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Article



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## FEATURES OF RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC

**Abstract:** The article discusses the international aspects of problems related to the Arctic, the improvement and updating of strategies and policies in this zone of the European Union and a number of countries (India, USA, Finland, Faroe Islands), withdrawal from projects in the Russian Arctic after the start of a special military operation of a number of large European and Asian multinational companies. It is emphasized that Western states continue to increase their military presence in the region. The situation was greatly complicated by the beginning of the process of Finland and Sweden joining NATO, which strengthens the potential of the alliance and creates real military threats to Russia in the Arctic direction. Using examples of decisions of the Government of the Russian Federation in 2022, the problems of the Russian Arctic, especially related to the development of the Northern Sea Route and some subjects of this zone for the next 15 years, are analyzed. Attention is focused on the nature of the activities of the country's leadership, ministries and departments, legislative bodies, representatives of business and public organizations for the integrated development and exploration of the Arctic in the light of unfavorable international events of 2020–2022. It is noted that the real impact of the NWO on the Arctic region can only be determined by its final results. The article also analyzes the strategic interests of Russia and China in the Arctic. It represents one of the most promising and underdeveloped regions of the world. Russia, as an Arctic state, has its own interests in the northern territories and is implementing policies aimed at strengthening its leading position in their development. China, on the other hand, views its participation in projects for the development of the Arctic as an opportunity to establish stable ties with this region, and here the comprehensive strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the PRC takes on new shape. In particular, it is economically beneficial for both countries to develop northern sea routes, which will reduce the delivery time for goods from Asia to Europe and vice versa. It is noted that joint Arctic projects make it possible to intensify the development of communications along the Northern Sea Route and ensure the

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environmentally friendly development of natural resources. In addition, mutual interest in cooperation is due to the difficult international situation.

**Key words:** Arctic, Russia, Arctic Council, sanctions, military threats, special military operation, China, cooperation, energy resources, liquefied gas, Northern Sea Route.

**Language:** English

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## Introduction

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In 2022, the strategies and policies of the Arctic countries continued to be improved and updated. Thus, on March 17, India's Arctic Policy was unveiled (Ministry of Earth Sciences... 2022), and on October 7, the White House published a new US Arctic strategy until 2032 called "National Strategy for the Arctic Region" (National Strategy... 2022). If Delhi's position in the future allows India to be considered as a potential partner of Russia in the northern direction, then Washington's strategy, as before, is aimed at consolidating its dominant position in the region, gaining direct access to the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and containing Russian influence. During the opening of the Arctic Circle 2022 Assembly in Reykjavik on October 17, 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Faroe Islands, Janis av Rana, presented the Arctic strategy of his autonomy (Faroe Islands launch... 2022), consisting of eight directions. The significance of the document lies in the fact that it temporarily replaces the Danish strategy of 2010. After the adoption in October 2021 of the Joint Communiqué "More active participation of the EU in creating a peaceful, stable and prosperous Arctic", the European Union opened its representative office in September 2022 Greenland in the city of Nuuk. Its interest in strengthening ties with the Danish region is driven by its rich mineral deposits and its ability to produce and export renewable green energy.

A number of large European and Asian transnational companies reacted to the events in Ukraine after the start of a special military operation, withdrawing from Arctic projects or revising their plans to invest in them. Among them are the Norwegian Equinor, the Anglo-Dutch oil concern British Petroleum, the French oil and gas company Total, the Indian state-owned crude oil and natural gas corporation and the Singaporean company Trafigura. They left Russian projects despite significant financial and image losses. The European Commission has imposed sanctions on the Kolarctic program, which plays an important role in interregional cooperation. Members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council announced the suspension of interaction with the Russian Federation. Scientific cooperation with the International Council for Science and the International Arctic Science Committee was also significantly

