

Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole

By Pavel Baev

October 2007



The JAMESTOWN
FOUNDATION

A stylized map of the Arctic region, showing the outlines of the continents and islands. The map is positioned below the text of The Jamestown Foundation.

October 2007

Russia's Race for the Arctic and the New Geopolitics of the North Pole

Pavel Baev



Occasional Paper

The Jamestown Foundation's Mission

The mission of The Jamestown Foundation is to inform and educate policymakers and the broader policy community about events and trends in those societies that are strategically or tactically important to the United States and that frequently restrict access to such information. Utilizing indigenous and primary sources, Jamestown's material is delivered without political bias, filter or agenda. It is often the only source of information that should be, but is not always, available through official or intelligence channels, especially in regard to Eurasia and terrorism.

Occasional Papers are essays and reports that The Jamestown Foundation believes to be valuable to the policy community. These papers may be created by analysts and scholars associated with The Jamestown Foundation or as the result of a conference or event sponsored or associated with The Jamestown Foundation. Occasional Papers reflect the views of their authors, not those of The Jamestown Foundation.



1111 16th St. NW, Suite 320
Washington, DC 20036
tel: (202) 483-8888 • fax: (202) 483-8337
• www.jamestown.org •

Executive Summary

The symbolic planting of the Russian flag on the seabed close to the geographic North Pole on August 2, 2007, has received a disproportionate amount of media coverage and triggered massive jubilation domestically as well as international criticism. Officially, Moscow has maintained that it acted in full compliance with the Law of the Sea Convention. The goal of the on-going series of expeditions is to collect scientific evidence for resubmitting to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) its request to confirm that some 460,000 mi² of underwater terrain between the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges are the continuation of the Siberian shelf and thus could be added to Russia's exclusive economic zone. In fact, however, this particular expedition had minimal scientific content but played a prominent role in adding an Arctic dimension to Russia's assertive foreign policy.

It is widely believed that the main driving force behind Russia's claim is energy, since research indicates that the Arctic shelf could contain significant reserves of hydrocarbons. *Gazprom*, however, is in no rush to develop even the proven fields in the Barents Sea and the government is not planning any major breakthrough in off-shore production. It is within the realm of possibility that in some 30 years the ice cap could become much thinner but the demand on oil and gas would remain so high as to justify their production at enormous costs in the High North. It is obvious, though, that the current rush to the Northern frontier is driven by other factors, domestic as well as geopolitical, which justify the application of such risky instruments as combat patrolling by the Long-Range Aviation. The four Arctic states—Denmark, Norway, Canada and the United States—supported by the UK and other allies, might find it useful to defy Russia's unilateralism not only by blocking its request in the CLCS but also by pursuing a Kennan-style course based on a combination of containment and cooperation. A multilateral deal on dividing the Arctic into five national sectors might appear to be a natural solution, but in fact the Antarctic model is more promising, particularly since the key problem is not about sharing profits from developing abundant resources but about joining efforts in preserving the common endowment.

Introduction

The annals of Arctic exploration were expanded on August 2, 2007, by a noteworthy if slightly eccentric entry: the Russian expedition consisting of the nuclear icebreaker *Rossiya* and research ship *Akademik Fedorov* reached the North Pole where two deep-water submersibles, *Mir-1* and *Mir-2*, were launched and some nine hours later safely retrieved after reaching the seabed at about 4300m. The symbolic planting of the Russian flag made from corrosion-resistant titanium at the highest latitude point has received a disproportionate amount of media coverage and triggered massive jubilation domestically as well as international criticism and even counter-measures. In Soviet times, every geographical map showed the USSR's borders going along straight longitudinal lines of 32°E from the Kola Peninsula and 180°E from the Bering Strait towards the Pole, so that a huge sector covering approximately one third of the Arctic Ocean was designated as territorial waters. The new Russian claim is only slightly less ambitious as it seeks to expand its 230-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) by about 460,000 mi² beyond the Chukotka Sea and the East Siberian Sea, advancing the argument that the underwater ridges of Mendeleev and Lomonosov constitute continuations of its continental shelf. In itself this claim is nothing remarkable, however, the spectacular manner in which it was asserted, described as an "audacious foray" and a "flag-planting caper," constitutes a cause for concern in the West, particularly when placed in the context of Russia's increasingly reckless behavior and chesty rhetoric, exemplified by Putin's Munich speech in February 2007 [1]. This paper examines the immediate fallout and the wider implications of the Russian advance towards the Arctic, starting with the legal issues and scientific background, moving then to the crucial aspects of energy and security policies, touching upon matters of national identity, and evaluating the prospects of the unfolding geopolitical competition in the Arctic Ocean.

