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### The Russian Arctic, Sanctions Pressure and Geopolitical Instability

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**Abstract.** The development of the Arctic region was strongly influenced by the international situation — on February 24, the Russian Federation launched a special military operation in Ukraine. The United States, Great Britain and the EU, as well as several international and regional organizations imposed extended sanctions restrictions against Russia in the fields of politics, economics (transport, finance, trade, defense industry, aviation) and scientific research, which had regional consequences. The article describes the factors that determine the Russian Arctic's development under the collective West sanctions pressure. The interrelation of the state policy and social and economic development of the Arctic regions of Russia during the period of general geopolitical instability is investigated. The study uses the dialectical method, as well as general logical, theoretical and empirical research methods. The study examined the measures taken by the Russian government to ensure sovereignty and economic and technological independence in the Arctic. The conditions for increasing stability in the Arctic zone are also decompounded, a number of proposals that are of the brightest and most pronounced interest for the formation of stability in the region are presented, and the established goals and motives of economic development are outlined. The authors analyzed the geopolitical conditions for the development of the Arctic region today, trying to reflect the intentions of the main Arctic players in the current situation and determine the vectors of their further political decisions. The conclusion is made that it is necessary to increase further efforts on the Arctic track, to strengthen defense and security in the Arctic region. The necessity of creating suitable conditions for the integrated economic development of the Russian Arctic is substantiated.

**Keywords:** *Russian Arctic, sustainable development, sanctions, geopolitical instability, international cooperation*

#### *Introduction. Arctic policy and strategy*

The Arctic has recently attracted a great deal of attention of scientists and the public. The main issues are global warming, reduction of ice cover in the Arctic Ocean, mineral resources and increasing opportunities for navigation. The Arctic is an underdeveloped space in both regional and global economies. It is a global reserve resource area with vast energy reserves. It is rich in rare earth metals, minerals, ores and other raw materials of strategic importance.

In view of these factors, international contacts at various levels have intensified, including those of the scientific community, and the role of the Arctic Council (AC, Council)<sup>1</sup> as a high-level

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<sup>1</sup> The Arctic Council was formed on September 19, 1996 in Ottawa (Canada).

forum for regular intergovernmental dialogue on environmental issues, sustainable use of natural resources, cooperation in ensuring security and sustainable development of small indigenous peoples of the North has significantly increased. In addition to the founding countries (“Arctic G8”: Canada, Denmark, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States of America), it includes 13 observer states (Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, France, Switzerland, China, India, Republic of Korea, Japan and Singapore), a number of intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations, including the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the International Federation of Red Cross Societies and Red Crescent (IFRC), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), OSPAR Commission, Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians (SCAR), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization IA (WMO), Western Nordic Council. The composition of observers has also been expanded by non-governmental organizations: Advisory Committee for the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS), Arctic Institute of North America (AINA), Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH), Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU), International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), International Arctic Social Science Association (IASSA), International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Northern Forum, International Ocean Protection, University of the Arctic (UArctic), World Wildlife Fund<sup>2</sup>.

All observer countries have their own national approaches to the exploration and development of the Arctic, justified by the territorial proximity to the Arctic through the access to the sea coast of the Arctic Ocean by any part of their land<sup>3</sup>, national security issues, as well as financial, economic and technological opportunities for the development of the Arctic.

Norway (2006, 2011), Denmark (2011), Finland (2010, 2013, 2021), Sweden (2011) have their own strategies and are constantly improving them. Their content is reflected in sufficient detail in the publications of the journal “Arctic and North”.

Among the observer countries of the Arctic Council, Germany has become increasingly active in recent years. In 2013, the German government adopted a national policy. In June 2016, France approved a national road map for the Arctic. In April 2018, the United Kingdom presented the second Arctic strategy, which addresses Arctic issues in the context of the country’s exit from the European Union. Italy has not yet presented its Arctic strategy, but sees the region’s attractiveness in energy, science, tourism and the development of mining infrastructure. Spain seeks to develop shipping. The Netherlands has considerable experience in off-shore hydrocarbon exploitation which could be used in the northern seas. Poland is making efforts to unite European AC ob-

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<sup>2</sup> Arctic Council Observers. URL: <https://www.arctic-council.org/about/observers/> (accessed 10 November 2022).

<sup>3</sup> The length of the Arctic coast is 38.7 thousand km.

server countries around itself. Switzerland is only looking at its new status, determines the interest in the AC working groups.

The Arctic European states have significantly expanded their agendas and forms of work. Observations on climate, monitoring of the natural environment and ecological systems, biodiversity, changes in the living conditions of local peoples, the state of the Arctic seas and studies of shipping possibilities in ice-covered waters are increasing. Although the European Union was not granted observer status to the Council in 2013, in April 2016 it adopted a Comprehensive Arctic Policy, and on October 13, 2021, a new Strategy was adopted that defines priorities, goals and objectives of the European Union in the Arctic macro-region<sup>4</sup>. The document demonstrates the EU's rapidly growing ambitions in the Arctic and its desire to become one of the leading players in the northern latitudes, countering the increasing role of the Russian Federation in the Arctic. The European Parliament makes a significant contribution to the consideration and development of policy in the Arctic.

