

# Soft security in the Arctic

**The role of Russia in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council  
and the Arctic Council**

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# Index

## **Soft security in the Arctic**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction.....  | 3  |
| The Russian Arctic.....  | 5  |
| Russia and the Barents Council .....                                   | 7  |
| The organisation and its uses .....                                    | 7  |
| Economic and political constraints .....                               | 9  |
| The Russian view of the BEAC .....                                     | 13 |
| Russian economic priorities: trade and investments .....               | 15 |
| Transport, border and visa issues.....                                 | 17 |
| Energy cooperation .....   | 21 |
| Environment and climate .....  | 22 |
| Health issues .....  | 24 |
| Indigenous peoples.....  | 25 |
| Rescue operations .....  | 27 |
| Human contacts, science and culture .....                              | 28 |
| Cooperation with other organisations .....                             | 30 |
| Russia in the Arctic Council .....                                     | 31 |
| The organisation and its limitations.....                              | 31 |
| The Russian view of the Arctic Council .....                           | 36 |
| Environmental protection and climate .....                             | 39 |
| Economic and social issues.....  | 41 |
| Energy issues .....  | 43 |
| Marine shipping and its consequences.....                              | 44 |
| Emergency prevention .....   | 45 |
| Indigenous peoples and their culture .....                             | 47 |
| Which Russian interests do the BEAC and AC meet? .....                 | 49 |
| Conclusions on Russian policy in the BEAC and the Arctic Council ..... | 52 |

## Introduction

Russia is not only a great power, conducting a multilateral and multi-vector foreign policy all over the world, but also a regional power. It is especially interested in retaining its influence in the post-Soviet space, earlier called the near abroad, by nurturing bilateral ties and multilateral organisations. In the far abroad, Russia is especially engaged in bilateral and multilateral relations with its European neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will examine and compare the role of Russia in the most important institutions of the Arctic region, namely the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Arctic Council (AC).<sup>2</sup> This region has in the last decade attracted growing attention as a result of its vast energy resources, which are expected to become more available with the ongoing climate changes, and the growing energy needs in the world. Another reason for a Swedish study on the topic is the obvious fact that Russian policy always has been of great importance to Swedish security as well as to its economic interests. A topical reason is that Sweden holds the BEAC chairmanship in 2009-2011, and will also chair the Arctic Council in 2011-2013. The paper also aims to fill in a research niche: While important works have been made on Russian

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Legvold, "The role of multilateralism in Russian foreign policy", in Elana Wilson Rowe, Stina Torjesen, *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, Routledge, Abingdon 2009, p. 21f..

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the Arctic Council and its place among other Arctic initiatives and international regimes, see Oran R. Young, "The structure of Arctic Cooperation: solving problems/Seizing opportunities"; Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, Conferences, <http://www.arcticparl.org/conferences.aspx>, accessed 23 March 2010. As will be confirmed below, Young argues that the Arctic Council is not an organization in the ordinary sense as it has little administrative staff and resources nor builds on an established international regime (cp. the WTO) but rather should be called a forum or a mechanism intended to create a region-wide regime. (Young, pp. 6 f, 10) The same can be said about the BEAC. The term organisation will thus be used in a loose sense here.

policy vis-à-vis the Northern countries and the Arctic,<sup>3</sup> on its role in broader organisations and its relations with the European Union and NATO,<sup>4</sup> on the Arctic security policies of different states as well as on the effectiveness of Arctic institutions in solving different types of problems,<sup>5</sup> there are apparently no comparative studies on Russia's policy in these smaller forums.<sup>6</sup>

The focus of this study is placed on Russian policy in the two councils, but in so doing also the structure of the councils and their activities in Russia have to be presented. It will address questions such as: What have been the Russian priorities and aims as compared with the common aims of the councils? Have any controversies arisen, and what successes and failures can be recorded? Which are the similarities and differences in Russian policy in the two councils? A recurrent issue is to what extent Russian policy regarding these forums is characterised by a striving for a privileged position on the strength of size and power rather than cooperating on an equal footing with the other states. An overriding ambition in this paper is to show what purposes the councils serve for Russia. It will be contended that they facilitate Russian political cooperation with the partners and contribute to solve some

