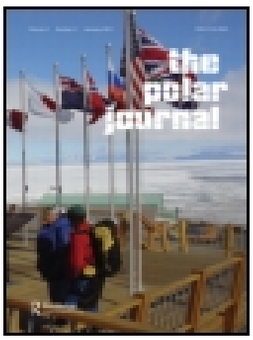

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ARTICLE

Forging Russia's Arctic strategy: actors and decision-making

Alexander Sergunin [a] and Valery Konyshev [b]

[a]Department of World Politics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Department of International Relations Theory and History, St. Petersburg State University, and Department of Political Science, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia; [b]Department of International Relations Theory and History, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Arctic policies are being made in present-day Russia. More specifically, this paper focuses on the roles and functions of various actors and institutions participating in the decision-making process. Both governmental and non-governmental actors are examined. The effectiveness of the decision-making mechanism is assessed. Major problems in organisation and functioning of this system are identified. The authors conclude that a rather stable decision-making machinery on Arctic policy has been created within the executive branch of the Russian government. The elements of parliamentary control over the decision-making process have been created. An executive-legislative liaison/consultative mechanism has been established and it facilitated the dialogue between the Kremlin and the legislature on Arctic policies. The role of the Russian regional and local governments became more salient in Arctic policy-making. Russia's Arctic regional and local governments develop numerous horizontal/networking-type relations (paradiplomacies) with their foreign partners. Non-governmental actors, such as the Russian business community, human rights, indigenous peoples' and environmental NGOs have got some say in Arctic policy-making. Despite some shortcomings the Russian Arctic policy-making system evolved in a more democratic and efficient way. Transitional period still continues but the grounds for optimistic expectations are quite solid.

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Introduction

The main body of scholarship on Russia's Arctic strategies focuses on Moscow's interests in the High North, its domestic and external policies in the region as well as on implications of Russia's actions for the regional international relations system.[1] Most scholars are interested in either sources/prerequisites or outcomes/results of Russia's

CONTACT Alexander Sergunin sergunin60@mail.ru Department of World Politics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Department of International Relations Theory and History, St. Petersburg State University, and Department of Political Science, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia

[1]See, for example, the most fundamental, book-length works on Russia's Arctic strategies: Carlsson and Granholm, *Russia and the Arctic*; Heininen et al., *Russian Strategies in the Arctic*; Indzhiev, *Bitva za Arktiku*; Lukin, *Rossiyskaya Arktika v Izmenyayushemsya Mire*; Pezard et al., *Maintaining Arctic Cooperation with Russia*; Podvintsev, *Rossiyskaya Arktika v Poiskakh Integral'noi Identichnosty*; Sergunin and Konyshev, *Russia in the Arctic*; Trenin and Baev, *The Arctic: A View from Moscow*; Zagorsky, *Arktika: Zona Mira i Sotrudnichestva*; Zagorsky, *Mezdunarodno-Politicheskie Usloviya Razvitiya Arkticheskoi Zony Rossiyskoi Federatsii*; Zamyatina and Pilyasov, *Rossiyskaya Arktika*.

political course in the Far North rather than in policy-making process. In other words, while the tip of the iceberg called 'Russian Arctic policy' is more or less studied, its underwater part remains invisible and understudied. There are very few scholarly works which analyse Russian decision-making on the Arctic.[2]

In contrast with the above approach, this study aims to examine how Russia's policy in the High North is being shaped. This is important to understand why Moscow's Arctic policies took specific forms and directions. It is also important to shed light on Russia's Arctic strategies decision-making system. It should be noted that such a system not only reflects policy debate in the society but it also is, to some extent, a product of this debate and an instrument which helps to put ideas and doctrines into practice. Decision-makers are the part of this debate, consumers of the products of discourse, instruments of implementation and a feed-back loop at the same time.

This paper focuses specifically on how Arctic policies are being made in present-day Russia. In particular, it pays attention to the powers, roles and functions of actors and institutions participating in the decision-making process. Both governmental and non-governmental actors are examined. It further assesses the efficiency of the decision-making mechanism and identifies major problems in its organisation and functioning.

Theoretical framework

There are several theoretical approaches to the study of Russia's Arctic policy-making.

The rational-action approach

This approach is based on rational choice theory with its assumption that mainly rational actors operate in the political sphere. Before taking a decision political actors calculate all possible positive and negative consequences of their potential acts and prefer not to take any risky decisions if they are not sure about a possible outcome.[3] From this perspective, the maximisation of utility by actors is the ultimate aim of foreign policy decision-makers. By maximisation of utility, the proponents of this approach mean a state first identifies and prioritises foreign policy goals; it then identifies and selects from the means available to it which fulfils its aims with the least cost.[4] In this regard, the focus of this approach is traditionally on policy outcomes and therefore assumes a relatively undifferentiated decision-making body for foreign policy (a 'unitary actor'), rather than one composed of different decision-makers. In our case, this theory suggests that Russia has an unified and well-coordinated governmental machinery which plays by established rules in the decision-making process. According to this perspective, executive agencies are subordinated to the top political leadership and a subject to the parliamentary and public control.

[2]Conley and Rohloff, *The New Ice Curtain*, 7–9; Godzimirski et al., *The Arctic*, 6–7; Klimenko, *Russia's Arctic Security Policy*, 3–6; Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, 37–46; Laruelle, *Russia's Arctic Strategies*, 6–9; Rowe, "The Arctic in Moscow"; Rowe and Blakkisrud, "A New Kind of Arctic Power?" 68–77.

