

## THE ARCTIC: A GEOSTRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN LIGHT OF THE MASS MEDIA

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The role of the mass media in the implementation of geopolitical projects has been repeatedly investigated. However, the topic in relation to the Arctic exploration so far has not been the subject of academic study. It is this gap, which is studied by the authors in present research partly presented in the current article. Based on conducted monitoring of the mass media during the last decade, the researchers at St. Petersburg State University (Russia) consider the problems of development of the Arctic region, which gradually becomes an arena not only of economic, but also military confrontation. Of course, politicians care not about the opportunity of walking through the endless north polar snow and ice, but a giant resource, transportational and geopolitical potential of the Northern territories. A kind of orchestration of public opinion was started by the mass media. Exploring open information sources, the authors come to the comprehension that the Arctic with its biological resources will soon become "hot point" of the planet.

**Key words:** Arctic, interests, oil, resources, perspectives, rights, claims, countries, sovereignty, military training exercise, presence.

### INTRODUCTION

For a long time the Arctic has attracted the attention of scientists and researchers. Significant changes in terms of geopolitical interest in the Arctic occurred on August 2, 2007 - a landmark milestone, when the members of the Russian expedition "Arctic-2007" planted the state Russian flag and a time capsule at the bottom of the ocean at the North Pole.

According to the conclusions based on the study of international mass media in St. Petersburg State University, this step was regarded abroad as Moscow's decision to define the relevant underwater territories as a continuation of the Russian land. Thus, it was the beginning of the international competition for the Arctic, which was joined not only by the Arctic countries but a number of states that are quite far from the Arctic Ocean. The mass media, seeking to draw attention to this event, try to feed information about what is happening in the Arctic region as a sensation. Every day we can read and listen to the broadcast in different languages: "Who owns the Arctic today?", "Tensions in the Arctic increases", "Cold spell in Europe may be related to the Arctic", "Russia moves ahead in the Arctic",

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“Atmosphere of conflict in the Arctic”, “Battle observed today in the Arctic”, “Arctic – exotic, which has become a “hot spot”, “Big bear is going to hold grounds in the Arctic”, “New race in the Arctic”, “New strategic goal of China: mineral resources of the Arctic”, “Development of weapons and military equipment for use in the Arctic”, “Cold war in the Arctic”, and all that. These and other headlines that appear regularly in the mass media create the impression that the battle for resources in this region has already begun. As noted in the work of S. Nikonov, world powers have begun their work on the emergence of noopolitik- information strategy aimed at manipulating international processes through the mass media (S. Nikonov, 2013).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study of publications covering the activities of countries in the development of the Arctic region in the XXI century consisted primarily of the monitoring of mass media and selection of materials devoted to the Arctic, as well as their problematic categorization. The study of the mass media materials was mainly based on the employment of the logical methods of cognition (analysis, synthesis, comparison, analogy, abstraction, and concretization) as well as the use of discourse-analysis and intent-analysis. For an in-depth comprehension of the core of a problem on today's development of the Arctic, the historical method was used that allowed drawing more substantiated conclusions on the investigated object. Also, in the present article the authors addressed the quantitative method represented by content analysis as well as a conceptual analysis of publications. Besides, the authors conducted bibliographic surveys and classified obtained information. When studying the mass media and selecting materials, the authors used both Russian-language databases as well as global mass media databases (including INTEGRUM, Factiva, etc.). The combination of different research methods and tools have allowed researchers to more objectively reflect the process of geo-strategic rivalry of states through mass media in terms of the development of the Arctic resources that are becoming more affordable in relation to climate change.

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

Scientists Nikonov (Nikonov S., 2013), Labush (Labush N., et al., 2015), and Baychik (Baichik A., et al., 2015) note that many reports of journalists aimed at protecting the national interests of their countries (including those in the Arctic) and creating a negative image of other countries. In this regard, the reviewers, even before the crisis in Ukraine and the Crimean events of 2014, noted that competition for the Arctic resources can lead in the XXI century to the cold war of a new type, different from that taking place in the bipolar world of the XX century.

“And while the first “cold war” in the world was occasionally too hot, the new “cold war” will clearly live up to its name: this war will ruin everybody by frost”, - wrote Czech columnist Tomas Lebr (Lebr T., 2012).

