

# **What determines Russia's approach to the Arctic security?**



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# Myth/stereotype-1

- Russia's major interests in the region are about hard (military) issues.
- On the contrary:
  - Russia's major concerns and policies are about soft/human security challenges (societal, environmental, the need for sustainable development), etc.).
  - Russian Arctic strategies of 2008 and 2013 are of an inward-looking character and about soft/human security problems.

# Myth/stereotype-2

- Moscow's security policy in the Arctic is of revisionist nature and aims at establishing Russia's control over the region's natural resources and transport routes (sea and air).
- As a matter of fact:
  - Russia plays by rules. All the existing and nascent conflicts are (and will be) solved peacefully, through negotiations and on the basis of the international law norms and principles.
  - Moscow favors the Arctic governance regimes: UNCLOS, Ilulissat Declaration, Arctic Council and BEAC

# Myth/stereotype-3

- Russia's security policies in the Arctic are basically about energy security.
- In reality:
  - Yes, exploring and developing the Arctic hydrocarbon resources is an important priority for Russia;
  - But (a) an exploitation of the Arctic oil and gas off-shore deposits is a matter of the distant future; (b) nobody threatens Russia's positions in its EEZ; (c) on the contrary, Russia is interested in international cooperation to develop the region's natural resources.

# **Doctrinal/conceptual basis**

- The Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic to 2020 and Beyond (Sept. 18, 2008)
- Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (Feb. 20, 2013)

# Drivers of Russia's Arctic security strategy:

- Climate change mitigation
- Making the Arctic Russia's 'strategic resources basis'
- The need for sustainable development of the AZRF
- Making the Arctic a 'region of peace and international cooperation'

# Climate change:

- **Opportunities:** increased accessibility to the Arctic natural resources and sea routes
- **Challenges:** environmental implications (unpredictable changes in flora and fauna); threats to the traditional economies of indigenous peoples; potential increase in international competition over the Arctic natural resources and sea routes

# Soft security agenda: Russia's environmental concerns in the Arctic

Moscow is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the AZRF. As a result of intensive industrial and military activities in the region many Arctic areas are heavily polluted and pose a threat to human health. The Russian scientists identified 27 so-called 'impact zones' that were polluted or contaminated to extent that this led to environmental degradation and increased morbidity among the local population.

The main 'impact zones' include the Murmansk Region (10% of pollutants), Norilsk urban agglomeration (more than 30%), West Siberian oil and gas fields (more than 30%) and the Arkhangelsk Region (around 5%). In sum, about 15% of the AZRF territory is polluted or contaminated.

# The map of impact zones in the AZRF



# Nuclear safety

- More than 80 nuclear submarines were located there, with over 200 nuclear reactors stored within them
- From 1964 to 1991, fluid and solid radioactive waste has been dumped in the Barents and Kara seas. According to some reports, the Soviet Union dumped 13 nuclear reactors in the Kara Sea (including 6 with nuclear fuel). Also, three reactors and a container with nuclear waste from the ice-breaker 'Lenin' have been dumped in a similar fashion. General radioactive waste amounted 319.000 curie in the Barents Sea and 2.419.000 curie in the Kara Sea. Although Russia has stopped dumping, the remaining nuclear waste in the Arctic is still a serious problem for the country

# Soft security agenda: indigenous peoples

- 27 indigenous ethnic groups, with the total number of about 200.000 persons, populate the AZRF.
- Indigenous peoples-related socio-economic problems: incongruity of traditional way of life to the current economic conditions; low level of competitive ability; growth of diseases and pathologies; high infant mortality rate, alcoholism, etc. The unemployment rate among the indigenous people amounts to 30-60% which is 3-4 time higher than among other AZRF residents. The life expectancy is as low as 49 years while it is more than 60 years generally in Russia.
- "The Concept for the Sustainable Development of Indigenous Small-numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" (February 2009).
- The Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (2005-2015).
- The conflict with RAIPON (2012).

# Hard (military) security policies:

- No interest in increasing offensive capabilities.
- Maintaining nuclear deterrence potential.
- Modest modernization programs for both strategic and conventional forces.
- The main goal of the conventional forces' modernization is to make the Russian military more compact, flexible, mobile, better equipped and trained.
- Moscow aims at increasing its control over the vast Northern territories to prevent non-traditional security challenges.
- The military force has changed its meaning in the Arctic context. Now it does not serve the global East-West confrontation; rather, it aims at protection of economic interests of the regional players.
- There is an understanding that it is easier to solve the existing problems through negotiations rather than by the means of war.

