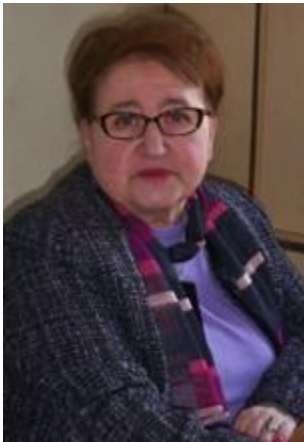


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India and the Arctic: environment, economy and politics



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Abstract. The article analyzes the main trends in the development of India and the development of the Arctic: the participation in the study of global warming and the state of the Arctic ice; the use of the Northern Sea Route for transportation; expansion of international cooperation in the Arctic direction, including with Russia.

Keywords: *Arctic, India, Russia, the Northern Sea Route, the Arctic Council, research*

The development of the Arctic is recognized in India as a priority program, with which the country is seeking to strengthen its economic and political positions in the region. India does not have now enough capacities to implement large-scale projects, however, it is purposefully trying to gain a foothold in the Arctic, hoping on assistance of the partners.

India's interest to the Arctic is associated with lack of energy, which is covered by import, so the Arctic with its potentially rich hydrocarbon resources attracts its attention. The country takes the 4th place in the world in oil import. Indian companies are interested in cooperation with Russian partners with a view of joint development of the deposits in the Russian North, for example, in the Nenets and Yamal-Nenets autonomous areas.

India worries about possible reduction in transportations across the Indian Ocean due to the prospect of expanding of cargo traffic along the Northern Sea Route (NSR). Country shows concern in climate change, as the events taking place at the North Pole, may affect the climate of the entire planet, including the Hindustan [1; 2].

The first evidences of the interest of India in Arctic research are related to the period when India was a part of the British colonial empire. In February 1920, India joined the Spitsbergen Treaty, which defined the international legal status of Spitsbergen archipelago which was under the sovereignty of Norway. This document was signed in Paris by a number of countries in Europe, Asia and the America, including the United Kingdom overseas dominions.

In 1981, at the initiative of the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, the Department of ocean research was created, it was subsequently transformed into the Ministry of Earth Sciences. After this, the Arctic research program has been developed. National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) founded in April 1999 in Goa, for the purpose of coordinating and developing of polar research in India, has been actively involved in cooperation with foreign scientific centers of the Arctic.

The beginning of regular Indian program of the Arctic research started in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s. In 2007, India established the research station "Himandri" in the village of Ny-Alesund in Svalbard at the distance of 1200km from the North Pole [3, p. 42]. This event can be considered as the beginning of change in the attitude of the Indian government to the Arctic territories. Since then, India has regularly (3-4 times a year) send scientific expeditions in the Arctic [4]. Every year about 200 researchers from various institutes, universities and colleges, work in shifts from May to November at this station. In June 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of India visited it. The first Indian multi-purpose floating observatory "IndArk" was launched on June 24, 2014, the works were carried out by a team of researchers from the Ministry of Earth Sciences, National Center for Antarctic and Ocean Research and the National Institute of Ocean Technology. It was discharged from board of the Norwegian research vessel "Lance" at Kungsforde in Svalbard, about midway between the coast of Norway and the North Pole¹. At the initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of India, the plans of the Arctic expeditions and research programs have been included in the five-year plans of the development of India. Expeditions of the Indian scientists on Spitsbergen island in 2007—2008 and in 2008—2009 were expected as well as research vessels of oceanographic expeditions during the Arctic summer of 2009—2010 and of 2011—2012.

Environmental protection is a key factor that determines Indian activity in the Arctic. It is, above all, related to the issue of climate change and global warming, if the peak of warming is in the spring and early summer, the temperature rise in the North of India could have disastrous consequences. Arctic ice melting affects the condition of the ice at the Tibetan plateau, where major rivers originate in India. It is known that any changes of ice conditions on tops of the Himalayan ridge can cause severe floods and have disastrous consequences for the entire Indo-Ganges valley, as the increase in sea level due to melting of glaciers can lead to flooding of considerable part of India with

¹ Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia predstavitelei gosudarstv-chlenov Arkticheskogo soveta, gosudarstv nabliudatelei i zarubezhnoi nauchnoi obshchestvennosti «Obespechenie bezopasnosti i ustoychivogo razvitiia arkticheskogo regiona, sokhranenie ekosistem i traditsionnogo obraza zhizni korennoogo naseleniia Arktiki. Arkhangel'sk. 16.09.2015. M., 2015. pp. 90—91.

a population of more than 100 million people. Therefore, monitoring for the condition of the ice is one of the priorities of Indian scientists working in the Arctic.

