there is a reasonable threat that Russia could stop supplies to Europe, especially as the winter is about to happen.

There is another interesting factor related to bilateral Russia and Japan relations as Arctic is slightly warming relations between the two countries. As Japan is a huge importer of energy sources, the North Sea Route (NSR) is of growing importance as it "*cuts the travel time from Hamburg to Yokohama by about 40 percent compared to the Suez route, with fuel savings of 20 percent*"<sup>65</sup> and other costs e.g. insurances. As there are tensions with China (Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands) the NSR is providing future option. So, economic interests are helping to overcome differences. The joint efforts were presented when Japanese explorer Inpex Corporation signed an agreement with Rosneft in May 2013 to explore two Russian oil fields in the Okhotsk Sea and Moscow supported Tokyo's candidacy for the 2020 Olympic Games. The cooperation is important for Russia as it is supporting bypassing EU sanctions when looking for highly desired technologies. Moreover, by building new LNG terminals it could have direct access to the Asian market, which is hungry for resources, without a need to build expensive pipelines. The bilateral relations between Russia and Japan are shaping the dynamics on international

<sup>63</sup> N. Cunningham, *Russia ships its first Arctic oil. Is a boom coming?* Energy/Environment Energy Voices, The Christian Science Monitor 21 April 2014,

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2014/0421/Russia-ships-its-first-Arctic-oil.-Is-a-boom-coming> [accessed: 11 September 2014].

<sup>64</sup> D. Trenin, P. K. Baev, *The Arctic A View from Moscow*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington 2010, pp. 22-23.

<sup>65</sup> S. Pourzitakis, *Japan and Russia: Arctic Friends*, The Diplomat (01 February 2014), <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/japan-and-russia-arctic-friends> [accessed: 02 August 2014].



relations creating some sympathy among countries based on pragmatic politics.

There are other concerns for Russia as the productivity of the Siberian oil fields is decreasing slowly, so new options are strategically important to preserve important role on the international energy market in the long perspective. Additionally funds are required to make new investments, and to look for than previous partners who could provide technologies. The symptom of search for money has been the decision to consider selling to China shares in an oil and gas Vankor Field in Eastern Siberia<sup>66</sup>. The deal could be speeded up by constant the reduction of crude oil (Brent) prices down to 73 USD/bbl at the end of November 2014.<sup>67</sup> Especially as much as 50% of Russian export relies on oil and some 20% on gas, so every price drop means deficiencies within national budget. It has also military dimension related to ongoing and rather ambitious program of the modernization of armed forces. The effort to extend military presence in the Arctic is linked with support for regional national claims and interests. Decrease of prices could influence revision of budget and some sectors on national economy could suffer, especially as there are prediction that the oil price will still goun down below 70USD/barrel and GAZPROM will be forced to downgrade gas prices for some nations. So, there is a hope that *“if economic incentives are driving combatants to fight, then altering those incentives by measures that move their cost-benefit calculus in favour of peace may also*

*induce them to cease fight.”*<sup>68</sup> Such the peaceful consequence could be an outcome of the international pressure on all the countries to look rather for common benefits than conflict. Even OPEC summit in November 2014 did not provide desired effect and oil prices are still going down.

Russian economy is suffering because decreasing oil prices, US and UE sanctions based on still ongoing instability in Ukraine, which is also one of major trading partners for Russia, directly causing its economic downturn. The Russian Rouble is still losing toward Euro and US Dollar and it reached at the beginning of December 2014 record low level reaching exchange rate more than 60 Roubles to Euro and more than 50 Roubles to US Dollar<sup>69</sup> with negative likelihood. The Bank of Russia is trying to support national currency by raising interest rates, which is criticized as there is possibility that side effect will be further slowdown of economic growth, which reached only 0.7 % in the third quarter of 2014. Moreover, inflation reached 8% and some 100bln USD of capital is supposed to leave country throughout the year<sup>70</sup>. The status of the international reserves of the Russian Federation went down to 428,6bln USD at the end of October 2014; some 12% compare to the beginning of the year<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> K. Ballentine, *Beyond Greed and Grievance...*, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>69</sup> As of 01 December the exchange rate went down to 63.63 Roubles to Euro and more than 51 Roubles to US Dollar. Follow: *Russian Rouble Exchange Rate*, Exchange Rates UK, <http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/Russian-Rouble-RUB-currency-table.html> [accessed: 01 December 2014].

