

SERGEY SUKHANKIN

ARCTIC POWER NETWORKS

Domestic institutions, corporate actors, and ideological drivers in Russia's High North strategy

July 2026





TRUE NORTH
IN CANADIAN PUBLIC POLICY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR

Gerry Protti

President, Collaborative Canadian
Energy Solutions, Calgary

VICE-CHAIR

David Schneider

Senior Investment Advisor,
Aligned Capital Partners, Victoria

VICE-CHAIR

Jacquelyn Thayer Scott

COO, Airesun Global Ltd;
President Emerita, Cape Breton University,
Sydney

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Brian Lee Crowley, Ottawa

SECRETARY

Elizabeth Burke-Gaffney

Commercial Negotiator, Oil & Gas, Calgary

TREASURER

Martin MacKinnon

Lecturer (part-time),
Cape Breton University, Sydney

DIRECTORS

Richard Boudreault, CEO,

AWN Nanotech, Montreal

Lisa Gable

Author, CEO, and former
US Ambassador, Washington, DC

Bryan Gould

Founder and Executive Chair,
Aspenleaf Energy Limited, Calgary

François Guimont

Retired, Federal Public Service, Ottawa

Simon Nyilassy

Founder, Marigold & Associates Limited,
Toronto

Hon. Christian Paradis

Co-founder and Senior Advisor,
Global Development Solutions, Montréal

Mark Rodger

Senior Partner, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP,
Co-Chair, Energy Markets, Toronto

Aaron Smith

Partner, Ernst & Young LLP, Nepean

Cheryl Ziola

Owner, Cheryl Ziola Communications,
Management & Advocacy, Vancouver

ADVISORY COUNCIL

John Beck

President and CEO,
Aecon Enterprises Inc, Toronto

Aurel Braun,

Professor of International Relations and
Political Science, University of Toronto,
Toronto

Erin Chutter

Executive Chair, Global Energy
Metals Corporation, Vancouver

Navjeet (Bob) Dhillon

President and CEO,
Mainstreet Equity Corp, Calgary

Jim Dinning

Former Treasurer of Alberta, Calgary

Richard Fadden

Former National Security Advisor to the
Prime Minister, Ottawa

Brian Flemming

International lawyer, writer, and policy
advisor, Halifax

Wayne Gudbranson

CEO, Branham Group Inc., Ottawa

Calvin Helin

Aboriginal author and entrepreneur,
Vancouver

David Mulroney

Former Canadian Ambassador to China,
Toronto

Peter John Nicholson

Inaugural President, Council of Canadian
Academies, Annapolis Royal

Barry Sookman

Senior Partner,
McCarthy Tétrault, Toronto

Sam Sullivan

CEO, Global Civic Policy Society,
Vancouver

Rob Wildeboer

Executive Chairman,
Martinrea International Inc, Vaughan

Bryon Wilfert

Former Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministers of Finance and the Environment,
Toronto

RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD

Brian Ferguson

Professor, Health Care Economics,
University of Guelph

Jack Granatstein

Historian and former head of the Canadian
War Museum

Patrick James

Dornsife Dean's Professor,
University of Southern California

Rainer Knopff

Professor Emeritus of Politics,
University of Calgary

Larry Martin

Principal, Dr. Larry Martin and Associates
and Partner, Agri-Food Management
Excellence, Inc

Alexander Moens

Professor and Chair of Political Science,
Simon Fraser University, Greater Vancouver

Christopher Sands

Senior Research Professor,
Johns Hopkins University

Elliot Tepper

Senior Fellow, Norman Paterson School of
International Affairs, Carleton University

Contents

Executive summary / sommaire.....	4
Introduction: Why Russia’s Arctic strategy cannot be understood from Moscow alone.....	8
What is happening in the Arctic, and how this aligns with Russia’s grand strategy	10
Who controls, executes, and devises Russia’s Arctic strategy?	14
Conclusions.....	49
About the author	51
References	52
Endnotes.....	67

Cover design: Renée Depocas

Copyright © 2026 Macdonald-Laurier Institute. May be reproduced freely for non-profit and educational purposes.

This publication was funded in 2025 by the Russia Strategic Initiative, U.S. European Command. The author of this document has worked independently and is solely responsible for the views presented here.

The opinions do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of War, the United States Government, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, its directors, or supporters.

Executive summary | *sommaire*

Russia's Arctic strategy is often misunderstood in Western policy debates. Too much attention remains fixed on President Vladimir Putin, military deployments, or short-term geopolitical crises. This obscures a more important reality for Canada, the United States, and their allies: Russia's Arctic posture is sustained by a durable network of state corporations, regional authorities, security institutions, and ideological organizations that shape long-term strategic behaviour. Many of these structural drivers will persist regardless of changes in Kremlin leadership.

Since 2022, the Arctic has become even more important to Moscow. Sanctions, the collapse of relations with Europe, and Russia's accelerated "Pivot to Asia" have increased the region's economic, military, and political significance. Russian officials increasingly frame these dimensions as inseparable. The Arctic is no longer treated simply as a resource base or transit corridor, but as a central arena of strategic competition with the West.

Russia's Arctic system is not governed through Kremlin directives alone. It operates through a semi-centralized network in which different actors exercise varying degrees of influence. State corporations, regional governments, security agencies, think tanks, and ideological organizations all help shape policy implementation and strategic priorities. While the Kremlin remains the central coordinating authority, many key Arctic functions are delegated to actors operating below the presidential level.

Among these, Rosatom has emerged as the dominant institutional player. Through its control of Russia's nuclear icebreaker fleet, Arctic infrastructure projects, and management of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), Rosatom has become indispensable to Russia's Arctic ambitions. Increasingly, it combines operational authority with agenda-setting influence across transportation, industrial policy, and Arctic development.

At the same time, Russia's Arctic governance system has become more securitized and ideological. The re-establishment of Russia's Maritime Collegium reflects Moscow's effort to integrate military planning, infrastructure development, transportation policy, and anti-Western strategic thinking into a unified framework. Organizations such as the

Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Geographical Society, and the Valdai Club reinforce Kremlin narratives portraying the Arctic as historically Russian, strategically indispensable, and central to Russia's identity and great-power status. With the inclusion of RAIPON (the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East), these narratives are also directed outward, including toward Western audiences concerned with Indigenous governance, environmental stewardship, and Arctic legitimacy.

Russia nevertheless faces serious structural constraints. Sanctions have disrupted technology imports and delayed major shipbuilding and energy projects. Demographic decline across Arctic regions continues to undermine labour availability and infrastructure sustainability, while the costs of modernization are rising under wartime economic pressure. Yet these weaknesses should not encourage complacency. Moscow is adapting through tighter state-corporate integration, expanded domestic control, and deeper cooperation with non-Western partners, particularly China. The result may be a less efficient but more centralized and resilient Arctic governance system.

For Canada, the United States, and their Western allies, the implications are clear. Russia's Arctic strategy should be understood as a long-term systemic challenge rather than a temporary feature of Putin's rule. Western governments should therefore:

- Expand Arctic intelligence and analytical efforts beyond military indicators to include corporate, infrastructural, and ideological networks.
- Increase investments in Arctic infrastructure, maritime logistics, and northern population resilience across allied Arctic states.
- Strengthen long-term co-operation with Indigenous communities as essential partners in Arctic governance and security.
- Monitor the growing integration of military, industrial, and ideological dimensions in Russian Arctic policy.
- Develop coordinated strategies to address expanding Sino-Russian co-operation in Arctic transportation and energy sectors without overstating its current level of integration.
- Prepare for a prolonged period of strategic competition and Russian securitization in the High North.

Ignoring Russia's Arctic posture would be a strategic mistake for Canada, the United States, and their allies. It is embedded in durable institutions and networks that will outlast current sanctions and wartime pressures. Underestimating this risks ceding long-term influence in a region that is becoming central to 21st-century power competition, where control over routes, resources, and infrastructure will help shape the global balance of power. [MLI](#)

La stratégie arctique russe est souvent mal comprise en Occident. On accorde toujours trop d'attention à Vladimir Poutine, aux déploiements militaires et aux crises géopolitiques transitoires. Cela occulte une réalité bien plus importante pour le Canada, les États-Unis et leurs alliés : la Russie s'appuie sur un réseau durable d'entreprises publiques, d'autorités régionales, d'organismes de sécurité et d'organisations idéologiques pour façonner son comportement stratégique à long terme. Bon nombre de ces vecteurs structurels vont perdurer, peu importe qui est à la tête du Kremlin.

Depuis 2022, l'Arctique a pris encore plus d'importance pour Moscou. Les sanctions, l'effondrement des relations avec l'Europe et le « basculement asiatique » ont accru l'importance économique, militaire et politique de la région, des dimensions de plus en plus interconnectées pour les décideurs russes. L'Arctique n'est plus simplement une base de ressources ou un corridor de transport. Il revêt une importance centrale pour la concurrence stratégique avec l'Occident.

Le système arctique russe n'est pas régi uniquement par le Kremlin. Ce réseau semi-centralisé est opéré par des acteurs aux degrés d'influence variables. Les entreprises d'État, gouvernements régionaux, agences de sécurité, groupes de réflexion et organisations idéologiques contribuent tous à façonner la mise en œuvre des politiques et les priorités stratégiques. Si le Kremlin reste l'autorité centrale de coordination, de nombreuses fonctions clés dans l'Arctique sont déléguées à des intervenants actifs à un échelon inférieur à celui du président.

Ainsi, Rosatom s'est révélé être l'acteur institutionnel dominant. Grâce à son contrôle sur la flotte russe de brise-glaces nucléaires, ses projets d'infrastructure et sa gestion de la Route maritime du Nord (NSR), il est devenu indispensable pour les ambitions arctiques de la Russie. Il allie de plus en plus puissance opérationnelle et capacité à façonner les priorités dans les secteurs des transports, de la politique industrielle et du développement.

En parallèle, le cadre de gouvernance russe en Arctique s'est renforcé pour prendre un tournant plus idéologique. La remise en place du Collège maritime russe illustre les tentatives visant à harmoniser la planification militaire, l'amélioration des infrastructures, la politique des transports et une réflexion stratégique anti-occidentale. L'Église orthodoxe russe, la Société géographique russe et le Club Valdai, entre autres, soutiennent les déclarations du Kremlin qui présentent l'Arctique comme un territoire historiquement russe, crucial sur le plan stratégique et central pour l'identité russe et son statut de grande puissance. En intégrant la RAIPON (Association des peuples autochtones du Nord, de la Sibérie et de l'Extrême-Orient), ces énoncés visent également des audiences à l'étranger soucieuses des enjeux liés à la gouvernance autochtone, à la préservation de l'environnement et à la reconnaissance de l'Arctique.

La Russie est néanmoins confrontée à de sérieuses contraintes structurelles. Les sanctions ont perturbé les importations de technologies et retardé d'importants projets de construction navale et énergétiques. Le déclin démographique dans les régions

arctiques continue d'influer négativement sur la disponibilité de la main-d'œuvre, la viabilité des infrastructures et les coûts de modernisation, sous la pression économique de la guerre. On ne peut cependant faire preuve de complaisance. Moscou s'adapte en renforçant l'intégration État-entreprises, son contrôle interne et la coopération avec des partenaires non occidentaux, en particulier la Chine. Cela pourrait conduire à un système de gouvernance arctique moins efficace, mais plus centralisé et résilient.

Pour le Canada, les États-Unis et leurs alliés, les implications sont claires : la stratégie arctique russe présente un défi systémique à long terme plutôt qu'une spécificité transitoire du régime de Poutine. Les gouvernements occidentaux doivent donc :

- Élargir le renseignement et l'analyse au-delà des indicateurs militaires pour inclure les réseaux corporatifs, infrastructurels et idéologiques.*
- Investir dans les infrastructures, la logistique maritime et la résilience des populations nordiques des États arctiques alliés.*
- Renforcer la coopération à long terme avec les Autochtones, partenaires essentiels de la gouvernance et de la sécurité dans l'Arctique.*
- Surveiller l'intégration croissante des dimensions militaires, industrielles et idéologiques de la politique arctique russe.*
- Élaborer des stratégies coordonnées pour repousser l'expansion de la coopération sino-russe dans les transports et l'énergie en Arctique, sans surestimer son niveau actuel d'intégration.*
- Se préparer à une période prolongée de concurrence stratégique et de sécurisation russe dans le Grand Nord.*

Négliger la position russe en Arctique serait une erreur stratégique pour le Canada, les États-Unis et leurs alliés. Elle s'inscrit dans des institutions et des réseaux durables, résistants aux sanctions et pressions en temps de guerre. La sous-estimer serait abdiquer son influence à long terme dans une région clé pour la compétition mondiale du pouvoir au XXI^e siècle, là où le contrôle des voies de communication, des ressources et des infrastructures contribue à façonner l'équilibre des puissances. [MLI](#)

Introduction: Why Russia's Arctic strategy cannot be understood from Moscow alone

Military deployments, territorial claims, and strategic signalling are often treated as the defining features of Russian grand strategy in the Arctic. This perspective is understandable from the standpoint of Canada, the United States, and their NATO allies, where analyses frequently focus on military capabilities or on President Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin as the principal drivers of Russian policy. While these dimensions are undeniably important, they offer only a partial understanding of how Russia's Arctic strategy is formulated and implemented. A fuller explanation requires closer examination of the domestic political, economic, and ideological forces that shape decision-making across Russia's broader governance system.

Importantly, Russia's Arctic strategy is not produced by a single centralized actor, but by a semi-centralized network in which multiple institutions exercise varying degrees of influence. State corporations, regional governments, federal ministries, lobby groups, and research institutions are interconnected through financial, regulatory, and informational relationships that shape bargaining, resource allocation, and policy implementation. At the centre of this system stands the Kremlin, which coordinates competing interests through hierarchical authority, resource distribution, and political arbitration. Yet the durability and complexity of Russia's Arctic governance structure extend beyond any single leader and are likely to outlast both Putin and the current political configuration. The Arctic occupies a pivotal place in Russian national development for at least three reasons. First, it is essential to Russia's economic survival and to the interests of political and corporate elites, particularly through energy extraction, transportation corridors, and

infrastructure development. Second, the Arctic reinforces Russia's geopolitical status as a major regional and, arguably, global power. Third, it carries significant ideological weight in official narratives of national resilience, technological achievement, and civilizational distinctiveness, strengthening the state's self-image as a unique Eurasian power.

Russia's Arctic strategy is best understood as the product of interactions among domestic actors operating within a semi-centralized governance network that functions in the following way:

- State corporations shape investment priorities and infrastructure development while leveraging proximity to political power to secure favourable policies.
- Regional governments advocate for local economic interests and social stability, influencing implementation on the ground.
- Ideological platforms and think tanks frame the Arctic as a space of national mission and strategic necessity, legitimizing state policy and mobilizing public support.
- The Kremlin and senior federal institutions coordinate these relationships by managing conflicts, distributing resources, and aligning competing interests within a broader strategic framework.

The question is: How do domestic actors, institutions, and ideological platforms shape the formulation and implementation of Russia's Arctic strategy? Several related questions follow: Which actors exert the greatest influence over Arctic decision-making, and through what mechanisms? How do ideology, economic imperatives, and regional governance interact in defining Russian Arctic priorities? How is Arctic policy coordinated under conditions of sanctions and strategic isolation? Which elements of this governance structure are likely to endure amid political continuity or leadership change? Finally, what blind spots persist in Western assessments of Russian Arctic behaviour?

Rather than treating Russia's Arctic strategy as the product of a monolithic decision-making centre, we should view it as a network of interacting actors and institutions: the Kremlin, federal ministries, state corporations, regional authorities, and ideational platforms. Examining the relationships between them helps to explain how funding dependencies, regulatory authority,

overlapping personnel, and institutional coordination shape policy outcomes. By shifting attention away from Moscow as a singular actor and toward the broader domestic configuration underlying Arctic governance, we can create a more durable understanding of how Russian Arctic policy is formed, implemented, and sustained – and, most importantly, why it will continue to present a long-term challenge to Canada, the United States, and their allies.