limited. The activities of the Russian Federation in the Nordic Council of Ministers have been terminated. In March 2022, seven Arctic Council countries (Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway, USA, Finland and Sweden) refused to take part in all meetings chaired by the Russian Federation on its territory, despite the AC's unified strategic plan. Later, on June 8, these states decided to limitedly resume the activities of the AS, but without the participation of Russia. All this ultimately resulted in a boycott of the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Against the backdrop of a worsening situation caused by EU sanctions, at the end of June 2022, thanks to the efforts of the Russian Foreign Ministry, it was possible to resolve an acute conflict in connection with Oslo's blocking of cargo heading to the Russian village of Barentsburg to ensure the livelihoods of Russians and employees of the Arktikugol trust. Western states continue to increase their military presence in the Arctic. The situation in the region was greatly complicated by the beginning of the process of Finland and Sweden joining NATO, which strengthened the capabilities of the alliance and created real threats to Russia in the Arctic direction. NATO, as noted by the scientific director of the Institute of the USA and Canada of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences S.M. Rogov, moves on to forming tools to contain Russia in the Arctic region, which has not happened before.

## Main part

In the current conditions, it was decided to continue the chairmanship, directing the main efforts to the development of the Arctic territories of the Russian Federation, which already in 2022 led to serious progress. More attention began to be paid to the development of the Northern Sea Route, which affected the volume of cargo transportation, which reached 34 million tons in 2022, and the management of the route. Meanwhile, international transit traffic has declined. Within the structure of the Rosatom state corporation, on the basis of the Headquarters of Maritime Operations, the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route" was created, which made it possible to improve the management of shipping on the Northern Sea Route. In order to ensure its sustainable growth, increase freight transit and increase the efficiency of

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export logistics routes, the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation approved a plan for the development of the Northern Sea Route until 2035. It is planned to allocate 1.8 trillion rubles from various sources. At the same time, paragraph 7 of the document states that the order of the government of the Russian Federation dated December 21, 2019 No. 3120-r "On approval of the Northern Sea Route infrastructure development plan for the period until 2035" is cancelled. The previous version included 11 chapters and 84 specific items for future activities. The updated plan includes about 150 events. The issue of preparing a new plan in 2022 was considered at meetings of Deputy Prime Minister A.V. Novak twice (February 3 and June 9) and with the participation of Prime Minister M.V. Mishustin during an operational meeting with deputy prime ministers on August 1. Priority is given to the development of the cargo base. An application "Forecasted volume of cargo traffic along the Northern Sea Route" has also appeared, which provides for an annual update of the volume of cargo transportation. This plan, which in its content is actually a program for the development of the maritime transport route of the Russian Far North, made it possible to objectively determine that due to the consequences of the pandemic and an insufficient cargo base, we will not be able to transport 80 million tons along the Northern Sea Route by 2024.

Particular attention is paid to the creation of an Arctic orbital satellite constellation, renewal and development of the icebreaker fleet and port facilities. Thus, by 2024, two Arktika-M spacecraft should be launched into orbit, which will provide data on the hydrometeorological situation in high latitudes, as well as three radar observation spacecraft: two Condor-FKA spacecraft, one "Review-R". By 2026, four Express-RV satellites will provide broadband Internet access in the Russian Arctic zone. Without the creation of an Arctic satellite constellation, the safe passage of ships along the Northern Sea Route is not possible. By 2026, four more nuclear-powered icebreakers of Project 22220 will be put into operation, and by 2027, the first icebreaker of the Leader project will be commissioned. The ice-class cargo fleet will be increased more than threefold by 2030. More than 30 tankers, 40 bulk carriers and 22 container ships need to be built. Currently, five nuclear-powered icebreaker escort ships in the waters of the Arctic Ocean. An order was signed to allocate more than 470 million rubles to replace the power equipment of the research vessel Pyotr Kottsov, which is engaged in navigation and hydrographic support of navigation in the Northern Sea Route region. Repair work, which will increase the service life of the vessel by at least 15 years and significantly reduce operating costs, is being carried out in Kaliningrad. On November 22, 2022, the hull of the nuclear icebreaker Yakutia was launched at the Baltic Shipyard. The ship