[3]Amadife, *Pre-theories and theories of foreign policy-making*; Rosenau, *The scientific study of foreign policy*; Snyder et al., *Foreign policy decision-making*.

[4]Alden, *Foreign policy analysis*, 24.

However, the critics of rationality (mostly from the behavioural school) believe that foreign policy decision-makers do not act in a purely rational manner that conforms to the core assumptions of the rational choice theory. At best, foreign policy decision-makers could be said to operate within the framework of the information available to them and make decisions on that limited basis. Moreover, decision-makers are also subject to other influences such as their perceptions, pre-existing beliefs or prejudices and cognitive limitations on handling information which introduce further distortions to the process. Critics of rationality emphasise that attempts at rational foreign policy decision-making are misguided and even potentially dangerous for states.[5]

In the Russian case, many political actors are often exposed to emotional and irrational factors, especially when, they believed, the incompetent or parochial decisions were taken on the Arctic issues. Quite often, this led to the unhealthy interagency competition and power struggle between different decision-making bodies, which, in turn, contributed to a sometime messy process of Russia's Arctic policy formulation (especially in the 1990s). Needless to say that such a Byzantine-style policy-making is not in line with the postulates of the rational choice theory.

The bureaucratic-action approach

The adherents of this, rather popular among the foreign policy analysts, theory believe that a head of a state is strongly dependent on the foreign policy bureaucracy, which has relevant competences and expertise in the field and, for this reason, is very influential in decision-making.[6] This approach seems very promising in the case of the study of Russia's Arctic policy-making because Moscow's High North strategy quite often becomes a result of various bureaucratic 'corridor wars' between influential players. A particular foreign policy decision is often the outcome of bureaucratic scuffles, struggles between political factions and interest groups, and clashes between individual representatives of the governing elite. This is further complicated by discrepancies between the official and actual allocation of authority in policy-making in Russia and in the proliferation of special interest groups.

According to this theory, the governmental bureaucracy, which perceives itself as a semi-independent/autonomous actor, is a crucial player not only in decision-making but especially in the sphere of policy implementation. It can even emasculate or sabotage decisions taken by its superiors.[7]

The critics of this approach, however, note that it ignores at least two important factors. Firstly, in contrast with Boris Yeltsin who often was exposed to the influence of his associates and charismatic personalities, Vladimir Putin prefers to take most important political decisions himself although in consultations with his assistants and competent agencies. Putin many times demonstrated that he was able to resist bureaucratic pressure. Moreover, he is quite skilful in exploiting interagency disputes for his own purposes, including putting a bridle on the bureaucracy.[8]

[5]Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Sprout and Sprout, *Foundations of International Politics*.
[6]Halperin & Clapp, *Bureaucratic politics and foreign policy*.
[7]Allison et al., *Putin's Russia and the enlarged Europe*, 36–40.
[8]Gomart, *Russian civil-military relations*; Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behaviour*, 167–194.

Secondly, the federal bureaucracy is not a sole actor in the Arctic policy-making process. The latter is also affected by the Russian parliament, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, regional governments, mass media, etc.

Muddling through

This concept imagines decision-making as a quite chaotic process, in which objectives are never specified, remedial action is taken when it only becomes essential, and more important decisions are dependent on the power struggles between various governmental agencies and interest groups.[9] Decision-making is described as a chain of passive, often ill-balanced measures that are undertaken as a mere reaction to events rather than a forward-looking and clear strategy that is based on a pro-active approach. Not only Yeltsin's but also Putin's foreign policy moves are often represented as reactive, improvised and emotional actions which were not guided by any strategic vision.[10]

While some decisions (like the 2007 planting of the Russian titanium flag on the North Pole or creation of an additional Arctic brigade in 2015 and its deployment near the border with non-aligned Finland who started to think about further rapprochement with NATO) were ill-judged and taken under stress conditions, however, most Russia's Arctic activities over the last two decades were done in line with its strategic priorities which were reflected in Moscow's doctrinal documents[11] and hardly can be called unexpected and unpredictable.

To sum up, although it seems that the rational-action approach is the most reliable one for the study of the Russian decision-making on the Arctic, two other approaches cannot be ignored completely. These approaches altogether compliment rather than contradict or exclude each other.

Governmental level

Normally, in a democratic society the policy-making process involves two types of actors – governmental (the presidency, numerous executive agencies, Parliament, regional and local governments, etc.) and non-governmental (interest groups/lobbies, political parties and associations, religious organisations, think tanks and mass media). However, given a transitional nature of the Russian society and political system,

Russia's Arctic policy-making has its peculiarities. For example, due to the exceptional importance of the Far North for Russia's national interests Arctic policy-making is a highly centralised process. Although the sub-national and non-state actors obtained some role in shaping Moscow's Arctic policies in the post-Soviet era, the centre of the decision-making system firmly remains in the Kremlin and the executive agencies (see Figure 1).

