

Russia's Strategy in the Arctic - From Realism to Liberalism. And Back?

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Contents

- Two overall Russian discourses – or foreign policy directions – concerning the Arctic
 - IR-realism/geopolitics
 - IR-Liberalism
- 2007-2008: IR-realism/geopolitics
- 2008/2009-2013: IR Liberalism
- 2013- : Back to Realism?



Two overall discourses

IR-realism/geopolitical

- Security first
- Balance of power politics (zero-sum game)
- Patriotic language: Russia's 'greatness', 'sovereignty'
- Expressions such as "exploring", "winning", "conquering"

IR-liberalism

- Cooperation first
- Plus-sum game
- International law language focusing on negotiations around the UNCLOS/CLCS process
- Focus on need for modernization, use of economic terms
- Expressions such as "negotiation", "cooperation", "joint ventures", "framework of international law"

2007-2008

IR realism/geopolitical

Artur Chilingarov

Polar researcher, Putin's special representative to the Arctic

- August 2007
- "Russia stopped its activities in the Arctic in the '90s due to the break-up of the Soviet Union, but after this 13-year absence we have returned to the Arctic. And strictly speaking, we will never really leave the Arctic anymore. Historically speaking, it is Russian territorial waters and islands. Now we are recovering it."
- Russia will "enlarge by Siberia and the Northern seas"
- "We are the people who came closer to the centre of the Earth than anybody else"



IR-realism/geopolitical

Nationalists/eurasianists

Alexander Dugin

"The purpose of our being lies in the expansion of our living space. The shelf belongs to us"

Alexander Bobdunov

The Arctic is "not only a base of economic resources, our future in the material sense, but also a territory of the spirit, of heroism, of overcoming, a symbolic resource of central importance for the future of our country."

Aleander Prokhanov

"the Arctic civilization requires an incredible concentration of force in all domains. It will become, then, a sanctified 'common good,' in which the peoples of Russia will rediscover their unity, conceived by God as those to whom he destines great missions"



Reactions outside Russia

- Canada's foreign minister, Peter Mackey:
- "This isn't the 15th century. You can't go around the world and just plant flags and say 'We're claiming this territory.'"



2008/2009 – 2013

IR-liberalism discourse

- Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister
- Alexandr Novak, Minister of Energy

Focus on

- The UNCLOS/CLCS process
- The Illulisat declaration (Arctic Council)
- Bilateral agreements with other Arctic states (Norway 2010)



Sergei Lavrov
Minister of Foreign Affairs

- All problems in the Arctic “will be resolved by the Arctic countries based on the existing and rather sufficient international and legal basis and, of course, on good will”



Russian policy so far: The IR-liberalism discourse is dominating

- Putin backs the Foreign Ministry's IR-liberalist course on the Arctic
- Russia wants to decouple the Arctic from Russian-Western competition
- The goal is the same for both wings: the Arctic is to become the resource base for Russia's economy



Russian policy so far: The IR-liberalism discourse is dominating

Artur Chilingarov

“Scientific evidence can be the only criteria and proof that Russia, just like Denmark, is attached to these territories. We hope that politics will not interfere in the solution of this process”

Arctic Council meeting, Iqaluit in Canada 24 April:

- All countries did their best to keep the tone of the meeting peaceful and cooperative



After 2013 Back to realism?

- Putin, February 2013: The United States has essentially launched now the second phase in its global missile defence system.” ... “there is a danger of the militarisation of the Arctic.”
- Putin, December 2013: “Russia is actively exploring this promising region, returning to it, and should use all possible channels to protect its security and national interests.”



After 2013 Back to realism?

The “United States’ attack submarines are concentrated in that area, not far from the Norwegian coast, and the missiles they carry would reach Moscow within 15-16 minutes, just to remind you. But we have our navy there and quite a big part of our submarine fleet.”



After 2013

Back to realism?

- Patrushev, December 2013:
November 2013:
- “Russia cannot just passively watch war preparations by foreign countries near its borders”.



