Latvia’s role in the Arctic. Cooperation prospects

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Annotation. The aim of the current research is to scrutinize the role of the small states in Arctic regarding Latvia. The goal of the research is to reveal the small states promising cooperation routes in arctic region. By using regional research method to study the international cooperation situation there were revealed such budding routes as ecological safety, human resources, science, education, culture, investments, digitalization, cyber security, defense industry, rescue missions, telecommunications, IT technologies, mass media. At the same time the local method of the regional touch application allows to determine that Latvia as the other Baltic states should be a part of an integrated interaction with all the engaged countries basing on equal and parity mutual relations.

1. Introduction
Arctic is becoming more important for the whole world. Despite their geographical distance from the arctic region such powerful states as China seek to maintain their influence there. The EU states do not have such huge amount of resources but are also looking for their own role in the Arctic. Baltic states are also located significantly far from it, but being EU members and northern Europe countries proximity allows us to consider their Arctic role. Their area of interest is not that significant, but still it exists along with the interests of such states as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Arctic cooperation is pervasive, there are no empty streams. According to the research analysis the main theme is the economical cooperation. Studies made by M.V. Ulchenko [1], V. Zuckermann [2], O.U. Krasulina [3], K. Teplaya [4], O. Skotarenko [5] should be mentioned. Arctic region is a winning one for legal regulation researches. Studies made by D.A. Mokhorov [6], V.P. Demidov [7], M.A. Ermolina [8], V.N. Snetkov [9] are a perceptible contribution to the research. Arctic region human resources are an integral part of the US, Canadian, Danish and Finnish researches. Among the Russian ones there are works of E.A. Korchak [10], V.P. Samarina [11], O.N. Popova [12], V.Dmitriev [13], K.U. Eidemiller [14]. Nowadays all the arctic states pay a big attention to their part of arctic development, the role of the international institutes aiming to adjust relations of the region is also increasing. Not only the development of the Russian part of the Arctic but also the international arctic cooperation are subjects to the Russian researchers, such as S.V. Kulik [15], O.U. Krasulina [16], Z.M. Khasheva [17], A.M. Tamitskiy [18], E.V. Travkina [19], A.M. Vorotnikov studies [20].

Arctic region and its potential benefits for the arctic states is analyzed using the regional studies method. Afterwards the local method is used as a part of the economy-geographical method. Latvia's place and its role in the establishing arctic region related international policy of the northern Europe states, EU and NATO is analyzed.

2. International cooperation in the Arctic
Arctic infrastructure development for transport, buildings, utilities and energy transfer for both military and civilian purposes are important goals for the USA [21]. Arctic region is attractive for its natural
resources such as oil, gas, minerals and wildlife, including plants, soil, water and air. These are the national valuerables according to the USA and other countries [22].

In the current article the main goals of the arctic states according to their national strategies in the arctic region will be observed. Russian arctic region national strategy states the following goals: a) cover needs in minerals and natural resources; b) ecological safety; c) united space of information; d) scientific researches; e) international cooperation [23].

Despite the fact that both Russian and US strategies consider peace maintenance as one of the main goals for arctic region, the American and Russian strategies mention population protecting and threats confronting [24].

North is the central point of Canadian national identity [25]. Canadian government invests in projects aimed to create and operate military training centers. It also works very active on national resources protection and helping population of the isolated areas.

Norway focuses on military defensive cooperation with Russia. [26] As it is stated in the Norwegian Arctic strategy the government strives for defense basing on the dialogue with Russia, including joint military trainings. The Norwegian authorities make efforts to develop transport infrastructure, including railroads and air access.

Denmark's Arctic strategy assumes an important role of international law and cooperation establishment in order to resist potential challenges [27]. Trust and collaboration with partner states have an important meaning for Denmark. Healthcare and social stability are the priority points for Danish government. Danish-Canadian military cooperation is also strategically important. For Sweden the Arctic policy priorities are: a) political tension reduction; b) Arctic Council’s role strengthening; c) EU partnership promoting; d) Northern Countries Ministry work. Key directions of the Swedish work are: climate and environment, economical growth and human dimension [28].