Several ***ministries and agencies*** are responsible for the AZRF socio-economic, environmental and cultural development. The Ministry of Economic Development is in charge with the implementation of the 2014 State Program on the AZRF and coordination of other executive bodies' activities. The Ministry of Industry and Trade is responsible for

[9]Lindblom, "The science of "muddling through"" and Lindblom, "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through."
[10]Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 174–175; Sakwa, "Putin's leadership: character and consequences."
[11]Medvedev, "Osnovy Gosudarstvennoi Politiki"; Putin, *Strategiya Razvitiya Arkticheskoi Zony Rossiyskoi Federatsii.*

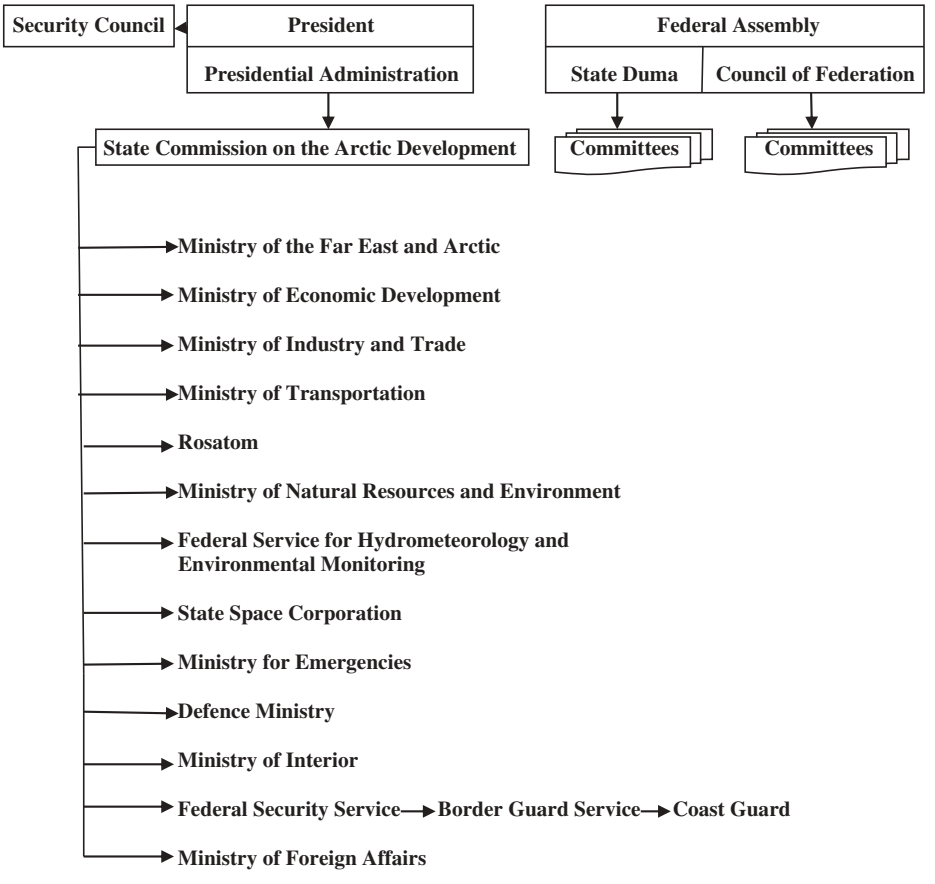

Figure 1. The Russian decision-making system: the governmental level.

the implementation of industrial projects in the region. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) oversees the oil, gas and mining industries as well as monitors the ecological situation in the AZRF. The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs deals, among other things, with the indigenous peoples of the Russian North.

The Ministry of Transport (MT) – through its NSR Administration – controls the navigation via this important sea lane. The same ministry – through the NSR Administration, Department of State Policy on Maritime and River Transport, and Russian Maritime Register of Shipping – is the main governmental body charged with the implementation of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Polar Code (2014–2015).

However, in 2016–2018 – in the spirit of the bureaucratic and muddling-through theories – there was an inter-departmental tug-of-war over the control of the NSR. By 2016, the Presidential Administration (Deputy Head Sergei Kirienko) and the Government (then Vice Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Commission on the Arctic Development Dmitry Rogozin) became discontent over how the MT managed the NSR. Particularly, Dmitry Rogozin criticised the ministry for its inability to develop a proper concept of an Arctic Transportation System.[12] In addition to the

[12]Baza Kompromata. "Korruptsionnyiy Sprut" Mintransa.

accusations of mismanagement and the lack of creativity, the ministry was accused of corruption. For example, in December 2016, the head of the NSR Administration Dmitry Smirnov was arrested on corruption charges.[13] A series of publications appeared in the Russian mass media, accusing of corruption the Director of the Department of State Policy on Maritime and River Transport Viktor Olersky who supervised the NSR Administration.[14] He has, however, survived the corruption scandal, avoided arrest and resigned from his post in June 2018.

Under these circumstances, the MT's old rival – the Russian State Corporation on Atomic Energy (Rosatom) – claimed its control over the NSR. Since 2008 the corporation has a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers of its own. For this reason, the Rosatom claimed that it not only had a good record in providing icebreaker services in the NSR but also was able to maintain and develop the whole route better than the MT.

The conflict between the Rosatom and MT escalated in April 2018 when the LNG carrier *Boris Vil'kitsky*, operated by Dynagas LNG Partners, entered the NSR despite damage to one of its three engines. The malfunction reduced the vessel's ice capabilities from Arc7 to Arc4 and made it illegal for the vessel to enter the route.[15] The NSR Administration officials only became aware of the damage when the vessel experienced difficulties navigating in heavy ice *en route* to Sabetta port while being escorted by the Rosatomflot (Rosatom's subsidiary) icebreaker *Taimyr*. Following the arrival of the vessel in Sabetta officials uncovered additional violations, including the absence of accurate ice charts and the lack of required ice navigation experience by the captain and crew. The *Boris Vil'kitsky* remained in port for more than a week before it was permitted to leave upon intervention by the Presidential Administration. The Rosatom presented this case as an evidence of the MT's bureaucratic approach to the NSR management while portraying itself as a responsible actor who cared of Russia's commercial interests. In this situation, President Putin supported the Rosatom and heavily criticised the MT. 'Gas carriers are not allowed into the port under far-fetched pretexts, then they do not let them depart. This will be dealt with separately,'[16] President Putin stated during a meeting with members of the Russian Parliament.

