Арктическая пятерка: поиск баланса сил в регионе

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Аннотация: Арктический регион в силу климатических изменений становится местом геополитического соперничества как арктических, так и неарктических государств. Традиционные форматы определения повестки дня в регионе действуют эффективно, однако с появлением интереса все большего числа международных акторов, эти форматы трансформируются, что может отразиться на балансе сил в регионе. Рост активности азиатских стран в Арктике, в первую очередь Китая, заставляет региональные государства вносить коррективы в стратегию освоения региона. Стрепительное возобновление России своего потенциала на северных территориях вызвало негативную реакцию со стороны западных стран, особенно после 2014 года. Появились такие стремления как интернационализация региона со стороны Северной Европы и Китая, стремление внести четкие границы со стороны России и Канады и наращивание влияния США на своих коллег по североатлантическому блоку. Данная ситуация может вызвать неконтролируемый рост напряженности в регионе, особенно в случае создания новых альянсов арктических стран с неарктическими. Автором рассматривается нынешние подходы стран арктической пятерки, анализируются истинные мотивы интернационализации и роль формата арктической пятерки в сохранении баланса сил и стабильности в северных широтах.

Ключевые слова: Арктическая пятерка международные отношения; неарктические государства; баланс сил; вопрос интернационализации

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The Arctic Five: search for a balance of power in the region

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Abstract: Due to climate change, the Arctic region becomes a place of geopolitical rivalry of both Arctic and non-Arctic states. Traditional formats for determining the agenda in the region are effective, but with the advent of the interest of an increasing number of international actors, these formats are transforming, which may affect the balance of power in the region. The growing activity of Asian countries in the Arctic, primarily China, is forcing regional states to make adjustments to the development strategy of the region. The rapid renewal of its potential in the northern territories of Russia caused a negative reaction from the western countries, especially after 2014.

Such aspirations have emerged as the internationalization of the region by Northern Europe and China, the desire to draw clear boundaries on the part of Russia and Canada, and the buildup of US influence on its colleagues in the North Atlantic bloc. This situation may cause an uncontrolled increase in tension in the region, especially if new alliances between the Arctic and non-Arctic countries are created. The author considers the current approaches of the countries of the Arctic five, analyzes the true motives of internationalization and the role of the format of the Arctic five in maintaining a balance of power and stability in the northern latitudes.

Keywords: The Arctic Five; international relations; non-arctic states; the balance of power; internationalization issue

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INTRODUCTION

The Arctic region is changing over the past decade because of the discovery of new opportunities for its development. Melting glaciers allows the Arctic five (USA, Norway, Russia, Canada, Denmark) to develop new mineral deposits, improve logistics through the northern sea routes and this is interesting for both the Arctic and non-Arctic states. However, some issues currently do not fall into the existing base of international law, which may give rise tensions in the region. The Documents like the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920 [1], the Convention on International Law of the Sea of 1982 [2], the Ilulissat Declaration of 2008 [3] form the basis of the regulatory framework for regional relations. Each of the five countries of the Arctic “five” has its approaches to the international development of the region.
POLICY OF «ARCTIC FIVE»

The Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of March 5, 2020 N 164 «On the Basics of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period Until 2035” speaks of an attempt by some foreign states to revise the basic provisions of international treaties governing economic and other activities in the Arctic and create systems of national legal regulation without taking into account such treaties and regional formats of cooperation. This definition includes attempts to internationalize a region. The document also recognizes “the incompleteness of the international legal delimitation of sea spaces in the Arctic, which can be corrected through mutually beneficial cooperation and the peaceful resolution of all disputes in the Arctic based on international law” [4].

This approach implies the priority of the Arctic states in addressing the regulation of international relations in the region, as well as the participation of the Arctic and non-Arctic states in its development, where the Arctic Council should play the role of a key regional association.

In September 2019, Canada published the Arctic and Northern Political Framework Program [5], which highlights the general direction of the Canadian government in the Arctic until 2030. This document developed in conjunction with local governments, indigenous peoples, Inuit, and Métis peoples and replaced Canada’s 2009 Northern Strategy and Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy Statement 2010. To address specific international challenges, Canada will implement an international Arctic policy that identifies priority areas including strengthening cooperation based on the rules of international order; Enhanced engagement with Arctic and non-Arctic states and a clear definition of Canada’s Arctic borders.

Trudeau’s new policy mentions the sovereignty of the Arctic, but much lesser than in the previous approach. It affirms the importance of “a rule-based international order in the Arctic” and calls for the resumption of leadership by Canada, as well as “the representation and participation of Arctic and Northern Canadians in relevant international forums and negotiations” [5]. It calls for strengthening Canada’s military capabilities in the Arctic, but only after discussing security threats.