What is happening in the Arctic, and how this aligns with Russia's grand strategy

Since 2022, the Arctic has become central to Russia's grand strategy, driven by sanctions, economic adaptation, and a pivot to Asia. Russia integrates economic development, military presence, and ideology into a single strategic framework

The Arctic as a strategic pillar of Russian statehood

The strategic importance of the Arctic region for Russia and its broader strategy is shaped by a number of factors:

- *Economic importance:* The Arctic is central to Russia's long-term economic strategy, primarily because of the immense scale of its natural resources. Russian officials estimate that the country's overall natural resource base – much of which is concentrated in the Arctic – may be worth an astronomical US\$100 trillion (TASS 2025a). In addition to vast hydrocarbon deposits, fisheries and critical mineral resources, Russian authorities increasingly and continuously portray the Northern Sea Route (NSR) – a maritime corridor running along Russia's Arctic coastline that links the European part of the country with the Far East and Asian markets – as a viable alternative to traditional shipping routes passing through the Suez Canal (Sukhankin 2021a). The NSR is emerging as multi-dimensional networked system in which the Russian state has the potential to acquire three primary network edges in Arctic logistics: regulatory (state control over access), infrastructural (ports, icebreakers, shipping routes), and financial (investment and partnership flows).

- *Military and defense significance:* Russia's strategy in the High North centres on the so-called "bastion defence" concept, growing in importance since 2022, which focuses on safeguarding the areas where nuclear ballistic-missile submarines patrol in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean (Benia 2026). Within this framework, the Arctic region plays a critical role in Russia's system of strategic nuclear deterrence. Namely, the Northern Fleet incorporates Russia's naval strategic nuclear forces, including nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines that constitute the maritime component of Russia's so-called "nuclear triad" (TASS 2026). Post-2022 geopolitical developments have further elevated the military importance of the High North: Finland's and Sweden's accessions to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has altered the strategic landscape in Northern Europe, extending Russia's border with the alliance and increasing the proximity of NATO forces to Russia's Arctic military bases.
- *Ideological meaning:* The Arctic region should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as an active part of Russia, integral to the Siberia-Far East macro-region central to Russia's attempt "Pivot to Asia." In this narrative, the Arctic, Siberia, and the Russian Far East are presented as a single geopolitical and "civilizational" space underpinning Russia's future development (Karaganov 2024). In this intellectual tradition, the Arctic becomes more than a region of economic opportunity – it ascends to the level of a symbolic frontier of Russian statehood and civilizational identity.

The Arctic region in Russia's strategic documents and official discourse.

The central document that defines Russia's strategic planning in the Arctic region is the *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security until 2035* (President of Russia 2020). It outlines the main priorities of state policy and integrates economic, social, and security objectives into a single legislative framework. It identifies three core priorities:

- Resource extraction and economic development
- Infrastructure and NSR expansion
- Security and sovereignty protection

The 2025 draft strategy of an updated Arctic policy extending to 2050, which was submitted to the Russian by the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and the Arctic (TASS 2025b), reflects Moscow's effort to adapt its Arctic policy to new geopolitical realities and shifting long-term economic priorities.

Another important strategic document shaping Russia's Arctic policy is the *Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (updated in July 2022). The document identified the Arctic as one of the key regional priorities of Russia's national maritime policy, reflecting the growing importance Moscow assigns to the region in both economic and security terms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2022). According to the doctrine, the loss of control over the Arctic (and the NSR in particular) would undermine the country's security and socio-economic development (Vestnik ONZ RAN 2022). The document outlines several concrete priorities for Russia's Arctic maritime policy:

- Developing Russia's icebreaker fleet, including both nuclear and conventional vessels, in order to ensure year-round navigation along Arctic shipping routes.
- Strengthening Russia's naval and military presence in the Arctic, particularly through the operational capabilities of the Northern and Pacific Fleets.
- Tightening control over the NSR – defined as a “national transport corridor” – in order to remain competitive in global maritime trade.

The growing gap between strategy and capabilities

Since 2022, sanctions have exposed a growing gap between Russia's Arctic ambitions and its implementation capacity, including in technology. Sanctions led to the withdrawal of Western contractors and service companies and have complicated the implementation of several major projects. This has been particularly visible in the LNG sector, which is central to Moscow's Arctic economic strategy. The Arctic LNG-2 project, one of Russia's flagship energy initiatives, has encountered serious delays due to restrictions on equipment supplies and shortages of ice-class LNG carriers needed for Arctic shipping routes (Marwa, Soldatkin, and Pavicic 2025). As a result, the project's launch timeline has been repeatedly postponed.

Second, Russia's growing dependence on China is generating new risks. China views the Arctic as part of its "Polar Silk Road" – the northern extension of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – and Moscow and Beijing have coordinated plans to expand cargo transportation along the NSR (RIA Novosti 2025a). Another area of Russia's looming China dependency in the Arctic is in hydrocarbons (Reuters 2025). According to multiple reports, to secure interest of the Chinese side, Russian producers have offered significant price discounts to Chinese buyers to sustain export volumes under sanctions pressure (Rashad et al. 2025).

Third, demographic decline across Arctic regions is one of the most persistent structural constraints on Russia's strategy. Many have sustained large population losses since the end of the Soviet period. Russian researchers note that the Arctic zone has lost approximately 600,000 residents since 1989. This demographic decline presents a major structural challenge because Russia's Arctic strategy depends on sustaining a certain level of permanent population capable of supporting industrial production, military infrastructure, transportation networks, and public services across vast and climatically hostile territories. Conversely, the ongoing depopulation reduces the available labour force, increases the cost of maintaining settlements and infrastructure, and complicates the recruitment of qualified personnel for strategically important sectors such as energy extraction, shipping, and defence. In addition, this process weakens Moscow's long-standing approach to the Arctic as a permanently inhabited and economically integrated space rather than merely a resource frontier. Over time, continued outmigration risks undermining both the economic viability and the security foundations of Russia's Arctic presence.

Crucially, Russia does not provide any information related to deaths of Arctic- and High North-based Indigenous populations because of its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, outmigration, and economic restructuring (Smirnov 2020). In some regions the decline has been dramatic: for example, the population of Murmansk Oblast fell by more than 34 per cent between 1989 and 2019 (Nikanov et al. 2021). As a result, demographic projections offered by ultra conservative Russian sources provide an alarmist picture, suggesting that if current trends continue, the population of Russia's Arctic territories could freefall and depopulation become a norm, while other Arctic countries – so-called "unfriendly countries" – are experiencing notable growth in their Arctic populations (Sovetskaia Rossiia 2025).

Fourth, much of the region's aging transport, energy, and industrial infrastructure dates to the Soviet period and now requires massive financial injections to modernize. Some Russian studies cite "trillions of dollars" of potential investments that will be required to achieve a decent level of modernization (Romanenko 2025). In this regard, Russian experts have argued that infrastructure modernization has become a central bottleneck for Arctic development, which will be difficult to overcome (Vostochny Center for State Planning 2025).

These constraints reshape the internal policy network by weakening reliance on external network edges (Western partners) and strengthening internal ones, thereby increasing the relative importance of actors capable of sustaining domestic production, logistics coordination, and alternative international linkages. This strategic reconfiguration calls for a closer examination of the actors who devise, implement, and influence Russia's Arctic strategy under these evolving structural constraints.

Who controls, executes and devises Russia's Arctic strategy?

Russia's Arctic strategy is implemented through a network of actors whose influence varies. In this context, the central questions become which actors are involved and how their positions within the policy network enable them to perform agenda-setting, coordination, and execution functions. Identifying these centres and, when possible, their hierarchies provides valuable insight into how Russia's Arctic policy may evolve in the future in any post-Putin political landscape. These actors should be understood not as isolated entities but as nodes within a policy network linked through (in)formal coordination mechanisms, overlapping personnel, and resource dependencies. Their influence is therefore best assessed through the interaction between agenda-setting institutions, coordinating bodies, and implementation actors.

The core coordinating nexus: the Kremlin, the Security Council, and the Maritime Collegium

Authority over the region is highly centralized and strategic direction typically originates within a compact group of institutions dominated by the Kremlin and the security establishment, while implementation responsibilities are delegated to specialized government actors. At the centre lies a core coordinating nexus composed of the Kremlin, the Security Council, and the recently re-created Maritime Collegium. These institutions are connected through dense elite networks, overlapping personnel, and (in)formal channels. The Kremlin defines strategic priorities, the Security Council reframes them in security terms, and the Maritime Collegium coordinates their implementation across maritime and Arctic domains. These ties are reproduced through recurring coordination meetings, shared personnel, formal mandates, and hierarchical reporting structures, giving the central nexus cohesion and control over the broader network. Thus, through these network edges flow strategic directives, policy proposals, and implementation feedback, ensuring continuous alignment between agenda-setting and execution.

The Kremlin: continuity and tradition in agenda setting.

The Kremlin serves as the principal source of strategic direction in Russia's Arctic policy. Its centrality derives not only from authority but from its position as the primary distributor of resources, mandates, and arbitration linking all major actors. This model acquired its current form following Vladimir Putin's administrative-legislative reforms in the early 2000s (Sukhankin 2018), which strongly personalized Russian governance structures. "Presidentialized" strategic priorities are typically formulated in this core nexus and then transmitted downward through bureaucratic institutions. Later, as the Russo-Western ties worsened and then de facto collapsed, this over-centralized and personalized model acquired pronounced anti-Western traits. Moscow now perceives the Arctic as a cornerstone of Russia's long-term geopolitical and economic ambitions and an emerging theatre of multidimensional geopolitical competition for natural resources and influence (Losev and Losev 2023). From this perspective, the Arctic is no longer seen in Moscow as just a resource-endowed periphery but also as a source Russia's major power status, where control over resources, sea routes, and infrastructure is inseparable from broader national security and foreign policy objectives (Sukhankin 2021b).

The federal centre has (almost) always set Russia's Arctic agenda. Multiple studies conducted before (Sergunin and Konyshchev 2019) and after (Sergunin 2024) the Russo-Western strategic split in 2022 have demonstrated the continuity and tradition in the Kremlin's role. In a broader historical context, Russia inherited a state-centric approach to formulating Arctic-related policy from the pre-1917 period. This stems from the fact that Moscow views the Arctic region not only as Russia's strategic resource base closely linked to energy production, maritime transportation, and national security (Aliyev 2020) but as a stage for ideology and prestige-seeking that have traditionally played a disproportionately large role in Russian policy.



*The Kremlin serves
as the principal source of strategic
direction in Russia's Arctic policy.*

That said, however, the Kremlin's nearly absolute power over Arctic agenda-setting is constrained by objective factors, creating underlying network tensions. As earlier works have pointed out (Maximova 2018), although the Kremlin promotes ambitious development for the Arctic, inherent structural challenges and strategic dilemmas create a persistent gap between the Kremlin's strategic aspirations and the practical regional realities. This gap (highly characteristic of both the Tsarist and Soviet periods) continues to mislead agenda-setters at the federal centre.

Another gap is that Putin only began to publicly highlight this theatre systematically in the early 2010s (Arctic Portal 2013) and it acquired strategic status after the first major rift in Russo-Western relations in 2014, after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its fomenting of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. This suggests that Russia's recalibration of the Arctic dimension was less a proactive strategic move and more a reaction to the deterioration of its relations with the West.

In practical terms, then, the Kremlin ranks highest in agenda-setting influence and institutional centrality. In terms of implementation, the Kremlin

usually chooses to delegate authority to other bodies acting as a referee rather than direct administrative executor. This is enabled through control over key edges – budgetary allocation, appointment powers, and conflict arbitration – rather than through direct operational involvement. These are both vertical (top-down authority) and horizontal (elite mediation across institutions), reinforcing the Kremlin’s role as both controller and broker.

The Security Council and securitizing the Arctic agenda.

Alongside the Kremlin, the Russian Security Council (RSC) has emerged as an important actor in shaping Moscow’s Arctic policy. While its decision-making role is largely indirect, it has functioned to frame the Arctic as a security domain, starting before 2022. In 2020, the RSC set up a commission to coordinate Arctic policy, operating alongside the government’s Arctic development commission but focused specifically on security. During commission meetings, RSC Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev repeatedly warns about “foreign states trying to gain control over Arctic resources and maritime routes,” arguing that Russia must strengthen its military in the region (Staalesen 2021).

At the same time, the RSC’s role should not be overstated. Today, it is at times more a symbolic coordinating body than a primary policymaker. However, the strategic narrative it helped establish under its long-time secretary Nikolai Patrushev (2008–2024) has had a lasting impact on Russia’s Arctic trajectory. Beginning before Russia–West relations deteriorated after 2014, Patrushev was actively promoting a securitized interpretation of Arctic developments. In 2012, he framed the NSR as a national security issue, warning that foreign submarines and vessels could potentially operate in the region without Russian authorization. In discussing the NSR’s eastern sector, Patrushev emphasized that regular navigation there remained limited and argued that this situation required stronger state oversight, improved infrastructure, and enhanced meteorological support (Bennett 2012). While not a primary policymaker, the Security Council functions as an agenda-setting node linking political leadership with security institutions, contributing to the securitization of Arctic policy – particularly under Nikolai Patrushev – by framing it through threat perception and strategic competition.

The Maritime Collegium

Arguably, the most significant institutional innovation in Russia's Arctic governance system in the post-2022 interim has been the re-established Maritime Collegium (President of Russia 2024). Originally stood up in the early 2000s, it now has a substantially expanded mandate under direct presidential oversight. The new body functions as a central coordinating platform for maritime policy, integrating naval strategy, Arctic development, and infrastructure planning; in a broader sense, its revival reflects Moscow's growing emphasis on maritime power as a key component of national strategy (Sukhankin 2024).

A crucial development is the appointment of Nikolai Patrushev as head of the Collegium. His appointment signals that maritime and Arctic policy will be closely integrated with national security planning and have a pronounced anti-Western tone. In this sense, Patrushev's leadership at the Maritime Collegium represents a deliberate Kremlin effort to consolidate control over maritime governance and align Arctic policy with broader geopolitical objectives related to naval modernization, maritime transportation infrastructure, and NSR development (Sukhankin 2025a).

Another significant aspect of the Collegium's leadership is that, unlike other institutions within Russia's power vertical dealing with Arctic affairs, Patrushev himself has articulated a relatively coherent strategic vision for the region. This vision is structured around several key priorities, including strengthening military security, expanding resource extraction, developing infrastructure, enhancing maritime transportation, advancing scientific research, and managing environmental challenges. As a result, beyond his openly anti-Western orientation and considerable political weight, Patrushev stands out for a more clearly defined interpretation of Russia's Arctic strategy and the trajectory it should follow (TASS 2024a).

The creation of the Maritime Collegium therefore reflects the Kremlin's attempt to unify governance for maritime strategy and Arctic development. By bringing together representatives from the navy, security services, and economic ministries, the Collegium facilitates coordination across sectors that were previously managed by separate institutions. The composition and leadership of the Collegium further illustrate that Russia's view of the Arctic increasingly reflects an overlap between geo-economic, geopolitical, ideological, and defense priorities. Under the current political regime, this trend is likely to persist and potentially intensify.

Despite its relatively short lifespan and its formal status as a consultative and coordinating body, the Maritime Collegium already plays an active role in several initiatives, shaping key strategic and legislative efforts in naval development, shipbuilding policy, and transportation. One of the Collegium's most notable contributions was its participation in preparing the Strategy for the Development of the Russian Navy through 2050, approved in 2025. Acting on a presidential directive, the Russian Ministry of Defence initially drafted the document, after which the Maritime Collegium revised and finalized it, incorporating proposals from federal ministries and other organizations (Morskaya Kollegiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2025) including industrial actors.