The Rosatom wanted to take from the MT not only diesel icebreakers, port infrastructure, icebreaker and pilot services but also other prerogatives, including adoption of regulatory documents, issuance of permissions to navigate via the NSR and development of international cooperation.[17]

Since the Rosatom had Sergei Kirienko (ex-director of this corporation in 2005–2016) as its powerful 'lobbyist' in the Presidential Administration, Vladimir Putin agreed to transfer the NSR management to this agency and asked its leadership to draft a new law on the Rosatom.

However, the Kremlin's idea to make the Rosatom an 'Arctic superagency' and a single 'master' of the NSR instead of having several executive bodies competing for the control over this sea lane met resistance from other state and non-state players. The MT pointed

[13]Ibid.
[14]Babayeva, Victoria. "S Chem Viktor Olersky Ukhodit s Posta Glavy Rosmorrechflota"; Kompromat.group. Bel'giyskaya Pizza ot Olerskogo.
[15]Korabel. "Boris Vil'kitskiy Narushil Ryad Pravil Arkticheskogo Moreplavaniya."
[16]Cited in Humpert, "How a Shipping Safety Violation is Escalating an Internal Conflict."
[17]Marinin et al., "Severny Kompromiss."

out that the Rosatom had no competences in developing a legal basis/regulations for shipping, making proper assessments of applications to navigate the NSR, exercising permanent control over shipping in this area, developing port infrastructure and international cooperation, including the IMO's Polar Code implementation.[18]

Interestingly, the Accounting Chamber of the Russian Federation supported the MT in its criticism of the Rosatom's initial proposals on the reform of the NSR management system. In its 2017 annual report (published in May 2018), the Accounting Chamber noted that the transfer of all control and management powers to the Rosatom could aggravate situation with the maritime safety and increase environmental risks in the NSR water area. Moreover, the Rosatom's proposals to develop the NSR port infrastructure seemed unrealistic because they did not fit into Russia's state budget approved for 2018–2020. Finally, the Accounting Chamber accused the Rosatom of being inefficient in spending money for building a series of new nuclear icebreakers (*Leader*-type) which led to numerous delays in this ambitious programme's implementation.[19]

Along with governmental actors, some business players opposed the plans to make the Rosatom a NSR monopolist. Some of them, such as, for example, *Nornikel*, have an icebreaker fleet of their own and do not need Rosatom's help. Other companies, like *Novatek* and *Gasprom Neft*, plan to build such fleets in the near future and do not want to be dependent on the Rosatom.[20]

As a result of these fierce debates a compromise was reached by the end of 2018. On 27 December 2018 President Putin signed a law which established a shared responsibility for the NSR management between the Rosatom and MT.[21] Rosatom's new powers in the Arctic included development and operational responsibilities for shipping, as well as infrastructure and sea ports along the northern Russian coast. The MT retained its powers to issue regulations on shipping (including safety and environmental standards), allow or deny ships' access to the NSR and develop international cooperation, including the Polar Code implementation. This reform was supposed to help the NSR to fulfil the presidential task to increase annual goods volumes shipped along the Arctic route to as much as 80 million tons by year 2024.

Along with the Rosatom and MT, some other executive agencies partake the NSR management. The Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring and the State Space Corporation are responsible for providing the governmental organs and ships with information on ice conditions and meteorological forecasts in the NSR area. The Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters is responsible for search and rescue operations and oil spill prevention and response in the Arctic – both on the land and sea.

A number of government agencies such as the Defence Ministry, Ministry of Interior and Federal Security Service (including the Border Guard Service and Coast Guard) are charged with providing the AZRF with internal and external security.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) represents Russia in its international relations, including bilateral diplomatic contacts with the Arctic and non-Arctic states,

[18]Ibid.
[19]Burmistrova, "Schetnaya Palata Raskritikovala Zakonoproekt "Rosatoma" ob Arktike."
[20]Marinin et al., "Severny Kompromiss."
[21]Putin, *O Vnesenii Izmeneniy*.

negotiations on the polar issues and activities in the framework of various regional and global organisations and fora, such as the UN, IMO, AC, BEAC, etc.

Other ministries and agencies are regularly being brought into Arctic policies as well. For example, the MNRE was responsible for preparing and presenting Russia's submissions on the extension of the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean for the UN's relevant commission. The MT together with the MFA conducted negotiations with the IMO on the Polar Code. The Russian Coast Guard cooperates with the similar services of other Arctic coastal states, including the Coast Guard Arctic Forum established in 2015. The Ministry of Higher Education and Science is responsible for academic and research cooperation with the Arctic countries in the bilateral and multilateral formats, including the implementation of the 2017 Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation.

All this creates a problem of coordination of the above governmental agencies and establishment of a proper division of labour between them. To cope with this challenge the Kremlin has initially planned to establish a special Ministry of Arctic Affairs. However, given a controversial experience of the similar agency for the Russian Far East whose effectiveness was questionable, the Russian Government decided to limit itself to the creation of an inter-agency coordinating body – the State Commission on the Arctic Development (March 2015). This commission consists of not only the heads of the federal ministries and agencies involved in the Arctic affairs but it also includes the governors of the AZRF regions and presidential envoys to Russia's five northern federal districts.[22] It was initially chaired by Vice Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, a famous hardliner who believed that Moscow should be assertive in protecting its interests in the High North and whose controversial statements regularly provoked a harsh reaction from foreign politicians.