<sup>70</sup> *Rosja: rubel spada, rośnie inflacja, słabnie wzrost gospodarczy* (Russia: rouble is falling, inflation is rising, economic growth is weakening), Polish Press Agency, Portal ONET Money, 28 October 2014, <http://waluty.onet.pl/rosja-rubel-spada-rosnie-inflacja-slabnie-wzrost-g,18529,5662443,1,news-detal> [accessed: 28 October 2014].

<sup>71</sup> At the beginning of 2014 it was estimated as much as 509,5bln USD. See: *International Reserves of the Russian Federation*, Bank of Russia, Moscow, [http://www.cbr.ru/eng/hd\\_base/default.aspx?Prtid=mrrf\\_m](http://www.cbr.ru/eng/hd_base/default.aspx?Prtid=mrrf_m) [accessed: 01 December 2014].

<sup>66</sup> J. Bolanowski, *Wielkie problemy Rosnieftu. Putin szuka ratunku w Chinach* (Great problems of Rosneft. Putin seeks relief in China), Biztok wp.pl, 09 September 2009, [http://www.biztok.pl/gospodarka/wielkie-problemy-rosnieftu-putin-szuka-ratunku-w-chinach\\_a17571](http://www.biztok.pl/gospodarka/wielkie-problemy-rosnieftu-putin-szuka-ratunku-w-chinach_a17571) [accessed: 10 September 2014].

<sup>67</sup> *Energy & Oil Prices. Crude Oil & Natural Gas*, BloombergView.com as of 31 November 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/energy/> [accessed: 01 December 2014].

Although, there is relatively good industrial production, the oil prices and ongoing sanctions are still decisive factors influencing Russian budget and until it will be stabilized the economy will not recover following expectation of the national leadership. It will cause revision of budget for incoming years (it was based on assumption then oil prices will not go lower than 90USD/barrel) and reduction of funds for all the national sectors including also military expenses; however those will be as restricted as possible. There is also side effect of budgetary cuts as lack of funds and stability is encouraging well educated scientists and managers to leave country as it happened after collapse of the Soviet Union.

### ARCTIC MILITARY RISE TO SUPPORT OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF POWER

As mentioned previously, to support political statements the Northern Fleet is present in Arctic and two purposely created Arctic brigades are in the formation process. All the units will be subordinated to the newly created Northern Fleet-Unified Strategic Command (SF-OSK)<sup>72</sup> integrating the Northern Fleet, land forces brigades, air force and air defence units and also all other necessary combat support and combat service support elements. The Command *“will be responsible for protecting Russia’s Arctic shipping and fishing, oil and gas fields on the Arctic shelf, and the country’s national borders in the north”*<sup>73</sup> by enhancing abilities to plan and execute joint operations using more effectively

<sup>72</sup> Northern Fleet-Unified Strategic Command in Russian language: Severny Flot-Obedinyonnoye Strategicheskoye Komandovaniye (SF-OSK). Read: T. Pettersen, *Russia to reorganize military forces in the Arctic*, (17 February 2012), The Barents Observer,

<http://barentsobserver.com/en/security/2014/02/russia-reorganize-military-forces-arctic-17-02> [accessed: 28 November 2014].

<sup>73</sup> Z. Keck, *Russia to Establish Arctic Military Command*, the Diplomat 21 January 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/russia-to-establish-arctic-military-command/> [accessed: 29 October 2014].

available resources. The additional advantage will be provided as soon as the NSR will be navigable and the Russian Northern and Pacific Naval fleets will be able to support each other and the SF-OSK will monitor the sea lines of communication. The growing command and control set up and capabilities of units will create significant strategic deterrence effect toward other nations interested in Arctic and any forceful solution. It is a message that any option, including military one, is acceptable and feasible for Moscow to preserve national interest.

