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Russia in the Arctic. Will the State Commission be its helmsman?



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Abstract. The article is focused on the analysis of the decisions on the development and exploration of the Arctic. It also reveals the activity of the State Commission on the Development of the Arctic. It notes the slow solution of problems of energy, information, transportation security of the remote settlements in the

Russian Arctic. Unresolved issues of legal support of the guarantee and compensation system caused a certain degree of concern for persons working on the territory of the North in the Arctic. This list of existing problems could be extended. Activities of the State Commission confirm the thesis that Russia intends to provide reliable and long-term national interests in the Arctic.

Keywords: *Arctic, the development, the State Commission, the problems*

The continuity of the soviet and Russian policy in the Arctic remains a hot topic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the context of the new geopolitical situation in the world, Russia has begun to formulate a new Arctic policy, because in the 1980s the Soviet experience was mostly lost. This article examines decisions on the development of the Arctic, and policy implementation.

Decisions on the development and exploration of the Arctic

In 1992, an inter-ministerial Commission for the Arctic and Antarctic Affairs was established, which replaced the RSFSR State Commission on Arctic and Antarctic Affairs. In 1996, there was an approved program of development of hydrocarbon reserves on the shelf of the Arctic seas of Russia until 2010. Russia ratified the Convention on the law of the Sea 1982 in December 2001 to increase the limits of its continental shelf of Russia but failed. The Commission considered the evidence provided by the Russian side concerning the Lomonosov Ridge unconvincing when identifying its structure as an undersea continuation of the continental shelf.

However, this did not reduce attention to the country's leadership in the Arctic and its problems. September 18, 2008: the President of the Russian Federation approved the framework of the State policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to the year 2020 and beyond, which identified the objectives and strategic priorities of the State policy of Russia in the

Arctic. In order to carry out the tasks defined in this document, according to experts, the state should begin more productive phase in the exploration and development of the Arctic. During the preparation and adoption of the document, a significant contribution to the security of the Russian Federation has been made. In Arkhangelsk, Northern (Arctic) Federal University¹ was established to train specialists for the Arctic areas.

On the 8th of February 2013 the President of Russia approved “Arctic development strategy of the Russian Federation and national security for the period up to the year 2020”. The Russian Government Decree No. 366, 21.04.2014 approved the “State programme of socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period until the year 2020”. In 2014, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation from May 2, 2014 No. 296 “On land territories of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation” the state authorities identified subjects of the Russian Federation and municipal entities included in the Arctic zone of Russia: a) the four subjects of the Russian Federation (Murmansk region, Yamalo-Nenets, Nenets and Chukotka Autonomous Okrugs); b) some territories of the four subjects of the Russian Federation: Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (five municipal districts), Krasnoyarsk Krai (3 municipalities), Arkhangelsk Oblast (seven municipalities), Komi Republic (one municipality).

After that, the composition of the Arctic also became an object of state statistical observations. The all-Russia classification of regions has a separate section “Land territory of the Arctic zone”. Decree of the RF Government signed on the 3rd of December 3, No. 2437-r: A federal plan of statistics is supplemented by subsection 2.5. “Indicators of socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and national security”. July 26, 2015: Russian President V.V. Putin approved the “Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation”, which defines the tasks for the Arctic regional policy. These documents constitute state strategic planning, management and regulation of the socio-economic development and national security issues in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF).

With the adoption of a special law on the Arctic, pinning the special status of the macro-region, it could be argued, that Russia has a full legislative framework managing the relations in this region of the country. The Institute of legislation and comparative law of the Government of the Russian Federation ends “inventory” of all legal acts relating to the Arctic. According to its Director, Vice-President of the RAS T.Habrieva, now we have more than 500 different normative legal acts. Adoption of a federal law “On the development of the Arctic” could be a basis for local

