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## “Cold Peace in the Arctic”: prospects for cooperation between Russia and Western Europe in the Arctic were discussed in Oslo \*

© Lyubov A. ZARUBINA, Head of the Department of International Cooperation, Ph.D. student

E-mail: l.zarubina@narfu.ru

Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk, Russia

**Abstract.** The article represents a brief overview of the speeches presented at the “Cold Peace in the Arctic” International Conference (Oslo, Norway, September 2018) attended by experts from Russia, Norway, and other countries. The author believes that many representatives of the scientific community see prospects for mitigating contradictions and strengthening international cooperation in the Arctic.

**Keywords:** *geopolitics, the Arctic, Norway, Russia, international cooperation.*

Studying geopolitical changes in the Arctic is of interest to the academic community, diplomats, organizations, and states, as well as business representatives and experts in international relations. The Arctic countries within and outside the region have always been perceived as a platform for dialogue and cooperation. According to many politicians, researchers, and journalists, historically, Russian-Norwegian relations were distinguished by the absence of military conflicts and a desire for mutual understanding and good neighborly relations, which became the ground for cooperation in the North and the Arctic. This view was challenged by the events of 2014–2018, when, in connection with the Ukrainian crisis, Russia fell under a series of economic and political sanctions that questioned cooperation, incl. the Arctic one. The accession of Norway to the sanctions against Russia reduced the intensity of the political dialogue at the senior management level and led to a decline in cooperation.

These and other changes are becoming the subject of discussion in the academic community, which addressed both private problems of cooperation, successful cases of collaboration, and scenarios for the development of events in the region that can be of use in foreign policy decision making. The discussion is usually held in an international format, which indicates the continuation of the dialogue and readiness for a reasoned exchange of views.

September 14, 2018, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs in Oslo (NUPI) hosted the International Conference “Cold Peace in the Arctic”. The event was held within the project CANARCT devoted to geopolitical changes and their impact on the situation in the Arctic. The project involved both Norwegian and Russian researchers and experts from other countries. The objective of the conference was to answer the question of whether new management practices and co-operation in the Arctic overshadow or soften the contradictions between Russia and Western

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countries. This issue was set in the light of political culture changes, technological development of the Arctic countries, economic activity in the region, and climate change.

Three panel discussions lighted some top issues of Arctic policy, international relations, economic activity in the region, Russian-Norwegian relations, and prospects of the Arctic development in various aspects.

The first panel discussion, "The Arctic as a domestic issue in Russia" covered the formation of the Russian Arctic policy (Helge Blakkisrud, NUPI), the energy potential of the Arctic region and concerning natural resources and its use (N. Poussenkova, IMAMO, Moscow), the formation of the Russian state approach to the Arctic as a "support zone" of the country (D. Tulupov, St. Petersburg State University). During the speech, Helge Blakkisrud emphasized preserving ties between Russia and the Western countries in international cooperation in the Arctic. He also introduced the Arctic policy of Russia as a two-tier system with both intra- and foreign elements. H. Blakkisrud defined the Russian Arctic as territorial complex within the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation, and the area that Russia considers its sphere of influence in the region. Blakkisrud H. believes that the Arctic is not a priority due to the absence of a relevant ministry. Russia only has a commission with a reduced amount of state funding to address the Arctic issues. The author concluded that Russian policy in the Arctic suggested a gradual search for answers to the challenges of the region.

Nina Poussenkova's report, "Energy resources of the Arctic Ocean and Europe (or Asia?)", focused on the development of oil and gas in the waters of the Russian Arctic. It was all about the internal and external aspects of the issue, e.g., the search for a comprehensive solution to ensure the profitability of extraction and selection of markets, which is essential in connection with a range of costs incurred by Russia in the institutional and foreign policy perspective. Analytics of the Russian Government let the author conclude the issue would not be among the priorities up to 2035.

