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The "Arctic Vector" of Spanish Foreign Policy

A B Almazova-Ilyina¹, M O Gabrielian², S V Kulik¹, K Yu Eidemiller²

¹Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, St. Petersburg, Russia

²Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russia

gamax2011@gmail.com

Abstract. In this article, the author identifies key features of the strategy of Spain in the Arctic region. It focuses on the geographical features of the Spanish Arctic policy and draws parallels in some aspects with other states with similar status (France, Italy, Poland). The author defines the research, economic and political interests of the Spanish state in the Arctic, and also defines the main achievements and results. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of the scientific presence of Spain in the polar region, which allowed the kingdom to gain access to various international associations and institutions related to the Arctic. The main ideas of this study are the desire to show the Spanish Arctic policy as a successful version of the implementation of soft power, conducted through the concept of scientific diplomacy. The second important aspect is the relationship of the Arctic research process with the European integration process and Madrid's desire to combine the efforts of the European Union in the development and implementation of the Arctic strategy. Such actions find understanding among countries such as France, Italy and Poland.

1. Introduction

The Arctic has traditionally been a conflict of interest involving world powers. The process of climate change leads to easier access to the polar region, which causes greater interest among non-Arctic states. They seek to be involved in local processes to achieve common interests. Among such states there are a lot of member countries of the European Union.

Based on the geographical factor, the country is far from the process of developing the Arctic. However, Madrid has a long history of presence in the region. In the era of the great geographical discoveries, Spain, like England, was looking for alternative routes to Asia, bypassing both Americas. At the end of the 16th century, a Spanish captain of Greek descent, Juan de Fuca, tried to discover the Arctic Strait into the Atlantic across the Pacific coast of America (the Juan de Fuca Strait was named after him). Another navigator, Bartolome de Fonte, claimed that he was able to cross the Arctic passage through the Hudson's Bay in 1640.

One of the most successful was the expeditions of Juan Francisco de la Bodega and Quadra, which took place in 1775 and 1779, which allowed us to draw up more accurate maps of the region. You can also highlight the voyages of Francisco de Elise and Riveng, which during the expeditions of the early 1790s. discovered the strait of Georgia. Competition with Great Britain continued. For example, James Cook used the diary of Antonio Murella (one of the participants in the Bodega and Quadra expedition of 1779) during his own voyages. Due to the loss of most of the colonial possessions at the beginning of the 19th century, Spain for a long time lost interest in the Arctic.



Today, Spain has its own new interests in the region. First of all, economic in nature, which can be solved by intensifying research and development of the region. Over the past few years, Madrid has significantly increased its presence in the Arctic and has achieved a number of successes. The Kingdom is actively developing its own strategy in the Antarctic, possessing experience, knowledge and technology for the Arctic direction.

Among the main objectives of the presence of Spain in the Arctic, three can be distinguished: research, economic and political. Each of them has a strong relationship and logically flow from each other. This allows us to consider the issue comprehensively.

2. Spain's research interests in the Arctic

The main documents of the Spanish government [1] place strong emphasis on research interests in the region. Spain notes the great importance of the global warming process in the Arctic and the possible negative consequences. Moreover, this trend is of concern to international organizations seeking to track and evaluate the degree of threat [2]. Therefore, Madrid annually sends its own expeditions to the Arctic to study climate trends. However, in the interpretation of the Spanish government there is a certain duality. The negative effect of the global warming process is recognized. The main emphasis is on threats to the violation of the local ecosystem, the state of flora and fauna, as well as the situation of indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Spanish scientists fear the consequences of rising sea levels [3]. This is largely Spain motivates its own research in the region. Despite this, the fact of a "window of opportunity" caused by warming in the Arctic is recognized. The Spanish government expects to simplify research operations, including in the field of exploration and extraction of resources.