Could Science Provide a Solid Legal Foundation for the Claim?

There have been more than a few triumphant statements about the newly-confirmed Russian ownership of the Arctic seabed, including the half-joke by Artur Chilingarov, veteran explorer and the leader of the expedition, who stated that "we have exercised the maritime right of the first night" [2]. Such statements were met with harsh rebuttals from Western officials, who characterized the Russian underwater enterprise as a "show" and reminded that 15th century tactics are no longer valid: "You can't go around the world and just plant flags and say 'We are claiming this territory'" (Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay), or clarified that "whether they went and spray-painted a flag of Russia on those particular ridges is going to make one iota of difference" (U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey) [3]. However, both Russian President Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov were in fact quite cautious in their

assessments of the situation, with the former emphasizing the new scientific evidence that would strengthen the Russian application and the latter clarifying that raising flags is a matter of tradition in exploration and pointing to the planting of the U.S. flag on the moon [4].

Russia is indeed acting in perfect accord with the Law of the Sea Convention (1982), which it ratified in February 1997, with the significant reservation that it would not accept the procedures leading to the compulsory decisions regarding the disputes related to Articles 15, 73 and 83 that concerned delimitation of maritime borders and EEZs [5]. It is, however, Article 76 on *Definition of the Continental Shelf* that is in the center of the current dispute, and while this definition is extraordinary vague, one point is established perfectly clear in §8:

Information on the limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured shall be submitted by the coastal State to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set up under Annex II on the basis of equitable geographical representation. The Commission shall make recommendations to coastal States on matters related to the establishment of the outer limits of their continental shelf. The limits of the shelf established by a coastal State on the basis of these recommendations shall be final and binding.

Russia was the first state to invoke this rule in late 2001 when it submitted to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) the request to confirm that some 460,000 mi² of “no-mans” underwater terrain were the continuation of the Siberian shelf. The request was put on hold in mid-2002 due to insufficient scientific evidence, and it could be pointed out that the CLCS has not produced a single affirmative recommendation on the eight submissions it received since its establishment [6]. Moscow was not discouraged by this setback and redoubled its efforts at collecting data on the geological structures and mapping the Arctic seabed. Of particular importance in this respect was the expedition by the Institute of World Ocean Geology in May-June 2007 when the *Rossiya* nuclear icebreaker conducted in-depth research on the Lomonosov ridge, including drilling, acoustic and seismic tests, which received little if any media coverage [7].

Chilingarov’s expedition had in fact a modicum of scientific content, if that: the submersibles reached the seabed in the middle of the Amundsen Basin that is squeezed between the Lomonosov and Gakkel ridges, and the few samples of sand and dirt that it collected could not constitute any geological evidence [8]. What the expedition did achieve was unprecedented international attention to Russia’s Arctic research, and that could constitute an important factor in resolving the dispute. Moscow expects that its demonstrated commitment to conducting a large-scale research program would convince the concerned parties of the feasibility of its claim, much the same way as direct presidential support was conducive to the success of Sochi’s 2014 Olympic bid. The CLCS, however, is in a quite different position than the International Olympic Committee as it does not need to make a choice and finalize its decision on the revised

and updated request that Russia plans to submit in 2009. In fact, the flamboyant style of state-sponsored privateer Chilingarov, who was compared with Francis Drake claiming California for the British crown, is rather compromising for the objectivity of real research, which is now seen as mere selecting if not cooking of evidence in support of a political goal [9].

Is Energy Really the Driving Force?

There is hardly a comment on Russia's exploration of and claim for the Arctic seabed that does not mention the desire to take control over the potentially vast reserves of oil and gas. In the time of permanent anxiety in the world energy market that drives the oil prices to stratospheric heights that are already seen as the norm, such an emphasis is entirely understandable. Besides, it fits perfectly into the pattern of Russia's foreign policy where energy matters, and especially the export of natural gas, have become not only a key priority but also an exclusive presidential domain, in which Putin takes keen personal interest. There are, nevertheless, many uncertainties as well as a few certainties about the energy dimension of Russia's Arctic quest—or even “conquest”—that ask for inserting a healthy dose of doubt into authoritative statements of the ‘it-is-all-about-hydrocarbons’ type.