On October 7, 2022, the White House released a new US Arctic strategy up to 2032, entitled the National Strategy for the Arctic Region<sup>5</sup>. It is emphasized that it is intended to serve as the basis for the leadership of the United States government to address emerging problems and threats in the Arctic. In reality, it is aimed at strengthening positions in the region, obtaining direct access to the NSR. One more notable event was at the beginning of August 2022 — the bill on the Arctic, introduced by the American Republican Senator from Alaska Lisa Murkowski (Arctic Bill, Bill), which literally says that “the term “Arctic countries” does not apply to the Russian Federation”, and “Arctic organizations of indigenous peoples” do not include the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation”<sup>6</sup>. The bill is filled with elements of the “cancellation” of Russia as an Arctic power, the intention is to eliminate the “Russian monopoly on Arctic shipping” [1, Timoshenko D.S.].

Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Legacy, Our Future (2009) outlines the key messages for Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.

China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore (with observer status at the AC since 2013) have a significant influence on the Arctic policy of the European countries. Of the above, only China has its own Arctic strategy — the White Paper (published by the Press Office of the State Council of the PRC in January 2018). On March 17, 2022, India's Arctic Policy was released, the pillars of which are “science and research, climate and environmental protection, economic and human development cooperation, transport and communication, governance and in-

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<sup>4</sup> Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic URL: [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v7.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2_en_act_part1_v7.pdf) (accessed 26 October 2021).

<sup>5</sup> National Strategy for the Arctic Region. 2022. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Murkowski Introduces Comprehensive Arctic Bill. Senate. 03.08.2022. URL: <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/download/arctic-commitment-act> (accessed 08 August 2022).

ternational cooperation and building up national potential”<sup>7</sup>. Seoul’s strategy in the Arctic is aimed at attracting a wide range of management, research and business structures to the implementation of projects. Japan is interested in the possibility of using the NSR, conducting scientific research of the Arctic seas. Singapore positions itself in the Arctic as one of the world’s leading maritime powers. Having analyzed and compared positions we can conclude that Asian countries are becoming serious competitors to Europeans in the development of the Arctic.

It should be noted that for 25 years, the states of the Arctic Council have sought to work in a cooperative and collaborative manner, consistently improving the international legal framework for Arctic activities and their national Arctic policies. Its authority is evidenced by the fact that a group of scientists from 20 countries proposed in 2018 to nominate the Council for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In May 2021, the chairmanship of the AC passed from Iceland to Russia. In accordance with the program, the Russian Federation successfully developed cooperation with the countries participating in the intergovernmental forum in four priority areas that are closely interconnected:

- population of the Arctic, including the indigenous peoples of the North;
- protection of the Arctic environment, including climate change;
- socio-economic development of the region;
- strengthening the AC role as the main platform for multilateral cooperation in high latitudes.

In addition to the program, Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation M.V. Mishustin on April 30, 2021, approved the plan, which included 116 major events in 11 areas<sup>8</sup>. All this created a good basis for the Russian chairmanship of the AC.

### ***Sanctions policy towards Russia in the Arctic***

Western sanctions against Russia are not a new phenomenon. In the mid-2010s, a number of restrictions emerged in the activities of the states in the Arctic, due to the sanctions regime of the US and EU countries against Russia. They have a negative impact not only on maintaining stability in the region, but have also led to the curtailment of a number of promising economic projects. This especially intensified after the start of Russia’s Special Military Operation in Ukraine (SMO).

In March 2022, a non-parity “seven plus one” trend began to emerge in the Arctic Council: Canada, the United States, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland refused to take part in all meetings held under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation and on its territory. On June 8, it was decided to resume the activities of the AC in a limited format: without the participation of

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), India. India’s Arctic Policy: Building a partnership for sustainable development, March 17, 2022. URL: <https://www.moes.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-03/compressed-SINGLE-PAGE-ENGLISH.pdf> (accessed 18 July 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Plan of main events of Russia's chairmanship of the AU 2021–2023 April 30, 2021, No. 4161p-P2.

Russia. Russia, as the leading Arctic power, continued its chairmanship. The refusal of the mentioned countries to take part in meetings and events under the Russian chairmanship and subsequent events increased the uncertainty regarding the plans for the Arctic development, upset the balance of Arctic solidarity, which was formed and consistently strengthened during the AC chairmanship of the countries. The Arctic ceases to be a territory of political stability and successful development of multilateral international cooperation.

Some large European and Asian energy companies reacted to the events in Ukraine in February 2022 by withdrawing from Arctic projects. These include the Norwegian Equinor, the Anglo-Dutch British Petroleum, the French Total. Japanese companies have frozen new investments in the Arctic LNG-2. The European Commission imposed sanctions on the Kolarctic program. On March 9, members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council announced the suspension of cooperation with Russia. The British Petroleum, the Indian State Corporation of Crude Oil and Natural Gas and the Singaporean company Trafigura revised their plans to invest in the Vostok Oil project of PJSC Rosneft in Taimyr [1, Timoshenko D.S.; 2, Zhuravel V.P.]. Scientific cooperation with the International Council for Science and the International Arctic Science Committee has also been terminated. The activities of the Russian Federation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers have been suspended.

In the context of the need to maintain the sustainable development of the Arctic region, Russia is now facing the primary task of activating domestic economic capacities.

It should be noted that the measures taken against Russia will have a negative impact on the AC states. The Arctic region is becoming the object of controversy between individual countries or their groups on a number of important issues. The problems of ecological, economic, technological, transport and military security were added to the territorial claims. In the medium and long term, international risks in the Arctic may increase if confrontation persists in Russia's relations with the West. Russia should use this temporary pause in the full-scale functioning of the Council to analyze the situation in the Arctic and work out specific steps to ensure national interests, improve the welfare of residents, and strengthen security in the northern direction.

The entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO greatly complicated the situation in the Arctic region. The capabilities of the Alliance in the region have expanded significantly, which poses a real threat to Russia in the Arctic [1, Timoshenko D.S.]. For example, tensions have arisen with Norway against the backdrop of sanctions pressure, including on the issue of Spitsbergen. In June 2022, Oslo blocked a cargo sent to the Russian settlement in Barentsburg for the Arktikugol trust. The conflict was resolved thanks to the efforts of the Russian Foreign Ministry and the position of Norway, which, adhering to the provisions of the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920, itself proposed ways to circumvent EU sanctions. However, as early as 11 October 2022, the situation worsened when Norway continued to boycott the activities of the Russian tour operator Grumant, part of the Arktikugol trust.

Ensuring the Russian presence in the Spitsbergen archipelago is one of the main tasks of Russia's state policy in the Arctic. The Russian Federation has long-term plans for strengthening, diversifying and modernizing economic and scientific activities in the archipelago (coal mining in limited volumes (for its own needs), fishing, improving the infrastructure of Barentsburg, conducting comprehensive research on mineral exploration and climate change). The development of tourism will create favorable conditions for further socio-economic development [3, Timoshenko D.S.], and will also contribute to the justification of Russia's economic presence in the archipelago.

The sanctions policy has consequences of both negative and positive nature in matters of a social and economic nature and the general situation in the country. It is impossible to ignore the rapid growth of domestic industrial production, the efficiency in the formation of the necessary legal framework, the colossal support of certain sectors of the economy by the state for the purpose of import substitution. However, the rapid outflow of citizens and highly qualified specialists from Russia generates various problems [4, Potravnyaya S.V., Tishkov E.V.]. The manufacturing sector requires the immediate replacement of mobilized citizens who left for a special operation, as well as specialists who emigrated abroad, with new personnel, which in the current realities is associated with certain difficulties. As of the end of August 2022, personal transfers from Russia since the beginning of SMO amounted to \$14 billion. According to the BCS Global Markets report, the total amount of capital outflow from Russia by the end of 2022 may exceed \$200 billion<sup>9</sup>. In the third quarter, 9.7 million citizens left Russia, which is almost twice as many as in the second quarter (5 million)<sup>10</sup>. According to Rosstat, the resident population of Russia as of August 1, 2022 amounted to 145.1 million people. Since the beginning of the year, the population has decreased by 475.500 people, or 0.32%, for the same period in 2021, the decrease was 351.500 people, or 0.24%. At the same time, in the period from January to July, the natural decline in the country's population amounted to 401.600 people, migration outflow — 73.900 people<sup>11</sup>. According to demographers' forecasts, the decline in the birth rate in Russia could be 12-15%<sup>12</sup>.

The problems of declining birth rates, population aging and depletion of migration flows are also exacerbated by the sanctions policy. However, the listed factors of the socio-economic development of Russia and the Arctic regions in particular require a separate study and should be

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<sup>9</sup> Iz Rossii vyveli za rubezh 11% VVP v 2022 godu [11% of GDP was transferred from Russia abroad in 2022]. URL: <https://pravo.ru/news/242610/> (accessed 26 August 2022).

<sup>10</sup> FSB raskryla dannye po vyezdu rossiyan za granitsu s iyulya po sentyabr' [FSB disclosed data on the departure of Russians abroad from July to September]. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5651512> (accessed 06 November 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Proekt «Esli byt' tochnym» sprognoziroval vozmozhnoe sokrashchenie chislennosti naseleniya [The project "To be precise" predicted a possible decline in the population]. URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2022/11/03/948693-rossiya-opustilas-na-devyatoe-mesto> (accessed 03 November 2022).

<sup>12</sup> Demograf Aleksey Raksha: «Chislo rodivshikhnya cherez 1,5 goda umen'shitsya na 12-15%» [Demographer Alexey Raksha: "The number of births in 1.5 years will decrease by 12-15%"]. URL: <https://newizv.ru/interview/31-10-2022/demograf-aleksey-raksha-chislo-rodivshihnya-cherez-1-5-goda-umenshitsya-na-12-15> (accessed 09 November 2022).

carried out in correlation with the recent adoption of a number of political decisions that stimulate support for the development of the family institution, social measures to support the population, as well as the entry of four new subjects into the Russian Federation.

Representatives of the scientific community need to analyze the processes taking place in the Arctic in real time, to propose additional steps to ensure Russian interests in the region.

### ***Responses to Western sanctions***

Russia was preparing for possible Western sanctions. Since 2020, a lot has been done for the development and exploration of the Arctic. A legislative framework has been created to increase the investment attractiveness of the Russian Arctic, the Fundamentals of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic, the Strategy for the development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and ensuring its national security for the period up to 2035, six federal laws, 40 normative acts have been developed and adopted.

These decisions were supported by more than 15 billion rubles from the federal budget to finance Arctic projects in the period 2021–2024. While maintaining the continuity of the AC agenda, the Russian Federation has introduced a lot of new things. An innovative step was the creation in 2021–2024 international Arctic station “Snezhinka” — a scientific and educational platform based on renewable energy sources. The first 8 months of the chairmanship were successful and efficient.

Measures were taken in time to refine the program and plan of Russia’s chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2021–2023), according to which about 50 events were scheduled for 2022 alone. A number of conferences, forums, festivals were canceled, the number of participants was reduced, financing was cut. More attention was paid to the Russian northern territories.