The body also took part in discussions surrounding a dedicated federal law on shipbuilding, an initiative intended to consolidate regulatory frameworks and expand state support for the domestic sector (Mediapaluba 2024). Such legislation is expected to support both civilian and military shipbuilding programs while strengthening domestic industrial capabilities. In addition, the Collegium has examined projects on the NSR and the proposed Trans-Arctic Transport Corridor. Discussions at Collegium meetings have included the integration of ports in the Russian Far East and Arctic regions and the broader logistics architecture needed to support growing NSR traffic (Korabel.ru 2025). These initiatives form part of Moscow's long-term efforts to transform Arctic maritime routes into a strategic transport system linking Europe and Asia.

Security issues have also figured prominently in the Collegium's agenda. At a presidium meeting in January 2026, participants discussed measures aimed at ensuring the security of strategic maritime communications, protecting commercial navigation, and strengthening naval presence along key maritime routes (Sudostroenie.info 2026). These discussions reflect growing Russian concern over the protection of maritime infrastructure and shipping lanes amid rising geopolitical tensions and increasing economic activity in Arctic waters.

In the final analysis, the Maritime Collegium's significance lies less in autonomous agenda-setting than in institutional centrality: it links defence, industrial, maritime, and Arctic policy communities through a formal coordination mechanism and thus functions as a bridging node within the wider network. It channels information, policy proposals, and

implementation feedback across sectors, making it a critical conduit for both top-down directives and bottom-up reporting. These constitute informational edges (policy coordination), institutional edges (inter-agency linkage), and strategic edges (alignment of military and economic priorities). The importance of this body lies in connecting once fragmented sectors and reducing coordination gaps in Russia's Arctic strategy.

Drive toward centralization and its implications.

Taken together, the institutional architecture (top level) of Russia's Arctic strategy reveals a governance model marked by two intertwining processes: centralization and securitization. This results in the Arctic increasingly emerging as a zone of development and of national security, maritime control, and geopolitical competition. The re-establishment of the Maritime Collegium and appointment of Patrushev as its head signal this trajectory.

The growing centralization of governance points to a further concentration of command within a narrowing network core (RIA Novosti 2024). As stated earlier, the Maritime Collegium's role goes beyond sectoral coordination or consulting. It appears to have been designed to connect maritime strategy, Arctic development, and national security in one institution. This became visible in the Collegium's December 2024 meeting where Patrushev explicitly argued for a single integrated Arctic development project, with the NSR in its heart (TASS 2024b).

Russian leading subject matter experts and analysts appear to be highly supportive of the transformation: among others, Andrei Zagorsky (professor at Moscow State Institute of International Relations; affiliated with the Russian International Affairs Council/RIAC) emphasized that the security situation has become more fraught in the context of intensified military activity in the Arctic after Finland and Sweden joined NATO, reinforcing the tendency to view the region through a worst-case-scenario lens (Zagorskiy and Vyakhireva 2024). Another analysis argued that Russia's current conceptual approach to the Arctic requires a reassessment of coordination among specialized agencies and adaptation to persistent structural problems, including harsh climatic conditions and continued population outflow, which in turn could be resolved through greater centralization of Russia's Arctic policies (Zhilin 2025).

Centralization and securitization, however, could result in an imbalance between strategic agenda-setting and the level of practical delivery. For instance, while the centre seeks tighter coordination, Russian businesses and regional governments report bottlenecks in the material foundations of Arctic policy related to a disbalance between ambitious targets and existing capabilities. One notable discrepancy emerged in September 2024, when Rosatom's projected NSR cargo volumes appeared to fall below the targets set in the government's 2022 plan, suggesting a gap between official ambitions and operational realities (Kostrinsky 2024). In other words, the centralized governance model may be plagued by the same weakness that haunted the Soviet architecture: while politically coherent at the top, it might remain operationally strained below.

This is primarily why Russia's Arctic strategy (and its feasibility) cannot be understood solely through institutions at the centre. Implementation depends on a variety of factors such as the state's ability to mobilize sufficient industrial, logistical, demographic and financial capacity to carry out those priorities. Another layer of "nodes" take charge of implementing the strategy – corporations, local officials, and other forces that oversee practical implementation of strategy and policymaking initiatives. For that reason, the next section will look at the implementation cluster of major state corporations and state-linked industrial actors that turn Arctic policy priorities into actual Arctic projects.

State-corporate power bloc: strategic implementers

Russia's Arctic strategy is implemented through a state-corporate power bloc composed of several major state-linked companies that are building the infrastructure backbone of Russia's Arctic. Three – Rosatom, Norilsk Nickel (Nornickel), and the Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex – occupy a particularly important place in the cluster as strategic implementers, translating the federal policy priorities into concrete infrastructure, logistics systems, and resource extraction capabilities. In fact, the co-operation and compliance of these actors and with government defines the state's ability to finance, manage and operate infrastructure in the Arctic's challenging conditions (Kluge and Paul 2020). Their influence is most visible in logistics, industrial production capacity, and in the priorities of state funding and subsidy.

Rosatom

Rosatom has a dominant position in this cluster because of its control over infrastructure, giving it a centrality that is felt across the Arctic governance network. As the NSR operator since 2018 and a participant in key coordinating bodies, it maintains direct linkages with federal ministries, the Maritime Collegium, and foreign partners, combining implementation leverage with agenda-setting capacity.

Among its main responsibilities are securing navigation along the NSR for Russian and international operators (TASS 2025c), coordinating icebreaking through its subsidiary Atomflot, development maritime infrastructure, and developing strategic co-operation with foreign partners – notably China – in the Arctic (Rosatom Newsletter 2025a). This institutional arrangement effectively places Rosatom at the centre of Arctic logistics management in the Arctic with an emphasis on the NSR.

The results of Rosatom's management of the NSR are controversial. On the one hand, cargo volumes along the NSR have increased significantly in recent years – in the eyes of Russia's leaders, the critical indicator of Arctic success. According to Rosatom reporting, traffic reached a “record” of nearly 37.9 million tons in 2024, which corporate leaders portrayed as evidence that the route is emerging as a viable alternative to traditional maritime corridors connecting Europe and Asia (Rosatom 2025). Similarly, they hailed Rosatom's nuclear icebreakers – designed to achieve year-round navigation along the NSR – as evidence of the company's undisputed managerial effectiveness (Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia 2026).

On the other hand, however, Rosatom and its activities have faced significant structural challenges. First, international shipping companies remain hesitant to use the NSR due to high insurance costs, unpredictable ice conditions, and foreign sanctions. Consequently, most NSR-related cargo traffic consists of domestic shipments of Russian natural resources rather than international transits. This results not only in a visible dichotomy between official long-term strategic plans for 200 million tons by 2030 and cargo volumes that may have plateaued, falling to 37.0 million tons in (2025) from 37.9 million tons in 2024 (*Moscow Times* 2026). Furthermore, Rosatom's icebreakers-related initiatives are superficially impressive on the surface but their actual value for money, disproportionate cost, and questionable

economic sustainability spur doubts about Russia's ability to preserve its competitive edge in this sector over the long-term.

Reputational damage from questionable commitments to ecological sustainability are a second point of concern in Rosatom's network positions. Between 2009 and 2020, 520 maritime incidents occurred along Arctic routes that fall under Rosatom's operational oversight (Blokova 2025), illustrating the range of risks in the region. In August 2019, an explosion at a missile-testing site near Severodvinsk (Nyonoksa) killed five Rosatom specialists and exposed additional personnel to elevated radiation levels. Another occurred in December 2023 when a fire broke out aboard the nuclear-powered cargo vessel *Sevmorput* while docked; authorities reported no injuries and that the reactor was not threatened. Most recently, in January 2025, the nuclear icebreaker *50 Let Pobedy* collided with a cargo ship in the Kara Sea while escorting traffic, sustaining hull damage but avoiding reactor impact (Nilsen 2025). These episodes underscore persistent operational and safety challenges in Russia's expanding Arctic maritime infrastructure.

Rosatom has also faced inter-ministerial controversies. Its centralization and exclusivity in managing Arctic transportation (Kommersant 2017) has generated friction inside the network. This was more visible before February 2022 and Rosatom has largely countered competitors, but the issues are likely to resurface. For instance, the Ministry of Transport resisted transferring NSR authorities to Rosatom, trying to protect its own NSR Administration. The dispute did not end when Rosatom gained full responsibility for the route. In 2018, conflicts erupted between Rosatom's Atomflot, the Transport Ministry, and Novatek over the movement of the damaged LNG carrier *Boris Vilkitsky*; the quarrel became serious enough to require Kremlin intervention and drew a public rebuke from President Putin (Humpert 2018). This disagreement grew so much that it ultimately required Putin's personal intervention. These disputes reflect competition over control of key network edges like regulatory authority and logistics.

Since February 2022, Rosatom's position as the key (and in many ways privileged) executor of the Kremlin's Arctic strategy has gone largely undisputed. However, Rosatom is heavily subsidized by the state: in 2024, it received \$15.4 billion in funding (TASS 2024c). Given growing budgetary constraints and intensifying internal competition for the Kremlin's financial support, under these conditions inter-ministerial and inter-corporate (Staalesen 2019)¹

disagreements could re-emerge. Should transport volumes stagnate along the NSR or few foreign firms invest in it, the Kremlin's near-complete trust in Rosatom's leadership could erode, weakening the corporation's position as the principal implementer of Russia's Arctic strategy.

“ Among Russian state corporations,
Rosatom emerges as the central corporate
actor in Russia's Arctic strategy.

The final function of Rosatom is fostering long-term co-operation with foreign countries and their future elites in the Arctic. Rosatom's “Icebreaker of Knowledge” (*ledokol znanii*) initiative represents a distinctive instrument of soft power, uniting education, technology promotion, and geopolitical signaling. Launched in the early 2020s, the project uses Russia's unique nuclear icebreaker fleet to bring selected students to the North Pole for scientific training and symbolic exposure to Russian Arctic capabilities (Davis 2025). The initiative has evolved into an increasingly international format. By 2024–25, expeditions involved participants from up to 21 countries, many of them from the Global South or states engaged in nuclear co-operation with Russia (Rosatom Newsletter 2025b). The competitive selection process – drawing tens of thousands of applicants globally – targets high-achieving students aged 14–16 and integrates them into a curated environment of Russian scientific, technological, and ideological messaging (Atom Media 2025). In many respects, the program mirrors elements of late Soviet youth diplomacy, cultivating early stage familiarity with Russian institutions, embedding positive associations with technological modernity, and stimulating informal transnational networks. Crucially, these interactions are anchored in sectors – nuclear energy, Arctic logistics, and advanced science – where Russia retains comparative advantages and maintains partnerships with dozens of states.

Overall, among Russian state corporations, Rosatom emerges as the central corporate actor in Russia's Arctic strategy: it possesses strong implementation leverage through control over logistics and infrastructure, high institutional centrality through participation in coordinating bodies

and close ties to ministries, growing agenda-setting influence, and an expanding role in Russia's long-term international Arctic engagement.

Nornickel

Nornickel remains indispensable for Russia to be able to pursue and implement its Arctic strategy. In terms of its place in the Arctic strategy network, Nornickel's role is best understood through a combination of implementation leverage and selective bargaining power: its importance derives from control over cargo flows and industrial assets, while its ties to the state are mediated through regulation, environmental oversight, and strategic dependence rather than formal centrality.

It supplies a large share of the cargo base that makes the NSR commercially viable. Specifically, Nornickel ships its own cargo (ore, metal products, fuel, and supplies) on a year-round basis between the Yenisei basin and Arctic sea lanes. In its own description, the firm stresses its role as Russia's main industrial user of the NSR and the only industrial company in the country with its own ice-class fleet (Nornickel n.d.). Its key mining projects include the South Cluster on the Norilsk-1 deposit, designed to expand the mineral base feeding Norilsk metallurgy; the Sulfur Program in Norilsk; and its Kola operations near the Norwegian border (Nornickel 2023). In practical terms, Nornickel manages an entire vertically integrated Arctic production corridor linking extraction, processing, port handling, and export, giving Nornickel structural importance that it has not, however, turned into full network centrality.

The reason for its structural importance is its large revenues (Abireg.ru 2026), part of which comes from the hard currency earned by its exports. This status, however, has not made it an agenda-setter and it remains mostly an implementer of Arctic strategy. Its bargaining power appears to be much weaker when measured against Rosatom's. For instance, despite multiple incidents of pollution, Rosatom never faced the public backlash that Nornickel did when a May 2020 diesel spill from a ruptured fuel tank owned by a subsidiary released some 20,000 tons of fuel into the Arctic environment. That earned the wrath of Putin, who publicly rebuked company leadership and declared a state of emergency (Teterevleva and Devitt 2020). The situation escalated into a direct conflict between multiple official bodies with Rosprirodnadzor, the state environmental agency, suing Nornickel. The

court ultimately imposed a record 146.2 billion ruble (about US\$2 billion at the time) penalty. As some analysts argued, the case was politically damaging for the company because it was not merely an environmental scandal – it disappointed the Kremlin’s expectation of competent stewardship (Staalesen 2019). Another area of slowly brewing discontent in Moscow is the state of relationships between the company and Indigenous and local communities, which complained about Nornickel’s persistent violations of ecological sustainability (Temirova 2021). These disputes create reputational risk for a firm that Moscow depends on to stabilize Arctic settlement and industry.

Another potential source of tension lies in the company’s investment role. Unlike many large Russian corporations that receive federal support, Nornickel has emerged as the largest private investor and operator in Arctic mining and logistics infrastructure. The company has spent billions of dollars modernizing and upgrading facilities, effectively compensating for limited state investments in the Norilsk region through its own funds. Should the Ukraine war drag on and Western sanctions persist, this asymmetry could become more unstable. If the Kremlin continues prioritizing state-linked corporations such as Rosatom and Rosneft, which consistently demand greater state support for large investments with questionable justifications, while expecting Nornickel to shoulder a disproportionate share of Arctic development costs, the arrangement may increasingly appear inequitable to the company’s leadership. This could generate tensions with federal authorities and other enterprises.

Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex

The Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex opened in 2015 in Bolshoy Kamen (Primorsky Krai) as the country’s first large-tonnage shipbuilding facility capable of constructing oil tankers, ice-class LNG carriers and offshore platforms. Since then, it has emerged as a central instrument of Russia’s Arctic strategy. A consortium of domestic corporations that included Rosneft, Rosneftgaz, and Gazprombank, formally created the shipyard in a move that was supposed to link the state (agenda-setting power) and the (quasi-)private sector’s financial muscle. Zvezda’s main mission was to replace (“*import-substitute*”) foreign-built large civilian vessels and offshore equipment that Russia had previously been unable to produce domestically (TASS 2017). Therefore, in strategic terms, the emergence of this facility represents Moscow’s attempt to link Arctic resource

extraction with a domestically controlled maritime logistics system, the costs of which are to be borne by Russian corporations.

The task that the Kremlin gave Zvezda – strengthening Russia’s ice-class shipping to serve hydrocarbon projects along the NSR – is a delicate one. Based on Russian industry estimates, Arctic energy projects could require as many as 200 tankers and gas carriers by 2035. Among Russian shipyards, only Zvezda currently possesses the capacity to construct ice-class vessels of such size (Milkin 2024). Despite the state-business link, Zvezda has not functioned as a market-driven industrial project. Like many large Russian enterprises serving geopolitical objectives, it has depended heavily on direct and indirect state support, including preferential financing and targeted subsidies. Russian sources indicate that subsidies associated with vessels intended for the Arctic LNG-2 project alone were expected to exceed 31 billion rubles between 2021 and 2023 (some US\$430 million at the time). Consequently, Zvezda has evolved into a strategic industrial asset advancing state policy objectives (TASS 2020). Its network influence primarily depends on its position within procurement and production cycles, linking state demand, corporate orders, and industrial output, placing Zvezda as a critical intermediary between policy and material capability.

Zvezda was left as the only viable domestic alternative for constructing specialized Arctic vessels after 2022, when Western sanctions undermined technological cooperation with foreign shipyards in Finland and South Korea, forcing Russia to accelerate investments in domestic shipbuilding. In this respect, Zvezda consolidated a near-monopoly – a trend already visible before 2022 – while serving the needs of other state-linked corporations such as Rosneft, Gazprom, Novatek, and Sovcomflot. In this sense, Zvezda – which is said to enjoy Putin’s favour – has emerged as a clear beneficiary of Russia’s break with the West and the state’s increasing reliance on domestic shipyards to advance Arctic strategy.