Despite the new Arctic policy, the principle of maintaining sovereignty will remain one of the main ones. Canada didn’t want to become an observer of the Arctic Council of China, and also negatively assesses the actions of the Chinese in Iceland and Greenland. Canada expresses its open position of non-admission of the EU to the Arctic Council and any possible expansion of its presence in the Arctic. Canada has several complaints about the american approach to internationalizing the Northwest Passage, to which the Canadian government extends its sovereignty by analogy with the North Sea Route of Russia.

A new round of changes in US state planning regarding the Arctic region occurred with the publication on June 6, 2019, of the US Department of Defense’s Arctic Strategy [6] which updated the previous 2016 strategy.

Back in early May 2019, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo visited Finland as part of the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting, and through his speeches, he announced key areas that were reflected in the new Arctic strategy a month later. He announced the intensification of US policy in this region, in the context of rivalry between different countries, and security threats from Russia and China [7]. This is a new trend, since the Arctic Council practically did not discuss security issues earlier, and mainly discussions related to environmental protection, climate change and sustainable development of the region.

The U.S. Department of Defense’s published Arctic Strategy traces far more specific practi-
cal aspects than in previous documents. The main theme was the competition of the United States with Russia and China. But a strategic advantage for the USA, unlike rivals, it is a network of allies and partners with common national interests.

Although the new Arctic strategy of the US Department of Defense is more specific than previous documents, however, it states more likely a statement of the current situation than concrete solutions to problems. Perhaps these options are defined in more detail in the closed part of the report.

Priority for the United States is to maintain as long a period of low tension in the Arctic as possible to have time to fill in the gaps that remain at the moment.

In 2009, Norway secured its status as a pioneer in the field of international cooperation and legal regulation in the Arctic among the countries of Northern Europe. Russia is the main opponent in territorial disputes [8]. At the border negotiations in the Barents Sea, Norway was unable to achieve the application of the principle of the median line. Signed September 15, 2010. The Murmansk Treaty [9] is attributed to the victory of Russian diplomacy. However, scientists disagree on to whom this agreement has become more beneficial. In any case, the signing of the document confirms that Oslo seeks to resolve controversial issues through diplomatic means.

Norway is one of the Arctic leaders who has, first of all, economic interests in the region. The most important sector of the economy is fishing. The latest version of the Norwegian strategy of 2017 [10] clearly shows the contradiction between the economic interests of the state and environmental protection. This becomes a particularly important “image problem” of Norway, which positions itself as a leader in environmental safety and, at the same time, relies on a hydrocarbon-dependent economy [11].

The document pays considerable attention to international cooperation. Norway notes the priority of the principles of international law. The Arctic is defined as a region of peace, stability and predictable development. The priority areas for international transboundary cooperation include such areas as climate change, environmental protection, resource management, health and maritime security.

Special attention is paid to the importance of NATO in the region, through participation in which Norway realizes its security policy in the region. In the 2017 strategy, it also mentions the role of Russia and its activation in the military sphere in the Arctic in recent years, but it also indicates that this military activity of Russia is not aimed at Norway. Nevertheless, Norway intends to create a balance in the field of security in the Arctic.

Relations with North-West Russia through the Barents Euro The Arctic cooperation is a priority for the Norwegians, the Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes has special experience in the field of cross-border cooperation. Even though Northern Norway differs from Sweden, Finland and Russia in that it has a high level of employment, there is a need to harmonize and promote labour mobility in the region, including in the North-West of Russia, which implies an exchange between educational institutions. Norway is also promoting an initiative to create a coordination mechanism for the EU [12].

The Kingdom of Denmark is among the Arctic countries (the “Arctic Five”) due to Greenland, which is under the jurisdiction of Denmark. After the 2008 referendum on the status of Greenland, one of the goals of Denmark was the international recognition of the territorial autonomy of the island and maintaining the status of an important actor in the Arctic [13].

In general, the current Danish policy towards the Arctic is characterized by a certain restraint and constructiveness when considering and
making decisions on controversial issues, both in the field of defining borders and concerning economic, environmental, scientific, technical and military international cooperation. At the same time, it is important to take into account the fact that Denmark is a member of NATO and the EU, therefore, in most cases, it expresses the interests of the West.

So, in 2004, the Joint Committee for the Cooperation of Greenland, Denmark and the United States was created based on the Igaliku Agreement, which consists of three parts: the Agreement on updating the 1951 defense agreement and the creation of an advisory group, the Joint Statement on Environmental Cooperation and the Agreement on technical and economic cooperation [14].

In 2010, Denmark and Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand cooperation in the field of operational defense in the Arctic, focusing on joint military exercises and the exchange of information for cooperation in rescue operations. The agreement catalyzes enhancing day-to-day cooperation between the commands in Greenland [15].

