THE ARCTIC CROSSROAD: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FOR RUSSIA

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THE ARCTIC: GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- Northern area of the Globe down from the North Pole to the Polar Circle
- 8 Arctic states within the above area – Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Russia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and the USA
- Total area – 21 million square km
- 5 Arctic states that border the Arctic Ocean, having respective territorial jurisdiction (territorial sea, continental shelf, EEZ) and further territorial claims for the Arctic – Russia, USA, Canada, Denmark and Norway
- The shoreline – 38700 km out of which the stretch of 22700 km of the shoreline belongs to Russia
Ice-covered ocean, permafrost, severe climatic conditions, fragile ecosystems

Rather low pollution, although having encountered recently problems of long range air pollution, climate warming with melting of glaciers and risk of sea level rising, sea pollution (within Russia) from land-based sources, pollution from military and transportation uses

Known for its rich natural resources that are already used and have a high potential for economic use – fish, minerals both located within the water covered areas and on the land surface, a reserve of fresh water

Transportation route – Northeast Passage (within the Russian territorial waters from Murmansk to Vladivostok) and Northwest Passage (next to Canada)
Crossroad of interests

- Economic interests of states to have access to these resources
- Environmental interests to preserve the natural conditions and protect the environment against dangers rooting in new developments
- Social interests especially those connected with the rights of indigenous peoples to use resources for supporting their traditional lifestyles
- Political interest connected with the national security interest connected with defense of its Arctic boundaries
Sectorial approach to the delimitation of national territorial claims of the Arctic bordering states - since 20s years of the 20th century by declaring respective sectors as property of such states.

In 1994 with the adoption of UNCLOS this approach was replaced by a concurring territorial regime leaving to the Arctic states only rights to the continental shelf and EEZ - 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

International cooperation in environmental protection and natural resources use - the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (1991) the Arctic Council (1996), Spitsbergen Treaty (1920), Illulissat Declaration adopted at the Arctic Ocean Conference in Greenland (2008), Treaty between Russia and Norway on Marine Delimitation and Cooperation of the Basents sea and the Arctic Ocean (2011), applications to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for an extended continental shelf, Ministerial meeting of the Arctic States (5) in March 2010 in Canada.
The arctic crossroad of Russia’s national interests

- Interests to develop minerals
- Oil stocks within the Russian Arctic brings 20% of budgetary income. Now they reach 380 million tons (oil consumption in the world 3900 million tons)
- Within its jurisdiction – 80% of all found deposits of gas. Gas extraction – 500 billion cubic meters (consumption in the world – 3000 billion)
- Development of coal, diamonds, other minerals within the surface territory
- Growing use of Northeastern Passage with a larger accent of transportation of fuels
- Location of military fleet, including nuclear containing ones
- Use of the nuclear testing ground at the New Land Island
- Rights of 250 thousand indigenous people to have access to natural resources
Environmental impacts

- Environmental pollution caused by the growth of oil deposits development – shift from local to regional
- Existing pollution from land based developments that come into the Arctic with the river flows
- Degradation of fragile landscapes caused mostly by construction and operation of pipelines
- Loss of biodiversity
- Social impacts, especially for indigenous peoples
- Stocking of wastes
Develop and implement climate change prevention and adaptation measures by cutting greenhouse emissions and establishing special regime for the coastal zone.

Develop adequate responses to the risks of sea pollution from oil and gas extraction activities.

To ensure environmental security while operating the Northeast Passage.

Elimination of stocked (past) pollution.

General laws on environmental protection, including rules on emission limits, permitting, land use, protection of rights of indigenous peoples.

Presidential decree “Fundamentals of the National Policy of the RF in the Arctic for the Period up to 2020 and Further Perspective” (2008)
On-going law-making and practical steps

- Draft law on the conservation of the marine environment and its protection from oil pollution
- Draft law on elimination of the stocked (past) pollution
- Creation of the new national park “Russian Arctic” in 2011
- Implementation of the Federal Programme “Global Ocean” (Section “Development and Use of the Arctic”)
- Ongoing projects to remove past pollution in certain places of the Russian Arctic – removal of oil metal barrels at the Archipelago Frans Iosif
Further actions

- Addressing environmental problems of the Arctic may only be done within the concept of sustainable development as economic, environmental and social interests come across here.
- Development of the international cooperation on the Arctic with an understanding of special responsibility as an Arctic state for the preserving the unique environmental features of the ecosystem.
- Adoption of adequate Russian national legislation, in the first place, connected with preventing and responding to oil spills and eliminating the past environmental damage.
- Ensuring its implementation.