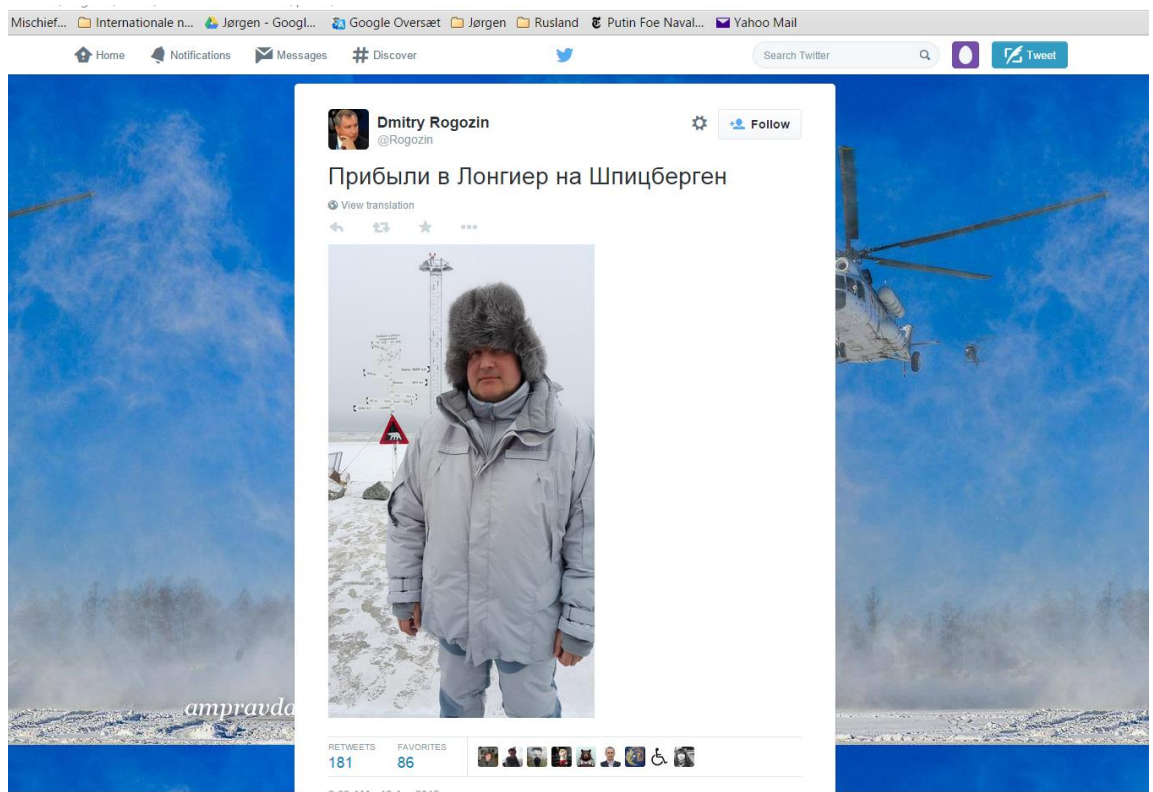
After 2013 Back to realism?

- Sergei Shoigu, 25 February 2015: a “broad spectrum of potential challenges and threats to our national security is now being formed in the Arctic”
- Chief of the general staff, General Valery Gerasimov, February 2015
- “the level of existing and potential military threats for Russia may increase significantly by 2030, and wars for natural resources should be expected”.
- “The level of military threats will be linked to the struggle among the world’s leading powers for fuel and energy resources, markets and ‘living space’”.



After 2013 Back to realism?

- Dmitri Rogozin has become the leader of Russia's Arctic Commission
- 19 April 2015: "We arrived in Longyearbyen in Spitsbergen",
- "The Arctic is Russian Mecca"
- 21 April 2015: "Last year, we had the historical reunification of Sevastopol and the Crimea. This year, we present a new view and new powerful stress on the development of the Arctic. Basically, it is all about the same"
- "Tanks don't need visas" (25 May)



Is the pendulum swinging back?

- No!
- The IR-liberalist discourse is still dominating Russian policy on the Arctic
- However, the IR-liberalist discourse is not that stable..