The Danish side does not exclude that increasing international activity in the Arctic can change the geostrategic significance of the region, which justifies the tasks set for the Danish Armed Forces in the “Agreement on Military Security 2018-2023” [16].

It is worth noting that Denmark strongly supported the granting of observer status to China in the Arctic Council. It is the only country in Northern Europe to have comprehensive strategic partnerships with China. In the political sphere, close contacts are maintained at a high level, interaction is constantly being carried out, and political mutual trust is constantly deepening.

However, not all aspects of bilateral cooperation between the two countries can be characterized as positive. The kingdom is opposed to the participation of Chinese companies in the construction of three airports in Greenland, the government is concerned that China’s participation in this project could adversely affect relations with the United States.

THE QUESTION OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE REGION

The internationalization of the Arctic region is possible for a number of reasons.

Firstly, none of the Arctic states has the exclusive right to the entire territory and water area of the region. The sectoral principle, which was officially recognized only by Canada and the USSR, also did not provide for the countries of the “Arctic Five” (USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Russia) the right to the entire sector, but only to the land and coastal parts. According to the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Arctic countries have a 200-mile economic zone and the ability to expand their rights by proving their relationship to the continental shelf. Other methods under international law in the northern latitudes are not provided.

Secondly, the main regional structure of the Arctic Council, which implies the active participation of organizations of indigenous peoples of the north and other non-governmental organizations along with official delegations of states, as well as the advisory nature of the decisions made, makes it possible to lobby the interests of non-regional players or to bypass the organization. A good example was the activity of the “Arctic Five”. Five countries come together on a joint initiative. Thus, the Ilulissat Declaration [17] was signed, which was initially negatively received by the international community, since representatives of 3 members of the Arctic Council (the Arctic states: Iceland, Sweden, Finland) and representatives of the indigenous peoples of the north were not invited to the meeting. The accusation of “separatism” was replaced by approval of the initiative, since the agreements reached in
search and rescue, oil pollution and scientific cooperation served as an impetus for strengthening international cooperation in the region. Regulatory documents were signed based on the Arctic Council in 2011 [18], 2013 [19] and 2017 [20] respectively.

The countries of Northern Europe (NE), having a direct interest in international cooperation within the region, are promoting their interests, gaining support from the European Union and China. In turn, the Northern Europeans uphold the rights of the EU and China in the Arctic Council. Internationalization will allow NE countries to appeal unhindered to the help of influential actors, thereby building the necessary balance of power in the region. For example, the Norwegian internationalist R. Bertelsen in his work “The Arctic as a laboratory of global governance: Knowledge-based cooperation and scientific diplomacy ” argues that the experience of the“ Arctic laboratory ” of transnational relations, based on knowledge in international system processes, is that these relations can play a useful role in managing consolidating processes that have high risks of overgrowing into conflict ”[21]. In his opinion, the experience of Russian-Western scientific cooperation and Chinese scientific cooperation with the Arctic states illustrates the possibilities of introducing global governance in the region. The main message of Bertelsen and other North European researchers, is that the main link in the possible internationalization is scientific cooperation [21].

However, the Norwegian does not take into account the geopolitical and economic aspects of the development of the region. It is these aspects that pose the risks of increased tension, where the scientific community plays a secondary role.

The PRC, having published the Arctic Strategy in 2018, declared its main interest in the region - the development of the Northern Sea Route. However, in order to satisfy its interests in the Arctic, China needs to review the leadership of the Arctic five in the region to implement the global project of the Northern Silk Road.

Chinese researchers also pay great attention to scientific cooperation [22]. The second aspect that the Chinese want to make their “lever” for internationalization is ecology. An analytical article by China daily: “The Need for Global Governance for Interaction in the Arctic” [23] published an interview with C. Baoji, a senior fellow at the Shanghai Institute of International Relations about the prospects of China’s participation in the development of the Arctic through an environmental agenda. The article traces the negative attitude towards American policy in this area (not signing the Paris Treaty, not recognizing its influence on climate change in the Arctic by signing a joint statement in the Arctic Council, etc.). The scientist suggests that non-Arctic states with a developed environmental development program for the region will help to avoid climate collapse and mitigate the negative consequences of development. Thus, we can conclude that the North Europeans and the Chinese are trying under the pretext of benefits to science and ecology to make the Arctic public domain, which contradicts the approaches of Russia and Canada in the first place. Such attempts may give rise to a conflict of interests in the region, therefore, it is necessary to rethink the general approach to peaceful interaction, taking into account geopolitics, economics, science and ecology.