should be handed over to the fleet at the end of 2024. "The icebreakers of this series use waste-free technologies... Emissions of soot or black carbon are only 500 grams per year. If compared with emissions from a conventional coal boiler house, this is 100 thousand times less," noted Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation V.V. Abramchenko, who was present at this event. The second serial nuclear icebreaker of project 22220 "Ural" built by the Baltic Shipyard successfully completed the factory sea trials program and on December 3, 2022, set off from the port of Murmansk to the Kara Sea. At the government level, access to preferential loans has been expanded for investors implementing projects in the Far East and the Arctic in industry, transport, and energy, which will significantly reduce the risks of failure of investment projects due to sanctions restrictions. In November, Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation M.V. Mishustin signed an order to allocate more than 2.6 billion rubles from the federal budget for the development of social, communal and transport infrastructure in the Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, as well as the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, which will help improve the socio-economic situation of the Arctic zone. Work has begun on developing the transport infrastructure of the Murmansk region. The boundaries of the priority socio-economic development territory "Capital of the Arctic" have been expanded, which will allow the construction of a marine transshipment complex for liquefied natural gas in the waters of the port of Murmansk. As part of the comprehensive development of the Murmansk transport hub, financing is provided for the construction of a 49.7 km railway to the port of Lavna, where a coal terminal of the same name with a capacity of 18 million tons per year is being built. Attention should be paid to the work on recycling ships that have exhausted their service life. At the moment, four nuclear-powered icebreakers that were previously used on the NSR routes - Sibir, Arktika, Sovetsky Soyuz and Rossiya - are undergoing this procedure. The 25th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum played an important role in developing modern approaches to the development of the Arctic. At which the Ministry of Eastern Development of the Russian Federation presented a broad agenda for the work of regions in the context of sanctions against Russia. The Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG-2 projects are being successfully implemented. A bench testing complex for hydrogen production is being created at the Kola Nuclear Power Plant in the Murmansk region. The world's first Russian floating nuclear power plant, Akademik Lomonosov, is successfully operating, commissioned in May 2020 in the northern seaport of Pevek. Russia has begun creating the international autonomous Arctic station "Snezhinka", which will be a research center on the basis of which it is planned to conduct experiments,

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research, develop and implement technologies in various fields, primarily in the fight against climate change. Unfortunately, foreign investors are poorly attracted to its construction; mainly budget funds are used.

The progress of fulfilling the assigned tasks must be constantly monitored by the State Commission for Arctic Development. With the creation in 2019 of the Ministry of Eastern Development, which is characterized by activity in setting and solving problems of development and development of the region, the state's attention to Arctic problems has increased significantly. Issues of development of the Arctic zone of Russia have acquired particular importance in light of the unfavorable international events of 2020–2022. Due to the “Covid crisis” and the disruption of global supply chains, the Russian government began to discuss proposals to increase funding for projects in the Arctic Ocean, and several rounds of Western sanctions intensified processes for the development of Arctic territories and modernization of transport corridors to Asia. All this was reflected in the speeches of government representatives at various levels. Employees of the Analytical Department of the Nuclear Industry Communications Center conducted a comprehensive study of speeches by government officials on the topic of Arctic development from October 31, 2021 to November 1, 2022. According to their assessment, five groups of “political figures” are clearly distinguished: namely.

The first side is occupied by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Over the past year, Putin mentioned or quoted in 100 publications on the topic;

The second line is occupied by the head of the Ministry of Eastern Development of the Russian Federation A.O. Chekunkov and his deputies, who regularly report on the work to improve the legislative framework, the investment attractiveness of the region, and the infrastructure and business projects implemented there;

in the third group we can highlight the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation M.V. Mishustin, his deputies Yu.P. Trutnev and A.V. Novak, some federal ministers responsible for achieving the goals of national projects and presidential instructions. The focus of their speeches was the quality of management, financing, scientific and technological support for the development of the Arctic;

the fourth group consists of governors of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the Arctic zone;

the fifth - heads of departments who mentioned the Arctic among other subjects of their interest.