Nonetheless, Zvezda faces serious structural weaknesses that might in the future undermine its role as a strategic implementer of Russia’s Arctic strategy. First, the collapse of foreign technological partnerships after 2022 disrupted supply chains for critical shipbuilding components. Authoritative Russian information outlet *Vedomosti* reported in 2023 that sanctions affected the availability of propulsion systems, large castings, and other specialized equipment, leading to higher costs and construction delays. In

one case, a supplier reportedly sought a 67 per cent price increase for part of the propulsion package, illustrating the inflationary pressures associated with import substitution (Kostrinsky, Litova, and Volobuev 2023). These difficulties suggest that the shipyard's long-term viability depends on continued state subsidy centred on Arctic development strategy.

Second, Zvezda's development has produced tensions within Russia's industrial system. Russian information outlets have pointed to several fault lines, including competition between Rosneft and Novatek over tanker procurement and disputes over governing the yard (RBC 2024). One notable example (before 2022) concerned the rivalry between Rosneft (which controls the shipyard) and Novatek, whose Arctic LNG projects require fleets of Arc7-class LNG carriers. Novatek has repeatedly argued that Zvezda cannot deliver vessels quickly enough, preferring competitive tenders that could include foreign shipyards, while Rosneft has sought binding domestic orders to secure the yard's long-term workload (Interfax 2019). While muted since 2022, further delays or Russia's inability to meet commitments to foreign customers could once again trigger inter-corporate and ministerial disputes. The real test for Zvezda will be the fulfillment of federal procurement orders for LNG carriers. The issue extends well beyond purely economic considerations and has become politically sensitive. Continued disruptions in vessel deliveries – although, in December 2025 Zvezda delivered its first domestically built LNG carrier, Aleksey Kosygin, the only confirmed Arc7 LNG carrier delivered by Zvezda to date – would challenge Moscow's narrative of technological sovereignty and ability to substitute for the loss of foreign contractors.

Lastly, questions linger about the shipyard's governance. In late 2024 to early 2025, discussions took place about transferring Zvezda to the state-owned United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC), but negotiations collapsed due to financial constraints and disagreements over the terms (Interfax 2024). This episode highlights ongoing competition among state-linked actors for control over strategic industrial assets and (once again) raises questions about the economic sustainability of Russian state-owned corporations (*goskorporatsii*) and their reported “invincibility” in the face of Western sanctions (Yarwood 2025).

The state-corporate bloc – of which Rosatom, Nornickel, and Zvezda are examples, alongside oil and gas majors like Rosneft, Gazprom, and Novatek – translate federal directives into infrastructure, production, and logistics

while also shaping strategic priorities. These three companies control aspects of transport (NSR), resource flows, and shipbuilding capacity, giving them agenda-setting influence as the Kremlin depends on their technical, financial, and operational capabilities. In practice, this once again highlights that fact that Russia's Arctic strategy emerges not solely from centralized Kremlin-guided planning but from ongoing interaction between the state and its strategic corporate partners – all of which pursue their own agendas (albeit mainly in line with Kremlin's strategic goals). This interaction demonstrates that actors controlling critical edges – such as logistics, production, and infrastructure – can translate implementation capacity into agenda-setting influence within the network.

Regional gatekeepers and territorial brokers

Alongside the state-corporate power bloc, regions also are nodes in the Arctic network. In practice, three regions – Murmansk Oblast, Arkhangelsk Oblast, and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YNAO) – are most noteworthy, functioning as intermediary nodes linking the federal centre to on-the-ground (*na zemle*) implementors. Among the most relevant factors in their significance is their control over natural resources (especially hydrocarbons), infrastructure, and access points (ports, transport). In addition, their access to so-called “administrative resource” (that is, to federal decision-making) as well as their dependence on federal funding and corporate partnerships shapes their roles.

In Russia's currently highly personalistic and centralized political system, regional governments are not sovereign actors, but neither are they mere transmitters of orders. Rather, they function as regional gatekeepers and territorial brokers, mediating between the centre and Arctic periphery, bargaining for infrastructure and rents, and trying to shape how the Arctic is (or will be) governed from below. Their weakness, however, lies in dependence on, among others, federal financial support, presidential arbitration, and state corporations, which means that they only possess limited and conditional leverage (Leontyeva and Lototskaya 2025). Moreover, these three regions do not occupy the same position in the Arctic hierarchy. Murmansk has the strongest claim to being the administrative and logistics gate of the western Arctic (TASS 2022a); YNAO has the greatest economic leverage because it anchors Russia's gas industry; and Arkhangelsk aggressively uses its Arctic political identity to

lobby for federal recognition and infrastructure investments. That unevenness makes them useful case studies as territorial brokers in the Arctic region.

Between centre and Arctic periphery: the hierarchy and the extent of success

Among the three, Murmansk Oblast has been the most successful in converting regional ambition into a federalized Arctic agenda, owing to the effective personal lobbying from local governors who have persistently framed Murmansk as Russia's indispensable "gateway to the Arctic." In the changing geopolitical milieu, such campaigns can be traced to at least 2014, when Governor Marina Kovtun publicly linked the Murmansk transport hub to the interests of companies such as Rosneft and Gazprom (RIA Novosti 2014). In effect, this was a bid to shape federal investment priorities and prevent competing ports from displacing Murmansk. This demonstrates the region's determination (and ultimately ability) to influence financial flows within the Arctic strategy network.

Later, with Russo-Western relations worsening and domestic competition for resources and state support intensifying, Murmansk under Governor Andrey Chibis has attempted to further institutionalize its brokerage role. In numerous interviews and public talks, Chibis promoted Murmansk as a "key region for Arctic development," linking the region's future to logistics, minerals, and reoriented trade corridors. He later used his role in the State Council's Arctic working group to argue that Murmansk's project portfolio should be embedded in all-Russian Arctic policy, including social development, infrastructure, and NSR priorities (RIA Novosti 2022). Under Chibis, Murmansk started transitioning from a policy implementer to a regional agenda-setter. Similarly, Murmansk's mediation role confirms the significance of its bargaining power, for instance on the issue of gasification. Despite its high costs, Chibis secured Putin's support for major gasification projects in the region, showcasing the regional leadership's ability to advance its case in the face of initial hesitation from Moscow and Gazprom and the project's technological complexity. This case demonstrated the ability of a region to successfully apply pressure on the centre and a state corporation (RIA Novosti 2022b). In this sense, Murmansk has the strongest ties to the federal centre in terms of repeated coordination and successful advocacy. Its strength lies in dense connections to federal decisionmakers and corporate implementers.

Arkhangelsk Oblast – less successfully – strives to strengthen its role within Russia’s Arctic hierarchy through identity- and science-related efforts. Arkhangelsk occupies a weaker position overall, relying more heavily on symbolic identity production and lobbying. Its weaker position reflects thinner and less effective connections to central decision-makers. For instance, the Northern (Arctic) Federal University deliberately worked to construct an “Arctic marker” of regional identity, effectively rebranding Arkhangelsk as an Arctic centre rather than a peripheral northern region (Katorin 2019), an attempt by regional elites to secure status, attention, and infrastructure.

This being said, Arkhangelsk has at least one significant structural issue: competition with other regions, particular its considerably weaker comparative advantages vis-a-vis Murmansk. Unable to get an upper hand over Murmansk for the NSR logistics and servicing functions, Arkhangelsk authorities nonetheless succeeded in securing a new deepwater port as a part of the comprehensive plan for Arctic infrastructure development (Government of the Russian Federation 2023). Arkhangelsk has also used sectoral lobbying to defend its position against Murmansk. In 2023 Governor Aleksandr Tsybulsky raised with the federal fisheries leadership the need to improve shore infrastructure and reminded Moscow that federal strategy itself envisioned service centres for the fishing fleet in both Arkhangelsk and Murmansk (RIA Novosti 2023a).

YNAO’s ability to participate in federal centre’s Arctic-related strategy is based on its endowment of strategic natural resources. According to Russian sources, it holds over 65 per cent of Russia’s gas reserves (about 20 per cent of the world’s), as well as 20 per cent of Russia’s oil and condensate reserves (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2026). Thus, the region’s bargaining power is primarily in major natural gas projects critical for both domestic and foreign economic ties. This forms the type of competitive edge that the federal centre cannot easily substitute. Yet, despite its huge bargaining power, the regional authorities failed to secure a critical infrastructural project, the so-called Northern Latitudinal Railway. After multiple promises (coming from Putin himself (RIA Novosti 2021)), it appears that the project became a victim of cost overruns, lost private funding, and post-2022 geopolitical shifts, and is now effectively on hold with an uncertain future. This is particularly concerning for the YNAO because while Moscow recognizes the region’s centrality to national energy strategy,

it allocates priority to the NSR (and thus Murmansk and Arkhangelsk) in terms of hydrocarbon and cargo transport rather than the YNAO (Seleznev and Korenkov 2025). Thus, it could be argued that YNAO possesses the greatest resource-based leverage but weaker agenda-setting capacity. Its leverage is structurally embedded in resource-flow mechanism, which the federal centre cannot bypass or ignore.

Control over the key factors of input

In this dimension, the situation appears to be marked by some sort of duality: YNAO holds the strongest position among the three regions in terms of endowment with critical natural resources but its actual role and input in the agenda-setting process remains quite limited. Despite the region's vitality to Russia's war-battered economy and some Russian-language scholarship, characterizing YNAO as a case of "hybrid regionalism" – in which regions, despite being fully integrated into vertical governance structures, retain a significant degree of autonomy and even pursue self-regulatory practices (Leontyeva and Lototskaya 2025) – the region's bargaining power is limited not only vis-a-vis Murmansk but also Arkhangelsk. Specifically, the region's economy is tied to large corporations and federal transport decisions, while internally it remains split between industrial extraction zones and traditional Indigenous land use. For example, one earlier study on YNAO that discusses hydrocarbon extraction on territories of traditional Nenets land identifies this as the most conflict-prone aspect of the interaction between fuel-and-energy companies, Indigenous communities, and regional authorities (Martynova 2019). Moreover, beyond disputes between Moscow and Indigenous groups over the commercial use of local land, these tensions could take a different trajectory in the future. The local population may become increasingly aggrieved by the heavy military losses suffered by Indigenous communities on the front in Ukraine (Berezhkov 2025). Given their small numbers, such losses would be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to replenish, potentially turning this issue into a significant source of antagonism.

Murmansk's leverage is different: it does not dominate Arctic extraction; rather, as argued earlier, it controls critical logistics and access flows. Murmansk also has the largest concentration of residents and projects within the Arctic preferential regime: in 2023 Chibis noted that the region accounted for 32 per cent of all residents of the Arctic Zone preferential

system with a combined number of 203 projects (TASS 2023). That gives Murmansk a strong claim to being the principal western administrative platform for channeling Arctic investments. This, however, contains one structural issue that the regional authorities do not frequently emphasise: while Murmansk has proven capable of attracting projects, it almost fully depends on external funding, of which large part comes from the federal centre (TASS 2022b).

Arkhangelsk could be viewed as the weakest party in terms of direct control over resource rents, which is why its authorities emphasize port infrastructure, processing, and Arctic services. The local authorities stress transport investments, airport reconstruction, and port infrastructure, tying this to reportedly growing investments in the region (RIA Novosti 2023b). Yet, compared with YNAO's control over natural resources and Murmansk's logistics position, Arkhangelsk's bargaining power is more derivative – it largely depends on convincing Moscow that the region is necessary to the broader NSR and Arctic service economy.

Elite patronage and federal dependence

Murmansk's Arctic leverage gives it significant political influence, but its dependence on federal backing limits its autonomy in agenda-setting. Its bargaining power operates within, not outside, the Kremlin's vertical of power. As argued previously, Murmansk's dependence is most visible in large-scale infrastructure and energy projects. This said, however, under Chibis – and apparently owing to the Russo-Western split – Murmansk has demonstrated notable agenda-setting capacity; it has positioned itself as the “capital of the Russian Arctic” and successfully lobbied for key projects within the spectrum of federal priorities (Ministry of Information Policy of the Murmansk Region 2025). Given its indispensability to the system, Murmansk's dominant positions among Russia's Arctic region is solidified by federal political patrons. Beyond Putin, key figures such as Alexander Novak (Deputy Prime Minister of Russia who oversees energy policy, including oil, gas, and Arctic resource development) and presidential aides have supported region-linked projects, including LNG development initiatives promoted by Novatek and regional authorities (Staalesen 2023). While Murmansk (and its authorities) should not be viewed as an independent agenda-setting force when it comes to the Arctic strategy, it does have a brokerage power – it has

significant influence over such areas as shaping proposals and lobbying. In this configuration, its main leverage lies in strategic relevance, whereas its limitation lies in the necessity of federal endorsement for implementation.

Murmansk’s Arctic leverage gives it significant political influence, but its dependence on federal backing limits its autonomy.

The case of Arkhangelsk Oblast’s position in Russia’s Arctic strategy is emblematic in terms of understanding the limits of regional autonomy within a centralized system as well as the specific mechanisms through which weaker regions attempt to exercise influence. The oblast’s leadership, under Governor Aleksandr Tsybulsky, has demonstrated some agenda-setting initiative, but this remains limited. Specifically, the majority of the most notable local large projects and initiatives have a chance to advance when they are embedded in federal programs, which highlights the region’s overwhelming reliance on Moscow. Structurally, Arkhangelsk’s strengths could be located in its institutional Arctic identity, historical role in exploration, and diversified (though limited) industrial base. As mentioned earlier, regional elites have deliberately cultivated this identity to secure political relevance of the region to the Kremlin’s Arctic strategy (Katorin 2019). Yet, these strengths are largely offset by significant weaknesses, where Arkhangelsk cannot effectively compete with more resource-endowed and better positioned regions. Moreover, following the Russo-Western split after 2022 and imposition of sanctions, Arkhangelsk has become markedly less attractive to foreign investors. The Russian side aims to frame this as a “repositioning,” but projects involving alternative non-Western investors, particularly China, have been stalled or cancelled, while technology transfer remains limited (Andersson 2024). These trends reflect a wider contraction of FDI in the Russian Arctic. While the region retains strategic importance, its economic role has narrowed and become increasingly dependent on state financing and limited external partnerships, which means that Arkhangelsk’s

autonomy in Arctic agenda-setting is very limited. There is little doubt that the region can articulate priorities and lobby effectively, but it cannot independently determine strategic direction.

The YNAO occupies a somewhat paradoxical position in Russia's Arctic governance system: it is the most economically powerful and vital region, yet, in practice, its ability to influence strategic agenda-setting is very limited. For instance, the region's successive authorities – Dmitry Kobylkin and later Dmitry Artyukhov – have failed to successfully lobby for critical infrastructural projects that would have elevated the role of the YNAO in Russia's Arctic hierarchy from a resource-endowed region to one with greater decision-making authority. In terms of political backing from above, YNAO benefits from strong federal patrons linked to the energy sector, including Deputy Prime Minister Novak and senior figures overseeing fuel and energy policy. However, this patronage reinforces dependence: regional priorities usually advance primarily when aligned with national energy strategy. In general, in terms of its contribution to Russia's Arctic strategy, the YNAO's autonomy is instrumental rather than independent. Indeed, the region does possess bargaining power (mainly backed by its economic importance), but its strategic agenda is ultimately shaped by federal decision-making and corporate alignment, leaving limited space for independent regional policymaking.

Ideational and discursive platforms

Russia's ideas for the Arctic are not a product solely of the Kremlin, the Security Council or the Maritime Collegium. Rather, a small ecosystem of regime-adjacent think tanks, research institutes, universities, and lobby groups translate broad presidential priorities into elite narratives, policy concepts and ideas, and publicly consumable arguments. Their significance lies in institutional proximity to decision-makers and ensuring that policy narratives circulate consistently across political leadership, expert communities, and international audiences. In the Arctic, four regime-legitimizing global strategy platforms – the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the Valdai Discussion Club, *Russia in Global Affairs*, and *Arsenal Otechestva* (a military-strategic magazine) – perform a vast load of these functions. Together, they help frame the Arctic not merely as a resource base or transport corridor, but as proof of Russia's status as a sovereign civilizational power and a legitimate agenda-setter in the emerging “multipolar” (or post-Western) global order.