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<sup>3</sup> See Wilson Rowe (ed.) *Russia and the North*, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa 2009 and chapters in e.g. Niklas Granholm (red), *Arktis – strategiska frågor i en region i förändring*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) January 2008.; Carolina Vendil Pallin, "Russia's Security Policy Agenda in Northern Europe", in Roger E. Kanet and Maria Raquel Freire (eds) *Russia and European Security* (Palgrave, forthcoming)

<sup>4</sup> See Wilson Rowe and Torjesen (ed.), and Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud, Hanna Smith (eds.), *The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Summers, *Arctic Solutions. The Frozen (Thawing) Relations of the High North*, Institut français de relations internationales, Paris, February 2010; Niklas Granholm, *Delar av ett nytt Arktis. Utvecklingar av dansk, kanadensisk och isländsk arktispolitik*, FOI, December 2009; Olav Schram Stokke and Geir Hönneland, *International Cooperation and Arctic Governance*, Routledge, London and New York 2009. On the EU Arctic policy, see Andreas Maurer, *The Arctic Region – Perspectives from Member States and Institutions of the EU*, Working Paper, September 2010, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin.

<sup>6</sup> There is however a case study on Russia in the AC, namely Elana Wilson Rowe, "Russian regional multilateralism: the case of the Arctic Council", in Wilson Rowe and Torjesen (eds.) (2009).

environmental, social and economic problems but do not meet Russia's key security and economic interests.

In order to facilitate the analysis and comparison of the councils the material is structured with regard to the most salient clusters of issues. The focus is on the top, intergovernmental level, but regional and parliamentary cooperation is also included when applicable. Throughout, attention is directed to changes and continuities over time since the early 1990s with a focus on the last few years. The Arctic is here simply defined as lands and seas north of the Polar Circle.

After a short introduction on Russia's general interests in the Arctic region, Russia's role in the BEAC structure and its different policy fields is analysed. Then Russia's policy in the AC is scrutinized and compared before the general conclusions on Russian policy are made. The analysis builds on official documents from the councils, Russia and other member states, available on their websites, further on press comments and research material from both Russia and Western states.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Russian Arctic**

Russia has by far the longest coast on the Arctic Sea and the biggest Arctic population, especially in the Barents region, where Murmansk with about 300 000 inhabitants is the largest city north of the Polar Circle. The Arctic region also is of crucial importance to the Russian economy, because a major part of its oil, gas and other raw materials are extracted there.<sup>8</sup> According to Russian sources, the Arctic contains most of the potential hydrocarbon resources of the world, the Barents Sea region and its hydrocarbon resources are already the most developed part of the Arctic

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<sup>7</sup> The author is grateful for constructive comments on an earlier draft from Professor Alyson Bailes, Reykjavik, Hanna Ojanen and Marc Rhinard, UI, and from Niklas Granholm, FOI and other participants of a research seminar in Stockholm, 27 January 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Summers, pp. 2 ff; Robert L. Larsson, "Arktis och energifrågorna", in Granholm (red.), pp. 18 ff; Granholm & Kiesow, pp. 44.

and may become one of the most promising regions of the whole planet.<sup>9</sup> The most important gas fields are those on the Yamal peninsula in westernmost Siberia, which are already being exploited, and the Shtokman deposits off the Kola peninsula. Climate change and ice-melting make these resources more accessible and also opens new transport routes.<sup>10</sup> This gives vital reasons underpinning Russia's legal claim to 1.2 million square kilometres of the Arctic Sea, including the North Pole, which is being prepared for submission to the United Nations in 2013.<sup>11</sup> In order to mark its claim Russia in 2007 placed a flag on the bottom of the sea at the North Pole.<sup>12</sup> This action evoked international attention and response measures by the other Arctic states, but Prime Minister Putin rejected all criticism of it and invited others to do the same "if they can".<sup>13</sup> The Arctic is also militarily important to Russia. The Northern Fleet is the biggest of the Russian fleets and it is by far the strongest in the Arctic. The activities of Russian military and border troops increased in the 2000s, not least with reference to the military ambitions of NATO states, which are closely watched.<sup>14</sup>