In these latter days, this struggle becomes increasingly dangerous. Previously, foreign mass media with some humor wrote about the symbolic war of flags, which was waged by Danish and Canadian expeditions on the tiny Hans Island, located in the ice of the Northwest Passage. But when reserves of oil and gas were detected on the seabed close to the island, contradictions between two countries escalated. Canada held near the island military training exercises, while Denmark has designated its military presence by patrol boat (Apanasenko, V.M., 2013, Subbotin, V., 2016). The mass media anxiously reported on pace of developments in the Hans Island area and satisfyingly informed on the news about possibility of peaceful division of his small territory between Canada and Denmark.

“The fate of the Arctic Circle will actually show, - writes researcher Jody Ray Bennet, - whether cold war is finished, or it is just frozen until the ice has melted” (Bennet J.R., 2010).

Explaining the reasons of the erupted controversy, the press, radio, television, and online media air impressive messages about the economic prospects of the Arctic. According to the UN and the USA, the oil reserves here amount to 90-100 billion tons (that is several times greater than all the resources of Russia or Saudi Arabia). The Arctic shelf hides from 20 to 25% of the world's hydrocarbon reserves. According to official US geological survey, the Arctic region contains in its bosom about 13% of oil, still not discovered and 30% of well-hidden natural gas. The total value of mineral raw materials focused there, is estimated at 30 trillion US dollars. The Arctic region gives almost half of the fish products in the world. Due to the melting of the ice, new Northern waterways, hitherto inaccessible, can be discovered by 2030.

“The Arctic is the contact point of the three Northern continents, which attracts the great powers by its mineral wealth and a strategic trading location. It is breaking out of its icy shell and against the will gives itself in the hands of homo economicus”, - concludes in one of his articles M. Corwin, a specialist in the Arctic, Columbia University scholar (Corwin M., 2012; Skidanov Yu., 2016).

In 1996 the Arctic Council was established, incorporating eight countries located around the Arctic Ocean: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA. This unique institution was focused on the pollution problems of the Arctic environment, its sustainable development, climate change, and development of local Arctic communities. According to the mass media reports, in recent years, the Arctic countries seek to monopolize the resources of the region, protecting it from any outside interference. As noted by Laval Frederick Laser, Professor of geography from the University of Quebec, 95% of these resources are owned by the Arctic states. The tensions that stem from long-standing territorial disputes between the Arctic countries, reflect the competition for the emerged opportunities to obtain considerable economic and strategic benefits that are

provided by geographical advantages and potential resources of this vast snow-covered space.

In 2007-2015, this rivalry was noticeably manifested in the increased military activities of the Arctic states. In particular, it should be noted that the number of military training exercises in this region has increased. Thus, according to the Associated Press, in March 2012, Norway hosted the largest ever Arctic military training exercises, "The Golden Answer", involving 16,300 service personnel from 14 countries. Their goal was to learn how to operate in ice situation in both conducting real combat and preventing terrorist threats. The death incident of five crew members of the Norwegian C-130 Hercules aircraft that crashed near the highest mountaintop of Sweden, named Kebnekaise, proves the harsh conditions, in which military training exercises were carried out. Even earlier, two months before these maneuvers, press highlighted military training exercises of the USA, Canada and Denmark troops held in the same conditions (Lebr T., 2012).

In the framework of the annual event called "Operation Nanook", Canadian, American and Danish ships are also conducting joint naval maneuvers in the Canadian Arctic. The military training exercises involve some of the most powerful torpedo warships and frigates being at the disposal of each of the fleets. The Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyers – the United States Navy's first class of destroyer, launched in 1999 – is equipped with the Aegis Combat System, which many experts consider to be the most advanced in the world. Canadian frigate HMCS Halifax, carrying a vast arsenal of weapons, is considered to be the only foreign warship, which is allowed by the US Navy to be included in their striking carrier-borne forces. The frigate Vaedderen – an ocean patrol warship of the Royal Danish Navy – is one of the few warships of this class, specially built for operations in the Arctic ice (this warship was noted when it went into the disputed waters around the Hans Island).