RIAC's role is arguably the most influential of the three, which is not accidental: RIAC's co-founders include the Russian Foreign Ministry (RFM), the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, and Interfax (Russian International Affairs Council n.d.), placing it at the junction of the diplomatic bureaucracy, academic authority, business interests, and state-linked information management. In Arctic matters, RIAC's work consistently protects Russia's jurisdictional claims and development agenda while avoiding a maximalist tone or outwardly anti-Western narratives. Its publications stress the NSR as a national transport artery, defend Russian regulatory claims, warn against "internationalization" pushed by extra-regional actors, and seek to preserve those multilateral mechanisms – especially the Arctic Council (AC) – that allow Russia to act as a rule-shaping insider rather than an isolated spoiler (Kortunov 2025). RIAC helps the Kremlin to project moderation. However, its leading experts are still prone to perceive the Arctic as an area of competition (Kortunov 2024) without surrendering strategic control or irrevocable severing ties with other Arctic countries.

Russian experts argue that Russia should focus on securing control, building capacity, and actively treating the Arctic as a critical front in a more competitive global order.

Valdai performs a different function: since its inception in 2004, it acts as a high-level narrative amplifier of Russia's geopolitics for foreign audiences (Valdai Club Foundation n.d.). The Club is backed by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, RIAC, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), and Higher School of Economics (HSE); its research director is Fyodor Lukyanov, editor-in-chief of a prominent journal, *Russia in Global Affairs*; and President Putin has treated the annual Valdai meeting as a privileged venue for strategic signalling for more than two decades (Valdai Discussion Club 2025). In Arctic discourse, Valdai's contribution is to lift the region out of narrow sectoral planning and place it inside a larger story about multipolarity, Eurasia (Strelnikova 2024), global logistics, sanctions adaptation, and Russia's

historic northern destiny. Valdai texts emphasize the NSR as a world-order corridor, the Arctic as an arena where non-Western powers – especially China (Filippova 2023) and India (Jayaprakash 2025) can be integrated into Russian-led formats of Arctic co-operation, and the region as a test case for the broader shift from Western-centric globalization to multi-polar global order. This type of messaging is not coincidental: Valdai aims to convince foreign audiences that Russia's Arctic role is natural and stabilizing and Arctic development without Russia is unrealistic in the long run.

Russia in Global Affairs occupies a third niche and is the most intellectually ambitious of the three. While RIAC tends to defend Russian positions within existing institutions, and Valdai dramatizes Russia's geopolitical mission, *Russia in Global Affairs* situates the Arctic within debates on world-order transformation. Its editorial architecture is revealing – Fyodor Lukyanov anchors the journal, and its advisory board includes figures tied to the Analysis Centre under the Government of the Russian Federation and HSE, underscoring the journal's proximity to state-adjacent expert networks. Arctic essays in the journal contend that the region has become a mirror of the systemic changes reshaping the global rules-based order (Collins 2017). They treat the Arctic as a place where older governance arrangements are eroding and where Russia must defend both status and strategic flexibility under new geopolitical conditions. That makes the journal particularly useful for shaping elite interpretations of why the Arctic matters beyond natural resources, transportation, or even defence-related themes, portraying it as a laboratory for a post-liberal order, which will be dismantled because of intensifying geopolitical competition. Referring to US President Donald Trump's rhetoric about Greenland, Russian experts argue that Russia should focus on securing control, building capacity, and actively treating the Arctic as a critical front in a more competitive global order (Lukyanov 2026).

Analysis of the three platforms points to subtle (yet still visible) differences among them.

First, on institutions-related issues: RIAC appears to be noticeably more protective of the AC because it sees institutional continuity as advantageous to Russia even amid confrontation. *Russia in Global Affairs* is more willing to contemplate systemic breakdown and redesigned governance. Valdai, meanwhile, often treats institutions instrumentally, emphasizing instead broader geopolitical repositioning and Russia's ability to build new alignments.

Second, on non-Western partners: Valdai is generally the most enthusiastic about embedding the Arctic into a Eurasian and Sino-Indian framework, while RIAC is more cautious, especially where extra-regional actors might dilute Russian control over the NSR or the Arctic legal order.

Third, on militarization: Valdai commentary has at times blended geopolitical confidence with warnings against overreading Arctic conflict, whereas RIAC's post-2022 output more directly normalizes enhanced Russian military posture in response to NATO expansion and the loss of the former co-operative equilibrium.

These differences should not be viewed as open (or emerging) factional splits that set aside these discursive platforms, but they do reveal different emphases inside the regime's broader Arctic discourse coalition. More importantly, however, is that the common denominator remains much stronger than the divergences. All three platforms legitimize the same strategic core:

- The Arctic as indispensable to Russia's sovereignty, great-power identity, energy future, and transport geography.
- The NSR as a strategic national asset, not a neutral global property (the internationalist vision of the Arctic region).
- Russia's Arctic policy must now be nested inside the country's larger confrontation with the West and pivot to non-Western partners.

Therefore, the strategic role of these platforms should be seen not just as commentators on Russia's Arctic strategy; in fact, they help make it governable, defensible, and intelligible within the logic of the contemporary Russian power vertical. In methodological terms, RIAC, Valdai, and *Russia in Global Affairs* display strong ideological alignment and partial institutional overlap, but differ in their degree of policy-facing influence. Together, these platforms reinforce shared narratives across the network, ensuring ideological consistency between political leadership, expert communities, and external messaging.

Further, if the above-mentioned platforms provide the overarching geopolitical and policy framework, *Arsenal Otechestva* defence and military magazine² (established in 2012) plays a critical role in translating that framework into concrete military-strategic logic, particularly in the Arctic domain. The journal is closely associated with Russia's defence-industrial community, military expert community, and conservative security elites, and

serves as a platform where strategic priorities are articulated in operational and technological terms. This positioning makes the journal not merely descriptive but participatory in shaping doctrinal thinking and procurement priorities, particularly in areas such as Arctic militarization. A defining feature of *Arsenal Otechestva* is its consistent portrayal of the Arctic as a potential theatre of military operations. For instance, in an article titled *The Arctic as a Possible Theatre of Military Operations*, the authors argue that the region's harsh climate does not reduce conflict potential but instead increases the need for specialized military forces, infrastructure, and logistics systems adapted to polar conditions (Dybov et al. 2023a). This argument is further developed in Part 3 of the same paper, which highlights operational challenges such as communications, mobility, and sustainment in Arctic environments, reinforcing the necessity of integrated planning and technological adaptation (Dybov et al. 2023b).

Critically, the journal (and its key contributors) presents the Arctic region not just only as a zone of competition, but a multidimensional rivalry that is taking place between several groups of actors. This disruption aligns with the logic of post-2014 developments and finds support among many key politicians and public figures inside Russia. According to the authors, competition in the Arctic includes five “circles” of countries and international organizations (Losev and Losev 2023; Sukhankin 2025b). First, the core “Arctic countries” – such as Russia, United States, Canada, Denmark, and Norway – are the primary competitors for Arctic resources due to their direct geographic access. A second group, the “near-Arctic states” like Sweden and Finland, play a supporting role, particularly by contributing technological and strategic capabilities to Western efforts. Third, Western-led organizations such as NATO and the European Union are increasingly viewed by Russian analysts as expanding their influence in the region, potentially forming alternative structures as co-operation in the Arctic Council weakens. Additionally, global institutions like the United Nations and its specialized bodies act as formal arbiters, shaping legal and environmental frameworks without direct involvement in resource competition. Finally, non-Arctic states – including China and several European powers – are emerging as interested actors seeking a role in Arctic governance and economic opportunities. Together, these layers reflect a complex and increasingly contested system of overlapping interests and influence in the Arctic.

In the final analysis, the journal plays an important role in Russia's Arctic policy ecosystem by bridging the gap between strategic intent and military implementation. Through its detailed analyses of Arctic operations, infrastructure, and capabilities, it ensures that high-level policy is translated into actionable military logic, making it a key instrument in shaping both discourse and practice in Russia's Arctic strategy.

Normative legitimization and ideological platforms

Since the Arctic is not only a zone of economic and military competition but also an arena of international legitimacy and governance, the Kremlin has increasingly sought to shape external perceptions of its Arctic conduct. This is particularly important in countries such as Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, where Indigenous rights, environmental governance, and reconciliation policies occupy a central place in political discourse and legislative frameworks. In this context, Russian state and quasi-state actors attempt to portray Russia as a responsible Arctic power committed to Indigenous participation, historical continuity, and regional stewardship. These efforts are intended both to reinforce domestic legitimacy and to counter Western criticism of Russia's militarization, resource-extraction practices, and treatment of Indigenous communities in the Arctic. Within this broader effort, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), the Izborsk Club, and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) constitute a distinct layer of influence within the network shaping Russia's Arctic strategy. Unlike think tanks and research institutions, these actors do not formulate policy in a technocratic sense. Instead, they provide ideological framing, cultivate societal acceptance of state priorities, and promote narratives that reinforce the legitimacy of Russia's Arctic posture both domestically and internationally.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC): sacralising space, supporting social cohesion, and calling for obedience

Distinct among Russia's Arctic strategy actors, the ROC legitimizes norms, framing Russia's northern presence as historically continuous, spiritually justified, and socially natural. That function has gained prominence since 2014, when the Kremlin started to increasingly contrast Russia to Western civilizations (Sukhanovskaya 2022).

Beyond reinforcing morale, cohesion, and a mission-oriented identity among military personnel deployed in the High North, the ROC is a unifying force and a source of ideological legitimation for Russia's Arctic ambitions. Its position, however, is not a byproduct of current politics: it has a long history in Russia's development (*osvoyeniye*) of its North. Since the Middle Ages, monasteries were outposts of settlement, economic development, literacy, and political integration, as well as of religion. Multiple studies on monastic landholding and the "small monasteries" of the Russian North emphasize that church institutions were embedded in local territorial organization and helped structure northern governance long before the modern state apparatus took shape (Demchuk 2007; Ponomarev 2018).

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Patriarch Alexy II (1990–2008) placed special emphasis on rebuilding religious infrastructure and reintegrating the Church into state and military life in the Arctic, by blessing naval units of Russia's Northern Fleet and encouraging the construction of chapels at remote military bases. Following the ascension of current Patriarch Kirill in 2009, the ROC's involvement in the Arctic affairs acquired more pronounced geopolitical forms, reinforcing the notion that the Arctic is not a distant frontier but part of Russia's civilizational core (Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia 2016). The same logic informs church-building and symbolic expansion there, explicitly tying religious construction to the region's identity, promoting a "Russian Arctic" and complementing state and regional oversight. At the same time, the ROC fosters ties in an openly ideology-driven manner about Russia's "strategic Arctic direction" with servicemen of the Northern Fleet (Alekseeva 2020). This development marks a significant evolution in the ROC's role in the Arctic region.

It is also important to note Kirill's personal role in Russia's focus on the Arctic: in his interviews, the head of the ROC openly frames the Arctic as a historically earned national priority, emphasizing Russia's pioneering role and the "heroism" of those who developed the region, thereby linking contemporary policy to a legacy of sacrifice and national destiny (Interfax 2014). His personal stance is very important since it provides high-level spiritual endorsement of Arctic development, allowing the ROC's involvement to appear not as political alignment, but as a continuation of Russia's historical and moral mission, whereby strengthening the legitimacy of both Church participation in and Russia's claims for exclusive role in the region.

In the final analysis, the ROC is linked to Russia's Arctic policy system through symbolic legitimization, military-social integration, and elite-level endorsement. It does not formulate policy as such, but reinforces ideological cohesion between the state, the armed forces, and regional identity projects.

The Russian Geographical Society (RGS) as an outward-designed para-state instrument in the Arctic

The Russian Geographical Society (RGS) has emerged since 2022 as one of the Kremlin's most prominent instruments for projecting Arctic-related soft power to external audiences and advancing Kremlin strategy. Even though formally a scientific and civic organization, the RGS – founded in 1845 – today operates under direct state patronage. Putin chairs its Board of Trustees, while Sergei Shoigu – Former Minister of Defence (2012–2024) and currently Secretary of the Security Council of Russia (since 2024) – serves as president. The inclusion of senior officials and executives from companies such as Gazprom Neft and VTB in its governing bodies further demonstrates its growing position (Russian Geographical Society n.d. a).

Since Russia's marginalization at the Arctic Council after February 2022, the Kremlin has been increasingly relying on domestic quasi-civil institutions and platforms akin to the RGS to produce alternative channels of legitimacy. The RGS's ostensibly neutral role as an organizer and supporter of scientific expeditions and research underpins its relevance to the Kremlin. Since 2022, the RGS has intensified Arctic expeditions, including projects on Franz Josef Land (Russian Geographical Society 2024 a) and across the broader Arctic zone through its expedition program. These missions combine environmental monitoring, geological surveys, and historical research, thereby reinforcing Russia's physical presence in strategic territories (Russian Geographical Society 2026). The society also devises useful narratives for the Kremlin, such as the Geographical Dictation (Russian Geographical Society n.d. b) and its grants program (Russian Geographical Society n.d. c), which promote a vision of the Arctic as an inherently Russian space shaped by exploration, stewardship, and historical continuity. This messaging aligns closely with official discourse and is designed to resonate with both domestic audiences and external partners, particularly in non-Western states.

The RGS operates at the intersection of civilian and security institutions, reflected in Arctic-related activities frequently involving the Russian Ministry of

Defence (MOD) and the Northern Fleet (Russian Geographical Society 2024 b). The organization's activities include co-operation with military structures in historical-geographical projects such as "The Main Face of Russia: History, Events, People" (Russian Geographical Society 2022). Officially, this multi-year exploration project is a series of expeditions in the Arctic, covering all major archipelagos of Russia's northern seas. However, these activities blurred the line between civilian science and strategic reconnaissance, contributing to mapping, environmental monitoring, and logistical knowledge relevant to military planning. In 2025, Putin himself acknowledged the significant role of geographers, topographers, and meteorologists in the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War (RIA Novosti 2025b), again pointing to this geographic dimension of Russian state propaganda.

Beyond fieldwork, the RGS influences Arctic policy indirectly through its expert networks. While it does not directly draft policy, its members and affiliated experts participate in advisory processes that help reinforce key ideas related to sovereignty, resource extraction, and the expansion of the NSR in Russia's Arctic strategic documents. Discussions at the presidential level further highlight the integration of scientific expertise into Arctic decision-making, as reflected in Kremlin materials on Arctic development meetings. For instance, in 2025, Putin personally stated that "[the RGS] has played the leading role in the exploration and development of the Arctic" (RIA Novosti 2025c).

The RGS increasingly appears to be the Kremlin's strategic expert resource in the Arctic region. In the post-2022 context of international isolation, the legitimizing function has become increasingly central to sustaining Russia's Arctic strategy. In general, the RGS operates across scientific edges (knowledge production), symbolic edges (narrative framing), and institutional edges (policy-adjacent advisory roles), enabling Russia to present its Arctic activities as grounded in science and history rather than political and economic interests.

The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)

Founded in 1990, at the first Congress of the Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Soviet Union, the RAIPON was conceived as an independent advocate for the rights of indigenous communities in the North, Siberia, and the Far East. Since 2022, the government has gradually co-opted it. Its influence now derives less from autonomous agenda-setting than from its utility as a

legitimizing and mediating node within the broader governance network. It mainly serves as an intermediary between the state, Indigenous peoples, and international forums. In the post-2022 Arctic, RAIPON is best understood as a mechanism of social stabilization and narrative management: useful to the Kremlin precisely because it translates Indigenous presence into administrative order and political legitimacy (International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR) 2024).