In order to understand the direction and consequences of sanctions against the Russian Federation, to develop the necessary decisions in a timely manner, the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin held an expanded meeting involving a wide range of participants on April 13, 2022. Speaking about the development of the Russian Arctic zone, he noted: “Now, taking into account various external restrictions and sanctions pressure, we need to pay special attention to all projects and plans related to the Arctic: not to postpone them, not to shift them, but on the contrary, we must respond to attempts to restrain our development by increasing the pace of work both on current and long-term tasks as much as possible”<sup>13</sup>.

According to the Head of State, in the conditions of sanctions, the most important issues in the Arctic region of Russia are to solve the problems of social sphere of the residents of Arctic territories and shift workers; complex modernization of infrastructure, energy, residential and social facilities in the Murmansk Oblast; implementation of priority investment projects; increase of oil, gas, coal consumption in the domestic market, promotion of deep processing of raw materials,

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<sup>13</sup> Meeting on the development of the Arctic zone. President of Russia. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68188> (accessed 18 April 2022).

increase of energy supplies to other regions that need them; activation and completion of the construction of the Northern Latitudinal Railway; development of the NSR; construction and maintenance of an emergency rescue fleet and integrated emergency rescue centers of the EMERCOM of Russia; active involvement in cooperation in the Arctic of non-regional states and associations, primarily Asian countries<sup>14</sup>.

These areas have become priorities for ministries, departments and the Arctic regions throughout 2022.

The central issue was the growth of Arctic shipping, increasing freight transit and improving the efficiency of export logistics routes. The Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation M.V. Mishustin approved a plan for the development of the NSR up to 2035 (Decree No. 2115-r dated August 1, 2022). It is planned to allocate 1.8 trillion rubles from various sources for its implementation. The document includes about 150 measures. In particular, this is the development of transport hubs in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, the construction of bunkering and maintenance bases in the ports of Tiksi and Dikson, the Utrenny liquefied natural gas and gas condensate terminal, the Sever Bay oil loading terminal, and a marine terminal designed to service infrastructure for the development of the Pavlovskoe lead-zinc deposit on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago, the creation of a marine transshipment complex for liquefied natural gas in the Kamchatka Krai and on the Kola Peninsula. It is planned to build an emergency rescue fleet of 46 vessels, to equip the Arctic integrated emergency rescue centers of the Ministry of Emergency Situations with helicopters. An Arctic satellite constellation will also be created, on which the hydrometeorological and navigational support of shipping, as well as the assessment of climate change in high latitudes, depend. More than 150 billion rubles are expected to be spent on the development of spacecraft for safe navigation on the NSR. By 2030, six radar satellites for remote sensing of the Earth should be launched into orbit: two Obzor-R and four Kondor-FKA<sup>15</sup>.

The issue of building ice-class transport vessels is being addressed separately. Russia plans to build 153 vessels for the Arctic fleet, including 12 icebreakers. In general, 32 ice-class transport vessels are being built today to implement Arctic investment projects. Of these, 25 are at Russian shipyards and 7 are at Korean ones. Nuclear-powered icebreakers are manufactured by Baltiyskiy Zavod. Two icebreakers of the “22220” project, “Arktika” and “Sibir”, with a capacity of 60 MW, are already working on the Northern Sea Route, 3 more ships of this project (Ural, Yakutia and Chukotka) are under construction. The planned dates for their commissioning and delivery: the first vessel – the end of 2022, others – this year, 2024, 2026 and 2027. The Zvezda shipyard in the Far East is also building a unique 120 MW icebreaker “Lider”. So far, this is the so-called first-in-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> V razvitie Severnogo morskogo puti vlozhat 1,8 trilliona rubley [1.8 trillion rubles will be invested in the development of the Northern Sea Route]. URL: <https://rg.ru/2022/08/16/reg-szfo/v-razvitie-severnogo-morskogo-puti-vlozhat-18-trilliona-rublej.html> (accessed 18 September 2022).

class ship, but an order for 2 more is expected. In other words, this unique project will also be put into mass production <sup>16</sup>.

As for the construction of nuclear-powered icebreakers, 90% technological supremacy has been achieved. Taking into account the disposal of three icebreakers in the short term due to the depletion of the resource, it is planned to build six more icebreakers by 2030. Four of them will be financed from extrabudgetary funds, and two nuclear-powered icebreakers and a recharging ship — from the budget <sup>17</sup>.

This contributed to the growth of cargo traffic along the Northern Sea Route. In 2016, the volume of traffic was 7.5 million tons [5, Lukin Yu.F.], in 2017, 10.7 million tons were transported <sup>18</sup>, in 2018, 19.689 million tons <sup>19</sup>, in 2019, the volume of traffic cargo amounted to 30 million tons against the target of 26 million tons <sup>20</sup>, in 2020 – 32.9 million tons. According to the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation A.V. Novak, “in 2021, cargo traffic amounted to 35 million tons, which is 2 million tons higher than the plan, plus 6%. This year, as of July, we are still growing by 5%” <sup>21</sup>.

As part of execution of the Presidential instruction and decision of the government, the Federal State Budgetary Institution “Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route” was created within the control loop of the State Corporation Rosatom, which is responsible for managing navigation along the NSR <sup>22</sup>. This will ensure the safety of navigation along the routes of the Northern Sea Route, the stable delivery of goods within the framework of the northern delivery, and will additionally attract new cargo carriers to the Northern Sea Route as part of transit. These activities include issuing and withdrawing permits for these operations. It includes the Maritime Operations Headquarters.