Actual problem for India is the research of climate change, precipitation and the state of Arctic glaciers and ice of the Arctic Ocean to detect possible distant interdependence between the Arctic climate and the Indian monsoons. Indian scientists have established the existence of such dependence, but its mechanisms are not clear. The vital problem for the development of agriculture in India is volumes of monsoon. According to one of the participants of the Arctic Research of India K.P. Krishnan, particular importance of the Arctic region for the Indian subcontinent is precisely determined by the fact that there is atmospheric dependence of the region of north pole and intensity of Indian monsoon. Therefore, the results of research can help for modeling and prediction of the state and intensity of the monsoons.

India's interest in the research of the Arctic region is also associated with the need to study the flora and fauna of various forms of life in the Arctic region. India's first scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean, started on the first week of August 2007. It was composed of five members, headed by the director of the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research Shri Raziq Ravindra. Three long-term research projects in the sphere of atmospheric science, microbiology, earth sciences and the study of glaciers began in the result of the month-long stay at the International Arctic base in Ny-Ålesund. The second scientific expedition consisted of two stages: June — July and July — August 2008. Research of ice, atmospheric and biological processes, etc. were conducted there. The third Indian expedition worked in three phases: June — July 2009, August 2009 and March — April 2010. Next Indian expedition consisting of 5 members worked in the Arctic since May 14 till June 8, 2011. Scientists from various national institutions take part in the Indian Arctic Program. More than US 12 mln. have been invested in the research in recent years. In 2012—13, 25 scientists visited the station "Himadri", where they spent more than 185 days for research on ten special projects [5].

In 2012 India applied for the observer status, and on 1 May 2013 India received it at the eighth meeting of the Ministers of member countries of the Arctic Council, in Kiruna (Sweden), this status was granted to India, along with China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Italy and Singapore. India's position in the Arctic Council is manifested in the fact that it takes the active part in the study of global warming and the state of Arctic sea ice, India studies possible options of using the Northern Sea Route for transportation, is looking for ways to enhance international cooperation in the Arctic area. It is important to note that India is opposed to expanding of oil and gas production, explaining it by the exploration and production of hydrocarbons in the Arctic are

associated with many risks, lack of the necessary technology and the limited scientific knowledge of environmental problems and serious dangers due to the effects of climate change. When using the Arctic as the shortest sea route between the eastern and western regions of the world, India is simultaneously reviewing its strategic interests and capabilities in the Indian Ocean.

Taking into account the events in Ukraine and strengthening of the opposition between Russia and the US and the European countries, India believes that it is important to consider not only the questions of science and the environment, but also the dynamics of the political, economic, strategic and economic processes in the Arctic region. In this regard, India considers the following objectives as strategic: 1) the expansion of not only economic and scientific, but also political and strategic cooperation with the "northerners" on a bilateral basis; 2) a large-scale study of the political situation in the Arctic region and the development of the special Indian "Arctic strategy"; 3) promotion of the idea of reducing the confrontation in the region; 4) the Arctic region should be declared free of nuclear weapons [6, p. 247].

The meeting of Indian diplomats with experts was held in September 2012, at Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), where the country's strategic prospects in the Arctic were discussed [4, p. 18]. ICWA prepared a special document in which, in particular, were formed the following tasks facing India in the Arctic: 1) to establish a mechanism for bilateral dialogue with the coastal Arctic states; to support the work of the Arctic Council, to promote cooperation between its members; 2) to appoint a special representative (ambassador) on Arctic affairs, who will represent India at the meetings of the Arctic Council; to develop such the Arctic policy, which will provide both diplomatic and academic, economic and strategic interests of the country; 3) to organize a special group for the continuous monitoring and observation for the development of political, diplomatic and strategic processes in the Arctic; preparing and publication of scientific projects and programs, including joint ventures with foreign countries, for policy makers and relevant government institutions. India should develop its own "Arctic strategy"; 4) to participate in international conferences, where there are real opportunities for the exchange of views with the scientists from different countries on the Arctic; 5) to participate actively in the elaboration of consolidated views of Asian countries on such problems in the Arctic as changes in sea level, ice conditions, changing of weather conditions, i.e. all that could have an impact on the situation in various regions and countries with a predominantly agricultural development; 6) to strive for inclusion of questions about the state of the northern polar area in the agenda of international forums such as BRICS, the East Asian Summit and others, with the participation of countries, somehow involved in the Arctic and Antarctic research.; 7) to strive for inclusion of issues related

to the Arctic into the first track of discussions with Canada, China, Denmark, European Union, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, Russia, the United States and other countries for the analysis of prospects for India's cooperation with these countries; 8) polar research should be discussed during the talks between India and Pakistan, since the changes in the Arctic affected on Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau, also influence on socio-economic development of both countries; 9) active participation in polar research gives India the status of sea power, a full participant in the solution of global problems, among which the development of the Arctic is included by the country's leading experts; active participation also contributes to the training of national personnel for navigation and maintenance of ships involved in the Arctic.