“ *The outbreak of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine unmasked the Kremlin’s instrumentalist approach to its circumpolar Indigenous population.* ”

The outbreak of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine unmasked the Kremlin’s instrumentalist approach to its circumpolar Indigenous population and implicated RAIPON’s leadership in a series of scandals that involved, among others, organized missions to occupied Ukrainian territories (Lackenbauer, Sidorova, and Sukhankin 2023). Formally, RAIPON still presents itself as the defender of Indigenous rights and works with the State Duma and federal government on relevant legislation. But in practice, it functions to render support to the Kremlin’s Arctic policies, especially when it comes to extracting natural resources or other commercial activities on lands with a significant share of Indigenous population (Sulyandziga and Berezhkov 2024). Internationally, Moscow still benefits from RAIPON’s status as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council. Even as Arctic co-operation has frayed, RAIPON allows Russia to signal that it remains committed to Indigenous inclusion and “responsible governance.” This representation increasingly serves Russia’s international publicity more than indigenous self-determination.

Although the organization has partly lost credibility within international Indigenous and Arctic governance circles, RAIPON will likely be repositioned in the post-Ukraine war period as Russia is gradually readmitted to international organizations. In this context, it may help legitimize state policies through

diplomatic messaging and the projection of Indigenous inclusion. RAIPON's significance for understanding Russia's Arctic strategy lies in its intermediary role between the federal centre and Indigenous constituencies.

The Izborsk Club

The Izborsk Club³ plays a distinct role in Russia's Arctic strategy as a normative and ideological platform. The Club primarily contributes by shaping how the Arctic is conceptualized, justified, and communicated within elite ultra-conservative, anti-Western and frequently conspiracy-focused circles. Evidence from the Club's activities indicates sustained and structured engagement with Arctic issues, which became particularly visible between 2014 (the so-called "Russian Spring") (Leontyev 2014) until 2020.

For example, in its 2016 session titled "Course–Arctic" (*Kurs Arktika*) – which convened representatives of scientific, military, and political communities – the Club aimed to secure its function as an ultra-conservative and ultra-nationalist ideational networking hub. The establishment of an Arctic-focused branch further institutionalized this engagement, signalling that the region occupies a stable place within the Club's broader agenda (Izborsky Club 2016). Analysis of materials produced by the Club during this time clearly shows that its experts perceived the region from a conflict-focused prospective (Rozanov 2016) and as a part of Russia's general need to re-establish its military posture (Shurygin 2016). After 2022, the Club's Arctic narrative temporarily became even more confrontational, highlighting sanctions pressure, NATO expansion, and Russia's exclusion from co-operative Arctic mechanisms. At the same time, they stress Russia's structural advantages in the region and the necessity of consolidating its presence. In this vein, recent contributions argue that Arctic development should be elevated to the level of a central state project, linking infrastructure, military capability, and resource extraction into a unified strategic vision (Dmitrievsky 2024).

The available evidence indicates that the Club's role is weaker than the institutions treated above. This can be explained by three factors. First, the Club's narrow focus marginalizes its influence. Published sources do not suggest that the Izborsk Club's members directly contribute to official Arctic policy documents but instead focus on satisfying the most ultra-conservative segments of society. Second, the Club's ultra-radical and often conspiratorial agenda further constrains its relevance. While such ideas may resonate with

certain groups within Russian society, the Kremlin tends to rely on expertise from more balanced and less extreme discursive platforms due to the Arctic's strategic importance. Third, internal disagreements have riven the Club over the policies on the so-called post-Soviet space and Ukraine. Some of the Club's most influential figures, such as Leonid Ivashov, openly rebuked what they perceived as the Kremlin's initial half-hearted approach to conquering Ukraine before 2022 (Goble 2026), which weakened the Club.

Nonetheless, the Club's ideas contributed to the overall securitization of Russia's discourse on the Arctic and popularization of a zero-sum approach to geopolitics. The Izborsk Club may have a larger role in post-Putin scenarios. Akin to the late 1980s and early 1990s, a post-Putin period may be marked by a partial liberalization of public debate in Russia, accompanied by an intensified search for national identity and a new development course. In this context, the Club's staunchly anti-Western, ultra-conservative, and conspiracy-oriented agenda – ideas that have repeatedly proven resilient in Russian political thought – may find renewed relevance in future debates over Russia's role in the Arctic. At the same time, its influence would not necessarily depend on a liberalized environment: should a more hardline authoritarian configuration emerge, these ideas could equally be absorbed into a more conservative ruling framework, further reinforcing their relevance.

Durable network features in the Arctic: looking beyond Putinism

The Arctic will remain a priority across political eras. It is not a coincidence that after 1991 the Arctic re-emerged as a priority. A focus on the Arctic should be viewed as a structural, durable and resilient component of Russian geopolitics, not purely as a function of Putin's personality. Even if or when one pillar of the network this paper has described weakens or fails, the network reforms and survives. A combination of factors is at play.

Entrenched institutions

The institutional backbone of Russia's Arctic strategy is highly durable and does not revolve around a single individual. Instead, the core of the network is centralized in the Kremlin, the Security Council, and the Maritime Collegium. These collectively define strategic priorities and integrate economic, military, and logistical planning. This architecture reflects Russia's historical pattern of justifying Arctic governance as a strategic necessity. Therefore, even in

most post-Putin scenarios, leaders in Moscow would have little incentive to completely decentralize Arctic governance, given the region's role in nuclear deterrence, energy production, and maritime access. In practical terms, leadership change may temporarily shift the country's priorities but is unlikely to alter the core institutional logic of Arctic policymaking and Russia's centuries-old traditions of Arctic governance.

Structurally indispensable and mutually complementing actors

Moreover, the narrow but critical set of “strategic implementors” are effectively irreplaceable in executing Russia's Arctic strategy. Corporations Rosatom, Nor Nickel, and the Zvezda shipyard form the backbone of state policy implementation – and have vested interests in its elements. For example, without Rosatom's icebreaker fleet and logistical coordination, the NSR would not function; without Nor Nickel, the cargo base underpinning Arctic shipping would collapse. In addition to these corporations, regional governments offer unique competitive services (such as natural resources, transportation points, or unique defence-related positions) to the Kremlin – and the Kremlin to them. The corporate players and regional governments generate structural dependencies for the centre that are likely to persist regardless of political leadership. As a result, Arctic strategy becomes locked into a state-corporate model that is highly resistant to political change.

Furthermore, Western economic sanctions have reinforced these actors in Russia's Arctic strategy, accelerating internal consolidation around domestic actors as the Kremlin seeks to replace technological imports. This is reflected in three trends. First, it has encouraged monopolization, as entities like Rosatom and Zvezda have gained privileged status as “unfriendly” countries exited the market. Second, it has fostered integration of Arctic development into broader industrial and technological sovereignty efforts. Third, it has reoriented Russia's economic and policy ties, as Russia has deepened relationships with non-Western partners, particularly China. While sanctions are profoundly damaging Russia's economy in general and hampering the timely completion of Arctic projects in particular, industrial players are expanding their power. That has resulted in a more insulated but more cohesive and increasingly anti-Western Arctic system, a sanctions-hardened network that is less efficient but, arguably, more durable. Even after Putinism, elements of this system will likely persist.

Elevation of security-related priorities and its long-term effects

Russia's securitization of the Arctic is a structural shift with long-term implications that will likely outlive Putin and his political system. Analysis of Russian historical experience with regards to the Arctic illustrates that the region is progressively becoming more and more embedded in the country's national security architecture. This is exemplified by the case of the NSR and its year-round navigability. The Russian Empire conceived of and partially implemented the idea of using icebreakers in the last half of the nineteenth century and subsequent Soviet actions fused this direction with defence and security agendas. Future Russian leaderships will inherit an Arctic agenda framed in terms of sovereignty, deterrence, and geopolitical competition rather than co-operation or purely economic development. They, too, will have to wrestle with imperial, Soviet, and then Putinist legacies.

Moreover, the Arctic is directly tied to one of Russia's central strategic pillars, its nuclear deterrent. Strategic submarine forces, early warning systems, and military infrastructure concentrate in the region, making it indispensable to Russia's core security posture. Regardless of ideological orientation, any successor regime will be compelled to prioritize Arctic defence and control. At the same time, this securitization reinforces centralized governance and strengthens the state-corporate nexus, where actors such as Rosatom and major industrial firms operate within a security-driven rather than a purely commercial logic.

Over time, there is every reason to believe that this shift is likely to harden Russia's external behaviour. Moscow views the Arctic as a contested strategic frontier under NATO and Western pressure; a perception embedded in institutional thinking and expert discourse. Even in a post-Putin environment, this threat perception is likely to persist, producing a more guarded and transactional Russian approach to Arctic governance. The net effect of these tendencies is to transform the Arctic into a permanent pillar of Russian state security strategy. Its anchors in military, state, and ideological institutions suggest that Russia's Arctic posture will remain durable, even as leadership, rhetoric, or tactical priorities evolve.

Conclusion

Russia's Arctic strategy resists simplification. For Western policymakers and analysts, the central challenge in the years to come will be to recognize that Moscow's approach is anchored in durable networks that integrate security imperatives, ideology, historical narratives, infrastructure development, and long-term state-building. Three critical factors must be considered.

First, Western analyses often over-personalize Russia's Arctic strategy by focusing on Vladimir Putin. Instead, they need to recognize its deep historical roots. Russia's Arctic expansion dates to the late-16th century as a deliberate, state-driven process tied to economic extraction and territorial consolidation. From the outset, the Arctic was in many ways central to Russia's imperial identity, making historical continuity essential to understanding current policy.

Second, many interpretations take a one-sided view by emphasizing militarization while overlooking the broader system behind Russia's Arctic approach. In reality, military development is intertwined with economic needs, ideological motives, and infrastructure, supporting power projection and resource stability. A wide network of actors sustains this strategy, including state, quasi-state, and cultural institutions, whose combined influence reinforces coherence and durability.

Third, Russia's soft power – reflected in its territorial scale, extensive natural resource base, and long-standing record of Arctic exploration – continues to underpin its resilience in the region. As the largest Arctic state and the one most structurally dependent on the region, Russia is likely to maintain a sustained strategic focus on the Arctic and preserve certain competitive advantages. While Russia's violation of international law has resulted in its current political isolation, this situation is unlikely to remain static over the long term. From a policy perspective, Canada and the United States, along with other Western governments, may increasingly face trade-offs between continued exclusion and the functional requirements of Arctic governance, particularly in areas such as navigation, environmental protection, and resource management. As a result, some Western actors may gradually advocate for limited, selective engagement with Russia in narrowly defined domains. In this context, the Arctic emerges as a likely testing ground for such pragmatic, issue-specific co-operation, driven less by political reconciliation than by operational necessity.

These factors have direct implications for how Canada, the US, and their Western allies assess Russia's capabilities and its intent. While the image Russia projects in the Arctic – of technological competence, resilience, and strategic continuity – exceeds its actual material capacity, this gap does not diminish the Kremlin's willingness to commit resources to Arctic geopolitical projects. On the contrary, it reinforces a pattern in which prestige-seeking, ideological validation, and symbolic demonstration of great-power status often take precedence over economic rationality, narrowly defined – which may appear counterintuitive from a Western perspective but remains internally coherent within the Russian system.

Crucially, the Arctic remains one of the few strategic theatres where Russia retains agency in choosing partners and shaping the terms of engagement. Educational and youth-oriented initiatives such as the “Icebreaker of Knowledge” represent forward-looking investments in influence – not always immediately realized by initiators of these initiatives – among future elites in the Global South and beyond. The returns on such efforts are unlikely to be immediate but they will likely prove consequential in the decades ahead about how the world thinks about Russia's place in the Arctic. [MLI](#)

About the author



Dr. Sergey Sukhankin is a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation and the Saratoga Foundation and a fellow at the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network. He teaches international business at MacEwan School of Business and Economics at the University of Alberta. Currently he is a postdoctoral fellow at the Canadian Maritime Security Network. [MLI](#)

References

Abireg.ru. 2026. “Норникель» увеличил выручку до 13,8 млрд долларов по итогам 2025 года” [*Nornickel Increased Revenue to \$13.8 Billion in 2025*]. *Abireg.ru*, February 12. Available at <https://abireg.ru/newsitem/112261/>.

Alekseeva, Elena. 2020. “Митрополит Мурманский Митрофан: Крайний Север — это место особых людей” [*Metropolitan Mitrofan of Murmansk: The Far North Is a Place for Special People*]. *Patriarchia.ru*, February 27. Available at <https://www.patriarchia.ru/article/100913>.

Aliyev, Nurlan. 2020. “Development in Difficult Times: Russia’s Arctic Policy Through 2035.” *Russia’s Arctic Policy*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000440622>.

Andersson, Patrik. 2024. “Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic: Implications for Nordic Countries and Recommended Policy Responses.” *NKK/SCEEUS* Report no. 5 (October 22). Available at <https://sceeus.se/publikationer/sino-russian-cooperation-in-the-arctic-implications-for-nordic-countries-and-recommended-policy-responses/>.

Arctic Portal. 2013. “Putin Speaks at the Arctic Forum.” *Arctic Portal.org*, September 26. Available at <https://arcticportal.org/ap-library/news/1085-putin-speaks-at-the-arctic-forum>.

Atom Media. 2025. “Names of the Students to Go to North Pole Have Been Announced.” *Atom Media*, June 20. Available at <https://studynuclear.com/news/ar/axzagjt3o1-names-of-the-students-to-go-to-north-pol>.

Benia, Megi. 2026. “Russia Continues to Reshape Arctic Security.” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 26. *The Jamestown Foundation*. Available at <https://jamestown.org/russia-continues-to-increase-competition-in-the-arctic/>.

Bennett, Mia. 2012. "Russia Pushes Development of Northern Sea Route." *Eye on the Arctic*, August 14. Available at <https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2012/08/14/russia-pushes-development-of-northern-sea-route/>.

Berezhkov, Dmitry. 2025. "Silenced Victims: Indigenous Peoples and Russia's Mobilization Lies." *Indigenous Russia*, March 8. Available at <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/41988>.

Bloková, Ekaterina. 2025. "Russia Needs More Resources to Handle Emergencies on the Northern Sea Route." *Arctic Today*, May 8. Available at <https://www.arctictoday.com/russia-needs-more-resources-to-handle-emergencies-on-the-northern-sea-route/>.

Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia. 2026. "Russia Unveils Expanded Icebreaker and Infrastructure Plan for NSR." *Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia*, February 20. Available at <https://shippingmatters.ca/russia-unveils-expanded-icebreaker-and-infrastructure-plan-for-nsr/>.

Collins, Jeffrey F. 2017. "The Arctic in an Age of Geopolitical Change: Assessment and Recommendations." *Russia in Global Affairs*, October 6. Available at <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/the-arctic-in-an-age-of-geopolitical-change-assessment-and-recommendations/>.

Davis, Anna J. 2025. "Russia Sends Children to North Pole on Nuclear-Powered Icebreakers." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, April 18. Available at <https://jamestown.org/russia-sends-children-to-north-pole-on-nuclear-powered-icebreakers/>.

Demchuk, Galina Vladimirovna. 2007. "Церковно-монастырское землевладение на Русском севере в XVI–XVII веках" [*Church and Monastic Landownership in the Russian North in the 16th–17th Centuries*]. *Vestnik Severnogo (Arkticheskogo) federalnogo universiteta*. Seriya: Gumanitarnye i sotsial'nye nauki no. 2. Available at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tserkovno-monastyrskoe-zemlevladenie-na-russkom-severe-v-xvi-xvii-vekah/>.

Dmitrievsky, Aleksandr. 2024. "Александр Дмитриевский: Расширение НАТО ничего не меняет в Арктике [*Aleksandr Dmitrievsky: NATO Expansion Does Not Change Anything in the Arctic*]." *Izborsky Club*, May 13. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/25694>.