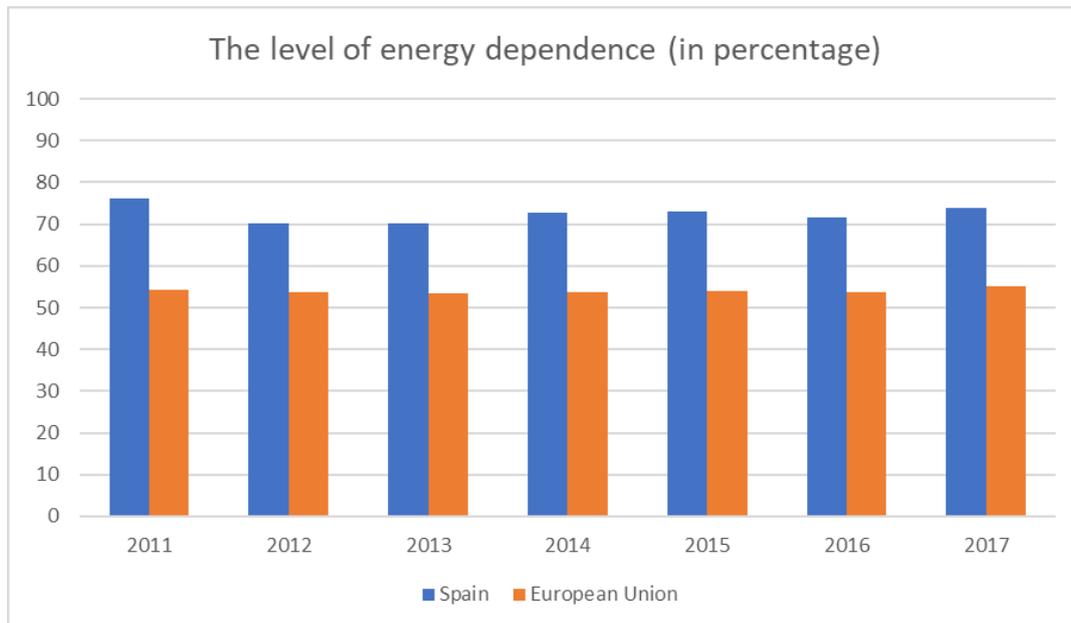
Spain regularly sends its own scientific expeditions to the polar region and conducts geological, biological, oceanographic and atmospheric studies. The results of these expeditions are considered to be quite high quality, and therefore Spanish studies are in demand. Periodically, various experts appeal to them. A large number of scientific works on the Arctic, as published in Spanish, and translated into it.

The Spanish authorities are aware of the advantage and seek to maximize the benefits. It is declared that successful research in the Arctic contributes to the growth of Spain's authority in the international scientific community and on the world stage. This allows us to reckon with the opinion of Spain on the issues of the Arctic and gives it access to representation in regional institutions and the implementation of economic ambitions. Therefore, in the Spanish Arctic strategy, the government places great emphasis on the scientific direction.

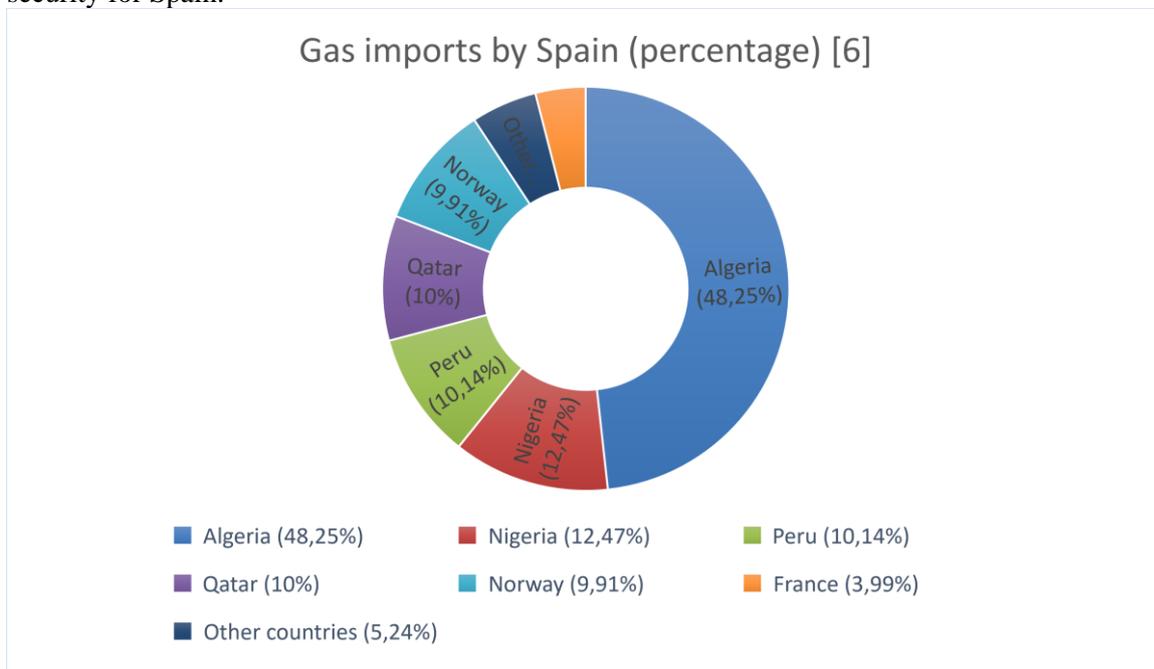
This strategy largely fits into the concept of "soft power". Thanks to humanitarian action, Spain is engaged in "attracting its own sympathies". The government forms a favorable image of presence in a distant region and gradually realizes its own economic interests through increasing authority. This approach can also be called "scientific diplomacy," when, thanks to scientific cooperation and cooperation, Spain is building up contacts and ties with regional Arctic actors.