Finland’s national priorities are economy, science, culture and human dimension [29]. Finland aims to strengthen its position as of an Arctic state and consolidate international Arctic cooperation. Arctic Council is the main collaborative platform for Finland. Finnish Arctic cooperation is also based on its relations with Sweden, Norway and the EU. Finland cooperates with Sweden and Denmark to promote and intensify the EU’s Arctic policy. In particular, the EU participates as an observer in the Arctic Council. Other Arctic Council observers are: France, Germany, Netherland, Poland, Spain, Great Britain, China, Italy, Japan, Korea, Singapore and India [30].

Iceland’s Arctic strategy key point is the recognition of country’s rights and interests [31]. It is also stated that such countries as China, Japan, EU- and NATO-states are willing to have influence on the Arctic. Along with unresolved issues between Arctic countries concerning disputed territories and considering third countries interests, the willingness of problem solving in a peaceful way may not be implemented. It will lead to tension escalation in the particular region.

2.1. Geopolitics and the Arctic region countries

Global geopolitical scale is constantly changing and it affects Northern countries despite their geographical closeness [32]. It includes the US police on NATO supporting, Russian complacent relation to European neighbors, financial and migrational crisis affecting the EU, Brexit. Finland, Sweden and Norway are the NATO members. Denmark, Finland and Sweden are members of the EU. All these five north European countries give great attention to peace and conflicts. Finnish policy considers mediation as the key point if peace-building through dialogues with other countries. Sweden also focuses on the peace-building according to such priority routes as establishing women's rights, peace and safety. For Iceland the peaceful conflict dealing through diplomacy and disarming policy is in the forefront. Norway positions itself as an impartial mediator of the dialogue. Danish peaceful efforts lean towards British and American political perspectives. Chinese interest in the Arctic region bases on the access to navigation and energy resources availability [33]. China has the second largest military budget, at the same time China is one of the primary challenges for NATO because of its approach to Arctic [34]. This makes it important for NATO to reply to the new challenges in military infrastructure and in cyberspace.

Canada is one of the EU key partners. Their cooperation bases on enhanced political and economic collaboration. The 2019 EU and Canada Joint Declaration states priority cooperation routes [35]. Among the economical and cultural cooperation it points out potential common use of Space. The Declaration
also states that EU and Canada keep working closely together on peace and stability maintenance as they did in Ukraine, Mali and Iraq. 15.03.2019 sanctions were coordinated by Canada, EU and the USA. The Declaration states that countries will continue their close collaboration on cybercrimes and misinformation countering, working closely with NATO cyber security centers [36, 37]. In 2016 there was a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between Canada and the EU-member states [38]. The Agreement marks such priority collaboration points as human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy, law, international peace, safety, effective multilateralism, economic growth, justice, freedom, political dialogue, consultative actions.

2.1.1. European Union and the Northern countries. EU projects in the Arctic region are implemented in accordance with the "Northern Periphery and Arctic", "Interreg Nord", "Bitnia-Atlantica" and "Sweden-Norway" programs [39]. Cooperation with the northern regions of Finland, Sweden, Norway and the Barents region is the aim of the "Kolarctic CBC" program. Along with the natural resources preservation, ecological safety, migration control, healthcare, culture and tourism, an important role goes to cooperation in transport and telecommunications development. EU priority is also the Arctic region business environment improvement and single digital market creation. It is important to note that scientific and investing activity is also treated as a high priority one in the Arctic region for the EU. Such priority scientific and investing activities are considered by the EU to be held not only together with Canada, Russia and the USA, but also with China, India, Japan, Korea and Singapore [40]. "EU Horizon 2020" program is particularly important for the global social problems solving. Sweden, Norway and Denmark are cooperating on the basis of the Nordic Council of Ministers [41, 42]. After Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian declaring of independence in 1991 they also began cooperating with the Nordic Council of Ministers basing on cultural, economic and political relations.