However, in September 2018, the commission was reshuffled and Rogozin was removed from this body. Now the commission is headed by First Deputy Prime Minister Yury Trutnev, who is also top responsible for government affairs in the Far East.[23] Moreover, it was decided in January 2019 that rather than establish a separate ministry of the Arctic, the government will incorporate Arctic affairs into the Ministry of the Far East, in a move to coordinate the country's expanding development of regional infrastructure and industry. This agency was renamed as the Ministry of the Far East and Arctic and got a position of a first deputy minister on Arctic affairs.[24] According to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, the establishment of a separate ministry of the Arctic would be too costly both in terms financial and administrative resources. And Arctic issues are in many terms related with Far Eastern developments, he argued.[25]

Russia's Security Council, a collective body composed of the heads of ministries and agencies dealing with national security and chaired by the President, serves as another top coordinating body for Moscow's Arctic policies. According to the Russian legislation, the Council determines the foundations of Russia's domestic and foreign policies; identifies the country's vital interests, as well as internal and external threats to its security; supervises the country's military, economic, social and information security; makes recommendations to the President on the issues of external and internal policies, and

[22]Medvedev, *Sostav Gosudarstvennoi Komissii.*
[23]Arctic-info. *Yuriy Trutnev Vozglavil Goskomissiyu po Arktike.*
[24]TASS. *Zamministra po Razvitiyu Dal'nego Vostoka.*
[25]Sudostroenie.info. *Minvostokrazvitiya Zaimetsya Voprosami Arktiki.*

drafts presidential decrees on national security matters.[26] All Arctic strategic documents were discussed and revised by the Council before they were signed by the President.

Some political analysts, however, believe that the Presidential Administration rather than the Security Council or the Arctic Commission is a real maker and coordinator of Russia's Arctic policies.[27] This body collects information for the President, drafts presidential documents and legislative initiatives, nominates candidates for the key governmental positions, plans the President's schedule as well as his domestic and foreign trips, etc. Unsurprisingly, many of these functions overlap with those of the Security Council and make the latter a nominal player which simply approves what the Presidential Administration suggests.

Moreover, the Russian presidents practice appointing special envoys to deal with most important/complicated international issues. These Kremlin's representatives are subordinated directly to the President, i.e. his administration. For example, Russia's famous polar explorer Arthur Chilingarov was appointed Putin's Special Envoy for Arctic and Antarctic Affairs to the discontent of the Foreign Ministry which already had an ambassador at large for the same purpose (to represent Russia in the Arctic Council and BEAC).

As the case of the NSR management system's reform demonstrates, the Presidential Administration intervenes Arctic policy-making on both strategic and routine/tactical issues.

To sum up, the problem of coordination of executive agencies' Arctic policies is not solved so far. Even under Putin (famous for his centralist spirit), there are still some unhealthy competition and tensions between various governmental institutions responsible for the High North which make plausible the bureaucratic-action and muddling-through theories. To some extent Russia still lacks a single (governmental) voice in Arctic affairs and Moscow's international partners are sometimes unsure of whom to listen and contact.

The Russian Parliament (Federal Assembly) is another player on the federal political arena. In the well-developed democracies, the legislature is a crucial and integral part of the policy decision-making process. However, in the case of Russia the situation is still different. It should be noted that with the adoption of the Russian Constitution in December 1993, the President became a key figure in policy-making.[28] The bicameral legislature has quite limited powers in the fields of both domestic and foreign policies.

On the other hand, the Federal Assembly is able to influence the executive in some ways. It has some voice in the budgeting process and may cut or increase appropriations for particular executive agencies. The President needs the legislature's approval of his top-rank and ambassadorial appointees. The lower house, the State Duma, and the upper one, the Council of the Federation ('Senate'), ratify and denounce international treaties. Parliament also drafts legislation related to domestic and foreign policies.[29] However, its power over legislation is less effective because of the extensive use of executive decrees, and the President's rights of veto.

The legislature can also adopt non-binding resolutions which have limited impact on the executive but cannot be fully ignored by the President and the government. The

[26]Yeltsin, "Zakon Rossiyskoi Federatsii o Bezopasnosti."
[27]Pacer, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 9–10, 17, 116, 167, 187; Sergunin, "Russian Foreign-Policy Decision Making on Europe"; Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behaviour*, 181.
[28]*Konstitutsiya Rossiyskoi Federatsii*, Articles 80–93.
[29]Ibid., Articles 94–109.

legislature may undertake investigations. The Council of the Federation exercises the sole parliamentary say on the sending of armed forces abroad and changing external and internal borders. Legislators can also appeal to public opinion to block some executive's initiatives. Finally, the Federal Assembly develops cooperation with foreign parliaments and parliamentary assemblies of international organisations (CIS, Council of Europe, European Parliament, NATO, OSCE, etc.).[30]

However, neither of these prerogatives affords Parliament much leverage over policy. The Russian Parliament's powers and impact on foreign policy cannot be compared to those of, say, the U.S. Congress.

The key role of the President (and the executive branch in general) in Russia's policy-making (including the Arctic one) can also be strengthened if a pro-presidential political party controls the Parliament. In contrast with the Yeltsin era, when presidential control over the legislature was rather weak, Vladimir Putin takes a firm hold of the Federal Assembly through his party 'United Russia'. The pro-presidential party has 340 of 450 seats in the State Duma,[31] while in the Council of the Federation it has 123 of 170 seats.[32] In such a situation, all executive power's legislative initiatives on the Arctic are guaranteed the support of the Parliament although opposition parties have some chances to amend bills if they manage to convince the 'United Russia' deputies of reasonableness of these amendmends.