Moscow is actively rebuilding former Soviet-era military bases including some on the New Siberian Islands, along with development of military capabilities which are necessary to operate in remote and difficult area and climate with temperatures as low as -50°C. The Islands are already the base for 10 military ships and four icebreakers being *“a demonstration of force.”*<sup>74</sup> The long term intent is to create permanent bases for purposefully equipped and trained units, navy assets - including upgrading fleet of nuclear-powered submarines and icebreakers - to patrol the waters. An important element will be a military town being, according to head of the Eastern Military District’s press service Colonel Gordeyev, *“the modular blocks for the construction of military stations have been delivered to Wrangel Island and to Cape Schmidt. The complex will be assembled in the form of a star that allows the personnel to move freely inside the construction, limiting exposure to cold temperatures as much as possible.”*<sup>75</sup>

The Northern Fleet located in bases on the coastline of the Barents and Norwegian Seas, according to its commander Admiral Korolov,

<sup>74</sup> J. Mitchell, *Russia’s Territorial Ambition and Increased Military Presence in the Arctic*, op., cit.

<sup>75</sup> A.Yudina, *Russia Building Military Town in Arctic*, RIA Novosti, 08 September 2014, [http://en.ria.ru/military\\_news/20140908/192745152/Russia-Building-Military-Town-in-Arctic.html](http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20140908/192745152/Russia-Building-Military-Town-in-Arctic.html) [accessed: 15 September 2014].

is supposed to acquire more than 40 modern vessels until 2020, following the program of the modernization of armed forces, including multirole, diesel powered submarines<sup>76</sup>. Among new submarines it is important to mention that newly build submarines K-550 'Alexander Nevsky' and K-535 'Yuriy Dolgorukiy', both the fourth generation Borei-class ballistic missile submarines of the Project 955, joined the Fleet. Moreover, until the end of the year another Borei-class submarine ('Vladimir Monomakh'), also armed with new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) 'Bulava', will strengthen the maritime

force. The Navy is conducting continuously intensive exercise involving all types of combat units e.g. in September 2014 some 10 vessels and submarines (nuclear and diesel powered), supported by Navy Aviation, exercised in the Barents Sea. The focus was on mine warfare, antisubmarine and anti-surface warfare employing both submarines and land-based mobile anti-ship missile batteries<sup>77</sup>. The Fleet is also conducting search and rescue exercises with Norwegian armed forces, codename "Barents", to ensure high level of rescue services, which is related to the water and weather conditions in that sea.



**Fig. 4.** Russian nuclear submarine "Podolsk" in Arctic.

**Source:** M. Dura, *Ekologiczny nadzór nad odbudową rosyjskich baz w Arktyce*, (Ecological supervision on rebuilding Russian Bases in Arctic), 15 October 2014, Defence24, [http://www.defence24.pl/news\\_ekologiczny-nadzor-nad-odbudowa-rosyjskich-baz-w-arktyce](http://www.defence24.pl/news_ekologiczny-nadzor-nad-odbudowa-rosyjskich-baz-w-arktyce) [accessed: 17 October 2014].

(Photo from мультимедиа.минобороны.рф)

<sup>76</sup> *Flota Północna otrzyma ponad 40 okrętów* (The Northern Fleet will acquire more than 40 vessels), Radio Voice of Russia 08 April 2014, [http://polish.ruvr.ru/news/2014\\_04\\_08/Flota-Polnocna-otrzyma-ponad-40-okretow-0300/](http://polish.ruvr.ru/news/2014_04_08/Flota-Polnocna-otrzyma-ponad-40-okretow-0300/) [accessed: 16 September 2014].

<sup>77</sup> *В Баренцевом море началось двухстороннее тактическое учение разнородных сил Северного флота*, (The bilateral tactical exercise of the Northern Fleet in the Barents Sea started) Website of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense, Moscow 09 September 2014, [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/person/more.htm?id=11982874@egNews#txt](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/person/more.htm?id=11982874@egNews#txt) [accessed: 15 September 2014].