The main uncertainty is definitely the scale of the reserves, since outside the narrow strip of sea shelf off the coasts of Alaska, Norway and Russia's western Arctic regions, no exploratory drilling has ever been conducted. Seismic and acoustic tests and geologic modeling cannot provide a basis for any reliable estimates, so most of the assessments that circulate in the media are in the category of wild speculation of “experts” who clearly understand that only the highest imaginary figures would be considered newsworthy. One near certainty behind this fundamental uncertainty is that the most promising hydrocarbon “provinces,” as far as the Russian sector is concerned, are in the Barents and Kara seas, with decent possibilities for discoveries in the Laptev Sea and generally promising structures in the eastern part of the shelf; for that matter, the deep-water plateau between the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges, which forms the main part of the Russian claim, is the least promising area. The results of the May-June 2007 expedition encouraged the experts from the Institute of World Ocean Geology to give the high figure of 9-10 billion tons of fuel equivalent (up to 48.8 billion barrels of oil, or about half of the proven oil reserves of the UAE), which is roughly five times smaller than what is usually estimated for the Barents and Kara Seas [10].

Another certainty in the Russian energy strategy is the lack of experience and technology for developing off-shore oil and gas fields, particularly in harsh Arctic conditions. This problem has come to the forefront of international debates when the Kremlin suddenly cancelled the long-going tender for developing the giant Shtokman gas field in the Barents Sea in October 2006 and directed *Gazprom* to implement this strategic task on its own [11]. The experts who had predicted

that *Gazprom* would not be able to advance this challenging off-shore project were proven right in July 2007, when French *Total* was taken on board as a minor partner (albeit with no access to resources) [12]. In fact, the list of successful off-shore projects implemented during the last decade is limited to *Sakhalin-I* and *Sakhalin-II*, which were built from scratch by consortia of trans-national majors; *Gazprom*'s recent hostile takeover of the latter would hardly improve its management, while its own *Prirazlomnoe* project in the Barents Sea has experienced delays and setbacks, so the current plan to get it on-line in 2008 appears problematic [13].

This latter case points to one more near certainty, which is rather difficult to explain: *Gazprom*, the oil companies as well as the government agencies are in no rush to develop the vast hydrocarbon resources of the Arctic seas. For that matter, *Gazprom* approved in 2006 an ambitious investment program for the rest of the decade, but during 2007 this program has been revised so that acquisitions are greatly increased while investments in upstream projects, including Shtokman, are significantly reduced [14]. The Ministry of Natural Resources presented in early 2006 a far-reaching "Strategy for Exploring and Developing the Oil and Gas Potential of the Continental Shelf of the Russian Federation until 2020," but this document is still not officially approved [15]. Neither is Moscow particularly keen to resolve the maritime border dispute with Norway that involves a sector in the Barents Sea potentially rich in hydrocarbons [16], and the Russian parliament is not yet contemplating the ratification of the 1990 USA-USSR Maritime Boundary Agreement, despite some phantasmagoric plans for building a tunnel under the Bering Strait [17].

Basically, Russia is not planning any major breakthroughs in developing or exploring the Arctic hydrocarbon riches – and it is not facing any risk of falling behind competitors who might begin contemplating a project in the free waters in the near future. The underlying proposition for claiming exclusive economic rights for the seabed beyond the 80°N latitude is that 30-50 years from now hydrocarbons would still be in such high demand that production at enormous costs will be economically efficient. What follows logically is that Russia is not particularly worried about climate change and has few thoughts about alternative energy sources; what appears possible to suggest is that current plans and mid-term prospects for energy development cannot justify the present-day rush in advancing the claim for expanding the Arctic possessions.

Could the Cold War Make an Arctic Comeback?

A military-security angle has been prominent in much of the commentary on the flag-planting expedition, with the speculation of a clash of interests easily importing the possibility of confrontation and even war [18]. The most common line of argument has been about a "war for resources," which connects nicely with the wide-spread attitude of energy greed, despite the fact that such a war remains an entirely hypothetical proposition. What is really happening in the

northern strategic environment is unilateral and demonstrative restoration of some elements of the deterrence system by Russia. Putin's order to resume regular combat patrolling by the Strategic Aviation just ten days after receiving Chilingarov's report could have been a coincidence, but the implicit connection was too strong to miss. Sergei Ivanov, First Deputy Prime Minister and former Defense Minister, emphasized it even further, asserting that the resumed patrolling did not signify a return of "bloc thinking" since the flights were conducted in the "specific regions where our economic interests are present, including navigation" [19].

There is much contradiction and confusion about the presidential order that was announced rather pompously at the meeting of the heads of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization who observed the final phase of the unprecedented Russian-Chinese military exercises [20]. For one thing, the flights of strategic bombers Tu-95MS over Arctic waters towards the North Sea were actually resumed in mid-July, adding a particular twist to the spy scandal between Russia and the UK [21]. In retrospect, those flights could be seen as a warm-up for the unprecedented exercises of the Strategic Aviation in mid-August, when 30-50 flights were performed daily, including from the rarely used bases in the North (Anadyr, Monchegorsk, Olenya, Tiksi and Vorkuta) [22].