The Parliament has an institutional framework for making and even conducting Arctic policy. The State Duma has a special Committee on Regional Policy, Northern and Far Eastern Affairs[33] although – depending on the issue – other committees can be involved in legislation on and oversight of the Arctic issues. The Council of the Federation has a similar institutional structure: the Committee on Federalism, Regional Policy, Municipal Administration and Northern Affairs[34] is in charge with the AZRF problematique while other units can be engaged, if necessary.

Although the legislature does not play decisive role in Russia's policy-making, the executive power, including the President and Prime Minister, realises the need to establish a proper liaison/consultative mechanism to avoid or prevent unnecessary conflicts with the Federal Assembly. The positions of the President's and Prime Minister's representatives in the State Duma and the Council of Federation have been created in the 1990s. These officials not only monitor the situation in both houses and take an active part in committee hearings and plenary sessions. They also draft legislation, consult deputies, present president-sponsored legislation, invite experts, make a legal assessment of bills pending in Parliament, introduce presidential nominees and deliver presidential messages to Parliament. These officials have got secretarial support from the special units of the Presidential Administration and Cabinet of Ministers.[35]

It seems, however, that the Federal Assembly could play a more significant role in Russia's Arctic policy-making both through its own parliamentary diplomacy and providing scrutiny and accountability of the executive which is one of the main functions of the legislature in a democratic society.

[30]Ibid.
[31]State Duma. *Fraktsii*.
[32]United Russia. Chleny Soveta Federatsii RF.
[33]State Duma. *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Dumy*.
[34]Council of the Federation. *Komitet po Federativnomu Ustroistvu*.
[35]Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behaviour*, 183–184.

As far as the sub-national level of government actors is concerned it is represented by the ***members of the Russian Federation (regions) and municipalities***. Prior to the early 1990s (when the Soviet model of federalism was a camouflage for unitarianism) the Russian regions and cities almost had no say in policy-making. However, with the rebirth of the Russian federative system many sub-national units became rather active both in domestic and foreign policies, including the Arctic affairs. Interestingly, they saw, for example, the development of their international contacts (or paradiplomacy) as an important resource both for solving their internal problems and putting pressure on the federal centre (e.g. to negotiate more concessions for their loyalty to Moscow).

The AZRF regions and municipalities tend to coalescence across borders in order to solve concrete and shared problems and this is done for reasons of their own and by employing the competence that they themselves harbour. They aim at adding to their strength by transgressing various borders – be they conceptual, identity-related or spatial – and do so by joining forces in the context of various regional endeavours, or for that matter, through lobbying in various broader contexts.

As far as other motives of paradiplomacy are concerned, some Russian sub-national units have been interested in partaking in the federal decision-making in the sense of stating their view prior to a final decision being reached or the international treaty signed. For example, the Murmansk region wanted to be involved in preparing international agreements where its status has been affected (visa regime, delimitation of maritime spaces, establishment of special economic zones and customs regimes, etc.).

Furthermore, and importantly, the underlying logic has in many cases turned EU-related (i.e. transnational) rather than remained state-oriented (bi-national). The proximity to the EU was a decisive factor that shaped paradiplomacies of some Russian northern sub-national units. With some of the financial means available for the Euroregions, twinning and other forms of cooperation coming from the EU and related funds, the profile of the sub-national actors involved has become quite Europe-oriented. Previously closed and barred spaces of the Russian Arctic – with regions/cities at the edge of statist space being unavoidably seen as peripheral – have been opening up as these border entities aim at benefiting from cross-border networking.

Two main forms of the sub-national units' international activities–direct (developing external relations of their own) and indirect (influencing federal foreign policies) can be distinguished.[36]

Direct strategies/methods include: creating a legislative basis for paradiplomacy; using the 'treaty-making power' (concluding agreements with the same-status international partners; establishing representative offices in foreign countries; accommodating foreign consular offices and trade missions; attracting foreign investment, promoting joint projects; creating a region's positive image abroad; co-operation with international organisations; increasing familiarity between partners; city-twinning and establishing Euroregions.

Indirect methods boil down to influencing the federal legislation via its own normative acts; capitalising on national diplomacy (getting benefits from international agreement concluded by Moscow); conflict prevention and resolution (helping Moscow to avoid or solve problems with neighbouring countries through intensive international

[36]Joenniemi and Sergunin, "Paradiplomacy as a Capacity-Building Strategy"; Joenniemi and Sergunin, "Russian Subnational Actors."

cooperation; exploiting the national parliament (lobbying their interests at the federal level); capitalising upon the federal infrastructure in the regions (MFA, Customs Service, MT, Ministry of Industry & Trade, Federal Border Service, etc.); exploiting international organisations (the Arctic Council, Barents Regional Council, Nordic institutions, UN and its specialised bodies, etc.).

Furthermore, in the real life sub-national units usually combine both direct and indirect methods because they are of complimentary rather than mutually exclusive nature.