The land units of the Russian armed forces will be composed of “a combined-arms force to protect its political and economic interests in the Arctic by 2020, including military, border and coastal guard units to guarantee Russia’s military security in diverse military and political circumstances.”<sup>78</sup> It will consist of previously mentioned two motorized rifle brigades situated in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk; the first is planned to be deployed and announced fully operational capable in 2015. The reorganization, equipping and training are already in progress. The transportation and mobility will be provided using MT-LBV armoured transport vehicles. The specialized units e.g. Special Forces reconnaissance units are also conducting trainings on the Kola Peninsula within experimental program simulating combat in the Polar Regions’ mountainous terrain. There were also airborne units’ drills and strategic bombers patrols to present variety of military options. Russian military industry complex is developing also purposely designed equipment to increase military capabilities and mobility in that specific terrain. Among them, new version of the helicopter Mi-8, named Mi-8AMTSz-WA ‘Terminator’, was tailored to the extreme conditions of the region to provide transport and deliver fire support to land forces. Moreover, such airframes as: the Ka-52 ‘Alligator’, next-generation reconnaissance and combat helicopter, and also upgraded Mi-24 – Mi-35M, which is multipurpose military transport helicopter for combat missions in day-and-night conditions in adverse weather, will join units there. To increase air defence capabilities a new combined short to medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system 96K6 Pancyr-S1 conducted successfully Arctic tests. Russian air force will deploy MiG-31 interceptors and

tactical aircraft at a Russian Arctic airfield in the urban settlement of Tiksi in northernmost Sakha Republic and at Anadyr airfield, capital of Chukotka Autonomous Area, as early as 2017. The distance from Anadyr to Alaska is just 750km and in the past it was the base for long-range aviation<sup>79</sup>. According to Lt. Gen. Mizintsev, head of the National Defense Management Center, „at least 13 airfields and 10 radar stations in the Arctic to safeguard the nation’s military security in the region.”<sup>80</sup>

The military presence is significantly growing causing symptoms of arms race to be followed by USA and Canada and growing potential of using force to preserve national interests. The Russian Series report, prepared by Defence Academy of United Kingdom, is declaring, that: „militarily, thanks to the Northern Fleet primarily, Russia is the dominant power in the region and looks set to further augment its military capability in the region throughout the rest of this decade”, so having it in mind it “looks set to keep all options open, should the ‘Arctic fist’ be required, rather than the ‘gloved hand.’ As an operational and home base for the country’s fleet of SLBM submarine cruisers, the Arctic also has great significance for the country’s national security. Thus, there would appear to be every likelihood that, if so required, Russia will use military force to maintain its position in the region.”<sup>81</sup> The militarization of Arctic has speeded up in 2014 and as stated by Defense

<sup>79</sup> Russia to Base MiG-31 Interceptors at Arctic Airfield: Air Force Commander, RIA Novosti, 15 October 2014, [http://en.ria.ru/military\\_news/20141015/194110681/Russia-to-Base-MiG-31-Interceptors-at-Arctic-Airfield-Air-Force.html](http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20141015/194110681/Russia-to-Base-MiG-31-Interceptors-at-Arctic-Airfield-Air-Force.html) [accessed: 17 October 2014].

<sup>80</sup> M. Fomitchev, Russia to Strengthen Arctic Border with 13 Airfields, 10 Radars, RIA Novosti, 15 October 2014, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20141028/194737649/Russia-to-Strengthen-Arctic-Border-with-13-Airfields-10-Radars.html> [accessed: 20 October 2014].

<sup>81</sup> S. J. Main, *If spring comes tomorrow... Russia and the Arctic*, Russian Series 2011, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham 2011, <http://www.da.mod.uk/publications/library/russian-series/20111017-SJM-Arctic-paper.pdf/view>, pp. i, [accessed: 11 September 2014].

<sup>78</sup> Russia to Field First Arctic Brigade in 2015, RIA Novosti 02 February 2012, [http://en.ria.ru/military\\_news/20120221/171440711.html](http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20120221/171440711.html) [accessed: 12 September 2014].