2.1. Economic aspect

Scientific research in the Arctic is largely motivated by the needs of the Spanish economy. The main interests of Spain in the polar region include energy, fisheries and tourism. Madrid is forced to import most of its energy resources. In the future, the "energy issue" the issue can only escalate, in view of the desire of the Government of P. Sanchez to close most of the nuclear power plants in Spain. The country is one of the largest importers of energy resources among the EU member states. Over the years, self-sufficiency has fluctuated around 20-29%, not exceeding 30% [4], which is a serious brake on the development of the economy. For comparison, in 2017, the level of energy dependence of Spain amounted to 73.9%, when the European Union as a whole was only 55.1% [4].



Part of the imported energy is produced directly by Spanish transnational corporations (TNCs), for example Repsol [5]. This corporation signed a contract for 15 years with the Russian company NOVATEK on gas supplies from the Arctic zone under the Yamal-LNG project (the French company Total is actively involved in the project), and is also considered as one of the possible participants in the development and extraction of energy resources in the Arctic. Participation can provide greater energy security for Spain.



The fishing and tourism issues differ significantly from energy issues - these areas are major drivers of the kingdom's economy. Madrid is ahead of many competitors in these industries. The country's fishing fleet is the largest in the EU. Spain fears the threat of fish shortages in the EU, and therefore insists on the development of fishing in the Arctic zone. Spain is one of the largest tourist powers in the world. The desire to develop tourism in the Arctic is clearly related to the characteristics of the Spanish economy.

Spain has a dual position on the issue of new transport routes through the Arctic. The prospects for the development of the Northern Sea Route, which runs along the coast of Russia, are regarded ambiguously. The main route from Europe to Asia runs through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. The alternative sea route poses a certain threat to the Spanish economy, which causes moderate concern. The process of global warming will probably make the Northwest Route through Canada [7] more accessible, which hypothetically could become a new route from Europe to the US Pacific coast. Such a path can strengthen the country's position as a transit point in transatlantic trade. The question of opening new sea lanes through the Arctic is mixed in Spain.

2.2. Political aspect

Economic interests in the Arctic region lead to increased political action from Spain. Since the kingdom does not have its own territories in the Arctic, it is interested in the region's openness to all the states of the world and equality in the development and exploration of the polar spaces. Spain seeks to become equal to the Antarctic in the Arctic region when there is no sovereignty of a single state over a specific territory. This is manifested in proposals for the creation of separate protected and regulated fishing zones. Madrid constantly refers to international agreements, including those related to climate and environmental issues, for regulating scientific and economic activities. Spain also counts on the assistance of the European Union and the development of a unified Arctic strategy, which can become a weighty argument in disputes with the Arctic powers. It is also worth mentioning that one of the most important European migration routes passes through Spain to the Northern European States [8]. Even indirectly, this fact alone allows Spain to establish inter-state relations with the Northern European countries "tete-a-tete", outside the EU's program framework, without its sanctions and aegis.