In 2008 President Dmitrii Medvedev signed a doctrine on Russian Arctic policy until 2020, according to which Russia's national interests were the following:

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<sup>9</sup> Golos Rossii, 15, 30 Oct 2009, <http://rus.ruvr.ru/news/2009/10/>, accessed 25 March 2010. For Western assessments, see Granholm & Kiesow, pp. 10ff, 44 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Indra Överland, "Natural gas projects in the Russian North", pp. 131, in Aalto et al.; Granholm Kiesow, pp. 48 ff; Larsson, 18 ff,

<sup>11</sup> Relying on the UN Convention Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) of 1982 Russia wants to prove that the Lomonosov and Mendelejev sea ridges are continuations of the Siberian continental shelf and therefore should extend Russia's economic zone of 200 nautical miles.

<sup>12</sup> Nikolaj Petersen, "The Arctic as a new arena for Danish foreign policy", *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2009*, Danish Institute of International Affairs, Copenhagen, p. 45, Vendil Pallin, pp. 3-5.

<sup>13</sup> Oldberg, "Rysslands intressen i Arktis", in Granholm (red.), pp. 40 f, Barents Observer, 16 March 2010 [www.barentsobserver.com](http://www.barentsobserver.com), Golos Rossii, 30 March 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Oldberg, pp. 39 ff; Golos Rossii, 30 March 2010, Aleksandr Slizhevskii, "Arktika: eshche odna kholodnaia vojna?", *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 26 March 2010.

- To use and expand the resource base for Russia's socio-economic development
- To maintain peace and cooperation in the Arctic, including military security
- To safeguard the unique ecological systems
- To use and develop the Northern Sea Route

By realising these aims Russia was expected to remain a “leading Arctic power” in the medium term.<sup>15</sup> At the end of this study an attempt will be made to examine to what extent and how Russia has managed to satisfy these interests through the BEAC and the AC.

## Russia and the Barents Council

### *The organisation and its uses*

During the Cold War, the northwestern part of the Soviet Union became one of its most militarized regions, since the strategic Northern Fleet was based on the Kola peninsula. No foreigners were admitted, and institutionalized contacts with the Nordic neighbours were negligible. A sign of thaw came when the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in October 1987 called for more cooperation in the Arctic region.<sup>16</sup> The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new Russian state aiming at democracy, market economy and cooperation with the West opened the door for the creation of the first major cooperation organisation in the Arctic area.

Seizing on this opportunity and as a way both to alleviate old military fears and new fears like an invasion of Russian social refugees, Norway in January 1993 took the initiative to invite a number of foreign ministers to Kirkenes and create the BEAC. In

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<sup>15</sup> Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii, *Osnovy gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Arktike na period do 2020 goda I dal'neishuiu perspektivu*, 18 September 2008, [www.scrf.ogv.ru/documents](http://www.scrf.ogv.ru/documents), accessed 9 November 2010; pp. 1-5. For summaries, see Summers, pp. 23 f; Granholm & Kiesow, pp. 46 f.

<sup>16</sup> David Scrivener, *Gorbachev's Murmansk Speech: The Soviet Initiative and Western Response*, The Norwegian Atlantic Committee, Oslo 1989.

a similar way, Denmark and Sweden had played an active role in forming the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1992 and Finland later proposed the EU to launch a Northern Dimension involving Russia.