In terms of content, very similar motives are noticeable in the speeches of government officials. The focus of the discussion is the implementation of territorial development projects: establishing transport

routes, building expensive infrastructure (primarily for petrochemicals and shipbuilding), providing comfortable living conditions for the population. Statements about this are made in connection with the implementation (less often non-fulfillment) of federal plans and programs. Heads of regions and non-core departments practically do not come up with initiatives, and higher-ranking officials mostly “echo” the President of the Russian Federation. The Arctic is a region that is attracting increasing interest from the international community. For a long time it was isolated due to natural reasons, but growing technological capabilities are opening up new prospects for the exploration and development of the region. In addition to large reserves of mineral resources, the Arctic has significant potential for the development of the most convenient transport and communication routes in many senses, not only connecting Europe with the Far East, but also opening access to North America through Canada. Russia has a long border with the Arctic, so its significant economic interests are associated with this region, supported by the growing geopolitical importance of the northern lands. China, being a state not territorially associated with the region in question, is seeking to gain access to the Arctic zone in order to conduct economic activities there, and also due to the growing geopolitical importance of these territories. Russian-Chinese relations are developing today at the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership, and interaction in the Arctic region seems to be a promising direction for both powers. In the context of growing international tension, Russian-Chinese cooperation acquires additional value, however, it also has its limitations, which also relate to the Arctic region. Analysis of bilateral interaction in the northern territories, determination of its trends and prospects is an urgent research task. Russia began exploring the Arctic back in the 17th century. However, until the 20th century, this direction could hardly be called an unconditional priority of its national policy. During the Soviet period, the Northern Sea Route acquired strategic importance and industrial mining began. In the 1990s, in fact, the Arctic complex, inherited by the Russian Federation from the USSR, was abandoned to the mercy of fate, which led to a general severe crisis in the territories of the Far North and an outflow of population. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Russia has undergone a reassessment of the Arctic strategy in terms of realizing the importance of the region for the development of the country. Fundamentally new decisions were made on the development of the Arctic spaces, scientific research expeditions were carried out, designed, among other things, to prove that the Arctic mountain ranges belong to Russia as part of the continental shelf. Already in 2016, the Concept of socio-economic development of the North until 2035 was adopted, which indicated increased attention to the region and

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the strategic direction of Russian foreign policy. The regulatory framework for Russia's activities in relation to the Arctic consists of:

firstly, "Fundamentals of state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period until 2025 and beyond", then extended until 2035;

secondly, "Strategy for the development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and ensuring national security for the period until 2035."

The basic principles and directions of Russian foreign policy regarding the Arctic include the following points:

1. The Arctic is the country's strategic resource base, which will contribute to the modernization and socio-economic development of the country.
2. The Arctic is a zone of peace and constructive cooperation.
3. The Arctic is a territory whose ecological system must be preserved.
4. The Arctic is the basis of the country's unified transport communications system through the development of the Northern Sea Route.

Security for Russia is no less important than the economic development of the Arctic. Thus, the Kola Peninsula is a zone of particular importance in military-political terms. It has access to the Atlantic Ocean and has important military infrastructure facilities. The sea-based nuclear forces of the Russian Federation are also deployed in the Arctic region. Atomic weapons allow the country to feel protected in any situation and ensure deterrence of a potential enemy, which "is not only a key element of Russian military strategy and policy, but also a symbol and guarantee of great power status." Russia's security forces have been tasked with neutralizing external and internal military dangers and threats in peacetime, ensuring strategic deterrence of potential adversaries, and in the event of an armed conflict, repelling aggression and ending hostilities. Analyzing the state of the military component of Russia in the Arctic zone, it should be noted that it is currently being strengthened, characterized by the return of the Russian armed forces to the northern territories. Thus, at the beginning of 2016, work was completed on the deployment and arrangement of six military bases in the Russian Arctic: on Kotelny Island, Alexandra Land, on Sredniy Island, on the Novaya Zemlya Islands, on Cape Schmidt, on Wrangel Island. Closed-circuit military camps, military airfields, and combat positions of air defense and aerospace forces units have been built or reconstructed there. In addition, in 2018, two separate anti-aircraft missile regiments equipped with the S-400 Triumph air defense system were formed and deployed on the Arctic coast. To protect these systems from enemy air attacks, batteries of the Pantsir-S man-portable anti-aircraft missile system (ZRPK) have been deployed. In addition, a coastal missile division equipped with the Bastion complex is located on Novaya Zemlya. On other

islands of the Arctic Ocean and in some mainland areas, coastal missile, anti-aircraft missile and missile and artillery units and subunits are on round-the-clock combat duty. At permanent bases along the NSR, aviation control points and radio, radar and space reconnaissance positions are equipped.