¹ The Government of the Russian Federation Order on the 2nd of April 2010: NArFu was established on the basis of the Pomor State University and Arkhangelsk Technical University

legal. Therefore, there would be no place for legal disorder in Russia [1]. The legislators agree that Russia needs a new uniform act on the Arctic. The Chairman of the Expert Council on Arctic and Antarctic under the State Council, V.A. Shtyrov emphasizes that “the State programme of socio-economic development of AZRF for the period till the year 2020” is an intermediate option, because it does not meet the objectives laid down in the strategy for the development of AZRF. The first thing you need to do is to modify or change the State program; the next step is creating powerful tools — the special laws on the Arctic, composed of several sections. *Firstly*, it is the economic component: the Arctic must become attractive to investors. Hence, there should be a special tax, fiscal and tariff policies, creating special conditions for the formation of the territory of advanced development, as it has been done on the Far East. *Secondly*, there must be a powerful block of social conditions for the consolidation of the people in the northern regions¹. Therefore, people would not leave northern regions. There is a need in serious incentives related to salary, provision of housing, increased size of the parent capital, etc. According to experts, there would be other options when people come to the Arctic for short time.

The Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Russian Federation A. V. Tsibulskiy thinks that the law should be a document that combines public administration system; special legal regimes involving economic or other activity in the Arctic; state support measures to stimulate such activity; promising mechanisms of public-private partnership; sectoral, regional and local peculiarities of legal regulation of the development of the Arctic territories and waters [2].

In the past two or three years, Russia is stepping up its presence in the Arctic. It is strengthening its position in the Arctic. The Russian Ministry of Defense, the EMERCOM and FSB of Russia established and began operate new military structure of the Joint Strategic Command “North” since December 1, 2014. Armed forces constitute a permanent base for the northern fleet at Novosibirsk Islands. “Spetsstroy Rossii” completed reconstruction of the military base of the first Arctic motorized rifle brigade in the settlement of Alakurtti, Murmansk Region. Work on the construction of facilities on the islands of Kotelnikov, Wrangel, Alexandra Land, Novaya Zemlya and Cape Schmidt is underway; the restoration of the airfields on Novosibirsk Islands and Franz Josef Land is planned and airfields in Tiksi, Naryan-Mar, Alykel, Vorkuta, Anadyr, and Rogachevo is completed. 13 airfields, 1 ground aviation polygon and 10 radar offices and air control points are to be built in the Arctic². October 22, 2015: Russian Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu said that

¹ V zakone ob Arktike dolzhen byt sformirovan moshhnyj socialnyj blok. URL: http://www.arctic-info.ru/ExpertOpinion/18-09-2015/v-zakone-ob-arktike-doljen-bit_-sformirovan-mosnii-social_nii-blok (Accessed: 25 March 2016)

² According to information agency «Arktika info» in 2014—2015.

creating the Arctic group of forces of Russia will be completed by 2018, and in 2016—2017 six airfields in the Arctic will be renovated¹. In order to complete a system for the comprehensive security of population and territories in the Russian Arctic, it is expected to open 10 complex emergency rescue centers of the EMERCOM of Russia with 16 thousand people working there. For the area of 20 000 km it is insufficient, taking into consideration that each year in the Arctic, according to the EMERCOM, we get up to 120 emergencies.

All sorts of accusations against Russia in the militarization of the Arctic are groundless. Deployment of military infrastructure in the Arctic is performed to protect the national interests of Russia, contributes to maintaining the balance of power in the region and counter together with law enforcement agencies and special services of the new challenges and threats to security². Despite the fact that in 2014 all military contacts within the framework of the Arctic Council were stopped, Russia acts in favour of the preservation of the Arctic as a territory of peace, security and international cooperation. The objective of the activity is mostly oil and gas industry, protection of the deposits, functioning of the Northern sea route, and it could be carried out by private military companies, says the Deputy of the State Duma Gennady Nosovko³.