It was in the aftermath of these successful exercises that Putin announced that the flights would continue on a regular basis and reinforced the message by defining the new pattern as "combat patrolling of strategic character." That Khrushchev-style statement required a small clarification that the bombers would not be carrying nuclear weapons [23]. However, it is still difficult to find a way around the fact that even in the Cold War era, the Soviet Strategic Aviation was able to perform combat patrolling for only limited periods of time (the longest one was from January 1985 to April 1987), but currently this mode would be even less sustainable besides inviting questions about the rationale for such demonstrations [24].

The total strength of the 37th Air Army of the Long-Range Aviation is 79 bombers (64 Tu-95MS and 15 Tu-160), of which about half could be deemed mission capable, however pilot training, maintenance and logistics remain serious problems [25]. A few days after the president's order, a Su-24 crashed during a training flight, and while that fighter-bomber did not belong to the Strategic Aviation, the Tu-160 that exploded in mid-air in September 2003 most certainly did. It does not constitute a problem for British *Typhoons* and Norwegian F-16s to intercept the slow-moving Russian *Bears* over Arctic waters, but the risks involved in these face-offs appear as excessive and unnecessary as those that brought the Levanevsky flight in August 1937 to its tragic end [26].

While currently it is these air "shows" that attract the most attention, traditionally it has been naval activity that constituted the main content of strategic confrontation in the North and generated the most acute risks. Moscow appears keen to expand this activity, as was demonstrated

by the missile launch by the strategic submarine K-84 *Ekaterinburg* from under the ice in the North Pole region on 9 September 2006 [27]. There is, however, a severe limitation to this ambition: the fleet of SSBNs has shrunk and is badly deteriorated, as was seen by the double failure to launch SLBMs during the presidential exercises in February 2004 [28]. The arrival of the new generation of submarines (the *Borey*-class) has been delayed by the setbacks in constructing the lead SSBN *Yury Dolgoruky* (started in Severodvinsk in 1996) and even more by the failures in testing the new *Bulava* SSBN. The latest *Bulava* test on June 28 was, according to some sources, only partly successful, but Admiral Vladimir Masorin, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, nevertheless confidently asserted that the production of these missiles would begin in 2008 and the test on maximum flight length would be conducted from the newly-launched *Yury Dolgoruky* [29]. The prospect of launching a faulty strategic missile from an untested nuclear submarine resembles indeed a game of Russian roulette [30].

Overall, the all-too-apparent weaknesses in Russia's strategic posture make it senseless to consider re-launching a military brinkmanship in the North, in which Moscow would hardly be able to impress its potential competitors (which are still called "partners" in Putin-speak) but would definitely expose itself to risks of technical disasters comparable to the K-141 *Kursk* catastrophe in August 2000, not to mention plenty of alarmist commentary in the Western media. The demonstrative application of such unreliable and self-damaging instruments appears to go against Putin's proclaimed adherence to the policy of pragmatism, but it does fit into his ambition to forge a new Russian state.

The "Conquest of the North" as an Identity-building Project

It may appear that ideology has not played a significant role in Putin's efforts at building a massive bureaucratic pyramid described as the "executive vertical"; however, in the fast-unfolding period of power transition, a unifying vision could serve as an important means of securing continuity and preserving the dominance of the ruling elite. As Ivan Krastev has recently insightfully argued, "Contrary to the assertions of Putin's critics, the concept of sovereign democracy does not mark Russia's break with European tradition. It embodies Russia's ideological ambition to be 'the *other* Europe'—an alternative to the European Union" [31]. There is no place here to examine the full extent of these ideological ambitions, but they do have a direct relevance for the new Arctic policy.

The parallel with Stalin's triumphalist propaganda campaign of "conquering the North" launched in 1936-1939 on the backdrop of severe internal repressions is too obvious to miss [32]. The Generalissimo, who still casts a long shadow over Russian collective psyche and is remarkably popular among the younger generation, perhaps had little appreciation for the mysterious nature of the north that so fascinates post-modernists of nowadays, but he understood perfectly the value of a positive mobilization in combination with a campaign of terror [33].

Besides making the explorers into national heroes idolized in popular songs (from which in later times all mentions of Stalin were carefully erased), he sought to direct the development of the Soviet aircraft industry on the track that was proven to be a perfect technological dead-end.