Dmitry Tulupov touched upon the problem of defining "reference zones" in the Russian Arctic. The author outlined the following criteria: based on a territorial approach, the status of the territory of regional development, the availability of strategic natural resources, the implementation or preparation of "anchor" projects, the presence of clusters, and infrastructure, incl. transport (concerning the Arctic, the Northern Sea Route). The author believes, the main factor of success is bringing together interested public and private entities. In this case, all the players are showing interest in minimizing damage to the environment through the introduction of more environmentally friendly technological solutions. In the author's opinion, funding "support zones" is intended to be mostly at the expense of the interested corporations and partly due to foreign investments. The role of the NSR will not be deciding on a global scale at least the next 15 years, although it is not a priority for Russia.

The second panel discussion "The Arctic as a meeting place" covered such issues as the view on international cooperation in the Arctic from Russia (A. Sergunin, Saint Petersburg State

University), the effects of the interaction of the Arctic (K.L. Gjerde, NUPI), the US perspective of Arctic cooperation (H. Conley, CSIS).

Alexander Sergunin stressed the strategic importance of the Arctic for Russia concerning natural resources, which entails strengthening the country's presence in the region in different ways. Further, he elaborated on the different approaches to the Russian policy in the area. "Neo-realistic" school in Russia regards the situation in the region as the rivalry between Russia and the Western countries, mainly through mutual economic impacts. The West aims to maintain Russia's status as a "junior partner", the source of cheap resources, incl. labor and a market for products. "Neoliberals", in the author's opinion, start from the responsibility of all humanity for the region, which gives the right to share resources and their rational use. Radical neoliberalism school believes the Arctic should move to a management model like the Antarctic one. According to the researchers, the priority of the Russian Arctic strategy should be "human dimension" (i.e., the Arctic population, incl. the native peoples of the North) and environmental protection. North must abandon the military development and become a platform for Russian entry into the European and multilateral institutions. "Hybrid / moderate school" believes in the exclusive responsibility of Russia based on a pragmatic approach, considering the integration with supranational institutions. It should form a flexible system of regional governance with strong support from the country's aspirations and rights in the delimitation of the shelf, control the Northern Sea Route operation, countering organized crime, etc. Politics, according to the author, is dominated by a combination of neoliberal and neorealistic approaches, which avoid radicalization of these matters and maintain a higher degree of cooperation than confrontation.

Kristian Lundby Gjerde paid attention to changes in the dynamics and logic of interaction between Russia and the West in the Arctic since 2014. The example was Norwegian-Russian relations. He drew attention to the fact that, since 2012, the focus increasingly began to shift from cooperation to security. The author emphasizes, the Arctic region remains a platform for dialogue based on international law. As for Russia, it does not appear in Norwegian official documents as a threat to national security, although the partnership depends on whether the states find the opportunities for its preservation and development. Representation of Russia in Norway and the Norwegian image in Russia remain conflict emanating from the security of their interests. Both sides, in the author's opinion, believe it is possible to improve the relationship and expect the first steps of the partners, as reciprocal sanctions only led to a deterioration of the image of the West in Russia.

Heather Conley (Center for Strategic and International Studies, USA) identified that the Arctic remained in the background for Washington. It runs just some infrastructure projects in the region, but the activities remain low. The projects involve research and the country's participation in the Arctic Council. However, the administration of D. Trump managed to attract foreign investment to Alaska. Despite the possibility of agreements in the "5+5" format (five Arctic sea states and five non-Arctic states engaged in fishing in the region), the National Security Strategy and De-

fense did not indicate any priorities in the region but deal with the presence of the US competition with China and Russia. The position of the US Congress designated decisive in this regard.

The conference keynote speech was one of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ine Eriksen Sørensen. Sending participants to the long history of cooperation and peaceful relations in the Arctic, the unique nature of the Norwegian-Russian relationships, shared historical memory, the Minister noted the intertwining of the concepts of “an ally” and “an opponent” concerning Russia remains relevant in Norway. It is associated with the country's priorities in foreign policy, based on membership in NATO, on the one hand, and the preservation of good relations with Russia, on the other. The Minister stressed the asymmetric character of the neighborhood between the countries, the narrowing of opportunities in Russia for the development of civil society, but noted “man-to-man” contacts between the two countries as the ground for the development of good relations. The role of the Arctic region in these issues is especially crucial because international law remains the primary regulator that reduces the conflict potential. The purpose of the Northern Dimension of Norway's foreign policy in building good neighborly relations in the Arctic is particularly important. Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic region (in 2018, 25 years) played a considerable role, developing cross-border cooperation, regional development, maintaining, and enhancing “man-to-man” contacts.