To sum up, paradiplomatic activities of Russia's Arctic sub-national units, the devolution of power that has taken place in Russia has boosted the conduct of foreign relations for the part of the sub-national units. It has, in fact, facilitated their turn into some quite real international actors. It is also obvious that paradiplomacy has served as an instrument for problem-solving with respect to Russia's relations with neighbouring countries and has, in this regard, an important integrative function. The reaching towards the international by numerous sub-national actors has actually counteracted trends pointing to Russia's marginalisation or international isolation. Moreover, paradiplomacy has been conducive to democratisation and it will undoubtedly continue to play an important transformative role in Russia's future. Rather than contributing to disintegration, as has been sometimes feared, it appears to have served as a catalyst for the pursuance of successful reforms and partaking in international integration.

Non-governmental level

This level of policy-making is usually represented in the democratic society by political parties, interest groups and NGOs. However, civil society in Russia is still in embryonic form and for this reason its impact on Arctic policy-making is either relatively insignificant or sporadic/chaotic. The peculiarity of Arctic politics is that Russia's political parties, NGOs and business community keep a rather low profile in High North politics. Some sectors of the energy, fishery and transport industries are the rare exceptions of the rule being occasionally involved in power struggle around the Arctic problematique.

The Russian energy lobby, the most powerful player among the various interest groups, is rather passive in Arctic policy-making at least for two reasons: First, since the exploration and development of the AZRF's hydrocarbon resources (especially the offshore ones) is often a matter of distant future, the Russian oil and gas business is still unable to think in such strategic categories being focused on more pressing – short- and mid-term – needs. Second, in terms of long-term strategic planning and relations with its Arctic neighbours the Russian energy lobby trusts the Kremlin being sure that the government will protect its interests in dividing the Arctic 'hydrocarbon pie'. It should be noted that most of oil and gas companies operating in the AZRF (*Rosneft, Transneft, Gazprom, Gazprom Neft*) are state-owned corporations and they do not need to actively lobby their interests in the governmental bodies because they are in fact an integral part of the state mechanism. The Russian government and energy companies are successfully developing some public-private partnerships, such as the *Novatek*'s Yamal LNG plant, *Gazprom Neft*'s Prirazlomnaya offshore oil field, Rosatom's floating nuclear power plant, etc.

The transport lobby regularly puts pressure on the Russian government to encourage it to develop the NSR infrastructure and build a new fleet of commercial ships

compatible with the Polar Code requirements as well as new nuclear and diesel-electric icebreakers to replace the old ones. As a result of this pressure Moscow has started the production of new nuclear super-icebreakers of the *Leader*-class (a series of three ships) and ice-class LNG super-tankers (a series of 15 vessels).

The fishery lobby was quite active in the case of negotiating and ratifying the 2010 Norwegian-Russian treaty on the delimitation of the Barents Sea. While the energy lobby tacitly supported the above agreement because it provided the Russian side with the maritime area potentially rich in oil and gas, the fishing organisations opposed the treaty because they believed that it deprived them from the parts of the Barents Sea abundant in bio-resources. The Russian Parliament, however, disregarded the fishery lobby's protest campaign by ratifying the Norwegian-Russian deal. The legislators pointed out that, in accordance with the 1975 Norwegian-Soviet agreement, Norwegian and Russian fishing vessels have reciprocal access to each others' zones.[37] Moreover their respective shares of the valuable stocks have been fixed equally long and have not been affected in any way by the delimitation treaty.[38]

The environmentalists are the most influential and politically active segment of the Russian civil society. The environmental movement has rapidly spread in post-Soviet Russia and for a while became rather influential in Arctic politics. Indeed, a great number of post-perestroika leaders started their political careers as environmentalists. For example, in the early 1990s the Russian 'greens' succeeded in promoting Academician Alexei Yablokov to the post of State Counsellor of the Russian Federation on Ecology and Health Care, thus becoming their major voice in the government.[39]

The environmentalist NGOs were indispensable in identifying major ecological problems of the Russian North as well as in encouraging Russian local, regional and federal governments to cooperate with neighbouring states and international organisations – UN Environment Program, AC, BEAC, and Nordic institutions. Particularly, the Russian 'greens' played a visible role in designing a Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Program in the Russian Federation (MNEPR) which was signed in 2003 by several OECD countries.[40] MNEPR aimed to facilitate cooperation and assistance to Russia in the field of spent nuclear fuel safety and radioactive waste management. Projects covered by MNEPR included securing and cleaning up spent nuclear fuel storage sites and dismantling old decommissioned nuclear submarines. The ecologists also were among those who helped to convince Moscow to participate in the Northern Dimension's Environmental Partnership which was launched in 2001 and remains to date one of the most efficient EU-Russian cooperative programmes.[41]

RAIPON (Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation), the only national-wide NGO dealing with the aboriginal affairs, was established during the Gorbachev's perestroika in 1990.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, RAIPON actively engaged in legal advocacy and became one of the driving forces behind the development of the legislative indigenous rights framework consisting of the three bills 'On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous

[37] *Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Pravitel'stvom Korolevstva Norvegii.*
[38] *Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation.*
[39] Gizewski, "Military Activity and Environmental Security."
[40] *Framework Agreement on Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Program.*
[41] *Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership.*

Peoples', 'On Territories of Traditional Nature Use' and 'On General Principles of the Organisation of Communities', which were adopted between 1999 and 2001. In 1997 RAIPON was among the initiators of a parliamentary hearing on ratification of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989) by the Russia Federation. In 2003, jointly with the Federation Council, RAIPON conducted an international roundtable meeting 'Participation of indigenous peoples in the political life of the countries of the Circumpolar Rim'.

RAIPON worked actively with the State Duma, the Federation Council and the Federal Government to strengthen legislation concerning the rights of indigenous peoples.