In Putin's Kremlin, manipulative PR is valued above any other political skill but the need to build a more solid ideological foundation has become recognized since the chain of disasters in the *annus horribilis* of 2004, when Akhmad Kadyrov's assassination was followed by the Beslan tragedy and when the Orange Revolution defeated all of Moscow's plans for Ukraine. Quite a few domestic mobilization campaigns were staged with various degree of success: the propaganda attacks on "treacherous" neighbors Georgia and Estonia (focused on the arrest of four Russian officers in Tbilisi in autumn 2006 and the removal of the Bronze Soldier monument from downtown Tallinn in Spring 2007) stirred patriotic feelings of a rather dubious nature, and the strong objections against the planned deployment of elements of a US strategic defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic resonated with the raising anti-Americanism. The attempt to gain a boost from the chairmanship role in the G8 in 2006 was not particularly successful, but the "victory" in the contest for hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics has been made into an ecstatic nation-wide celebration [34].

Putin's spin-masters have stumbled upon rather than invented the Arctic theme, which Chilingarov, fed up with his role as a one-issue oddity in the State Duma, had tried to sell for a long time. His previous escapade was a helicopter flight to the South Pole in the company of Nikolai Patrushev, director of the FSB [35]. In order to attract public and political attention to the North Pole expedition with its minimal scientific content, it was deemed necessary not only to downplay the role of foreign sponsors (a Swedish and an Australian "tourist" were on board of *Mir-2*) but also to emphasize the worries of Russia's frustrated competitors. To that end, the news about a U.S. "spy plane" that was following the expedition (in fact, the plane in question was a Norwegian P-3 *Orion* that made one visual contact with the ships) were spiced with speculations about the real purpose of the deployment of a U.S. "military" icebreaker [36]. When the attention was secured, every possible spin was put on the tale, from the historic parallels to energy greed, to defiance of grave risk, to pride in Russian technological superiority (omitting the facts that the *Mir* submersibles were produced in Finland for the USSR and that *Akademik Fedorov* had engine failure at the start of the tour).

The response in society was overwhelmingly positive but it is difficult to expect that this celebration would translate into sustained support for developing the Northern regions that are depressed by multiple economic problems (with the exception of oil and gas-producing enclaves) and are dependent upon cost-ineffective supplies organized by the federal center [37]. The one-off event might leave an imprint on the self-perception of the Russians and register on their assessments of the power of the state but it would hardly make any difference in the pattern of migration where the North is steadily losing population.

Moscow Measures the Players and the Stakes in Arctic Geopolitics

Celebrating the Arctic “triumph,” the Russians are fully aware that it makes a bitter pill to swallow for their Northern neighbors and so could result in complications and even tensions in international relations [38]. Perceptions of an inherently hostile external environment, perhaps not quite reaching the extreme vision of a “fortress Russia” but blended with deep mistrust in NATO and suspicions towards US hegemonism, are widely spread and reinforced by incessant propaganda. In the political elite, the predatory instincts of the nouveau riche mix with bureaucratic conformism and cynical manipulateness of the cadre from special services, to form a very particular worldview, for which geopolitics provide an easily applicable set of guidelines [39]. The imperative to move fast and elbow aside hesitant competitors determines the preference for proactive moves in Russia’s political behavior as the status quo is often seen as too restrictive for its newly consolidated power. The Arctic is perceived as a geopolitical “frontier” where Russia should use its competitive advantages and assert its claims since the readiness to advance its own interests, even if not of immediate character, is presumed to constitute an additional source of strength.

Among the potential competitors, Norway is perceived as a familiar and predictable neighbor, which is quite content with the deadlocked status of the maritime dispute and is more concerned about its own rights on the Spitsbergen (Svalbard) archipelago with its peculiar status (defined by the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920) than with challenging Russia’s claims. Denmark is not taken seriously and its attempts to establish that the Lomonosov ridge goes all the way to Greenland are relegated to the category of scientific oddities [40]. Canada is watched carefully, particularly with its plans for expanding naval capabilities in the Arctic, but Moscow assumes that there is not much direct conflict between its claims and Canadian interests [41]. The main line of Russia’s Arctic intrigue goes however towards the US, and the Kremlin expects that it would constitute a separate dimension in the complex relationship where the elements of confrontation and cooperation coexist but tensions tend to escalate as the hyper-power in decline seeks to check the rise of an independent power center.

The main source of risk in this rather simplistic picture is not that the US leadership would decide that Moscow had allowed itself one liberty too many, but that the four Arctic states—plus possibly the UK—who all happen to be NATO member-states, could join forces against Russia. The experiments with combat patrolling by Strategic Aviation could actually increase the probability of such coalition-building, so Moscow has to take into account the possibility that the concerned neighbors might find some forceful collective replies to its challenges [42]. It can only hope that the U.S. ability to deliver leadership is seriously weakened by the unfolding disaster in Iraq, and expect, perhaps optimistically, that disagreements between the Arctic states, who would advance overlapping and contradictory claims, would undermine

their Atlantic unity. In this respect, the failure to reach an agreement on the status of the North-Western passage at the recent US-Canada summit was taken as a confirmation of the depth of these cleavages [43].