SEARCH FOR BALANCE OF FORCES

The strongest possible alliance in the open spaces of the northern latitudes may be the alliance of Russia and China, where the Arctic and world economic leaders are united. This situation runs counter to all US interests in the region. Washington is also interested in the internationalization of the main logistics routes,
(the Northwest Passage and the North Sea Route) are not international. Not having much potential in the northern latitudes, the United States spreads its influence within NATO within Northern Europe, and also exerts pressure on Sweden and Finland to join the alliance, thereby promoting American interests.

Attempts to internationalize the Northwest Passage may push Canada to Russia, which also defends its rights to the North Sea Route. Both countries consider themselves responsible for international actors whose behaviour in the Arctic complies with established legal principles and norms. Despite the suspension of economic and military cooperation since 2014, complex interdependence has led to regional cooperation in search and rescue, cross-border fishing, the expansion of continental shelves, navigation, a mandatory polar code, and scientific cooperation.

The Russian and Canadian approaches are close but do not have sufficient grounds for rapprochement since the traditional influence of the United States on its northern neighbour remains strong.

At the same time, the Trump administration’s policy of sovereignty and destabilization of relations between Western countries within NATO provides an opportunity for North Europeans to expand their relations with China and the EU in the region.

All 5 Northern European states (Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland and Denmark) develop their relations with the Celestial Empire, including in the Arctic direction. However, any attempts by the Chinese side to invest in significant projects in the northern latitudes are met by alarmist articles of the Western media and local government bans on similar activities (Chinese entrepreneurs wanted to invest in the construction of three airports in Greenland, the Chinese billionaire Juan Budo tried to buy a plot of 300 sq. km. in Iceland). It says about the caution of the North Europeans and the preservation of the West-centric view of world politics.

The countries of Northern Europe - Sweden, Finland and Denmark are members of the European Union and are actively promoting the interests of Brussels in the North. Norway and Iceland remain neutral towards such activities. There is an agreement between Northern Norway and the EU on cooperation in the Arctic [24], which indicates the active cooperation of the Scandinavian country with the rest of Europe. Even though in March 2015 the Government of Iceland demanded that it not be considered as a candidate country for EU accession, the island state actively maintains relations with the association in economic matters [24].

Several factors (not accepting the EU application as an observer of the Arctic Council, Brexit, deterioration of relations in a pandemic) suggest that strengthening the EU’s position in the North is postponed indefinitely. At the same time, the Arctic agenda appears in such formats as the Nordic-Baltic eight “Nordic-Baltic-8” (Regional format for cooperation, which includes: Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Estonia. As part of The meetings of the Prime Ministers of the Nordic and Baltic countries, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Speakers of Parliaments regularly take place on the co-operation. On September 10, 2019, a meeting of representatives of the G8 and the USA took place, where security issues in the Arctic were discussed [25]. On November 14, 2019, the Estonian government decided to apply to the Arctic Council with a request to grant it observer status, all this indicates the desire of the United States to expand the number of “satellites” in the region.

CONCLUSION
So far, the “Arctic Five” remains the main participants in the Arctic. Each of the 5 coun-
tries pursues its interests in the region, however, the decisive vote in this cooperation remains with the United States and Russia. For example, despite the deterioration of relations within NATO, Canada, Denmark and Norway remain committed to Western cooperation, especially in security matters. At the same time, the development of the Northern Sea Route is unthinkable without Russian icebreakers and scientific competencies.

At first glance, the United States has an advantage in this format, since Norway, Canada, Denmark are west-centric states. However, the top five equally have such aspirations as internationalization and the preservation of the sectoral principle, geopolitical rivalry and cooperation in science and social projects, where Russia’s contribution plays an important role.

While maintaining an aggressive American policy of imposing their interests, the allies will increasingly move away to other centers of power. With the advent of China in the region, the balance of power may disappear, the promising Russia-PRC link will not leave any chance for other regional actors to influence the situation, which could create an increase in tension on the part of Western countries.

At the moment, China does not play a role in decision-making in the Arctic Council. In this regard, very cautious proposals were made from Beijing to create a wider legal framework for the Arctic, to which Secretary of State Pompeo in his speech in Rovaniemi clearly stated that the United States “reject attempts by non-Arctic states to claim a role in managing the Arctic” [26]. Hypothetically, the United States may deprive the PRC of observer status in the Arctic Council, but this does not mean that the PRC, in turn, will not create an alternative format for cooperation with the Arctic and Arctic states, therefore the American side urges the northern countries not to agree to Chinese investments, calling them opaque.

In a pandemic, it is difficult to predict a return to the previous dynamics of Arctic exploitation, but it is worth noting that the successful struggle of China with coronavirus gives this superpower a big head start, which could increase investment in the northern countries.

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