3. Achievements and Results

Spain initially began to implement its Arctic policy in "environmental" and "humanitarian" vectors. The Kingdom was one of the signatories of the agreement on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), to preserve the Arctic ecosystem in its original form. Several details are interesting - the convention entered into force in 1998. At the same time, the first meeting of the OSPAR commission ministers took place in the Portuguese city of Sintra (which can be interpreted as the relative success of the Iberian states), and in parallel, the first Spanish state body issuing issues of the Arctic - the Spanish Polar Committee. The objectives of the committee are scientific. Since 2009, this structure has been a member of the International Arctic Scientific Committee. His competence includes the coordination of scientific activities in the region and the development of recommendations for the Arctic Council.

A major success of the Arctic policy is the entry of Spain into the Arctic Council as an observer in 2006. The Spanish delegation has the right to consult on the adoption by member countries of the Council of declarative decisions. The admission of Spain to the Council indicates the relevance of its own Arctic strategy. Already in 2007, Spain conducted the first Arctic oceanographic expedition.

One of the largest scientific projects in the Arctic with Spanish participation can be called the Arctic Tipping Points (ATP) project [9], which is conducting a study of local marine ecology. The project presents a number of Spanish oceanographic scientists and involves Spanish scientific and government structures. In the context of Arctic research [10], the main emphasis is on global warming [11] and CO₂ emissions. Spanish scientists are studying the influence of these processes on the example of plankton [12] and its viability in a new emerging ecosystem.

Separately, it is worth noting the Svalbard archipelago. The archipelago is the main base of Spanish researchers and scientific expeditions. In addition to the ATP program, SIOS (Svalbard Integrated Earth Observing Serving) is being implemented in Svalbard, an Earth observation program in which the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation is involved [13]. One of its main tasks also includes the environmental aspect - work is being done to study global environmental changes. In addition to Spain, another Mediterranean EU country is involved in the project - Italy, whose scientific structures are involved in all departments of the program [13] (Italian and Spanish Arctic strategies are quite similar).

The archipelago is one of the main points in the largest Arctic expedition for Spain, which took place in 2019. This study was conducted as part of the MOSAIC mission, consisting of 600 scientists from 19 countries [14]. Moreover, not only representatives of the Spanish, but also Catalan scientific structures [15] participated in it. This expedition also dealt with global warming. The main project leader is Germany [16], which owns three expedition ships.

In addition to scientific research, Spain has a political and economic interest in the archipelago. In 1925, Spain signed the Svalbard treatise of 1920. Norway secured sovereignty over the archipelago, but the right was presented to the signatory countries of the exploitation of water and resources. The agreement opens up the possibility of economic activity for Spain. The area of Svalbard is the main activity of the Spanish cod fleet [17] (formerly Newfoundland). Research is underway to find black halibut. The region of economic activity is assigned to the EU, by special agreement with Norway (which often causes disputes between the parties) and fishing is regulated by quotas established by Brussels. The issue of their distribution often causes disputes between the parties Spain and Norway. Moreover, the Spanish position on the development of the archipelago is very similar to the Russian vision. Both states appeal to the 1920 treaty and consider Svalbard as a platform for an international, and not exclusively, Norwegian zone of economic activity. We see the coincidence of the interests of Spain in the Arctic and their practical implementation - the desire to develop the fishing sector and cooperation with the EU as a single actor promoting the interests of non-Arctic countries in the region. However, there are isolated cases when Spain moves away from the common EU position, as is the case in the search for "common ground" with Russia [18].

Spain is not the only country striving to make the EU a single actor in the Arctic. Poland advocates joining the Arctic Council as a permanent observer. In the status of the chairman of the Union, in 2011 Warsaw raised the issue of the EU strategy in the Arctic [5]. Italy also seeks to involve the Union in regional processes and invites experts from the association to build its own national strategy [19]. France supports EU unity on Arctic issues and the development of a common Arctic policy. Paris considers membership in the Fisheries Commission for the North-East Atlantic (NEAFC) [20] to be positive and promotes the idea of EU membership in the Arctic Council. There is also an energy issue - France considers it necessary to increase energy security from Norway and Russia [21] and to allow EU companies to explore and extract energy resources. The strengthening of the Union's position in the Arctic is being promoted by non-Arctic states, which speaks of a request for a unified strategy that will allow non-regional players to advance national interests. The EU itself has its own policy in relation to the Arctic, primarily in the research field. Over the past 10 years, the association has allocated about 200 million euros for research in the region.