Overall, it is clear that Chilingarov's expedition was an impromptu rather than a calculated geopolitical move but the Kremlin was quick to follow it up with political and security steps aimed at overtaking and dividing its dumbfounded competitors. It is also clear that by importing identity-building tasks into the geopolitical rivalry, Moscow has seriously constrained its own freedom of maneuvering and left itself little room for compromises.

Conclusions

The reaction in the West to Russia's Arctic adventure has been predominantly negative but in fact some of the consequences of this "attention-grab" could be positive from any perspective. For one thing, it could prompt the U.S. Congress to ratify the UN Law of the Sea Convention, which would greatly strengthen this international regime [44]. For another, the expedition has demonstrated once again the unprecedented depletion of the Arctic ice cap and thus provided an illustration of the problem of global warming [45]. In fact, the development of hydrocarbon resources on the shelf beyond the Gulf Stream-warmed Barents Sea would become possible only if the winter ice became much thinner, but that would cause multiple devastating disasters for the planet. In this respect, the plan for organizing a vast natural preserve "Russian Arctic" that stretches from the Franz-Josef Land to the northern part of Novaya Zemlya could be a small but helpful step in protecting the fragile Arctic eco-system [46].

Whatever scientific evidence is amassed, Russia has a slim chance at best that its claim on expanding its EEZ would be approved by the CLCS, which hardly was positively impressed by the demonstrative flag-planting. The four Arctic states, supported by other allies, might find it useful to defy Russia's unilateralism by sending expeditions to the North Pole and the Lomonosov ridge and ignoring possible flyovers by *Bears* and *Blackjacks*. Confrontation, however, offers a far less promising outcome than a combination of containment and cooperation as prescribed 70 years ago by George Kennan in the Long Telegram. A multilateral deal on dividing the Arctic into five national sectors might appear to be a natural cooperative solution but if there is a lesson in the Caspian experience it is about the endless quarrels fuelled by energy greed. The Antarctic model could offer a far better solution, particularly since the key problems in the near and mid-term would be not about sharing profits from developing abundant resources but about joining efforts in preserving the common endowment.

Notes

1. See “Ships, Subs and Missiles,” *The Economist*, 9 August 2007; Scott Borgerson, “An Ice Cold War,” *New York Times*, 8 August 2007; my early reflections are in Pavel Baev, “Russian Flag Stakes Energy Claim at North Pole,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 7 August 2007
2. See “Chilingarov: We Have Exercised the Maritime Right of the First Night,” *Grani.ru*, 7 August 2007 (<http://grani.ru/Politics/World/m.125719.html>).
3. Russian media provided uncensored coverage of these responses; see for instance Darya Yuryeva, “Lacking spine,” *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 August 2007.
4. One good source on these exchanges is Aleksandr Amzin, “By the Right of Quirites,” *Lenta.ru*, 3 August 2007 (<http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/08/03/arctic/>).
5. The text of the Federal Law on Ratification of the Convention can be found at (<http://www.kadis.ru/texts/index.phtml?id=19521>).
6. On the Russian request, see Vladimir Sanko, “The Shelf is Ours But It is Necessary to Convince the Neighbors,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 August 2002. The CLCS documents are available on its useful website (http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/clcs_home.htm).
7. The expedition was led by Viktor Poselov, Deputy Director of the Institute, which is affiliated with the Natural Resources Ministry; see Max Delaney, “Gas and Glory Fuel Race to the North Pole,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 31 July 2007; “Golden Seabed,” *Ogonyok*, no. 29, 16-22 June 2007 (<http://www.ogoniok.com/5005/18/>).
8. See Ekaterina Glikman, “Tourist Trip,” *Novaya gazeta*, 5 August 2007.
9. See “Pole positioning,” *Financial Times*, 4 August 2007.
10. See Aleksandr Kukolevsky, “Hit Below the Pole,” *Kommersant-Vlast*, 13 August 2007.
11. It was no secret for Russian commentators that political intrigue prevailed over economic rationale in that directive; see Pavel Prohorov, “The Shtokman Puzzle” *Expert*, 16 October 2006.
12. An interesting case of French debates on *Gazprom* can be found in “Can *Gazprom* Be Trusted to Ensure Russian Energy Supply?” Conference-debate at IFRI, 26 April 2007 (http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/recherche/russie_et_monde_post_sovi_tique_1040123098618/nergie_1170757134191); my abridged analysis is in Pavel Baev, “Kremlin Brings French *Total* on Board *Gazprom*’s Shtokman Project,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 16 July 2007 (http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372291).
13. See Ali Aliev, “Sakhalin Gas Knot,” *Expert*, 19 March 2007.
14. On *Gazprom*’s ambivalent investment plans and aggravating inefficiency, see Vladimir Milov, “The Downside of *Gazprom*’s Prosperity,” *The New Times*, 13 August 2007 (http://newtimes.ru/magazine/issue_25/article_2.htm).
15. See Alena Kornysheva, “Russia to Stake on the Shelf,” *Kommersant*, 6 March 2006; the draft of the Strategy is available at the Ministry’s website at (http://www.mnr.gov.ru/files/part/0477_sstrateg.doc).
16. Visiting Russia in June 2007, Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg secured an agreement on delimiting the border in the Varanger fjord but achieved no progress on the larger