This entire extensive infrastructure is managed by the Joint Strategic Command, created in July 2014 on the basis of the Northern Fleet, which includes a number of units of the Western, Central and Eastern Military Districts. Within a relatively short period of time, this command took the necessary measures to improve combat training and coherence of diverse army forces and assets in the difficult natural conditions of the Arctic. Ensuring military-strategic parity in the region under study is unthinkable without the participation of the Northern Fleet. Today it is the largest, most powerful and modern in the Russian Federation, protects the state border in the Arctic Ocean, ensures the safety of navigation in the coastal part of the Barents and White Seas, being one of the factors in the sustainable functioning of economic and transport systems in the northern and circumpolar latitudes. The missile submarines of the Northern Fleet are the most significant part of Russia's strategic nuclear forces in the region. In 2015, the flagship of the submarine fleet Yuri Dolgoruky successfully completed a voyage under the ice of the Arctic, and the nuclear-powered strategic submarine cruiser (APKSN) Alexander Nevsky made a trans-Arctic transition to its permanent base in Kamchatka. In addition, almost the entire surface nuclear fleet of Russia is deployed in circumpolar latitudes: the cruiser "Peter the Great", large landing ships "Kondopoga" and "Olenegorsky Gornyak", as well as icebreakers "Yamal", "Vaigach", "50 Let Pobedy" and "Taimyr".

The need to maintain and develop the military component of the Russian Federation in the Arctic is dictated, on the one hand, by the presence of NATO countries in the region, and on the other, by the desire of non-Arctic countries to gain access to the circumpolar seas. The growth of activity of the latter will take place in three directions: financing of civilian projects in the region, commercial and military maritime activities.

The economic, environmental and strategic interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic region include gaining access to the natural resources of the Arctic (especially hydrocarbon reserves), as well as their exploration and development. The largest and most significant international projects in the field of hydrocarbon production in the Arctic zone are Yamal LNG, Sakhalin-1, Sakhalin-2. Foreign and Russian companies take an active part in their implementation. The Russian Federation considers the Arctic zone to be the country's largest raw material reserve, in which hydrocarbon and mineral resources have remained intact. This fact has not only national, but also

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worldwide, global significance. The Arctic zone contains the main reserves of the most important minerals, which are decisive for the development of the country's economy. Thus, the explored volumes of industrial gas in this region account for 80% of the all-Russian total. This area contains 90% of the recoverable hydrocarbon resources of the entire continental shelf of Russia, including 70% on the shelves of the Barents and Kara Seas. The PRC's Arctic interests are officially concentrated in the areas of ecology, scientific research, shipping, and exploration and development of natural resources. This policy stems from the desire of the new global power to establish its presence throughout the world, including in the World Ocean. Arctic policy is seen as part of the process of forming a new world order, where China intends to be one of the leading guarantors of the new order. China's interest in the Arctic took shape in 2018, when the option of using the Northern Sea Route was developed as part of the Belt and Road initiative. In general, China's initiative was aimed at developing the shortest Eurasian transport routes connecting the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and Europe without North America. Part of China's Belt and Road project was the development of sea communications across the Arctic Ocean. China officially announced its intention to become a "polar superpower" back in 2019. Later, in 2020, a cooperation agreement was concluded within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union promoted by Russia and the PRC Belt and Road project. This cooperation also included support for the development of the Northern Sea Route. In 2020, Beijing published extensive material on its foreign policy in the Arctic. It promised to pursue its national interests in the region, and China is now planning its own fleet of modern icebreakers and promoting the Ice Silk Road project. The Northern Sea Route, or, according to Chinese terminology, the "Ice Silk Road", is considered in the PRC as a priority direction for the development of international cooperation in the Arctic. The key factor here remains saving time on transporting goods and the growing economic and logistics potential of the region.