Significantly enhanced is attention to search, exploration and production of hydrocarbon resources. Today we have 594 oil deposits, 179 gas deposits, two deposits of nickel and more than 350 gold deposits [3]. In addition, we have large deposits of ferrous, non-ferrous, rare metals, polymetals, radioactive elements, diamonds, non-metallic and chemical raw materials. Minerals remain the key driver for the development of the Arctic macroregion.

In early August 2015, Russia filed an application to the UN Commission on the limits of the continental shelf. Its approval will secure our country's sovereign rights over additional territory on the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean with an area of 1 200 million sq. km, a huge area rich with hydrocarbons [4]. The decision on this matter will be based on the Ilulissat Declaration, signed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of countries — participants of the Arctic Council in 2008, according to which all disputes arising when applying for the definition of the boundaries of

¹ Shojgu: Arkticheskaya gruppировka vojsk budet sformirovana k 2018 g. URL: <http://www.arctic-info.ru/news/22-10-2015/soigy--arkticeskaa-gryppirovka-voisk-bydet-sformirovana-k-2018-gody> (Accessed: 24 March 2016)

² On May 11, 2015 a session of Federal operating headquarters was held, and decisions were made regarding finding new measures for security and counter-terrorist defence of objects in the sea areas of the Russian Federation, including the Arctic, and regarding better effectiveness of cooperation between authorities while facing terrorist threats. See: V Moskve proshlo zasedanie Federalnogo operativnogo shtaba. URL: <http://nac.gov.ru/nakmessage/2015/05/13/v-moskve-proshlozase-danie-federal-nogo-operativnogo-shtaba.html> (Accessed: 25 March 2016)

³ Raskin A. Pravitelstvo otkazalos ot sozdaniya chastnyh armij // Izvestiya. 2015. 23 sentyabrya.

the Arctic shelf, will be resolved through negotiations and through the search for consensus. The application is scheduled for February 2016¹.

In contemporary political conditions, the West systematically uses the environmental problems caused by the mistakes of the past and some bugs today, as a pretext for creating reputational challenges for Russia. In particular, it could be directed against an application to expand the Russian continental shelf. Our State pays attention to the implementation of environmental programmes in the field of biodiversity in the Russian Arctic. It operates 24 specially protected natural areas, 10 nature reserves, 13 parks and 11 federal reserves with a total area of 22.5 mln ha, as well as 86 protected areas of regional importance (29 million ha) [3].

The State Commission for the development of the Arctic

Recently experts and officials have keenly discussed governance in the Arctic. The discussion emerged three terms: to create a new Arctic Federal District, the Arctic Ministry of the Russian Federation, the establishment of a Government Commission on Arctic Affairs. In February 2015, the State Commission on the development of the Arctic was established. The Chairman of the Commission — Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation D. Rogozin. The Commission includes 79 officials. April 14, 2015: they held its first meeting, started working groups and scientific and expert council. Now we can say that the Commission has been justified, and a number of objective factors has caused it:

1. A significant increase in the role of the Arctic in socio-economic development of the country in recent years. 43% of the Arctic area is Russian. The Russian Arctic is home to more than 2.5 million people, accounting for 2% of the population and more than half of the population of the entire Arctic² in the assessment of the United States Geological Survey. The Arctic is 30% of the undiscovered gas reserves, 13% of the undiscovered oil, 30% of the world freshwater. Arctic becomes the center of the intersection of national interests of the Arctic and non-Arctic States.

2. The need to improve coordination of the activities of the federal bodies of executive power. The Arctic issues meet about 20 ministries. Some order is also needed for the development of the Northern sea route (NSR) that will lead to fundamental shifts in world trade and redistribution of global cargo traffic.

¹ Donskoj: rassmotrenie zayavki RF na rasshirenie shelfa v Arktike zaplanirovano na fevral. URL: http://www.arctic-info.ru/news/25-12-2015/donskoi--rassmotrenie-zaavki-rf-na-rasshirenie-sel_fa-v-arktike-zaplanirovano-na-fevral_ (Accessed: 25 March 2016)

² In 2012 4.6 mln people lived in the Arctic, out of which 2.5 mln lived in AZRF.