# Threat perceptions

- The Kola Peninsula and the adjacent area are still considered a region of special strategic importance to Russia's national security. The direct access to the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, a relatively close proximity to potential U.S./NATO targets, and a relatively developed military infrastructure make this region well-suited for strategic naval operations.

# Threat perceptions (continued)

- The Kola Peninsula hosts two-thirds of the Russian sea-based nuclear forces. The nuclear deterrent remains not only a key element of the Russian military strategy, but serves also as a symbol and guarantee of Russia's great power status. Maintaining strategic nuclear capabilities is, therefore, one of the highest priorities of Russia's military policies both in the High North and globally.

# Threat perceptions (continued)

- The Russian military analysts believe that the Archangelsk Air Defense Sector is still crucial for the prevention of surprise attack over the North Pole.
- The Norwegian Sea still can serve as the main launch area for Western seaborne attack, so, these analysts maintain, the Russian Navy should still be concerned about the readiness of its anti-submarine forces in the Arctic.
- Both the Russian politicians and military repeatedly point to allegedly increasing political and military pressures from the U.S. and other NATO member states in the High North. They believe that the West/NATO want to undermine Russia's positions in the region. They emphasize the fact that Russian armed forces in the High North are still facing NATO just across the border.
- The Arctic coastal states' armed forces modernization programs are predominantly treated in the alarmist way.

# Threat perceptions (continued)

- Moscow has been worried about the new U.S. military strategy in the Arctic that envisages Washington's increased security activities in the region (U.S. Coast Guard Arctic Strategy May 2013; Department of Defense Arctic Strategy, Nov. 2013; Navy Arctic Roadmap for 2014-2030).
- Future NATO military plans in the Arctic. Given the ice-free Arctic in the foreseeable future (at least for the part of the year) the Russian military analysts do not exclude the possibility that the U.S. could permanently deploy a nuclear submarine fleet and sea-based anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems in the Arctic Ocean. In this case the U.S. will create capabilities for intercepting Russian ballistic missile launches and making a preventive strike.

# Threat perceptions (continued)

There is a clear tendency towards the increasing role of the soft security-related interests such as ensuring Russia's access to the natural resources and transport routes in the region. At the same time, as some Russian strategists believe, there are a number of security threats and challenges in the region that require preservation and further development of a certain military potential and presence in the North. They took a notice that the ongoing Ukrainian crisis has negatively affected the overall Russia's relations with NATO and its member states which unilaterally suspended several cooperative projects with Russia, including military-to-military contacts and the development of confidence and security-building measures.

# Russian military modernization programs: Air Force

- No credible modernization plans. In 2009, the Russian government granted a contract to Tupolev company to develop a new stealth bomber the PAK-DA that would replace the Tu-22M, the Tu-160 and the Tu-95MS. The prototype is scheduled to fly in 2020 and the aircraft is expected to enter service only in 2025–30.

# Russian military modernization programs: Navy

- Plans to upgrade three heavy nuclear-powered missile cruisers, the *Admiral Lazarev*, the *Admiral Nakhimov*, and the *Admiral Ushakov*;
- The project to build eight *Admiral Gorshkov* class and six *Krivak* class frigates;
- Delta IV submarines modernization (new sonar system and the new ICBM *Sineva* (Skiff SSN-23));
- *Typhoon*-class strategic submarines (to be re-equipped with long-range cruise missiles);
- *Borey*-class fourth generation nuclear-powered strategic submarines to replace the *Typhoons* (*Yuri Dolgoruky* is operation since Jan. 2013).

# Russian military modernization programs: Land forces

- Creation of an Arctic brigade (Alakurtti)
- Modernization of the Border Guards (FSS) infrastructure. 20 border guards stations to be built.
- Creation of the Arctic Group of Forces
- Non-military missions: SAR, fighting oil spills, exploration of continental shelf, fighting poaching, smuggling, illegal migration, etc.

# Conclusions

- In the foreseeable future Moscow's security (hard and soft) policies in the region will be predictable and pragmatic rather than aggressive or spontaneous.
- In contrast with the stereotype of Russia as a revisionist power in the North, Moscow will continue to pursue a double-faceted strategy in the region:
  - On the one hand, Russia will continue to defend its legitimate economic and political interests in the region.
  - On the other hand, Moscow is open to cooperation with foreign partners that are willing to partake in exploiting the North's natural resources, developing sea routes and solving numerous socio-economic and environmental problems of the region.