2.1.2. Latvia and the Arctic region. Priority cooperation areas are social, healthcare and digital spheres. Special attention is paid to national minority languages mass media. Along with other Baltic countries Latvia takes part in programs on national minorities' languages mass media funding [43]. Latvia's Nordic Council of Ministers works on the media literacy improvement ("Sarunu festivals LAMPA" project) [44]. Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME) creates educational programs for journalists. BCME work aims to create an independent association of Russian-speaking journalists, which will help to create a high-quality content for Russian-speaking community in the future. BCME hold events aimed at independent association of Russian-speaking mass media development [45]. Special attention is paid to areas with large number or Russian-speaking population: Daugavpils (Latvia), Narva (Estonia), Visaginas (Latvia). Such strategy integrates both journalists who work in Russian language and those who work with state languages (Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian) to provide a high-quality information using all the languages [46]. There is also a "Baltic counties independent mass media consolidation" program. The "Pilna Doma" is the most popular media literacy project in Latvia. It aims to increase the media literacy level of young people who are the most vulnerable ones to 'fake news' in mass media. Nordic Council of Ministers funds mass media projects because of the concerns that Russian propaganda affects Russian-speaking community in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia [47].

In 2018 there was held a research on nature of the information about Northern countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark)/ [48, 49]. The research stated that Russian citizens do not consider Northern countries as a priority. Firstly they are interested in Germany, France and Great Britain and only afterwards they pay attention to the Northern countries. For their part Northern countries' mass media claims Russia and Russian society to be aggressive and dangerous [50].

Latvia takes part in projects that give information on the Northern countries. "Northern countries Days" are held in Latvia to strengthen regional cooperation. Baltic countries collaborate with Northern countries in healthcare, cultural, scientific and educational spheres, in particular the digitalization and climate change areas are encouraged with discourse platforms (for example the "Nordic-Baltic Energy and Climate Challenge" international conference). As a part of cross boundary cooperation between Northern and Baltic countries there is a "Nordic-Baltic 5G" initiative created to support business and its funding [51].

In February, 2018 Nordic Council of Ministers held a survey among Latvian citizens on the collaboration with Northern countries [52]. The results have proven that Baltic citizens accept such
collaboration with the mentioned in the survey countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland). Latvian citizens assume that not only geographical countries but also the cultural values should be shared. The most important cooperation spheres for Baltic citizens are: economy, education, science, tourism, culture and new technologies. Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian citizens consider Northern countries as the ones with high-leveled social welfare, ecological consciousness, freedom of opinion. Estonian citizens assume that they can offer their own IT and digital services achievements to the Northern countries. Lithuanian citizens think of their innovations and scientific achievements. Collaboration with Northern countries is considered as an important one by the majority of respondents: 91% in Estonia, 89% in Lithuania and 84% in Latvia. It is agreed that the small countries should cooperate with each other (96% in Estonia, 93% in Latvia, 91% in Lithuania). Baltic citizens find benefits of such cooperation in learning from each other, trade and competitiveness development, work and study travelling simplification. It is also important that together with Northern countries the Baltic states will be able to get a stronger voice on the international arena.

Baltic countries and Latvia in particular seek to collaborate with northern Europe countries. Baltic states value to the Arctic region will be possibly strengthening, it is described by the main cooperation areas of the region. Along with the collaboration in healthcare, education, climate changes, investments, digitalization, economy and business spheres the political vector, cyber safety and defense are also very important. It must be noted that Baltic countries cooperate with Northern countries in the cyber safety sphere.