3. Growing influence of local governmental bodies within the AZRF. High taxes derived from hydrocarbon production, led to different living standards of the population; disparities in the development of regions; projects are not always timely, economically necessary and justified.

4. Growing influence and the tightening of competition between the major economic entities engaged in exploration and production of hydrocarbons in the Arctic region.

5. The need to strengthen the monitoring of funds allocated to address challenges in the Russian Arctic, including the clean up of the former economic activity.

6. The need for a set of objectives for the development of the International Arctic cooperation, and ensuring state and public security in AZRF.

Implementation of these statements gradually eliminates blurring of responsibility for implementation of the State policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic. There is an understanding that the country should form a single competence center, able to coordinate the activities of federal executive authorities and bodies of governmental power of RF subjects, other organizations and companies involved in the Arctic policy issues. The State Commission on the Arctic development will face a number of important tasks. *First*, it is a support of indigenous people of the North, Siberia and the Far East: an analysis of law enforcement in the area of their traditional land use, traditional way of life; accounting their interest in management decisions on development of the Arctic territories; introducing a mechanism of compensation for damage. Amount of federal funds provided to the regions to support economic and social development of indigenous peoples reduced from 600 mln rubles in 2009 to 205 mln in 2015¹. Today 28 subjects of the Russian Federation are home to 42 indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East or 258 thousand people². *Secondly*, it is the further development of International Arctic cooperation with states – members of the AC and observers. The particularity of the situation is that Russia “has consistently advocated the strengthening of cooperation with the States - members of the Arctic Council in all directions”³. However, the sanctions against our country influence the imbalance in collaboration between the major Arctic players and could adversely affect the performance of the two-year Presidency of the United States in the Arctic Council. Introduced sanctions restricting the time of

¹ D.O. Rogozin: neobhodima kompleksnaya informacionnaya podderzhka interesov Rossii v Arktike. URL: <http://www.arctic-info.ru/news/05-10-2015/dmitrii-rogozin--neobhodima-kompleksnaa-informacionnaa-podderjka-interesov-rossii-v-arktike> (Accessed: 24 March 2016)

² Zalog uspeshnogo osvoeniya Arktiki: razvivaya ne navredi. Intervyu prezidenta Associaciya malochislennyx narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka RF, deputata Gosudarstvennoj Dumy Federal'nogo Sobraniya Rossijskoj Federacii G.P. Ledkova //Arkticheskoe obozrenie. 2015. № 1. S. 22

³ Privetstvie Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii V.V. Putina uchastnikam i gostyam mezhdunarodnoj vstrechi predstavitelej gosudarstv-chlenov Arkticheskogo soveta, stran-nablyudatelej i zarubezhnoj nauchnoj Arkticheskogo soveta, stran-nablyudatelej i zarubezhnoj nauchnoj obshhestvennosti v Arhangelske 16 sentyabrya 2015g. URL: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/950.html> (Accessed: 12 March 2016)

realization of strategic projects, exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Arctic Russia, pose threats and risks for leading Russian companies. As the analysis shows, targeting sanctions demonstrate a real competition between the states in the region for its resources. In our view, the United States and European countries are not interested in strengthening the position of our country in the Arctic region. They lead and manage this policy even if their company will incur losses and withdraw from the Arctic projects in Russia. In these circumstances, it is important to create their own competitive technologies to reduce dependence on other countries in the future.