- border issue; see “Russia and Norway Agreed on Dividing the Varanger Fjord,” *Rosbalt*, 8 June 2007 (<http://www.rosbalt.ru/2007/06/08/298720.html>).
17. See “Russia to Build the World’s Longest Tunnel,” *International Herald Tribune*, 18 April, 2007.
18. See for instance, Nadezhda Sorokina, “The Battle for the Arctic,” *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 August 2007; “Russia is Facing a Second Cold War – On the North Pole,” *Izvestiya*, 30 July 2007; Oksana Boiko, “War for the Arctic,” *Vzglyad*, 9 August 2007.
19. See “Ivanov Says Strategic Bomber Patrols No Return to the Cold War,” *RIA-Novosti*, 23 August 2007.
20. One competent comment is Viktor Myasnikov, Viktor Litovkin, Ivan Gorshkov, Vladimir Muhin, “Bombers Flew into Big Politics,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 August 2007.
21. See Ilya Kramnik, “Return of the Flying Bear,” *Lenta.ru*, 19 July 2007 (<http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/07/19/tu95/>); my brief analysis is in Pavel Baev, “Moscow Escalates Diplomatic Row with London,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 24 July 2007
22. Informed discussion of these exercises could be found on Pavel Podvig’s blog (<http://russianforces.org/>).
23. That clarification was provided by General Anatoly Zhikharev, Deputy Commander of the Long-Range Aviation, see “Russian Long-range Planes Have No Nuke Weapons on Board,” ITAR-TASS, 21 August 2007 (<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=11804962&PageNum=0>).
24. See Aleksandr Golts, “A New Cold War or a Farce?” *Ezhednevny zhurnal*, 20 August 2007 (<http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7340>).
25. See Pavel Felgengauer, “President Shakes the Air,” *Novaya gazeta*, 19 August 2007. A gruesome case of brutal hazing in the garrison of Plesetsk space launch site reminded that strategic forces were as affected by *dedovshchina*; see “Serdyukov Promised to Sort Out *Dedovshchina* in Plesetsk,” *Grani.ru*, 24 August 2007 (<http://grani.ru/War/Draft/m.126458.html>).
26. On the 1937 drama, see John McCannon, *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939*. Oxford: OUP, 1998. On the present-day activities, see Richard Norton-Taylor, “Typhoons Scramble to Intercept Russian Aircraft,” *The Guardian*, 22 August 2007; “Sheathe the Sabres,” *Financial Times*, 23 August 2007.
27. See Viktor Myasnikov, “Setbacks and Victories,” *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 15 September 2006.
28. See Vadim Solovyev, Vladimir Ivanov, Viktor Myasnikov, “The Missiles Matter Less than Their Smart Load,” *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 20 February 2004; my reflections are in Pavel Baev, “Putin’s ‘Wonder-missiles’: Bluff, Threat or Pep-talk?” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 22 November 2004 (http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2368892).
29. See Vladimir Gundarov, Viktor Myasnikov, “The Bulava Affair,” *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 20 July 2007; Dmitri Litovkin, “Bulava Will Strike on the Hawaii,” *Izvestia*, 6 August 2007.
30. See Pavel Felgengauer, “Nuclear Roulette for Admiral Masorin,” *Novaya gazeta*, 9 August 2007.