Democratic values are shared by all the Baltic countries. Following the democratic vector Baltic countries influence together with the common EU voice on trespassing, human rights and freedoms violation. In particular, Latvia considered its own experience of the "soviet occupation" when debated on Ukrainian situation. It is appropriate to speak on the NATO expansion to its eastern borders, closer to the Russian Federation. This has been made possible by not only the NATO's will but also due to coordinated Baltic countries policy. In particular, Latvian politicians claimed that they consider it possible for Russian government to restore former soviet borders basing on the Ukrainian and previous Latvian historical experience. Same rhetoric was used by Latvian government during the Georgian conflict. In general, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia do not miss an opportunity to claim that Russian Federation threatens their safety and sovereign as well, as the safety and sovereign of the whole EU. These statements do not go against the EU and NATO policy and this is why they can be heard in the common voice and used against Russian Federation when talking about military defense and sanctions.

It is noteworthy that in addition to defense and cyber security issues, Latvia, along with other Baltic countries, participates in media projects. Why does it deserve special attention? For Latvia, there is a problem with the integration of the Russian-speaking minority into Latvian society. The society which, on the one hand, was formed by the indifference of the political forces of Russia in the 1990s, and by the Latvian political forces, on the other hand, which, in turn, created a modern nation-state, and, thanks to the position of the Russian-speaking population, created and are creating an agenda for domestic politics. The legitimization of the Latvian of the political elites actions often comes down to national minorities issues, which are understood as Russian-speaking residents. So in cooperation with the Nordic countries, the Latvian government uses the position of Russian-speaking residents as of the most vulnerable part of society in the face of Russian propaganda, which, in turn, allows Latvia to receive funding for the development of media projects, as well as for participation in a general dialogue on threats that can be carried by the Russian media.

Manipulating the so-called "Russian threat" allows Latvia and Estonia to play a specific role in the NATO and the Northern Countries policy vector and this fact sometimes affects relations with Russia in a not good way. Establishment of the NATO Strategic Research Centers in both Riga and Tallinn has influence on cyber security protection in particular countries but can not be considered as a cure-all measure for all the Arctic countries because it is only aimed at NATO behooves protection. Information transparency, its approachability and possibility of its common use are the main criteria of the cyber security. When one of the countries replaces the concepts and forms public opinion for the political benefits then it is necessary to have an adequate use of cyber protection and counteraction measures. This can be exemplified by the researches, carried out by NATO CSR and aimed at the following questions:
which information is consumed by the Russian-speaking population;
what kind of content does Russian mass media in Latvia have;
how does this content affects the Russian-speaking society.

Unilaterally formed opinion claims Russian mass media (TV, radio, social networks and online ones in particular) to be allegedly sovereignty undermining and be the source of the Latvian society segregation. This statement was proven wrong after a professional review. Prejudices and personal interests can generate controlled and uncontrolled cyber actions in modern technological societies.

Therefore cyber security issues should not be solved to serve the interests of specific groups or countries but in favor of all the Arctic region states. This extends to all political, economical and legal issues.

3. Conclusion
Latvia and the Baltic countries contribute to the Arctic development along with Canada, the USA, the Nordic countries and Russian Federation. Relations with Canada and the United States pass through the prism of relations with the EU and NATO, as well as with the countries of Northern Europe, it is also important to note cooperation through the Nordic Council of Ministers. Latvian and Estonian cooperation with the Russian Federation is presumed to be a strategic partnership and should not have a character of confrontation. To do so Russia and Latvia along with other Arctic region countries should enhance relations in such spheres as:
- media sphere - improving the quality of information flows, media literacy, creating the culture of information;
- cyber security - common designation of threats, development of measures to ensure the protection of cyberspace, digitalization, the development of legal and ethical methods of actions in foreign cyberspace;
- democratic development - protection of human rights and freedoms;
- defense - a designation of a peaceful, non-aggressive way of issues solving.

Baltic countries have a potential in such areas of cooperation as human resources, IT projects, science and education which leads to new cooperations and mutually advantageous development of the whole region.

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