Transit cargo transportation has tripled over the past two years; the number of voyages along the NSR doubled and reached 1627 ones <sup>23</sup>. However, Deputy Director of the Directorate of

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<sup>16</sup> Do 2030 plan postroit' 1,5 tysyach sudov. Viktor Evtukhov o sudostroenii v RF [The plan up to 2030 is to build 1.5 thousand ships. Victor Evtukhov about shipbuilding in Russia]. URL: [https://aif.ru/money/economy/do\\_2030\\_plan\\_postroit\\_1\\_5\\_tysyach\\_sudov\\_viktor\\_evtuhov\\_o\\_sudostroenii\\_v\\_rf](https://aif.ru/money/economy/do_2030_plan_postroit_1_5_tysyach_sudov_viktor_evtuhov_o_sudostroenii_v_rf) (accessed 15 October 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Operational meeting with vice-premiers. URL: <http://government.ru/news/46150/#pp1348> (accessed 10 October 2022).

<sup>18</sup> Summing up the activities of the NSR Administration for 2017. NSR administration website. URL: <http://www.nsra.ru/ru/glavnaya/novosti/n19.html> (accessed 15 October 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Savosin D. Ob'em perevozok po SMP v 2018 g. uvelichilsya v 2 raza [Savosin D. The volume of traffic along the NSR in 2018 increased by 2 times]. URL: <https://neftegaz.ru/news/view/179802-Obem-perevozok-po-SMP-v-2018-g.-uvelichilsya-v-2-raza> (accessed 04 March 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Ob'em perevozok gruzov po Sevmorputi dostig 30 mln tonn [The volume of cargo transportation along the Northern Sea Route reached 30 million tons]. URL: <https://sudostroenie.info/novosti/29125.html> (accessed 15 January 2020).

<sup>21</sup> Operational meeting with vice-premiers. URL: <http://government.ru/news/46150/#pp1348> (accessed 10 October 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Rasporyazhenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 23 iyulya 2022 goda №2019-r [Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of July 23, 2022 No. 2019-r].

<sup>23</sup> Operational meeting with vice-premiers. URL: <http://government.ru/news/46150/#pp1348> (accessed 10 October 2022).

the Northern Sea Route of the State Corporation Rosatom M.V. Kulinko said at the round table “Transport and transit potential of the Arctic” that international transit traffic along the Northern Sea Route in 2022 is not expected. In 2021, the volume of transportation within the framework of international transit amounted to 2 million tons, while the planned figure was up to 1.5 million tons<sup>24</sup>. Experts do not exclude that by 2030 its volumes passing through the Northern Sea Route may grow to 20–30 million tons. It is assumed that most of the transit will be container traffic. This means that it is necessary to build transport and logistics hubs along the NSR route, which will allow carrier companies to change ships and reload containers. Under these conditions, ice-class containerships Arc6 and Arc7 will be needed, which have yet to be created<sup>25</sup>. China, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Liberia and Portugal are the biggest carriers on the NSR.

The leading officials of the government of the Russian Federation, the Ministry for the development of the Far East, Rosatom, probably, should stop reporting to the President of the Russian Federation that 80 million tons will be transported along the Northern Sea Route in 2024, since currently Russia does not have an appropriate cargo base. The reason for this was the pandemic, sanctions against the Russian Federation, the weakening of the capacities of a number of domestic companies.

It is hardly worth expecting a significant increase in transit traffic along the NSR in the near future, although such a potential certainly exists. In the short and medium term, the Northern Sea Route will solve Russia’s domestic economic problems. It is primarily about exporting extracted natural resources and transferring them to the markets. A number of oil and gas production projects, which are key to the formation of the NSR cargo base, may be shifted due to the termination of imported equipment deliveries.

Russia has taken significant steps in Arctic exploration in 2022. The scientific and educational expedition “Arctic Floating University - 2022: The Changing Arctic” on the research vessel “Professor Molchanov” was successfully completed for the 10th time. The Center for Arctic Studies of the Institute of Europe Russian Academy of Sciences (IE RAS), on the basis of the Agreement between the IE RAS and the Northern Arctic Federal University, constantly takes the results of these expeditions into account in its scientific work and publishes analytical articles on the most topical issues of Arctic development in the journal “Arctic and North”. The construction of the ice self-propelled platform “North Pole” was completed on time, and from October 2022, a wide range of research in the Arctic was carried out on its basis. No other country in the world has such a scientific base, which once again confirms the importance of Russia as the leading Arctic nation in the world.

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<sup>24</sup> V direktsii Sevmorputi ob'yasnili otsutstvie zayavok na mezhdunarodnyy transit [The Directorate of the Northern Sea Route explained the lack of applications for international transit]. URL: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/505418f0> (accessed 18 October 2022).

<sup>25</sup> Dlya razvitiya Sevmorputi budet sozdan moshchnyy transportnyy flot [A powerful transport fleet will be created for the development of the Northern Sea Route]. URL: <https://rg.ru/2022/09/13/gaz-vozmot-na-bort.html> (accessed 18 September 2022).

Russia's situation will require very hard work to develop high latitudes, to protect the sovereignty of the state both at the national and regional levels. One of the steps to protect national interests in the ecological direction was the decision of the Government of Chukotka to refuse further cooperation with the Russian branch of the international public organization World Wildlife Fund (WWF Russia). The regional authorities terminated the agreement unilaterally, citing the fact that projects to create a 12-mile buffer zone to protect whales, as well as "bear patrols" (measures to monitor the movement of polar bears) are not in the national interest of Russia, and will prevent indigenous minorities from traditional fishing activities and jeopardize the security of the Russian Arctic.

### ***Defense and security issues. Russia's response***

The actions of states to build up their economic and military presence in the Arctic required Russia to take adequate measures aimed at maintaining parity and creating favorable conditions for protecting national interests.