Dybov, Valentin, Kolodko, Maksim, Podgornykh, Yuriy, and Kulkova, Natalya. 2023a. "Арктика как возможный театр военных действий (часть 1)" [*The Arctic as a Possible Theater of Military Operations (Part 1)*]. *Arsenal Otechestva* no. 5 (67), November 21. Available at <https://arsenal-otechestva.ru/article/1796-arktika-kak-vozmozhnyj-teatr-voennykh-dejstvij-chast-1>.

Dybov, Valentin, Kolodko, Maksim, Podgornyykh, Yuriy, and Kulkova, Natalya. 2023b. “Арктика как возможный театр военных действий (часть 3)” [*The Arctic as a Possible Theater of Military Operations (Part 3)*]. *Arsenal Otechestva* no. 5 (67), November 21. Available at <https://arsenal-otechestva.ru/article/1798-arktika-kak-vozmozhnyj-teatr-voennykh-dejstvij-chast-3>.

Filippova, Liudmila. 2023. “China’s New Role in the Arctic.” *Valdai Discussion Club*, May 31. Available at <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/china-s-new-role-in-the-arctic/>.

Goble, Paul. 2026. “We Are in Trouble: General Ivashov Sounds the Alarm on Russia’s Decline Under Putin.” *The Saratoga Foundation*, January 1. Available at <https://www.saratoga-foundation.org/p/we-are-in-trouble-general-ivashov>.

Government of the Russian Federation. 2023. “Распоряжение Правительства Российской Федерации от 22 сентября 2023 г. № 2555-р Об утверждении комплексного плана развития Архангельского транспортного узла до 2035 года” [*Directive of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2555-r of September 22, 2023, on the Approval of the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of the Arkhangelsk Transport Hub until 2035*]. *TKS.ru*, October 2. Available at <https://www.tks.ru/news/law/2023/10/02/0001/>.

Humpert, Malte. 2018. “How a Shipping Safety Violation Is Escalating an Internal Conflict over Russia’s Northern Sea Route.” *Arctic Today*, May 4. Available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3619227>.

Interfax. 2014. “Патриарх Кирилл считает развитие Арктики одним из важнейших приоритетов для России” [*Patriarch Kirill Considers Arctic Development One of Russia’s Key Priorities*]. *Interfax*, February 28. Available at <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/361924>.

Interfax. 2019. “НОВАТЭК’ попросил Путина разрешить заказать десять газовозов на зарубежных верфях” [*Novatek Asked Putin to Allow Ordering Ten Gas Carriers from Foreign Shipyards*]. *Interfax*, December 19. Available at <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/688565>.

Interfax. 2024. “Issue of Russia’s USC Purchasing Zvezda Shipyard Resolved in Principle, but Deal’s Dimensions Still to Be Discussed — VTB Head.” *Interfax*, December 5. Available at <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/108304/>.

International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR). 2024. *RAIPON: From a Nation-Based Change Agent to a Weapon of State-Controlled Propaganda*. ICIPR Report, July 1. Available at <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/38572>.

Izborsky Club. 2016. “Изборский клуб: курс — Арктика [Izborsky Club: Course toward the Arctic].” *Izborsky Club*, July 14. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/9837>.

Jayaprakash, Rajoli Siddharth. 2025. “Theorising the Drivers of India’s Engagement in the Northern Sea Route.” *Valdai Discussion Club*, December 3. Available at https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/theorising-the-drivers-of-india-s-engagement/?sphrase_id=2060470.

Karaganov, Sergey. 2024. “Eastern Turn 2, or Siberian Russia.” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, February 5. Available at <https://karaganov.ru/en/eastern-turn-2-or-siberian-russia/>.

Katorin, I.V. 2019. “Влияние арктического фактора на региональную идентичность в Архангельской области” [*The Influence of the Arctic Factor on Regional Identity in the Arkhangelsk Region*]. *Sotsiologiya* no. 2. Available at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vliyanie-arkticheskogo-faktora-na-regionalnuyu-identichnost-v-arhangelskoy-oblasti>.

Kluge, Janis, and Michael Paul. 2020. “Russia’s Arctic Strategy through 2035: Grand Plans and Pragmatic Constraints.” *SWP Comment* 2020/C 57, November 26. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). Available at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020C57/>.

Kommersant. 2017. “Российские суда получили исключительное право на перевозки по Севморпути” [Russian Vessels Received Exclusive Rights for Shipping along the Northern Sea Route]. *Kommersant*, December 30. Available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3512902>.

Korabel.ru. 2025. “Пять портов Хабаровского края готовы включиться в грузоперевозки по Севморпути” [*Five Ports of Khabarovsk Krai Are Ready to Join Cargo Transportation along the Northern Sea Route*]. *Korabel.ru*, December 25. Available at https://www.korabel.ru/news/comments/pyat-portov-habarovskogo-kрая-gotovy-vklyuchitsya_v_gruzoperevozki_po-sevmorputi.html.

Kortunov, Andrey. 2024. “Is Global Icebreaker Race Imminent?” *Russian International Affairs Council*, July 29. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/is-global-icebreaker-race-imminent/>.

Kortunov, Andrey. 2025. “Russia in the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities.” *Russian International Affairs Council*, March 28. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/russia-in-the-arctic-challenges-and-opportunities/>.

Kostrinsky, German, Arina Litova, and Alexander Volobuev. 2023. “Сроки сдачи ледокола «Россия» могут быть пересмотрены” [*The Delivery Timeline for the Icebreaker ‘Rossiya’ May Be Revised*]. *Vedomosti*, March 28. Available at <https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2023/03/28/968364-sroki-sdachi-ledokola-rossiya-mogut-bit-peresmotreni>.

Kostrinsky, German. 2024. “«Росатом» допустил отклонение объема грузопотока Севморпути от плана. Почему может измениться расчет объема перевозки” [*Rosatom Allowed a Deviation of Northern Sea Route Cargo Traffic from the Plan: Why the Calculation of Transport Volume May Change*]. *RBC*, September 17. Available at <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/17/09/2024/66e848979a7947126c129334>.

Lackenbauer, P. Whitney, Evgeniia Sidorova, and Sergey Sukhankin. 2023. “RAIPON, Russian Indigenous Peoples, and the War in Ukraine: Pro-Kremlin Narratives and Voices of Dissent.” *NAADSN Policy Primer*, July 21. Available at <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/23jul-RAIPON-Russian-Indigenous-PWL-ES-SS-NAADSN-policy-primer.pdf>.

Leontyev, Mikhail. 2014. “Битва за Арктику [*Battle for the Arctic*].” *Izborsky Club*, January 8. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/2460>.

Leontyeva, L.S., and Lototskaya, Yu. V. 2025. “Центр-периферийные отношения в регионах российской Арктики” [*Center–Periphery Relations in the Regions of the Russian Arctic*]. *Intellekt. Innovatsii. Investitsii* no. 6: 84–101. Available at <https://doi.org/10.25198/20777175-2025-6-84>.

Leontyeva, Lidiya Sergeevna, and Yuliya Vladimirovna Lototskaya. 2025. “Центр-периферийные отношения в регионах российской Арктики” [*Center–Periphery Relations in the Regions of the Russian Arctic*]. *Intellekt. Innovatsii. Investitsii* no. 6. Available at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tsentr-periferiynye-otnosheniya-v-regionah-rossiyskoy-arktiki>.

Losev, Evgeny, and Losev, Alexander. 2023. “Боевые ледоколы в Арктике” [*Combat Icebreakers in the Arctic*]. *Arsenal Otechestva* 1, no. 63. Available at <https://arsenal-otechestva.ru/article/1709-boevye-ledokoly-v-arktike>.

Lukyanov, Fyodor A. 2026. “Greenland Is Exposing the Truth about NATO.” *Russia in Global Affairs*, January 29. Available at <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/greenland-lukyanov/>.

Martynova, Elena Petrovna. 2019. “Промышленное освоение Ямало-Ненецкого автономного округа. Взаимодействие предприятий, сообществ коренных народов и органов власти” [*Industrial Development of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug: Interaction between Enterprises, Indigenous Communities, and Authorities*]. *Polyarnye chteniya na ledokole «Krasin»*. Available at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/promyshlennoe-osvoenie-yamalo-nenetskogo-avtonomnogo-okruga-vzaimodeystvie-predpriyatiy-soobshchestv-korennyh-narodov-i-organov>.

Maximova, Daryana. 2018. “Sustainable Development of the Russian Arctic Zone: Challenges & Opportunities.” *Arctic Yearbook*. Available at https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2018/Scholarly_Papers/21_AY2018_Maximova.pdf.

Mediapaluba. 2024. “К концу 2025 года будет принят новый закон «О судостроении»” [*A New Law ‘On Shipbuilding’ Will Be Adopted by the End of 2025*]. November 27. Available at <https://paluba.media/news/182726>.

Milkin, Vasiliy. 2024. “Нефтегазовым проектам в Арктике к 2035 году потребуется 200 танкеров и газовозов” [*Oil and Gas Projects in the Arctic Will Require 200 Tankers and Gas Carriers by 2035*]. *Vedomosti*, April 4. Available at <https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2024/04/04/1029758-neftegazovim-proektam-v-arktike-potrebuetsya-200-tankerov-i-gazovozov>.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2022. Морская доктрина Российской Федерации [*Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation*]. July 31. Available at https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/1688734/.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2026. “Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area.” April 17. Available at <https://mid.ru/en/maps/ru/ru-yan/2010555/>.

Ministry of Information Policy of the Murmansk Region. 2025. “The Governor Noted the President’s Support for Key Murmansk Region Projects at the International Arctic Forum.” May 28. Available at https://invest.nashsever51.ru/en/list_item/news/the-governor-noted-the-president-s-support-for-key-murmansk-region-projects-at-the-international-arctic-forum.

Morskaya Kollegiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii. 2025. “Стратегия развития ВМФ на период до 2050 года утверждена президентом России” [*The Development Strategy of the Navy up to 2050 Has Been Approved by the President of Russia*]. June 10. Available at <https://marine.org.ru/events/sudostroenie/17738/>.

Moscow Times. 2026. “Russia’s Northern Sea Route Cargo Volumes Fall for Second Straight Year.” *The Moscow Times*, February 9. Available at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/02/09/russias-northern-sea-route-cargo-volumes-fall-for-second-straight-year-a91895>.

Nikanov, A. N., Gorbanev, S. A., Dorofeev, V. M., Chashchin, V. P., Lachein, B., Fedorov, V. N. and Novikova Yu. A. 2021. “Demographic Profile of the Population Residing in the Metals and Mining Areas in the European Part of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation.” *Public Health and Life Environment* – PH&LE 29 (9): 7–15. Available at <https://zniso.fcgie.ru/jour/article/view/660>.

Nilsen, Thomas. 2025. “Nuclear Icebreaker Sustained Hull Damage after Collision in the Kara Sea.” *The Barents Observer*, January 28. Available at <https://www.thebarentsobserver.com/news/nuclear-icebreaker-sustained-hull-damage-after-collision-in-the-kara-seanbsp/423819>.

Nornickel. 2023. “Nornickel Unveils Major Sulfur Initiative in Norilsk.” *Nornickel*, October 25. Available at <https://nornickel.com/news-and-media/press-releases-and-news/nornickel-unveils-major-sulfur-initiative-in-norilsk/>.

Nornickel. n.d. “Navigating Ice.” *Nornickel ESG Insights*. n.d. Available at <https://esg.nornickel.com/tests/nornickel-fleet-test>.

Ponomarev, Dmitry Anatolyevich. 2018. “Малые монастыри русского Севера: к постановке проблемы” [*Small Monasteries of the Russian North: Toward Problem Formulation*]. *Paleorosiya*, no. 2 (10). Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/malye-monastyri-russkogo-severa-k-postanovke-problemy>.

President of Russia. 2020. “Strategy for Developing the Russian Arctic Zone and Ensuring National Security until 2035 Approved.” October 26. Available at <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/64274>.

President of Russia. 2024. “Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 13.08.2024 г. № 691 О Морской коллегии Российской Федерации” [*Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 691 of August 13, 2024, on the Maritime Collegium of the Russian Federation*]. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/51026>.

Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. 2016. “Святейший Патриарх Кирилл посетил поселок Тикси на берегу моря Лаптевых” [*His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Visited the Settlement of Tiksi on the Shore of the Laptev Sea*]. *Patriarchia.ru*, September 9. Available at <https://www.patriarchia.ru/article/52708>.

Rashad, Marwa, Emily Chow, Aizhu Chen, and Anna Hirtenstein. 2025. “Exclusive: Russia’s Novatek Gives Deep Discounts to Sell Sanctioned LNG to Chinese Buyers, Sources Say.” *Reuters*, November 18. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russias-novatek-gives-deep-discounts-sell-sanctioned-lng-chinese-buyers-sources-2025-11-19/>.

Rashad, Marwa, Vladimir Soldatkin, and Milan Pavicic. 2025. “Russia’s Arctic LNG 2 Plant Resumes Operation ‘Slowly.’” *Reuters*, April 1. Edited by David Evans. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russias-arctic-lng-2-plant-resumes-operation-slowly-2025-04-01/>.

RBC. 2017. “«Газпром» закажет на верфи «Звезда» 30 судов” [*Gazprom Will Order 30 Vessels from the Zvezda Shipyard*]. *RBC*, November 16. Available at <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5a0d99a29a7947ea7b681600>.

RBC. 2024. “Костин рассказал о сделке по покупке «Звезды» и планах на судостроение” [*Kostin Discussed the Deal to Purchase Zvezda and Plans for Shipbuilding*]. *RBC*, December 2. Available at <https://www.rbc.ru/business/02/12/2024/674d46d99a79475900259be6>.

Reuters. 2025. “Russia to Increase LNG Exports to China from Arctic and Sakhalin, Energy Minister Says.” *Reuters*, September 30. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russia-increase-lng-exports-china-arctic-sakhalin-energy-minister-says-2025-10-01/>.

RIA Novosti. 2014. “Губернатор: статус ‘ворот в Арктику’ должен остаться за Мурманском” [*Governor: The Status of ‘Gateway to the Arctic’ Should Remain with Murmansk*]. *RIA Novosti*, May 5. Available at <https://ria.ru/20140505/1006583791.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2021. “‘Северный широтный ход’ даст импульс освоению Арктики, заявил Путин” [*The Northern Latitudinal Passage Will Give Impetus to Arctic Development, Putin Said*]. *RIA Novosti*, April 21. Available at <https://ria.ru/20210421/arktika-1729271586.html?in=t>.

RIA Novosti. 2022a. “Чиби́с рассказал о планах работы группы Госсовета по развитию Арктики” [*Chibis Spoke about the Work Plans of the State Council Group on Arctic Development*]. *RIA Novosti*, December 8. Available at <https://ria.ru/20221208/arktika-1837329535.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2022b. “Андрей Чиби́с: Мурманская область превращает вызовы в новые возможности” [*Andrey Chibis: Murmansk Region Is Turning Challenges into New Opportunities*]. *RIA Novosti*, September 13. Available at <https://ria.ru/20220913/chibis-1816475757.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2023a. “Цыбу́льский и Шестаков обсудили развитие архангельской рыбной промышленности” [*Tsybulsky and Shestakov Discussed the Development of the Arkhangelsk Fishing Industry*]. *RIA Novosti*, May 11. Available at <https://ria.ru/20230511/rybolovstvo-1871084581.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2023b. “Архангельский губернатор рассказал о росте объема инвестиций в регионе” [*Arkhangelsk Governor Reported Growth in Investment Volume in the Region*]. *RIA Novosti*, December 11. Available at <https://ria.ru/20231211/investitsii-1915191361.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2024. “Морская коллегия займется сохранением за Россией статуса великой морской державы” [*The Maritime Collegium Will Work to Preserve Russia's Status as a Great Maritime Power*]. *RIA Novosti*, August 13. Available at <https://ria.ru/20240813/kollegiya--1965995641.html><https://ria.ru/20240813/kollegiya--1965995641.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2025a. “Россия и КНР утвердили план развития перевозок по Северному морскому пути” [*Russia and China Approved a Plan for the Development of Transportation Along the Northern Sea Route*]. *RIA Novosti*, October 14. Available at <https://ria.ru/20251014/rossija-2048100520.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2025b. “Путин отметил вклад географов в победу в Великой Отечественной войне” [*Putin Highlighted the Contribution of Geographers to Victory in the Great Patriotic War*]. *RIA Novosti*, October 23. Available at <https://ria.ru/20251023/putin-2050151406.html>.