Canadian armed forces sent to the remote Northern regions servicemen for the annual military training exercises as part of an operation called "Nunaliut", which translated from the language of the Eskimo means "This land is ours". These maneuvers involved Danish special detachment, equipped with dog sleds (world's only special force unit). The purpose of the joint training exercises was to strengthen Canadian sovereignty in the high Arctic by establishing patrols by the armed forces of Canada.

The Financial Times (UK) reported that a number of countries increase their military presence in this resource-rich and strategically important region, claiming their sovereignty over it (Hoyos, C., 2013). Among the Arctic states, Canada very seriously reacted to the news about planting the Russian flag under the ice at the North Pole at a depth of four kilometers. In 2007, Canadian Prime Minister S. Harper promised to create a deepwater port in mine Nanisivik – on the Northern tip of Baffin Island – to increase the Canadian military presence in the region. Several

times a year Ottawa sends to the Arctic Aurora CP 140 anti-submarine patrol aircrafts of the coastal aviation, purchased from the American company "Lockheed", while the rest of the time Canada relies on the Polar satellite, which gives a very narrow picture and thus is spending three weeks in order to gather information from the whole area.

Canada is going to patrol the Arctic region using the latest unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), which are developed by the American military-industrial company Northrop Grumman. Mr. Dufresne, Vice President and General Manager of the company's division dealing with drones, said that the acquisition of Polar Hawk UAV is part of the Canada First Defense Strategy. Analysts believe that thanks to dUAVs, Canadians will know about all the developments in the region – from passing ships to dubious mining projects (Hoyos, C., 2013).

Senior researcher at the Canadian Defense and Foreign Affairs Institute D. Steyrs believes that Ottawa intended to buy patrol ships to demonstrate their flag in the Arctic, but perhaps now, due to the purchase of drones, these ships will not be needed (Hoyos, C., 2013).

Observers note that the USA, Canada, Norway and Denmark did not increase so intensively the combat capabilities of their armed forces in the Arctic even during the cold war. This, in particular, was noted by Deputy Director of the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies at University of Calgary R. Huebert, who raises the question: "Don't these four countries are afraid of Russia, which can destabilize the situation?" (R. Huebert, 2010). Nobody indicates this country directly – writes the observer. Nevertheless, Minister of Defense of Canada P. Mackay said that in the future Canada will not invite Russia to participate in joint military training exercises in the Canadian Arctic. For another thing, what threat could force the Norwegians to acquire the very effective (and very expensive) combat systems, which they are buying from the Americans? "It's hard to avoid the conclusion, – says Huebert – that the supplying of the army with sophisticated armaments and weaponry, as well as large-scale training exercises in the Arctic are targeted exactly against Moscow. Even if Russia has nothing to do with that, no doubt that there is something that concerns the four Northern NATO countries, pushing them closer to each other" (R. Huebert, 2010).

Interesting is the opinion of the Lieutenant General Morten Haga Lunde, Head of Norwegian Military Intelligence, about Russia's military presence in the Arctic, expressed in the report to the military community in Oslo and presented on the website of the Russian Trade Mission in Norway with reference to the influential Norwegian newspaper. He noted that currently the Arctic is of the great interest for Russia because of three aspects: as a territory of critical strategic value, as a tool for the surmounting the crisis in Russian economy, and as a region of great symbolic value. Norwegian General believes that a key factor in all three aspects is the national control through military presence (Skidanov Yu., 2016).

In recent times in the issues concerned militarization of the Arctic there appeared an opinion that armies need to prepare not only for danger of possible armed conflict, but also for combating the effects of anthropogenic and environmental disasters.

The observers believe that the main stakes in the Arctic have been made by Russia, Canada and the USA. The USA, a little tired of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, now pushed their Northern forces back. In the recently published report of the United States Naval Academy, it was stated that the Navy is not prepared for long-term operations in the Arctic because it lacks vessels able to break through the ice to provide advanced bases (Lebr T., 2012).