Minister Shoigu during a military council meeting “we have set quite a pace in our foray into the Arctic,” and as an outcome “by the end of the year (2014) we will already deploy most of our units in the region – from Murmansk to Chukotka.”<sup>82</sup> The statement is significant as automatically it will allow military control of 6,200km long Arctic coastal zone by the end of 2014. The funds dedicated to Arctic are sufficient as for now to and planned activities are about to be completed supporting politics and economy. The challenge could be a long term sustainment of armed force in the region, especially when USA and also Canada will try to balance those capabilities. But in every case the continuity of upgrading infrastructure along the NSR will be one of the future trends as it is strongly supported by political will based economic needs<sup>83</sup>.

## FUTURE AND CONCLUSIONS

There are a few options for the future of Arctic cooperation and they vary from peaceful to conflict ones. The Russian International Affairs Council draws two possible security scenarios in the region. The first one, “negative security scenario”, assesses that military presence and hostility in the Arctic will increase and role of international organisations will gradually decline. The second one, “the positive security scenario”, is stressing the potential for enhanced international cooperation in Arctic. As such, “*actualization of the Arctic problems by a military-political bloc dominating in the world offers an opportunity to construct a new architecture of international relations in the*

*Arctic based on positive security.*”<sup>84</sup> The recent Russia – Ukraine crisis and revised perception of Moscow by European nations and US might complicate the „positive security scenario” and cooperation in Arctic by raising doubts about willingness to comply with the UNCLOS and to cooperate with the Arctic Council. The reopening of the old Soviet military bases in the region and cancellation of exercises e.g. Norwegian – Russian - US naval training „Northern Eagle” are showing that the future is not easy to predict.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time other actors are trying to increase their presence in the region, not excluding military domain, to gain as much as possible. Canada is no exception and it is ready to implement compromise approach within several options to solve disagreements, mainly with US. It strives to accomplish a credible and convincing presence in the region, but so far the inputs have been somewhat modest. US on the other hand has not showed overly enthusiasm on the Arctic issue until releasing key documents defining national strategy in recent years. Its stance is that great parts of the Arctic Sea, which Canada considers as inner area, are actually international waters. What makes this more difficult, from legal point of view, is the fact that USA has not ratified the UNCLOS. Washington is now preoccupied in Pacific region recognizing it as key for national interests<sup>86</sup>, nevertheless Arctic vigilance is

<sup>82</sup> A. Petrov, *Russian Bases to Span Entire Arctic Border by End of 2014*, RIA Novosti, 21 October 2014, <http://rt.com/news/197936-russia-arctic-military-shoigu/> [accessed: 26 October 2014].

<sup>83</sup> Read also: S. J. Main, *If spring comes tomorrow...*, op., cit., pp. 51-58.

<sup>84</sup> A. Shaparov, *NATO and a New Agenda for the Arctic*, Russian International Affairs Council, North (Arctic) Federal University, 24 September 2013, [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=2377#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=2377#top) [accessed: 16 October 2014].

<sup>85</sup> H. Mikkola, *The Return of Realpolitik? The deepening crisis in Ukraine may spill over to the Arctic*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, FIIA Comment 6/2014, Helsinki 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Read also in: M. Spangler, *Rebalancing the Rebalance*, Parameters Summer 2014, Vol. 44 No. 2, US Army War College, The Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle 2014, [http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Summer\\_2014/5\\_Spangler\\_Article.pdf](http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Summer_2014/5_Spangler_Article.pdf) [accessed: 31 October 2014].

growing as also Asian actors are interested in it. Such the shift in policy is recognized in Moscow but Russia is still inferior regarding real power projection capability to match that of the USA, and is trying to influence mainly through different international organisations and by winning time in developing necessary infrastructure. It is interesting to see how both use soft language and then again confrontational tones based on a situational change. In that respect Russia's objectives are quite clear and far reaching; if they will materialize, it would be by size the major player in the region ready to challenge any opponent. China's interests have also increased lately to ensure that it will not be excluded from the use of the region if all positive resources predictions will come true. It is boldly exploiting the global economic situation to gain a better position in Arctic. The country has a lot of economic power and it is using it mainly to affect the smaller Arctic Council states and is also trying to preserve good relations with Russia. Although they have benefitted of it today, in the long run this could not be in the best interests of the council members, especially as Beijing prefers bilateral talks. It is observing the military build-up especially by Russia and US and as for now is not ready and capable to follow them. The report, created already in 2009, highlighted that „*it is unclear whether Russia, either alone or with potential allies, would have to resort to military means to reach such political or economic gains from energy, or whether non-military opportunities already exist for it to achieve gains through the manipulation of its export supplies and its geographic domination of major transportation routes and existing export infrastructure for the former Soviet Union states*”<sup>87</sup>. They studied cases of Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania,