Measures are being taken to improve the composition and structure of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, military formations and bodies in the Arctic zone, to equip them with modern weapons, military and special equipment adapted to Arctic conditions<sup>26</sup>. In this direction, the modernization of new submarine bases, the construction of airfields, military camps for newly formed military units and weapons storage depots continues. Submarines of the Borey-A project, modern S-400 Triumph air defense systems, crews of radio engineering units and aviation guidance points are successfully fulfilling their tasks. Measures are constantly being taken to coordinate the actions of the troops, to create a new, more advanced infrastructure in the regions of the Far North.

Only in September 2022, the ships of the Arctic grouping of the Northern Fleet "Admiral Levchenko" and "Alexander Otrakovskiy", together with the tactical group stationed on Kotelniy Island of the New Siberian Islands archipelago in the Laptev Sea, worked out the defense of the borders of the Arctic<sup>27</sup>. Nuclear submarines and the Bastion coastal missile system of the Pacific Fleet during the Umka-2022 integrated Arctic expedition conducted launches of Granit and Onyx cruise missiles at a sea target at high latitudes. The missiles at the set time hit a complex sea target, imitating a squad of enemy warships at a distance of over four hundred kilometers<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 26 oktyabrya 2020 g. N 645 «O Strategii razvitiya Arkticheskoy zony Rossiyskoy Federatsii i obespecheniya natsional'noy bezopasnosti na period do 2035 goda» [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of October 26, 2020 N 645 "Strategy for Developing the Russian Arctic Zone and Ensuring National Security until 2035"].

<sup>27</sup> Korabli SF otrabotali oboronu rubezhey Arktiki v ramkakh ucheniy v more Laptevykh [The ships of the Northern Fleet worked out the defense of the borders of the Arctic as part of exercises in the Laptev Sea]. URL: <https://www.osnmedia.ru/obshhestvo/korabli-sf-otrabotali-oboronu-rubezhey-arktiki-v-ramkakh-ucheniy-v-more-laptevykh/> (accessed 19 September 2022).

<sup>28</sup> APL «Omsk» i «Novosibirsk» v Chukotskom more vypustili rakety po korablyam «protivnika» [Nuclear submarines "Omsk" and "Novosibirsk" in the Chukchi Sea fired missiles at the ships of the "enemy"]. URL: <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/15771197> (accessed 20 September 2022).

Important tasks to counter terrorism and illegal migration in the Arctic are solved by the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Russian Guard [6, Kholikov I.V., Kupriyanovich M.S.].

The activities of the Russian Coast Guard to protect and guard the state border of the Russian Federation, the length of which is about 20 thousand km, have been successfully implemented. Under the sanctions pressure, the tasks of monitoring the surface of the waters of the Arctic seas, especially in the areas of Russian industrial activity and the fishing zone of the Spitsbergen archipelago, have become topical. Attention has increased to ensuring the safety of maritime transport along the NSR [7, Kudinov N.N.].

Taking into account changes in the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations, attention has increased to accelerating the construction of the missing Arctic Integrated Rescue Centers. According to the Head of the ministry Alexander Kurenkov, in the coming years, it is planned to equip such centers in Sabetta, Dixon, Tiksi and Pevek<sup>29</sup> in addition to the existing ones in order to increase the level of protection of the population and territories of the AZRF by improving the monitoring system, increasing the efficiency of actions during search-and-rescue, emergency-rescue and other urgent works.

During SPIEF-2022, it was noted that about 35.000 specialists work in the Russian Arctic regions as part of EMERCOM units. To increase the efficiency of work, the department regularly conducts exercises of the forces of the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the Arctic. In April 2023, the Safe Arctic 2023 interdepartmental experimental research exercises will be held in nine northern regions of the country. The main site for testing the practical actions of the exercises will be the village of Sabetta, including the liquefied natural gas plant and the seaport<sup>30</sup>.

In the next few years, the aviation of the Ministry of Emergency Situations will include 14 helicopters, nine of which are designed specifically for operation in high latitudes (Mi-8AMTSh-VA (Arctic)). More than 100 pilots will be trained for polar flights<sup>31</sup>.

The bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Arctic zone have intensified their activities to protect the life, health, rights and freedoms of citizens of the Russian Federation, foreign citizens, stateless persons, directing their main efforts to combat crime, protect public order, property and ensure public safety [8, Gavrilov O.Yu.; 9, Shakhmaev M.M., Dombrovskiy A.A., Rustamov R.A.]. Particular attention is paid to the issues of migration, drug trafficking, weapons, road safety. They focus on countering the illegal extraction of bioresources, ensuring public order in regional cities, ports, airports, fuel and energy facilities, fishing artels, oil and gas production

<sup>29</sup> MChS otkroet v Arktike eshche chetyre spasatel'nykh tsentra [The Ministry of Emergency Situations will open four more rescue centers in the Arctic]. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16109103> (accessed 25 October 2022).

<sup>30</sup> MChS v 2023 godu provedet issledovatel'skie ucheniya v Arktike [The Ministry of Emergency Situations will conduct research exercises in the Arctic in 2023]. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/16096129> (accessed 29 October 2022).

<sup>31</sup> MChS poluchit vertolety Mi-8AMTSh-VA dlya poletov v Arktike [The Ministry of Emergency Situations will receive Mi-8AMTSh-VA helicopters for flights in the Arctic]. URL: <https://ria.ru/20211209/vertolety-1762859888.html> (accessed 19 October 2022).

sites, the development of solid minerals, and the compact living of communities of indigenous peoples of the North.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Arctic zone, in comparison with other regions of the Russian Federation, are understaffed, their infrastructure is sometimes outdated and needs to be updated and improved. Given the difficult climatic conditions and long distances, a new model of traffic management, cooperation and interaction with local public organizations based on information technology is required.