The observers believe that from a military point of view, for Moscow the Arctic is an important tool to provide its "forceful security". With the adoption of a new National Security Strategy in May 2009, the Russian warships and planes have greatly increased patrols in the Arctic Ocean. Also Russia builds on a large scale several military ports deploying military units on the Russian owned islands. According to the mass media reports dated December 1, 2015, the works on the deployment and installation of six military bases in the Arctic islands and mainland of the polar part of Russia are almost completed. The military bases are deployed on the islands of Kotelnny (Novosibirsk Islands), Alexandra Land (part of the Franz-Joseph archipelago), Medium (Severnaya Zemlya), as well as in the village of Rogachevo (Novaya Zemlya), and at Cape Schmidt and Wrangel Island (part of Chukotka Autonomous District).

At that, modernization of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Arctic is under strengthened focus of foreign countries, which do not take into account the transparency of Russia's policy in this region. The authors, while expressing concern over the deployment of Russian all-arms formation in close vicinity to the border with the NATO member country (Norway), do not overlook the fact that the highest-level leaders of this Northern state consider the development of cooperation with Russia to be one of the priority objectives of state policy. Formerly, concern about the disposition of this formation (not changing for many years) did not arise in Norwegian highest-level leaders. However, we should take into account the fact that in state plans for the modernization of the national armed forces, the Norwegian government also has its national targets to increase its military presence in the region.

A range of foreign mass media reports that Russia is superior in armaments for the Arctic. Thus, the American journal "The National Interest" presented a list of weapons, which can be successfully used by Russia in the Arctic and have little or no competitors in any army in the world. It includes icebreakers, "Shark" type submarines, the MiG-31 air interceptor, Tu-95 and Tu-142 bombardment aircrafts, and special operations troops.

Russia's neighbors in the Arctic display their military power. Thus, the Russian news agency "Interfax" reported that during military training exercises held from

July 31 to August 1, 2016, two American strategic bombers B-52 approached the Russian military bases in the Arctic at a distance of 200 miles and entered the airspace over the exclusive economic zone of Russia. Exclusive economic zone is not a country's territory, though it is protected by the special legal status of the state with regard to the development of natural resources (Solovets A., 2016). Width of the exclusive economic zone may reach 200 miles or 370 km. Naturally, such actions do not contribute to the de-escalation of tensions in the Arctic. In early April of 2015, the Russian General V. Makarov announced on the "Russian News Service" radio that in order to protect national interests in the Arctic, Russian Armed Forces deployed in the region "Armor" air defense antitank systems (ADATS). Besides, it is planned to deploy there air-defense interceptors MiG-31 (Makarov V., 2015). The above mentioned Head of Norwegian Military Intelligence, Lieutenant General Morten Haga Lunde indicates that through the rehabilitation of existing and creation of new military units, bases and modern weapon systems in the Arctic, Russia is increasing its military capabilities for early warning of threats from the outside, protecting against military aircrafts and naval vessels, as well as preventing the ability of other states to conduct their activities in areas close to Norway (Skidanov Yu., 2016).

Military observers note that the current flights of American B-52 remind the beginning of the 1980-ies – the first years of Ronald Reagan's presidency, when it was decided to conduct psychological actions against the Soviet Union. Russian military columnist I. Plekhanov believes that the USA returns to the former so-called "polar concept" that began to be developed immediately after the Second World War in 1946, which predicted possible military actions in Alaska and the Arctic. It was the time of the first reconnaissance and research flights of reconnaissance aircrafts of the United States Air Force to the North Pole to estimate the behavior of the technical equipment in extreme conditions, as well as tests were conducted on vehicles, devices, tooling, and bomb release mechanism. Even the tests of using jellied gasoline were conducted in the North. In 1956, four B-52 aircrafts made the first nonstop flight around North America via the North Pole. From 1950 to 1957, while the early missile technologies have not allowed the USA and the USSR to strike at the territory of each other, the bombers were to become the main means of delivering nuclear warheads. Since 1956 and for a long time this mission in the USA was assigned to B-52, while the shortest way to strike was via the North Pole. Predictions and calculations of the American analysts in the late 1950-ies showed that in case of war, just 15% of the B-52 have the chance to reach their targets and drop bombs. That was also when in the 1950-ies, the Americans decided to build a distant early warning system (DEW). From Alaska to Greenland, over the distance of 3 thousand miles, 63 system objects were built and delivered to the U.S. Air Force. "DEW" operated in conjunction with a number of other regional, local and internal detection systems. By 1985, the system became

outdated –some facilities were out of order, some were simply abandoned. Canada has spent at least \$ 250 million on cleaning its territory from the remnants of this system. However, a new “North Warning System” (NWS) was implemented shortly (Plekhanov I., 2016).