India treats with caution the activation of policy by China and Japan for energy resources in this particular ecological and economic region of the world. India and China see each other as rivals at the global level, and the Arctic is becoming as arena where their interests collide. In March 2010, Rear-Admiral of the Chinese Air Force, retired, Zhao Yin, speaking at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said: "The Arctic belongs to all people of the world as no nation has sovereignty over it." ². China, he continued, should also have a share of the region's resources. In India there are also ideas with call to follow China and achieve the share in the use of resources of the Arctic to ensure their economic growth.

At the same time, according to a well-known Indian diplomat and analyst Shyam Saran, this approach is short-sighted, because it does not take into account the damage that may be caused to the Arctic by "uncontrolled human greed." In addition, India has neither the financial nor the technological capabilities of the countries that are competing for the leading positions in the Arctic. Instead, India, according to Shyam Saran, should stand for signing of the Arctic agreement, according to which the territorial claims must be set aside till the expiration of the agreement. India should also put this issue in the agenda of the UN Security Council and initiate appropriate international actions. Such a contribution in the solution of the problem will contribute to its recognition as a responsible global power. Indian Institute of Defence Research and Analyses held a scientific conference in September 2013, the purpose of which was to identify the prospects of Asian coalition of countries (India, China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan), where the objectives and motives of the "Asian" observer countries' joined to the Arctic Council were considered [4]. India based on its conceptual provisions is seeking to develop an international Arctic cooperation with Norway, Finland, Canada, and especially with Russia.

² Kholodnaia voina za Arktiku: stavki Indii. 11.05.2012. URL: <http://ru.apircenter.org/archives/616> (accessed: 19 June 2016).

For instance, in the middle of November 2006, the Indian Minister of Earth Sciences Kapil Sibal visited Norway. In the course of negotiations, Arctic research were determined as priority area of scientific cooperation between two countries. In June 2007, during visit of Minister of Higher Education of Norway to India, the agreement to continue joint polar research and the study of climate change was reached. During the 2012—2013, within the framework of the Norwegian-Indian cooperation in the scientific sphere, two joint scientific expeditions in the Barents Sea area were carried out, as well as conferences where possibilities of Indian participation in the development of the region were discussed. [5]

In October 2014, the first ever visit of the President of India Pranab Mukherjee in Norway and Finland was taken, during which he crossed the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi area in Finland. This trip was regarded as a sign of India's commitment to continue to strengthen its strategic positions in the Arctic region, which gradually turns into a new arena of collision of geopolitical interests of various countries. The President was accompanied by 45 businessmen and professionals in the field of education that signed agreements with their partners from Norway and Finland. In Norway, also issues of cooperation in the field of deep-sea fishing and the development of related technologies were discussed. The cooperation with these two countries showed that in the interests of India, it is important to maintain relationships with the coastal states of the Arctic on a bilateral basis in the field of scientific and economic research, as well as in the political and strategic issues. Indian steel company Tata Steel intends to develop deposits of ore in the Arctic zone of Canada, and in such a large scale in order to provide a significant part of the demand for raw materials for its factories located in Europe [1, p. 93].

India is constantly expanding its cooperation on Arctic issues with Russia. Taking into account the long-term energy needs, Indian investment department of ONGC — OVL offered \$ 2 billion for 15% of shares of Yuganskneftegaz already in 2005. 04 of May the company Oil and National Gas Corporation — Videsh Limited (ONGC–OVL)³ sent to Rosneft an offer to participate in joint projects for the development of the Russian Arctic shelf together with the American company ExxonMobil, the Italian ENI and Norwegian Statoil. The company ONGC also works on the project "Sakhalin-1", where its share is 30%. In the Joint statement of 13th Indian-Russian Annual Summit, held on December 24, 2012 in New Delhi, signed by Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, both sides confirmed their interests in the fulfillment of the conditions of the Intergovernmental agreement about cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons, signed December

³ The company ONGC–OVL was founded in 1993 as a state structure. The government of India controls 74,14% of its shares.

21, 2010. At the same time, the Indian side confirmed its interest in equal participation in the development of existing and new projects in Siberia, in Russian Far East and on the Arctic shelf via oil and gas company ONGC-OVL. In joint document on the results of the 14th Summit held on 20—22 October 2013 in Moscow (14), it was noted that "the Indian side expressed interest to the company ONGC-OVL in the exploration of hydrocarbons in the Arctic in cooperation with leading Russian companies." In May 2014, Rosneft and Indian ONGC-OVL signed memorandum of understanding on the Arctic shelf of Russia within the framework of international consortium.