Big tasks in the Arctic are being solved by the recently created Federal Service of the National Guard Troops of the Russian Federation (Rosgvardiya)<sup>32</sup>. At present, the department's private security units are guarding 9 seaports of the NSR, 3 nuclear power facilities classified as important state facilities, 7 ships with nuclear power plants (including the nuclear icebreakers Yamal, 50 Years of Victory, Taimyr, Vaigach, the universal nuclear icebreaker of project 22220 Arktika, Sevmorput, as well as the floating nuclear thermal power plant Akademik Lomonosov, located in the port of Pevek in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug) [10, Kornilenko A.V.]. It should be noted that due to the planned commissioning of new nuclear-powered icebreakers, the development of seaport infrastructure and maritime shipping lanes in the NSR, as well as the growth of conflict potential in the Arctic, the organizational and staff structure of the units (parts) will need to be strengthened by 2024.

Recently, a number of major exercises have taken place in the Rosgvardiya. Thus, in March and April 2021, they were held under the title "Actions of special forces units of the National Guard of the Russian Federation in the Arctic zone in the event of a complication of the situation in peacetime at high-risk facilities" in the international port of Dudinka, located at the 69th latitude in mouth of the Yenisei. They practiced the release of hostages and a container ship with a load of explosives on board, which were captured by an organized criminal group. The successful actions of the military and police special forces were observed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Guard, General of the Army V.V. Zolotov. In total, the special forces group covered 1500 km in the most severe conditions of the Far North<sup>33</sup>.

In our opinion, the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Russian Guard in the Arctic require deep analytical support and the necessary financial support.

The strengthening of the Russian presence in the Arctic region is due to the efforts of the United States and its allies to challenge the legal rights of Russia in the Arctic. Over the past two

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<sup>32</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 05.04.2016 № 157 «Voprosy Federal'noy sluzhby voysk natsional'noy gvardii Rossiyskoy Federatsii» // Sobranie zakonodatel'stva RF, 11.04.2016, № 15, st. 2072; Federal'nyy zakon ot 03.07.2016 g. № 226-FZ «O voyskakh natsional'noy gvardii Rossiyskoy Federatsii» [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 04/05/2016 No. 157 "Issues of the Federal Service of the National Guard Troops of the Russian Federation" // Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation, 04/11/2016, No. 15, art. 2072; Federal Law No. 226-FZ of July 3, 2016 "On the National Guard Troops of the Russian Federation"].

<sup>33</sup> V Arktike startovali mashtabnye ucheniya spetsnaza Rosgvardii [Large-scale exercises of the special forces of the Russian Guard started in the Arctic]. URL: [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2021-04-02/404210-v\\_arktike\\_startovali\\_mashtabnye\\_ucheniya\\_spetsnaza\\_rosgvardii](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2021-04-02/404210-v_arktike_startovali_mashtabnye_ucheniya_spetsnaza_rosgvardii) (accessed 18 October 2021).

years, the Arctic strategies of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force and the Navy have been adopted in the United States. According to the Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation M.M. Popov, “The United States in the Arctic is expanding its military presence by deploying US GM destroyers in the Barents Sea, building three new heavy icebreakers by 2027 and establishing new naval facilities and naval bases”<sup>34</sup>. This course is confirmed by the three-week exercises COLD RESPONSE 2022 held in Norway in March 2022 with the participation of more than 30 thousand military personnel from 27 countries, 50 ships and 220 aircraft.

The military infrastructure in the region is being improved, stockpiles of weapons, military equipment and materiel are being created, and measures for the transfer of military personnel are being worked out. Commander of the Northern Fleet Alexander Moiseev on December 2, 2021 gave a generalized description of the infrastructure and aggressiveness of NATO in the region. He noted: “At the moment, there are up to 50 military infrastructure facilities of foreign states in the Arctic, such as the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland... These countries have 22 airfields, 23 naval bases, and 4 nuclear warning radar stations. Up to 19 thousand military personnel are permanently stationed at these facilities... The US and NATO navies continue the practice of carrying out regular single and group cruises of combat surface ships in the Barents Sea. The duration of the presence of US submarines and surface ships in the Barents Sea and Norwegian Sea is increasing. In 2021 alone, despite the ongoing difficult epidemiological situation, 20 operational and combat training events were held in the region for the national and joint armed forces of the NATO member countries. Moreover, over the past three years, there has been a steady increase in the intensity of combat training activities in the Arctic by the US Air Force strategic bomber aviation. While in 2016–2018, US strategic bomber flights over the waters of the Barents and Norwegian Seas were isolated events, in 2019–2021, flights were carried out systematically with increasing intensity — from 7 (17 aircraft) in 2019 to 10 (28 aircraft) sorties in 2021”<sup>35</sup>. However, it was emphasized that Russia is inferior to NATO in terms of the number of military facilities in the Arctic.