The mass media notes that today with the increased popularity of the theory of “hybrid” wars without the nuclear attacks, the use of military aircrafts in the North becomes again up to date. Russia is building bases in the Arctic, the USA wants to use the airbase in Iceland and strengthen activities at the base of Thule in Greenland, while Canada plans to open “Northern Operations Hubs”, including the runways. Today, the militarization of the Arctic is again gaining new momentum. The mass media notes that in the first decade of the post-Soviet period, due to economic hardships, construction of the foundations of the new national identity, the problems of the Caucasus and former Soviet republics, Russia practically kept away from the Arctic issues. Now it is understood that Russia is inextricably intertwined with the North and the Arctic, and its uniqueness to the world consists in this fact. Therefore, it is necessary to understand Russia’s desire to be more actively presented in the Arctic.

“We must not be afraid of the recurrence of Russia to the Arctic, – said Professor A.N. Pilyasov, Director of the Center for Economics of the North and the Arctic of the Council for the Study of Productive Forces at the Ministry for Economic Development and Russian Academy of Sciences, – but take it as absolutely natural strategic behavior” (Pilyasov A.N., 2016).

## **DISCUSSION**

The Russian expedition “Arctic-2007” smashed the seemingly unbreakable anvil of history and spoiled politicians’ game for a long haul. In this regard, a number of publications of foreign analysts conclude that the world today is engaged in a new geostrategic game of the XXI century – the game around the Arctic.

According to the document “On Regional Policy in the Arctic”, which was signed in 2009 by the US President, this region is a zone of national interests of the United States, which includes anti-ballistic missile defense, strategic deterrence, naval presence, etc.

As noted in an overwhelming number of publications on this topic, the military-political establishment of the United States plans to implement the entire set of “national interests” in the region without regard to the interests of other actors of international relations, and, first and foremost, the interests of Russia.

Russian experts have expressed the view that in such conditions Russia must be tougher and more determined in defending its political standing. Protection of the national interests in the Arctic needs a system of political, economic, and other measures, which should be based on the forceful component in this region.



On February 20, 2013, Russian President V. Putin approved the “Strategy for Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and the National Security up to 2020”. This document clearly states the necessity of creating Russian task forces and troops of general purpose in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, capable to provide military security in different military-political situations. This appears to be a necessary measure, which is dictated by two main reasons. The first and major cause is to protect the economic interests of Russia. The second cause is to ensure the military security of the state against threats emanating from the Arctic sector. This caused the necessity of creating task forces and troops of the Russian Armed Forces of general purpose in the Arctic zone in relation to the growing military potential of NATO countries, and primarily, the United States, in the concerned region.

### CONCLUSION

Thus, today the Arctic became the territory, where clash political and economic interests of many countries. The contradictions of the objectives of the various states in the Arctic can lead to increased international tension in general, and the probability of occurrence of military conflicts in particular. Analysis of publications in the mass media has shown that at present there are several reasons for the exacerbation of the geopolitical struggle in the Arctic, however, the major reasons are: a legally uncertain status of national borders in the region, wealth of its subsurface resources, and the strategic significance of transport routes in the Arctic region.

Russian mass media shows that the Arctic policy of the Russian Federation aims at protecting its national interests in the region based on several principles, one of which is the international cooperation in the Arctic. At the same time publications in the mass media drew attention to the fact that Arctic policy of NATO and primarily the USA in the region is clearly of offensive nature, which yet is covered with “legends about the military training exercises,” the need to combat terrorism, piracy, and so on.

In the community of international experts, the Arctic is called the place, where the cold war never ended. American military expert Jody Ray Bennett published the assumption that in the XXI century the Arctic Circle can become what was “the Middle East in the second half of the XX century”. The grounds for such predictions are indeed quite a lot. Therefore, we cannot allow the Arctic to become in the near future a “hot spot” in the international sphere.

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