Thirdly, continuation of work on clean up of the Russian Arctic, including the numerous radioactive waste. It should be noted that on November 24, 2015 this question was considered at the meeting of the RAS Presidium. Despite the fact that in the areas of flooding of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel the level of radioactive contamination of gamma-emitting radionuclides is low and does not differ from baseline values, we should not be limited to periodic studies but continue research and observation. The Russian strategy for further development of the Arctic makes the environmental and radiological safety particular important. Now, according to the RAS experts one unresolved problem is flooded nuclear facilities. In the Arctic waters of the USSR/Russia there are approximately 18 thousand of flooded nuclear objects. Today 119 of 121 nuclear submarines (NPS) are utilized in the Arctic. We also solved the problem of dismantling and disposing of the radioisotope thermo-electric generators used in our country since 1970-ies. A special attention is paid to rescue sunken nuclear submarines, as they were not prepared for the flooding and have no additional protective barriers. Submarine "Komsomolets" has two torpedoes with nuclear warheads in addition to the reactor, but they are at a depth of 1.5 kilometer in the Norwegian Sea. According to experts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, it is too expensive to put them up. Therefore, this submarine is not considered a priority utilization facility. The real danger are the two objects: the submarine k-27, located at a depth of 33 meters east of Novaya Zemlya in the Bay of Stepovogo and the submarine K-159, sunken in the Barents sea off the North coast of the Kola Peninsula at a depth of 170 meters. This submarine is under the waters used for intensive maritime communications. Therefore, the calculation of intensity and rate of corrosion of its protective barriers is an extremely important issue. A. Sarkisov believes that it is necessary to carry out additional special research and to build universal lifting platform for such work. According to A. Sarkisov, Russian Academy of Sciences should address the Government of the Russian Federation a number of proposals to solve this problem¹. After that, in our view, *it is necessary to present*

¹ Prezidium RAN: ochistit Arktiku ot posledstvij «holodnoj vojny». URL: <http://scientificrussia.ru/articles/prezidium-ran-ot-24-11-2015> (Accessed: 24 March 2016)

an integrated programme of clearing the water areas with radioactive waste, thus eliminate the soil for speculation and attacks on Russian inability to ensure environmental security in the Arctic.

Fourthly, sustainable development of the Northern Sea Route; increasing volumes of cargo transportation and integrating it into the world transport system. It must be assumed that the main source of growing the traffic on the NSR is the development of mineral resources of the shelf and the coasts of Barents, Pechora and Kara Seas, Yamal LNG project in particular. According to some scholars, the issue deserves a special attention in the framework of the maritime policy of the Russian fleet to transport petroleum and LNG [5]. Traffic at the NSR grows every year, but today it is not enough for significant transit. Throughout the Northern Sea Route, there is a need to create a sustainable system of navigation and pilotage using the capabilities of space technology at the northern latitudes. In public administration and public opinion, there is an understanding and expectation that the successful development of NSR would contribute to the economic rise of Russia.

At the second meeting in Sochi the Commission set the task of strengthening the work to promote and protect Russian Arctic interests in the media, as well as the development of Arctic tourism. Our media has some printed publications and electronic resources on Arctic issues; they systematically publish materials concerning the Arctic and its environment¹. With regard to Arctic tourism, it should be recognized that the Russian market is dominated by foreign tour operators. In this regard, it is necessary to create a major national tour operator focused primarily on the internal tourism to attract the Russian citizens and foreigners to the Arctic. However, for this purpose it is necessary to create the appropriate conditions and infrastructure.

November 23, 2015 in the Council of Federation held a joint session of the State Commission for the development of the Arctic and Council on the Arctic and Antarctic issues in the Federation Council. At the meeting, they discussed the draft federal law on the development of the AZRF. A proposal was made to establish a working group to finalize the bill for the autumn session, 2016. In the opinion of the participants of the meeting, organizational, financial and legal mechanisms should enhance the investment attractiveness of the macro-region and make the Arctic more accessible.

¹ They are: «Arkticheskie vedomosti», «Arktika; ekologiya i ekonomika», «Arktika i Sever», sajty «Arktika-info» (<http://arctic-info.ru>), «Vremya Arktiki» (<http://arctictime.ru>). Publications about the Arctic are present at web-sites of AZRF regions, Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Arctic and Antarctic scientific research institute, Kolskiy Scientific Centre of the RAS, Russian Council for International Affairs, Russian Centre for Development of the Arctic, Russian Geographical Society.