In 2022, the authorities of the United States of America formed a new 11th airborne division in the state of Alaska called the Arctic Angels. Reinforced by helicopter and artillery brigades, as well as parts of logistics, its total number reached about 12 thousand people<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> O tom, kto razzhigaet pozhar voyny i udastsya li sokhranit' khрупkiy mir, v interv'yu «Rossiyskoy gazete» rasskazal zamestitel' Sekretarya Soveta bezopasnosti Rossii Mikhail Popov [Mikhail Popov, Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, spoke in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta about who is kindling the fire of war and whether it will be possible to maintain a fragile peace]. URL: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/allnews/3188/> (accessed 09 April 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Admiral rasskazal o provokatsionnoy deyatelnosti SShA v Arktike [The admiral spoke about the provocative activities of the United States in the Arctic]. URL: <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2021/12/03/admiral-rasskazal-o-provokatsionnoy-deyatelnosti-ssha-v-arktike.html/> (accessed 28 December 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Army Forms 11th Airborne Division Amid Focus on Arctic Warfare. Military Daily News. 06. 06.2022. URL: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/06/06/army-forms-11th-airborne-division-amid-focus-arctic-warfare.html> (accessed 17 June 2022).

According to the Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Arctic Council N.V. Korchunov, Russia cannot but be concerned about a significant increase in NATO activity in the Arctic, including non-regional member countries of the alliance, such as the UK. NATO, as a pretext for increasing the presence of the Alliance in high latitudes, even uses Russia's economic cooperation with non-Arctic countries in the region (China), which is positioned by members of the bloc as a threat to its security. Such a trend, in the absence of a dialogue involving all the Arctic states, naturally increases the degree of conflict and can provoke military incidents in the region <sup>37</sup>.

At the opening of the X Moscow Conference on International Security (August 16, 2022), Russian Defense Minister General of the Army S.K. Shoigu, analyzing the situation on the European continent, noted: "Of course, the official participation of Helsinki and Stockholm in the strategic planning of NATO, the possible provision of the territory of these states for the deployment of strike weapons will change the security conditions in the Baltic region and the Arctic, will require a revision of approaches to defense Russian territory. Separate conclusions have already been made and enshrined in the updated Naval Doctrine, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on July 31. Work in this direction will be continued" <sup>38</sup>. Thus, the United States sets the task of gaining a leading position in the region in the new strategy. It notes that Russia has greatly increased its presence in the Arctic over the past ten years, having also modernized its military equipment. The United States accuses China of building up its potential in the Arctic zone through investments in scientific projects related to the Arctic [11, Slobodchikova S.N., Abramovich M.M.]. At the same time, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, speaking about the new US national strategy for development in the Arctic, noted that the United States will carry out the presence of the government in the Arctic region as necessary to protect the American people and protect its sovereign territory [12, Raikov Yu.A.].

### *Conclusion*

Russia, under sanctions from the United States and the European Union, should take all possible measures to protect its people and territory, strengthen the Arctic borders, science, economy and education, as well as intensify its work in the information space.

Establishment and development of new international platforms in the Arctic without the participation of Russia (for example, the Nordic Plus) will only lead to the stagnation of regional integration processes. Based on such steps by the West, it is possible to predict a change in the role of the Arctic Council in the short term in the following areas: reducing the role of the institution of chairmanship, retaining its nominal role; politicization of the Council's activities, exposure

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<sup>37</sup> MID RF: NATO mozhet sprovotsirovat' voennye intsidenty v Arktike [Russian Foreign Ministry: NATO can provoke military incidents in the Arctic]. URL: <https://tass.ru/interviews/15932579> (accessed 12 October 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Na otkrytii X Moskovskoy konferentsii po mezhdunarodnoy bezopasnosti s privetstvennym slovom vystupil Ministr oborony Rossii [At the opening of the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security, the Minister of Defense of Russia made a welcoming speech]. URL: [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12433677](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12433677) (accessed 18 August 2022).

to geopolitical tensions; a decrease in the activity of non-governmental cooperation on most tracks. However, scientific regional cooperation can be maintained regardless of the political agenda.

Russia views the Arctic not as a field of geopolitical intrigues, but as a territory of dialogue, stability and constructive cooperation. This is evidenced by the results obtained by the Center for Arctic Studies of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the course of scientific research. Colleagues from the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow State University, NArFU, RANEPa are in solidarity with us [13, Zhiltsov S.S., Zonn I.S.; 14, Burov A.S.; 15, Kretinin V.A., Kuznetsov V.V., Safronova L.E.].

Given the withdrawal of Western companies from many projects, an increase in unemployment and a possible increase in the outflow of citizens are predicted. The implementation of large projects is likely to be carried out mainly on a rotational basis. Under these conditions, the regional authorities and municipalities need to strengthen cooperation with large Russian companies that operate in these territories in order to resolve social issues in the interests of its residents.

In the context of sanctions against Russia, it is important to carry out consistent work to ensure the country's technological sovereignty in the Arctic. We are talking about eliminating the technological gap in the construction of Arc4 and Arc7 ice-class LNG tankers, creating equipment for drilling wells in the Arctic, and technologies for liquefying natural gas.

The leadership of the country and the heads of the subjects of the Russian Arctic understand that this region is an important and promising territory of Russia. This was confirmed during the work of the SPIEF-2022 [16, Zhuravel V.P.] and the Eastern Economic Forum. The need for systematic work to form awareness among Russian citizens of involvement in important Arctic affairs is emphasized. According to the experts, economic projects will be the most important ones. Our closest allies in the EAEU and BRICS need to be more actively involved in them. Taking into account the current situation in the AC, its deepest crisis, it is advisable to consider the issue of deeper integration on the Arctic track with China, up to the creation of its own Arctic Council.

The above and other Arctic problems should be the subject of research by scientists and specialists in 2023. In the current context, it is necessary to re-establish and reinvigorate international scientific cooperation in the Arctic.

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