RIA Novosti. 2025c. “Путин отметил роль Русского географического общества в изучении Арктики” [*Putin Highlighted the Role of the Russian Geographical Society in the Study of the Arctic*]. *RIA Novosti*, October 23. Available at <https://ria.ru/20251023/putin-2050153939.html>.

Romanenko, M.V. 2025. “Экономическое значение Северного морского пути” [*The Economic Significance of the Northern Sea Route*]. *Problems of Modern Economics* no. 4 (96). 2025. Available at <https://www.m-economy.ru/art.php?nArtId=8125&>.

Rosatom Newsletter. 2025a. “Northern Sea Route in the Spotlight.” 2025. *Rosatom Newsletter*, no. 292 (August, 2025). Available at <https://rosatomnewsletter.com/2025/08/25/northern-sea-route-in-the-spotlight/>.

Rosatom Newsletter. 2025b. “Icebreaker of Knowledge Opens New Horizons.” *Rosatom Newsletter*, no. 293 (September, 2025). Available at <https://rosatomnewsletter.com/2025/09/22/icebreaker-of-knowledge-opens-new-horizons/>.

Rosatom. 2025. “New Record Set for Volume of Cargo Shipped along the Northern Sea Route.” *Rosatom*, January 10. Available at <https://www.rosatom.ru/en/press-centre/news/new-record-set-for-volume-of-cargo-shipped-along-the-northern-sea-route/>.

Rozanov, Oleg. 2016. “Поле битвы – Арктика [Battlefield – Arctic].” *Izborskyy Club*, June 28. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/9665>.

Russian Geographical Society. 2022. “RGS on Novaya Zemlya: 200-Year History.” *Russian Geographical Society*. August 1. Available at <https://rgo.ru/en/activity/redaction/news/rgs-on-novaya-zemlya-200-year-history/>.

Russian Geographical Society. 2024a. “Экспедиция на Землю Франца-Иосифа 2024” [*Expedition to Franz Josef Land 2024*]. *Russian Geographical Society*. Available at <https://rgo.ru/activity/expedition-list/ekspeditsiya-na-zemlyu-frantsa-iosifa-2024/>.

Russian Geographical Society. 2024b. “Арктика глазами Нагурского: экспедиция РГО вернулась с архипелага Новая Земля [*The Arctic through Nagursky's Eyes: The RGO Expedition Returned from the Novaya Zemlya Archipelago*].” *Russian Geographical Society*. August 9. Available at <https://rgo.ru/activity/redaction/news/arktika-glazami-nagurskogo-ekspeditsiya-rgo-vernulas-s-arkhipelaga-novaya-zemlya/>.

Russian Geographical Society. 2026. “Экспедиция на архипелаг Земля Франца-Иосифа — 2026” [*Expedition to the Franz Josef Land Archipelago — 2026*]. *Russian Geographical Society*. Available at <https://rgo.ru/activity/expedition-list/ekspeditsiya-na-arkhipelag-zemlya-frantsa-iosifa-2026/>.

Russian Geographical Society. n.d.a. “The Board of Trustees of the Russian Geographical Society.” Russian Geographical Society. Accessed April 26. Available at <https://rgo.ru/en/about/councils-of-the-rgs/board-of-trustees/>.

Russian Geographical Society. n.d.b. “Географический диктант” [*Geographical Dictation*]. Russian Geographical Society. Accessed April 26. Available at <https://dictant.rgo.ru/>.

Russian Geographical Society. n.d.c. “Гранты” [*Grants*]. Russian Geographical Society. Accessed April 26. Available at <https://rgo.ru/activity/grants/>.

Russian International Affairs Council. n.d. “Co-founders.” Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/about/founders/>.

Seleznev, Pavel Sergeevich, and Ilya Olegovich Korenkov. 2025. “Значение международных морских транспортных путей для развития экономики и укрепления национальной безопасности России” [*The Importance of International Maritime Transport Routes for Economic Development and Strengthening Russia’s National Security*]. *ETAP* no. 1. Available at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/znachenie-mezhdunarodnyh-morskih-transportnyh-putey-dlya-razvitiya-ekonomiki-i-ukrepleniya-natsionalnoy-bezopasnosti-rossii>.

Sergunin, Alexander, and Valery Konyshchev. 2019. “Forging Russia’s Arctic Strategy: Actors and Decision-Making.” *The Polar Journal* 9 (1): 75–93. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2019.1618549>.

Sergunin, Alexander. 2024. “Understanding Russia’s Arctic Security Strategies.” *Strategic Analysis* 48 (6): 634–650. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2025.2460225>.

Shurygin, Vladislav. 2016. “Арктика для нас важна стратегически [The Arctic Is Strategically Important for Us].” *Izborsky Club*, June 30. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/9752>.

Smirnov, A.V. 2020. “The Arctic Population: Dynamics and Centres of the Settlement System.” *Arktika i Sever* [Arctic and North], no. 40: 270–290. Available at <https://doi.org/10.37482/issn2221-2698.2020.40.270>.

Sovetskaia Rossiia. 2025. “Арктика в разных измерениях” [*The Arctic in Different Dimensions*]. *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 20. Available at <https://sovross.ru/2025/10/20/arktika-v-raznyh-izmereniyah/>.

Staalesen, Atle. 2019. “As a Russian Nickel Plant Faces Closure, Locals Fear for Their Town’s Future.” *Arctic Today*, November 8. Available at <https://www.arctictoday.com/as-a-russian-nickel-plant-faces-closure-locals-fear-for-their-towns-future/>.

Staalesen, Atle. 2021. “National Security Chief Says Russia Must Bolster Its Arctic Military.” *The Barents Observer*, June 23. Available at <https://www.thebarentsobserver.com/security/national-security-chief-says-russia-must-bolster-its-arctic-military/159985>.

Staalesen, Atle. 2023. “Projected LNG Plant in Murmansk Now on Putin’s Table.” *Arctic Today*, September 5. Available at <https://www.arctictoday.com/projected-lng-plant-in-murmansk-now-on-putins-table/>.

Strelnikova, Irina. 2024. “The Eurasian Aspect of Arctic Cooperation.” *Valdai Discussion Club*, March 1. Available at <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-eurasian-aspect-of-arctic-cooperation/>.

Sudostroenie.info. 2026. “На Морской коллегии рассмотрели обеспечение безопасности судоходства на стратегических морских коммуникациях” [*At the Maritime Collegium, the Provision of Navigation Safety on Strategic Maritime Communications Was Considered*]. *Sudostroenie.info*, January 22. Available at <https://sudostroenie.info/novosti/46819.html>.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2018. “Russian Regionalism in Action: The Case of the Northwestern Federal District (1991–2017),” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2021a. “The ‘Suez Jam’: A Window of Opportunity for Russia’s Northern Sea Route?” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 18 (51), March 30. Available at <https://jamestown.org/the-suez-jam-a-window-of-opportunity-for-russias-northern-sea-route/>.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2021b. *Russia and the Arctic in an Era of Strategic Competition*. North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN). Peterborough, Ontario: Trent University. Available at <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Sukhankin-Russia-Arctic.pdf>.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2024. “Russia’s New Maritime Collegium Inaugurated in Renewed Focus on Arctic Policy.” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 21 (126), April 9. Available at <https://jamestown.org/russias-new-maritime-collegium-inaugurated-in-renewed-focus-on-arctic-policy/>.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2025a. “Russia Continues Conservative Pivot in Arctic (Part One).” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 18. Available at <https://jamestown.org/russia-continues-conservative-pivot-in-arctic-part-one/>.

Sukhankin, Sergey. 2025b. *The Fourth Battle for the Arctic: Russia’s Capabilities, Strategic Thinking, and Game Plan*. CMSN Reports (Canadian Maritime Security Network), March 2025. Available at https://76af1b57-9a2d-4a3b-b4b5-38e252782728.filesusr.com/ugd/e9367f_eb389257c41244edbb0c5846439e26ec.pdf.

Sukhanovskaya, Tatyana. 2022. “Самый большой храм Арктики открыли в Архангельске” [*The Largest Church in the Arctic Opened in Arkhangelsk*]. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 16. Available at <https://rg.ru/2022/10/16/reg-szfo/imennoj-sobor.html>.

Sulyandziga, Pavel, and Berezhkov, Dmitry. 2024. “Indigenous Peoples as a Tool for Russia’s International Publicity in the Arctic Region.” *Ocean and Coastal Law Journal* 29: 285. Available at <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/38859>.

TASS. 2017. “Судостроительный комплекс ‘Звезда’. Досье” [*Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex: Dossier*]. 2017. TASS, November 16. Available at <https://tass.ru/info/943633>.

TASS. 2020. “Субсидии ‘Звезде’ на суда для ‘Арктик СПГ-2’ превысят 31 млрд рублей” [*Subsidies to Zvezda for Vessels for Arctic LNG-2 Will Exceed 31 Billion Rubles*]. TASS, December 10. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/10219331>.

TASS. 2022a. “Андрей Чибис: Мурманская область — ключевой регион для развития Арктики” [*Andrey Chibis: Murmansk Region Is a Key Region for the Development of the Arctic*]. TASS, June 20. Available at <https://tass.ru/interviews/14970795>.

TASS. 2022b. “Два объекта ‘Нового Мурманска’ построят за 8,1 млрд рублей на условиях концессии” [*Two Facilities of ‘New Murmansk’ Will Be Built for 8.1 Billion Rubles under a Concession Agreement*]. TASS, September 13. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15740499>.

TASS. 2023. “Более 700 проектов в Арктике реализуются с господдержкой” [*More Than 700 Projects in the Arctic Are Being Implemented with State Support*]. TASS, July 19. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/18315657>.

TASS. 2024a. “Russia Plans to Raise Its Fleet’s Combat Capabilities amid West’s Threats — Kremlin Aide.” *TASS*, August 15. Available at <https://tass.com/politics/1829783>.

TASS. 2024b. “Патрушев предложил сформировать комплексный проект по развитию Арктики” [Patrushev Proposed to Form a Comprehensive Project for the Development of the Arctic]. *TASS*, December 18. Available at <https://tass.ru/politika/22702129>.

TASS. 2024c. “Rosatom’s Investments to Total \$15.4 Bln in 2024 — CEO.” *TASS*, October 15. Available at <https://tass.com/economy/1856533>.

TASS. 2025a. “Sechin Estimates the Total Value of Russia’s Natural Resources at Nearly \$100 Trillion.” *TASS*, November 24. Available at <https://tass.com/economy/2048283>.

TASS. 2025b. “Обновленную стратегию развития Арктики внесли в правительство.” [*Updated Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Submitted to the Government*]. *TASS*, October 31. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/25508249>.

TASS. 2025c. “Rosatom, Its Chinese Partners Approve Plan to Develop Shipping along Northern Sea Route.” *TASS*, October 14. Available at <https://tass.com/economy/2029215>.

TASS. 2026. “Стратегический щит России: как страна защищает себя в Арктике” [*Russia’s Strategic Shield: How the Country Protects Itself in the Arctic*]. *TASS*, February 26. Available at <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/26545955>.

Temirova, Chynara. 2021. “Russia’s Indigenous Peoples Call for International Support to Save the Arctic.” *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)*, October 29. Available at <https://iwgia.org/en/russia/4553-russia-indigenous-peoples-international-support-save-arctic.html>.

Teterevleva, Anastasia, and Devitt, Polina. 2020. “Putin Chides Nornickel, Orders Law Change after Arctic Fuel Spill.” *Arctic Today*, June 5. Available at <https://www.arctictoday.com/putin-chides-nornickel-orders-law-change-after-arctic-fuel-spill/>.

Valdai Club Foundation. n.d. “Valdai Club Foundation.” Available at <https://valdaiclub.com/about/valdai/>.

Valdai Discussion Club. 2025. “Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club. Transcript of the Plenary Session of the 22nd Annual Meeting.” *Valdai Discussion Club*, October 2. Available at <https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-club-transcript-plenary-session/>.

Vestnik ONZ RAN. 2022. “Морская доктрина отнесла СМП и Арктику в число районов защиты нацинтересов” [*The Maritime Doctrine Included the Northern Sea Route and the Arctic Among Areas of National Interest Protection*]. August 3. Available at <https://onznews.wdcb.ru/arktika/morskaya-doktrina-otnesla-smp-i-arktiku-v-chislo-rajonov-zashchity-natsinteresov.html>.

Vostochny Center for State Planning. 2025. Развитие Арктической зоны Российской Федерации [*Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation*]. Moscow, 2025. Available at https://vostokgosplan.ru/wp-content/uploads/digest_arctic_2025.pdf.

Yarwood, Andrew. 2025. “US Sanctions Target Russian Oil Tankers Still Under Construction.” *Shearwater Law*, February 21. Available at <https://www.shearwater-law.com/news/us-sanctions-target-russian-oil-tankers-still-under-construction-159323/>.

Zagorskiy, Andrey, and Vyakhireva, Natalya. 2024. “Небезопасная Арктика. Андрей Загорский о военно-политической ситуации в Арктике сегодня” [*An Insecure Arctic: Andrey Zagorskiy on the Military-Political Situation in the Arctic Today*]. *Russian International Affairs Council*, October 23. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/podcasts/nebezopasnaya-arktika-andrey-zagorskiy-o-voenno-politicheskoy-situatsii-v-arktike-segodnya/>.

Zhilin, Roman. 2025. “Концептуальный подход России к Арктике: закономерное переосмысление и сигнал для международного сообщества” [*Russia’s Conceptual Approach to the Arctic: A Natural Rethinking and a Signal to the International Community*]. *Russian International Affairs Council*, July 16. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/kontseptualnyy-podkhod-rossii-k-arktike-zakonomernoe-pereosmyslenie-i-signal-dlya-mezhdunarodnogo-so/>.

Endnotes

- 1 It should be mentioned that Rosneft among others wants to get Kremlin's subsidies and financing. In the past, Rosneft lobbied the Kremlin for policy adjustments to make Arctic oil exports viable. For instance, Rosneft argued that large Arctic projects and shipments through the NSR would require major tax incentives and infrastructure changes approved by the government.
- 2 The reason this magazine is discussed, rather than *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* or *Vojennaya Mysl*, is that access to these journals from outside Russia has been restricted since the outbreak of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war.
- 3 Izborsk Club is a nationalist, ultra-conservative intellectual platform that promotes anti-Western and state-centric ideological narratives aligned with Kremlin priorities. While not formally part of the government, it operates as a regime-adjacent platform that reinforces official discourse – particularly on sovereignty, security, and great-power identity. Its relationship with the Kremlin is indirect but supportive, shaping ideological framing rather than participating in formal policymaking.

constructive *important* forward-thinking
excellent *high-quality* insightful
timely *active*

GOOD POLICY

is worth fighting for.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT **MLI**

MLI has been active in the field of indigenous public policy, building a fine tradition of working with indigenous organizations, promoting indigenous thinkers and encouraging innovative, indigenous-led solutions to the challenges of 21st century Canada.

– The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould

I commend Brian Crowley and the team at **MLI** for your laudable work as one of the leading policy think tanks in our nation's capital. The Institute has distinguished itself as a thoughtful, empirically based and non-partisan contributor to our national public discourse.

– The Right Honourable Stephen Harper

May I congratulate **MLI** for a decade of exemplary leadership on national and international issues. Through high-quality research and analysis, **MLI** has made a significant contribution to Canadian public discourse and policy development. With the global resurgence of authoritarianism and illiberal populism, such work is as timely as it is important. I wish you continued success in the years to come.

– The Honourable Irwin Cotler

M A C D O N A L D - L A U R I E R I N S T I T U T E



323 Chapel Street, Suite 300,
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2
613-482-8327
info@macdonaldlaurier.ca

macdonaldlaurier.ca