China's interests in ensuring its energy security are also linked to the development of the Northern Sea Route. The Arctic is potentially a rich source of natural resources, primarily oil and gas, but their development is expensive and environmentally threatening. China counts on the presence of its companies in this area, as well as in the areas of shipbuilding, engineering, financing, and logistics, as it has the necessary technological base to ensure the safety of the region's ecosystem. China has included the Ice Silk Road in its new five-year development plan for the period 2021–2025 and intends to pragmatically participate in relevant Arctic projects that are in line with China's long-term development goals for the period up to 2035.

China dates its presence in the Arctic to its accession to the 1925 Spitsbergen Treaty. The PRC is a member of the International Arctic Scientific Committee, it has organized eight scientific expeditions, and founded its first polar research station in Spitsbergen. China is included as an observer in the Arctic Council, the key organization that controls issues related to the region of the same name. Non-Arctic countries cannot legally lay claim to territory in the Arctic, but major powers such as China are able to influence ongoing processes in this region. The PRC finances Arctic scientific research, related projects and organizes negotiations on free trade with Arctic countries. Unlike other states, China has powerful and free financial capabilities for this. The prospect of developing Arctic, shorter sea routes is one of the main principles shaping the understanding of the growing Chinese interest in the Arctic. Direct routes linking Asia, Europe and America will have a major impact on global trade. For China, three sea routes are key in this regard: the Transpolar Sea Route, the Northwest Passage, and the Northern Sea Route (Northeast Passage). Each is only available for part of the season and requires the use of icebreakers the rest of the year. But ongoing climate change in the Arctic may mean it is a matter of time before routes remain viable for increasingly longer periods.

In 2020, China announced its intention to cooperate in developing Arctic sea routes together with other countries. The PRC emphasized the importance of ensuring the rights of each country to use potential routes for the delivery of goods. This is Beijing's principled position. China advocates that the Arctic region is a common heritage for all mankind. This excludes special rights of the Arctic states, including Russia. The Arctic countries do not agree with this and view China's claims as a threat to their national interests and security. However, the PRC is actively developing its initiatives in this direction and cooperating with small states, in particular with Norway - in the field of scientific expeditions or with Denmark - in the field of investments, which generally helps strengthen the position of the Celestial Empire in relation to the Arctic. China's activity is causing concern in Western countries, which are clearly wary of its attempts to gain a foothold in the Arctic region. For example, Finland refused to lease an airfield in the Arctic to Beijing, despite the economic attractiveness of the proposal, while the Western "Five Eyes" Intelligence Sharing Alliance, whose members include the USA, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and New Zealand, announced its intention fight Chinese influence in Greenland, pointing out that Beijing already controls about 90% of the island's rare earths. In Greenland, there is a clash of interests between different countries, as Chinese, American, and European organizations plan to explore energy resources on the continental shelf. Chinese-controlled

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London Mining intends to develop large-scale iron ore mining in the southwest of the island and is proposing infrastructure and investment. Uranium deposits have been discovered in the south of Greenland, in which the United States and China are showing interest. There is also a plan for the development of new promising projects within the framework of aluminum production. In Greenland, Chinese activity and rivalry with other countries is causing debate as economic benefits come with concerns about environmental costs. In Denmark, too, the resolution of issues regarding Greenland is ambiguous. The extraction of raw materials was initially based on the availability of cheap Chinese labor, but Denmark is keen to retain the right to regulate immigration issues on the island.