However, the growing criticism of the federal government's policies on the indigenous peoples on the part of RAIPON coupled with the foreign technical and financial support of this organisation (which was taken suspiciously by the Kremlin) have led to the conflict between the Russian authorities and RAIPON in 2010–2013. In 2012, the Russian Ministry of Justice even suspended RAIPON's license for half year. The Kremlin forced this umbrella organisation to change its bylaws in line with the federal legislation and completely replace the old, oppositional, leadership with the loyal one.[42]

The renewed RAIPON has continued its cooperation with the government although in a less confrontational and more loyalist manner. For example, by the end of 2016, RAIPON developed a bill on the register of indigenous small-numbered peoples. This information resource includes all Russian citizens belonging to the indigenous small-numbered peoples and aims at providing these peoples with rights guaranteed by the Russian Constitution. The register should be maintained by the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs based on data provided by the Federal Tax Service.[43] Currently, the bill is being discussed in the Russian Parliament.

Conclusions

Several conclusions emerge from the above analysis:

As Russia's both strategic documents and practical policies demonstrate Moscow has extremely important national interests in the region. These interests include the access to and exploitation of the AZRF natural resources (mineral and biological ones). Russia tries to modernise and further develop the AZRF's industrial base which makes a significant and valuable contribution to the country's economy. Moscow is also interested in opening up of the NSR for international commercial traffic and developing circumpolar air routes. Moscow is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the AZRF. Russia still has considerable military-strategic interests in the region and tries to modernise its armed forced located there. Similar to other coastal states Moscow sees its military presence in the region as an efficient instrument to demonstrate its sovereignty over and protect its national interests in the High North.

Given an outstanding importance of the Arctic for Russia's national interests, it is understandable why so many actors – ranging from federal governmental agencies and regional/municipal authorities to powerful interest groups and NGOs – are intervening

[42]Rohr, *Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation*, 61.
[43]Zaikov et al., "Legal and Political Framework," 135.

in making Moscow's strategies in the High North. Harmonising various interests and harnessing different – sometime controversial – political impulses and activities became a very difficult and – at the same time – very important task for Russia.

The Russian decision-making system on the Arctic has evolved rapidly over the last quarter of century. One can make the case for both positive and negative/problematic changes. Looking at the bright side of this dynamic process the following promising trends can be identified: First of all, the chaos of the early 1990s has been overcome and a more-or-less stable decision-making machinery on Arctic policy has been created within the executive branch of the government. On the other hand, even Putin was unable to stop periodic bureaucratic clashes between different executive agencies competing for control over shaping and implementing Russia's Arctic policies.

The elements of parliamentary control over the decision-making process have been created. The Russian legislature (although it is much weaker than its U.S. or European counterparts) has some important functions, such as approval of the Arctic projects' budget, oversight of the executive branch and parliamentary diplomacy. An executive-legislative liaison/consultative mechanism has been established and it facilitated the dialogue between the Kremlin and the legislature on Arctic policies.

The role of the Russian regional and local governments became more salient in Arctic policy-making. The federal centre had to take into account regional/local interests and preferences. Moscow has also had to allow some sort of horizontal/networking type of relations (paradiplomacies) of regional and local governments with corresponding equals in foreign countries. Cross- and trans-border cooperation brought about a number of success stories in the case of several Russian northern regions.

Non-governmental actors have got some say in Arctic policy-making. The Russian business community (especially the energy, fishery and transport sectors) has gained some influence in Arctic policy-making. Relatively new political actors, such as human rights, indigenous peoples' and environmental NGOs became an integral part of the decision-making process. In contrast with the Soviet period when policy-making was a purely elite's prerogative, the current Russian political leadership has to take into account various interests of different segments of an emerging Russian civil society.

At the same time, numerous problems in organising and practical functioning of the Russian Arctic policy decision-making mechanism can be found: First, the decision-making system of the government is still far from an ideal. There is still a lack of a proper division of labour between different executive agencies. These agencies may differ by their conceptual approaches to Russia's Arctic strategies. There is sometimes an unhealthy competition between them for influence, funds, resources, personnel and access to information.

Russia's Parliament has too few powers to take an active part in the shaping of Moscow's Arctic policies. It is also unable to provide proper public scrutiny and accountability. This makes the Kremlin and the executive branch in general too independent in its Arctic policies.

The role of Russian regional and local governments in Arctic policy-making is still ambivalent. The federal centre is too jealous of its prerogatives. For example, a number of promising international region-in-the building projects (Northern Dimension, Euroregions) have found themselves in a bind because of the lack of federal support. It is a long way to go to revive these projects and put them in line with international standards (albeit the potential and resources are still there).

Although civil society and its institutions have come into the picture and now have some say in policy-making it should be noted that a lot has to be done to transform non-governmental actors into a full-fledged policy players. There is still discrepancy between the interests of Russian political and business elites and the civil society that often wants a different Arctic strategy from the government. In practice, the federal bureaucracy's policies and approaches often confront the projects of civil society groups. Instead of using the resources of these actors in a creative way, Moscow tries to control them. In so doing, the state undermines their initiative, making them passive, both domestically and internationally. In sum, a more reliable and harmonious system of the civil society-government relationship is needed.

It should be noted that these shortcomings and problems are rather typical for a transitional political system. The positive trends in Russia's Arctic discourse, doctrinal framework and policy-making should be taken seriously and supported by Moscow's international partners, as reciprocation will be decisive in determining both the future of the Arctic and Russia's prospects in the region.

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ORCID

Alexander Sergunin http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4683-0611
Valery Konyshev http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7257-6848

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