Spain's energy and tourism interests in the Arctic are currently poorly realized. Companies currently do not participate in the exploration and production of energy resources. Repsol only imports Arctic gas under the above agreement with NOVATEK. Madrid is inferior to countries such as France, Poland and the Netherlands, whose energy policy in the Arctic is more intense. However, Spain does not reject claims on the Spitsbergen shelf zone and claims the right to economic activity, sometimes criticizing the actions of the Norwegian authorities. At the moment, tourism is also only hypothetical in nature. Spain loses to one of the world industry leaders - France, whose companies establish routes to the region. The kingdom now consists of the Association for Sustainable Tourism of Arctic Tourism (SATA) and the Sustainable Model for the Development of Arctic Tourism (SMART) [5]. Reliance on international standards in tourism coincides with similar actions by Arctic actors in the region. In the case of Russia, sustainable development as a factor in the development of tourism has great potential in the Western Arctic [22], where it is considered as one of the highest priority areas. The development of the tourism sector was declared in the Russian Arctic-2035 program. The creation of tourist areas that meet international standards is expected in remote regions, which may "spur" the development of poorly developed territories. For example, a tourism project in the Bulunsky district of Yakutia [23] is considered as the prospect of successfully combining the principles of environmental conservation and competent development, which corresponds to the international (including Spanish) agenda.

4. Results and forecasts

Summing up, it can be noted that Spain, despite its non-Arctic status, has its own strategy in the polar region and is actively implementing it. Basically, it is of a research nature. Actions are motivated by considerations of science, and also have a humanitarian aspect. This is manifested in an appeal to the problem of global warming and the fate of the Arctic ecosystem. The authorities of Spain talk about the problems caused by human activities, and argue about their planetary nature. This is where the globalist rhetoric and assessment of actions not from the standpoint of national states, but from the standpoint of the whole world, a single whole, facing global threats to humanity are manifested in many respects. Based on this, two conclusions can be made:

- 1) The Arctic policy of Spain is in many ways part of the "soft power" carried out through "scientific diplomacy". The Spanish authorities, through scientific research and membership in international humanitarian organizations, in many respects strive to increase their own authority and sympathy, both in the scientific community and in the international arena. The admission to the Arctic Council as an observer and participation in a number of scientific projects indicates the success of the Spanish "scientific diplomacy" and the relevance of the strategy. Orientation to global problems, established in many respects by the UN, speaks of the desire of Spanish science to follow the main trends and give its own activity a friendly and valuable character for all mankind.
- 2) Spain implements its own Arctic strategy as a supporter of European integration. It is difficult for Spain to promote its own agenda due to the geographical factor. The kingdom is forced to cooperate with other non-Arctic countries with similar interests in the polar region. The European Union is the most favorable platform, where the Arctic position of Spain largely coincides with that of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, etc. Therefore, the actions of Madrid on the Arctic issue do not contradict the actions of the association as a whole and seeks to integrate as much as possible into pan-European processes. Most scientific expeditions and programs take place within the framework of EU projects. This is also manifested in disputes with Norway, when Spain supports the position of the whole association.

It must be understood that the Spanish strategy has been very successful given the objective conditions in which Madrid is located. The intensity of the scientific activity of Spain in the Arctic region has a positive trend - with each year, expeditions become more widespread. It should be assumed that in the future the dynamics will remain the same or at least not decline.

Under existing conditions, the main pillar in the Arctic strategy will remain "scientific diplomacy" as an expression of "soft power". It is necessary to take into account the features of the current situation. The current center-left government of P. Sanchez, established after a long political crisis, is focused on improving the environmental situation and supports international initiatives in this area. We should also expect deeper cooperation with other EU member states on Arctic issues.

Given economic problems and the government's desire to close nuclear power plants, Spain faces an increase in energy dependence. It can be expected that in the future, the authorities, in addition to scientific goals of a humanitarian nature, will begin to more actively realize their economic potential and opportunities. Spain has the technological capacities necessary for this, and regular expeditions create a scientific infrastructure to boost economic activity. In promoting economic interests, one can expect an appeal to the interests of the entire EU and the desire to solidify with other European non-Arctic states.

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