The PRC considers Russia as its priority partner in the Arctic. Beijing calls Moscow's political stability a distinctive feature of cooperation, which serves as a guarantee of its implementation of agreed decisions and ensuring non-interference by third forces. This factor is extremely important due to the existing tension between Russia and the West and the growing confrontation between China and the United States. In the context of sanctions pressure on Russia, China can provide it with investments and technologies for the development of the Arctic region to create new transport routes and implement infrastructure projects. The capabilities of the PRC can give impetus to the modernization of the territories of the North, including the development of ports, construction of infrastructure, creation of new routes for shipping, exploration and extraction of natural resources. A natural limitation to cooperation is the continued possibility that the Arctic will be used by Beijing as political leverage to establish itself as a new Arctic power. At the same time, the Russian Federation remains the largest military force in the northern territories, which allows it to worry less about competition from participants in projects in the Arctic. Russia asserts its claims to exclusive control over the Northern Sea Route, justifying them by its territorial position and the presence of the longest access to the Arctic region.

The development of the Ice Silk Road as part of China's Belt and Road project corresponds to Russian strategic interests in the context of the formation of the Russian Northern Sea Route as a more competitive project on a global scale under Russian control. Such a scenario will provide an opportunity for Russia to further strengthen its presence in the Arctic region, and for China to participate in its development, but not as a competitor to the Russian Federation. The Ice Silk Road is viewed by China as a commercial and geopolitical project, but for Russia it remains a vital area of national interests and security. Noting the weak population of the northern regions, which sharply contrasts with its growing geopolitical role, Beijing sets the task of improving the demographic situation, developing Arctic ports, their technical

equipment, which will extend their operation and establish policies for migrants. Meanwhile, the Russian Federation and China are successfully implementing joint projects to develop the natural resources of the northern territories. The Arctic LNG-2 project is aimed at establishing the production of liquefied natural gas in a volume of 19.8 million tons per year. During its implementation, three technological lines were built and it is planned to produce stable gas condensate with a total volume of up to 1.6 million tons annually. China provided Russia with investments and innovative technologies that made it possible to organize gas production and processing in Arctic conditions. The Utrenneye field, which is located in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug of the Russian Federation, has become the main resource base for Arctic LNG-2. The project itself was launched in 2018, when the main technical work was completed and all project documentation was ready. Following this, the process of technical and engineering preparation and the actual construction of facilities began, including drilling wells and building an embankment with the possibility of mooring Arctic ships. The project cost is estimated at a total of 21.3 billion US dollars, based on the 2019 situation. Another project is Yamal LNG. It involves work on the extraction, liquefaction and supply of natural gas. Its main resource base is the South Tambeyskoye field, where proven and probable natural gas reserves reach a volume of 926 billion cubic meters. m. The South Tambeyskoye field itself is located in the northeastern part of the Yamal Peninsula. It was discovered in 1974 and is now considered part of the West Siberian oil and gas province. A plant should be built on this territory that will produce liquefied natural gas. In addition, it is planned to provide it with transport infrastructure, including the sea and air port of Sabetta. Thus, Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Arctic has come to the forefront of bilateral relations and has become one of the most popular areas of interaction. Meanwhile, China's Arctic policy is constantly facing two main obstacles, namely:

firstly, its activation is perceived extremely ambiguously by other Arctic countries and centers of power. At the same time, Denmark, counting on Chinese investment, states that China has legitimate scientific and economic interests in the Arctic. However, in most countries there is some degree of wariness;

secondly, the practical implementation of the PRC initiative is hampered by the lack of access to the Arctic, which limits its potential. Canada is not inclined to give privileges to China in its attempts to gain access to the Northwest Passage, and Russia has no intention of relinquishing control of the Northern Sea Route.

As part of the "Concept of maritime cooperation" published by Beijing in 2017, which became part of the "One Belt and One Road"

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**ПИИИ (Russia) = 3.939**  
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**ICV (Poland) = 6.630**  
**PIF (India) = 1.940**  
**IBI (India) = 4.260**  
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initiative, the Chinese side formulated priority directions for the development of northern communications, including the “blue economic corridor” across the Arctic Ocean. It should reflect the participation of the PRC in the development of the Arctic region. This document became the first factual and official confirmation of Beijing's intentions regarding the Arctic. At the same time, the PRC takes into account the role of the Arctic in monitoring outer space, its military-political deterrence potential in the northern geopolitical space. China intends to build on Russian experience and its infrastructure in this regard.