31. See Ivan Krastev, "Russia as 'the Other Europe,'" *Russia in Global Affairs*, July-August 2007, pp. 33-45, on p. 42.
32. As one commentator put it, "The Absence of Political Reaction from the Authorities on the 70th Anniversary of the Peak of Stalinist Repressions (That Neither Started nor Ended in 1937) on the Background of the Celebrated Arctic Expedition of Artur Chilingarov, Vice Speaker of the State Duma, with the Planting of the Russian Flag on the Bottom of the Arctic Ocean in Commemoration of the 70 Years of the Chelyuskin Odyssey is Highly Characteristic." See Semen Novoprudsky, "70 Years with No Right on Letters," *Gazeta.ru*, 24 August 2007 (<http://www.gazeta.ru/column/novoprudsky/2083286.shtml>); see also Andrei Kolesnikov, "The Polar War is Raging On," *Grani.ru*, 3 August 2007 (<http://grani.ru/opinion/kolesnikov/m.125502.html>).
33. On the legacy of Stalin's terror, see Grigory Yavlinsky, "Article 37: Why Russians Forget About Repressions and Talk About 'Capitalism with a Stalin Face,'" *Novaya gazeta*, 5 August 2007. A brilliant post-modernist interpretation of the concept of the North is in Sergei Medvedev, 'The_Blank_Space: Glenn Gould, Russia, Finland and the North', *Ctheory.net*, 14 June 2000 (<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=128>).
34. For a sharp comment, see Stanislav Belkovsky, "The Victory of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin: Oh, Sport You Are Cash!", *Ezhednevny zhurnal*, 6 July 2007 (<http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=7229>); my reflections are in Pavel Baev, "Russia Wins Olympic Bid, Now Must Realize Ambitious Plans," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 9 July 2007 (http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372277).
35. See Andrei Sharov, "Ruslan Has Returned Home," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 15 January 2007; Dmitri Butrin, "Notes of Budget and Geographic Prostitution," *Gazeta.ru*, 15 January 2007 (<http://www.gazeta.ru/column/butrin/1258795.shtml>).
36. See Nadezhda Sorokina, "American Plane is Carefully Observing the Russian Expedition," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 July 2007; "US Send a Heavy Military Icebreaker to the Arctic," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2 August 2007.
37. According to a FOM opinion poll, more than 70% of respondents were in favor of Arctic expeditions and more than 65% supported the claim for expanding Russia's Arctic possessions; see Marina Ivanova, "The Arctic Expedition: Awareness and Attitude," FOM, 23 August 2007 (http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0734/domt0734_3/d073422). Problems of the Russian North are thoroughly examined in Fiona Hill & Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Siberian Curse* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2003); this book has generated plenty of indignant responses in Russia, see for instance the April 2007 roundtable "Russia's East in the XXI Century" (<http://www.beregrus.ru/krugstol/>).
38. The same opinion poll showed that some 40% of respondents expected problems in relations with other states, while some 30% were undecided.
39. Explaining this obsession with geopolitics, one astute observer noted: "It would be inappropriate to save money on geopolitical undertakings but nobody expects returns tomorrow or the day after, and that is the beauty of any global project, from the Great Silk Road to the Arctic Lomonosov ridge"; see Vadim Dubnov, "Geopolitics of Large Diameter," *Gazeta.ru*, 24

August 2007 (http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2007/08/24_a_2086215.shtml).

40. See Sergei Lebedev, "In Search of the Pole: Denmark Seeks to Establish its Rights on the Arctic," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 August 2007; Igor Yavliansky, Andrei Reut, Georgi Iliychev, "America, Denmark, Canada and Even Australia Joined the Dispute on the Arctic Seabed," *Izvestia*, 13 August 2007.

41. See Nadezhda Sorokina, "Canadian PM Inspects the Arctic," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 9 August.

42. See Aleksandra Homenok & Vladislav Vorobyev, "The Military Compete with Scientists in the Arctic," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 24 August 2007; Sergei Kulikov, "The Arctic Trap for Moscow," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 August 2007.

43. See Sergei Strokan, "North American Summit Was Cooled by the Arctic," *Kommersant*, 23 August 2007.

44. See "A Treaty Whose Time Has Come," *New York Times*, 25 August 2007.

45. See Andrew C. Revkin, "Analysts See 'Simply Incredible' Shrinking of Floating Ice in the Arctic," *New York Times*, 10 August 2007.

46. See Konstantin Volkov & Aleksei Nikolsky, "Zapolyarye – Russian Preserve," *Vedomosti*, 14 August 2007.

About the Author

Dr. Pavel K. Baev is a Research Professor at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO); he is also affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Civil War at PRIO. After graduating from the Moscow State University (MA in Political Geography, 1979) he worked in a research institute in the USSR Defence Ministry and then in the Institute of Europe, Moscow before joining PRIO in October 1992. Between 1995-2001 he was the editor of PRIO's quarterly journal Security Dialogue. His research interests include the transformation of the Russian military, the energy dimension of Russian-European relations, and the post-Soviet conflicts in the Caucasus and the greater Caspian area.