We will be objective when saying that Arctic key problems are solved too slowly and ineffectively. This is well understood by those, who lives and works there. The region is characterized by out-migration, a high degree of wear and tear of fixed assets, weak infrastructure. The issues of sustainable socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation require decision. The energy problems, information, transport security of the remote areas of the Russian Arctic are slowly decided. Attention is drawn to the aging of the icebreaker and river fleet, an acute shortage of small aviation. Legal provision of the safeguards system and compensation for persons employed in the territory of the North are unclear. Not clear is the support of entrepreneurial activities in the Arctic region. The area requires a significant build-up of forces and means to intensify monitoring of climate change and the state of soils. The list of existing problems could be continued, but you must understand the complexity and heterogeneity of the Russian Arctic. Each region, municipality has its challenges, problems and priorities. In these circumstances, it is important to advance the development of transport infrastructure, which will integrate the subjects of the Russian Federation into a single transportation system and the common economic space. Lately the members of the State Commission for the development of the Arctic and many experts not only opened and thoroughly analyzed all existing problems, but also suggested ways to address them¹.

Conclusion

Despite all the current complex and controversial political events, the Arctic is noted a **promising territory** by the Chairman of the State Commission D. Rogozin. We see that, for example, projects in Yamalo-Nenets autonomous district, such as the Yamal LNG port Sabetta, would become a reality, the pride of Russia, they require not only a high level of organization, but a lot of attention to the human forces and confidence in their implementation.

In September 2016, Arctic Council is going to be 20 years old. During that period, the member states and observer countries carried out the development of the Arctic. It is important to note that all the countries of the Arctic Council are aware that national interests in the Arctic,

¹ See.: Matvienko V.I. Zakon o razvitii Arktiki stanet nadezhnym pravovym fundamentom dlya realizacii ekonomicheskix interesov Rossii. URL: <http://www.arctic-info.ru/ExpertOpinion/25-11-2015/zakon-o-razvitii-arktiki-stanet-nadezhnim-pravovim-fundamentom-dla-realizacii-ekonomicheskix-interesov-rossii>; Rogozin D.O. Krizisy prihodiat i uhodyat, a Arktika — vechna. URL: <http://www.arctic-info.ru/ExpertOpinion/26-11-2015/krizisi-prihodiat-i-uhodat--a-arktika---vecna>; Donskoj S.E. My ne dolzhny otkladyvat osvoenie Arktiki do luchshix vremen. URL: http://www.arctic-info.ru/ExpertOpinion/27-11-2015/mi-ne-doljni-otkladyvat_-osvoenie-arktiki-do-lychshix-vremen; Chilingarov A.N. Artur Chilingarov: «Arktika demonstriruet sebya kak zona sotrudnichestva». URL: <http://rcoa.ru/news/konferentsii/artur-chilingarov-arktika-demonstriruet-sebya-kak-zona-sotrudnichestva>; Dmitriy Kobylkin: «Realizaciya infrastrukturyh proektov na Yamale obespechit dinamichnoe razvitie Sevmorputi». URL: <http://rcoa.ru/news/konferentsii/dmitriy-kobylkin-realizatsiya-infrastrukturyh-proektov-na-yamale-obespechit-dinamichnoe-azvitie-sevmorputi>; Barbin V.V. Arktika trebuyet sereznogo otnosheniya i mezhgosudarstvennogo vzaimodejstviya. URL: http://www.arctic-info.ru/Interview/27-11-2015/arktika-trebuyet-ser_eznogo-otnosenia-i-mej-gosudarstvennogo-vzaimodeistvia-i-dr. (Accessed: 24 March 2016)

especially economic, could be realized only through the close cooperation. Russia is also open to mutually beneficial cooperation in the Arctic, including Asian countries while respecting their independence, sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the Arctic states.

Establishment of a State Commission on the development of the Arctic confirms the notion that Russia intends to secure and ensure the long-term national interests in the Arctic. Priority issue for Russia is the preservation of the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability and cooperation.

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