Since 2010, Russia has hosted the International Arctic Forum “The Arctic – Territory of Dialogue,” which has become the largest platform focused on joint discussion of current problems and prospects for the development of the region by representatives of interested countries, including China.

In July 2017, the Russian Federation and China jointly announced that their cooperation also concerns the Northern Sea Route (“Ice Silk Road”). As part of the implementation of the agreements reached, the construction of “strong points” of the Ice Silk Road began, which Beijing considers as the most promising areas of strategic cooperation. According to A.A. Fedorova, the “Ice Silk Road” of the PRC, after joint modernization work, will reduce transportation time from 33 to 20 days, and the cost of transport costs will be reduced to 50 thousand dollars per day. Along with this, the Northern Sea Route is still characterized by harsh climatic conditions, therefore, the possibility of its use is currently limited to only a few months a year. However, for Russia it represents the main transport artery in the Arctic, therefore, Moscow is interested in cooperation with Beijing in this area.

The role of the Arctic in the modern world is steadily increasing. Global warming is causing the ice to melt faster, and it is predicted that by 2040 the region could be ice-free. The melting of Arctic ice will have a direct impact not only on the environment, but also on geopolitics. This means a sharp intensification of the international struggle for dominance over the North Pole, in which China will play an active role. Natural resource reserves, primarily oil and gas, will become more accessible, which is of great importance in the context of their demand in the Chinese economy.

In the future, the Northern Sea Route, which is now used exclusively by Russia and only at a certain time, will be transformed into a year-round transport route with huge trade potential and the prospect of military use. The route from Asia to Europe could be reduced by 35-40% compared to a similar route across the Indian Ocean. Russia will be able to export its own liquefied natural gas much more easily, increasing the availability of supplies from the Arctic fields of Siberia.

Thus, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China consider the Arctic as one of the most promising areas for cooperation, based on the role of the region in global geopolitics at the present time and its existing potential, which will be updated in the future.

Russia, as an Arctic state with the longest common border with the northern territories, is expanding its presence in the Arctic, modernizing the Arctic legacy of the USSR and ensuring its military-political and economic interests. Moscow offers Beijing participation in its Arctic projects, primarily in the development of natural resources and the development of communications along the Northern Sea Route. For China, the opportunities provided by cooperation with Russia are also vital within the framework of the implementation of the Ice Silk Road initiative, and Chinese investments for Moscow, currently, due to the implementation of Western sanctions policy, have no alternative.

### Conclusion

Sanctions of the United States and the European Union against the Russian Federation and the activation of NATO in the region negatively affected the economic development of our country, cooperation and interaction in the Arctic, but “... none of what our enemy predicted for us happened,” the Russian President noted at a meeting with members of the Government of the Russian Federation on January 11, 2023. The withdrawal of seven AU countries from the program and activities of the Russian Presidency of the Council increased uncertainty regarding plans for the development of the Arctic, violated solidarity, undermined mutual trust, and increased tension. But even in these conditions, Russia needs to complete its chairmanship and hand it over to Norway with dignity, although there may be other options. The situation in the Arctic continues to develop dynamically, in some aspects it is associated with increased risk and uncertainty, a decrease in confidence in the military field, which is due to a possible repetition of Ukrainian scenarios in the north. At the same time, the real impact of the NWO on the Arctic region can only be determined by its final results. In response to NATO's actions, Russia needs to continue to take the necessary measures to strengthen national security, solve problems of restoring its military infrastructure, and provide favorable conditions for the activities of economic entities, including the unimpeded functioning of the Northern Sea Route. In the current conditions, it is advisable to develop a separate program of cooperation between Russia and Eurasian partners and the BRICS countries in the Arctic. Thus, mutual interest in effective interaction in the field of development of Arctic territories and development of their potential can become a solid basis for long-term planning for the implementation of strategic initiatives of the Russian Federation and China in the Arctic.

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