RUSSIA'S MILITARIZATION OF THE ARCTIC

Russian rearmament

Rearmament programme

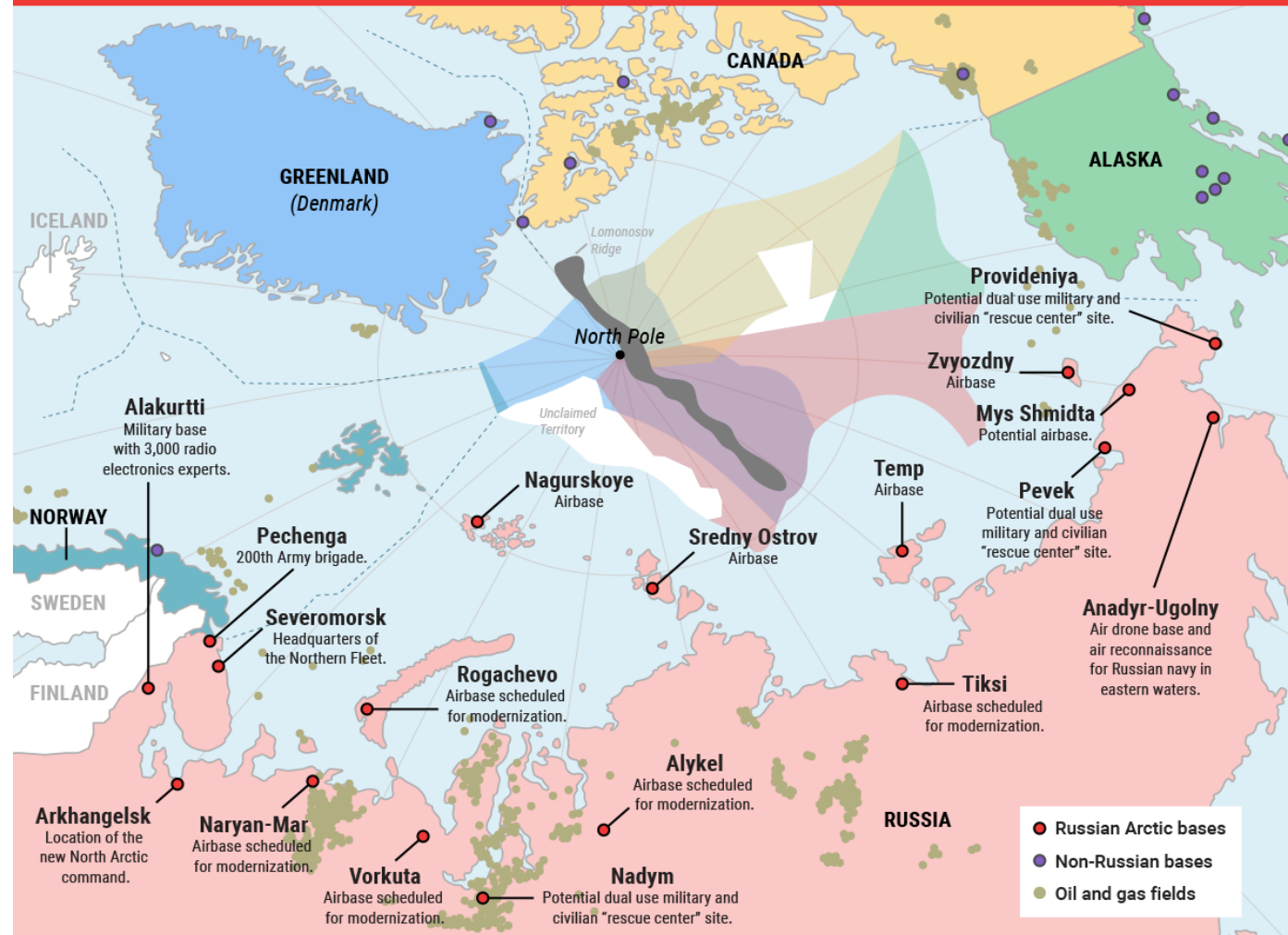
- Until 2020 Russia plans to spend 22 billioner rubles (730 million dollars (2011-figures) extra on new military equipment

Defence budget

- 84.462 mio. dollars (2014)
- Ca. 4,5% af GDP
- Ca. 11 % of state budget (2013)

Other defence budgets

- USA: 609.914 mio. dollars
- China: 216.371 mio. dollars
- UK: 60.482 mio. dollars



JSC Nord (Server)

- Northern Fleet
- Headquarters:
Severomorsk

- Two Arctic brigades,
permanent basing
with special
equipment/training
- Radar and air defence
missile units

- Deployment bases for
strategic bombers
(assembly area)
- Specialforces



Russian military buildup in the Arctic

- Primarily as part of overall balancing of USA/NATO
 - But also part of sovereignty enforcement
 - Defence against asymmetric threats
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- **Is it just peace talk while reaming?**