The Minister said, “the peace is not just the absence of war,” the legacy of the “cold war” somehow affects the relations between the two countries. Therefore, the “cold peace” is unacceptable; cooperation is a critical success factor.

The third panel “Arctic Futures” touched upon such issues as “hard security” in the Arctic (P. Baev, Institute for Conflict Studies in Oslo, PRIO), the future of international cooperation in the Arctic from the perspective of the region (K. Zaikov, NARFU) and scenarios for the future development of the Arctic (J. M. Godzimirski, NUPI). Pavel Baev, in his report “Challenges of “hard security” in the Arctic”, noted two cornerstones of the Arctic policy of Norway and Russia: on the one hand, it is military construction, and on the other, international cooperation. The author emphasized the advantage of the first element, as a rule, undermines the second, and this process intensified after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. The main problem that the author drew attention to is the change in Russia's status in the Arctic. The goal of the author was to determine the role of Russia as a revisionist or a state-supporter of the status quo in the region. Baev P. drew attention to the reasons for the militarization of the region, strengthening the military-industrial complex and the expansion of cooperation with China in the region. The first speaks in favor of Russia as a supporter of the status quo in the Arctic. But in general, the country acts as a revisionist of the established order. Konstantin Zaikov, in his speech on “The future of international cooperation in the Arctic: a view from the region”, spoke about the status of specific territories in international cooperation in the Arctic. Considering the foreign policy of Russia is the jurisdiction of the federal center, he noted the Russian regions have the potential for collaboration with external partners, both politically and on topical issues with standard solutions. He said, most of the Russian areas did not have

strategies for international cooperation. The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) was cited in the report as an example of successful collaboration, with a critical role in education and science. Further development of inter-regional cross-border cooperation, according to K. Zaikov, requires continuing lowering administrative barriers and strengthen the flows of collaboration in a cross-border format, where the author noted positive dynamics.

The panel's final report by Yakub Godzimirski (NUPI) — "Arctic futures — three basic scenarios" had the following goal: to assess the future of interstate cooperation in the region for the next ten years in the current political context. The author outlined three main scenarios for the region:

- Negative. It includes aggravation of relations with the possibility of military operations while preserving diplomacy and foreign economic activity, regulated by the motives of survival;
- Continuity. The scenario assumes coexistence in a diplomatic format with reliance on international institutions and key players in both the world and the region;
- Positive scenario. It involves cooperation on an institutional basis and liberal values, as well as contribution to the implementation of joint projects with a possible ideological consensus.

The ideal option, according to the author, seems to be convergence considering common values according to the EU model. The possibility of a scenario, according to the author, depends on the main actors, problems, localization, drivers, and time of events. He believes that roles can be distributed both among global and local players, both state and non-state. Drivers can be processes in various areas of human interaction, as well as climate change, specific claims and requirements, and the participation of individual non-Arctic players. Jakub M. Godzimirski referred Dmitry Trenin, who in 2014 presented five main areas with a need for cooperation: territorial issues, energy resources, sea routes, the international legal regime, and military-strategic processes. Jakub M. Godzimirski suggests the second and third scenarios in one or another combination are the most probable. At the same time, he identifies factors that can adjust any of the options: political, economic, technological, and environmental.

Considering the opinions voiced at the conference and the research presented, it seems possible to conclude that mitigating the contradictions in the region and developing effective international cooperation is possible. The key points noted by the authors of the reports speak in favor of this: an active search for solutions to the existing challenges to the development of the Arctic, combining the efforts of state and private structures, reducing radicalism in relations between countries, developing cross-border cooperation, institutionalizing new forms of relationships in the region, and a tendency to lower administrative barriers to the collaboration at the interregional level, the search for consensus on controversial issues.