At the beginning of October 2014, India's delegation participated in the international conference in St. Petersburg on the development of ports and shipping (Transtech), dedicated to the development of the Northern Sea Route. However, Indian experts noted that India did not have sufficient technical possibilities for the expansion of Arctic research, but was taking steps to solve this problem. In particular, aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, purchased in Russia, can be used for navigation in the Arctic waters. In early November 2014, Prime Minister N. Modi ordered the buy the polar research vessel to expand Indian operations in the Arctic. According to Indian experts, to solve this problem India is trying to build relationships with other participants of the development of the Arctic, primarily with Russia, whose role can become a key one in the sustainable development of the region. "We have to use the situation, — says the expert of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) Uttam Kumar Sinha, in an article published in The Hindustan Times. — Due to global warming huge deposits of oil and gas have become available, and we can cooperate with Russia in a strategic, commercial, scientific spheres. Russia will play an important role in ensuring the energy security of India. Russia and India have a long tradition of naval cooperation, and our fleet can operate in the Arctic, taking part in search and rescue operations and monitoring environmental pollution. The Russian and Indian scientists can work hand in hand over the key to the mystery of the Arctic Climatology and Meteorology»⁴.

Following the results of the visit of the President of RF V.V. Putin to India, on December 11, 2014, in a joint Russian-Indian statement (point 13) the importance of the Arctic region for two countries is accepted and their readiness to develop scientific cooperation in the study of the rapidly changing situation in the Arctic, to develop technologies for processing of rare earth materials in the Russian Arctic. In December 2015, the President of the RF Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister of India N. Modi conducted negotiations on joint exploration and development of hydrocarbons on the Arctic shelf of Russia. Parties recognized the importance of the organization

⁴ Aziatskii Sever. Chto nuzhno novym igrokam v Arktike. 13.04. 2015. URL: <https://lenta.ru/articles/2015/04/10/arctic/> (accessed: 19 June 2016).

of deliveries of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia to India. In this regard, both sides noted with satisfaction the growing cooperation between the group Gazprom and its Indian partners in the field of LNG trade. The Russian party welcomes the interest and connection of the Indian partners to cooperation in joint projects involving the establishment of LNG deliveries using the "Arctic LNG-2" factory facilities that are arranged by NOVATEK at the fields located on Gydansky peninsula and partly in the Ob Bay.

The parties welcomed the signing by NK Rosneft and the company ONGC Videsh Limited the contract of sale of 15% shares of Vankorneft, as well as negotiations to increase this share in the future. They noted the continuing interest of Indian companies to invest in Russia's hydrocarbon sector, in particular the discussion of NK Rosneft and the company Oil India Limited of promising investment projects, and called for the speedy coordination of new investment proposals. The sides welcomed the signing of main commercial terms of the contract for the supply of oil and oil products, by NK Rosneft and the group of industrial companies Essar, in December 2014, as well as the contract signed by them on 8 July 2015 "on the sidelines" of the BRICS summit in Ufa, for supply of oil for further processing on the refinery in Vadinare (India), providing, in particular, the entry of NK Rosneft in the authorized capital of the refinery. The parties noted with appreciation the offer of NK Rosneft to provide scholarships to Indian students interested in education in the oil and gas sector in Russian institutes⁵.

It can be stated that cooperation of Rosneft, Gazprom with the Indian company ONGC-OVL, which has no serious experience in the development of Arctic fields, is determined, including the current policy considerations, by the desire to restore cooperation on a wide range of areas, to confirm interest in India as a powerful ally on the world stage. Moreover, Russia is interested in partners' finance of offshore projects. Participation of ONGC-OVL in Arctic projects will help the Indian company to gain a foothold in the Russian northern oil and gas market.

India even in difficult financial situation and tension in the social and economic spheres has no plans to cede the initiative in the Arctic matters to his opponent in the region — China. India is seeking to diversify its strategy in the Arctic and leaves space for maneuver, for example by supporting initiatives of the USA, China, Japan, in internationalization of access to Arctic resources and transport possibilities of the NSR. With high level of scientific development, India deploys various programs in the Arctic. Delhi hopes that the growing political importance of the country will strengthen the country's geopolitical position in the region and in the Arctic Council.

⁵ Aleksandr Novak prinal uchastie v peregovorakh Prezidenta RF Vladimira Putina s Prem'er-ministrom Indii Narendroi Modi. <http://minenergo.gov.ru/node/3710>

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