Belarus and also Caspian and Central Asia nations as examples of military and economic pressure to achieve political goals<sup>88</sup>. The commutation between actors is still ongoing and during meetings, e.g. SIPRI workshop in Moscow in October 2013 the consensus seemed to prevail as “*participants agreed that an armed conflict in the Arctic is highly unlikely and that the Arctic is one of the most stable regions in the world.*” Although, “*at the same time, the possibility of future conflict cannot be completely overruled but if conflict does happen it is more likely to be the result of spill-over from conflicts elsewhere. There may be a need to develop confidence-building mechanisms to avoid misunderstandings between the Arctic states in respect to traditional security issues.*”<sup>89</sup> In that context the events in Ukraine during the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century could be a warning that Russia, but also other nations, could be willing to use all necessary means to forward their political agendas in solving territorial disputes and claims. In relation to Arctic it changes the situation by threatening possible developments. Nevertheless, so far nothing indicates that the disputes would cause major instability over the exploitation of the area but development of military capabilities is the alerting factor.

The approach of each single nation toward Arctic differs and is based solely on national interests, which is possible to understand. At the same time countries (USA, China, Japan, others) and organizations (EU, NATO) are still trying to revise policies and strategies to fit the situation and risks. It is important, as the final status is still not defined and some decisions by UN are to be taken, which is giving an advantage to countries with veto right there. It is linked with recognition that region could be an arena of power struggle, but as for now there is lack of power projection capabilities to

<sup>87</sup> A. M. Jaffe, R. Soligo, *The Russian connection*, in: M. D., Russel J. (ed.), *Energy Security and Global Politics. The militarization of resource management*, the Routledge Global Security Studies, New York 2009, p. 122.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-130.

<sup>89</sup> 1 Oct. 2013, *Russia's Strategy for Developing the Arctic Region Until 2020*, op. cit.



influence situation by single actor, so politics, engagement within international organizations' framework and economy are major tools. The future continuity of the global warming processes is a question and opinions are differing, nevertheless the process is still ongoing requiring development of clear way ahead for every player in Arctic. The sea routes will be open in some time and it could be used as a part of economy and political games by Russia possessing longest shoreline in the Arctic Sea. Positive signals are Russia – Norway treaty in the Barents and recognition of the UNCLOS, the Arctic Council and OSCE. Kremlin currently needs also positive developments for internal policy purposes to convince people that it is respecting international law when claiming just historical territories being focused on the prosperity of own people and all the steps in Arctic are just to preserve and raise their quality of life.

Professor Skrzyp when discussing geopolitics in the context of resources recognized that *"the great game of world powers is ongoing for access to those resources and their transport routes, called by some the geopolitics of pipelines or geo-economics. Geopolitics of tomorrow, in my opinion, is the global conflict of strategic raw materials, mainly oil and gas"*<sup>90</sup>. It applies to Arctic as rich resources and geostrategic location make it the area of interests for many nations and potential hotspot of the tomorrow. In the nearest future any open conflict is not an option for Russia as it is preoccupied with European affairs and needs time to stabilize unbalanced economy. On the other hand Crimea case is making European nations very occupied on the continent and it is making Arctic not main effort for EU and NATO at least for now. But, for that reason Moscow's

stance toward Arctic will be rather strong-minded as there is a lot to lose in the case of negating, even partially, its national interest there by other actors. By implementing very decisively and attentively comprehensive approach toward Arctic, Russia is winning the first stage of the long-term race toward future benefits.

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<sup>90</sup> J. Skrzyp, *Geopolityka „wczoraj, dziś i jutro”* (Geopolitics „yesterday, today and tomorrow”), Przegląd Geopolityczny ed. 2, Institute of Geopolitics, Częstochowa 2010, p. 23.

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