The Barents Council embraces Russia, the five Nordic countries, of which three are NATO members and three are EU members, plus the EU Commission. There are nine observer states, namely the United States, Canada, Germany, Poland, Italy, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Japan. The chairmanship rotates every second year between Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway, being the ones most concerned and close to the Barents Sea. The countries are represented by the foreign ministers at the summits, and between these senior officials of the foreign ministries hold meetings. Each BEAC chairmanship also organises a Barents parliamentary conference representing the national, regional and indigenous peoples assemblies, but there is no permanent body.<sup>17</sup> Russia held the BEAC chairmanship in 1996, 2000-2001 and 2007-09. At the summit in Luleå in 1998 Foreign Minister Yevgenii Primakov, soon to become Prime Minister, had the chance to meet both deputy US Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and EU Foreign Commissioner Hans van den Broek, and discuss general issues.<sup>18</sup> Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov met his colleagues at the 10-year anniversary summit in Kirkenes 2003.<sup>19</sup> Also other ministers (on environment, health, transport, etc.) meet in the BEAC framework. The BEAC thus offers Russia useful official contacts in several fields with the neighbouring states.

Besides this intergovernmental forum, there is, different from many other organisations, a regional level in the form of the Barents Regional Council (BRC),

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<sup>17</sup> BEAC, “The Barents Cooperation”, 10 April, Partners and related organizations, “The Barents Parliamentary Conference”, [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st), accessed 19 January 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Martina Johannesson, *Regionala organisationer i norr*, Utrikespolitiska institutet, Stockholm, pp. 35 f; TT 20 January 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister of Norway, Press release, no 192/2002, 16 December 2002, [www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumentarkiv](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumentarkiv), accessed 16 September 2010.



now consisting of 13 regions of the member states represented by their governors. Five of these regions are Russian, the first ones being the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions (*oblasti*), later to be joined by the republics of Karelia and Komi and the Nenets autonomous okrug. Together they cover a larger area than the other member states taken together.<sup>20</sup> The BRC is chaired by one region, separately from the BEAC chairmanship, also for two years. Both the BEAC and the BRC have committees preparing the top level meetings and joint or separate working groups (17 altogether in 2010), which meet more often. The working group of indigenous peoples has an advisory role in both councils. Russia here has representatives of both the Saami, the Nenets and Vepsians and the office is located near Murmansk, while the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Saami representatives are elected by the common Saami Parliamentary Council.<sup>21</sup> Russia thus has a relatively strong position in this part of the organisation, but decisions must be taken by consensus.

### ***Economic and political constraints***

A general problem in Barents cooperation is that the BEAC has few financial resources beyond the organisation itself. The ministerial and region-level working groups generally do not finance or administer the projects, but only help to coordinate them. The concrete projects are mainly bilateral between Russia and one of the

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<sup>20</sup> Nenets is still formally also subordinated to Arkhangelsk, which thus may get two votes. (Waling T. Gorter-Grönvik, *History, Identity and the Barents Euro-Arctic Region: The Case of Arkhangelsk*, In Geir Flikke (ed.), *The Barents Region Revisited*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo 1999 (?), p. 106. In 2008 the Finnish region North Karelia, situated south of the Russian Karelia republic, became an observer region.

<sup>21</sup> The Saami in Norway number 50-60 000, in Sweden some 20 000, in Finland 7000, in the Murmansk region 2 000 (BEAC, "Indigenous peoples in the Barents region", Swedish Chair of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, "The Barents cooperation", April 2010, [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st), accessed 6 September 2010.

Nordic neighbours and financed by Nordic and EU programmes, though often called “Barents” afterwards.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1990s Russia was in deep economic crisis as a result of the transition to a market economy and the political turmoil. Consequently, Norway as the main initiator had to finance most BEAC activities in Russia on a bilateral basis. On the other hand, the Barents Cooperation increasingly became involved with the EU and received more funding from its financial institutions, especially after Sweden and Finland became members in 1995. In 1997 the EU on Finnish initiative launched the Northern Dimension, in which the BEAC became a participant and which supported aid projects in Northwest Russia, and Russia’s ten-year Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU also facilitated the Barents Cooperation.

In the 2000s the situation changed, as Russia started to have steady economic growth thanks to rising energy export income and political stability. Russia now provided more initiative, participation and financing. Thus in 2008 Foreign Minister Lavrov promised more contributions to Barents projects.<sup>23</sup> In early 2009, 40 per cent of the projects of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat were co-financed by Russian sources and Russia contributes as much as the others to the International Barents Secretariat (see below), except that Norway paid half of its budget.<sup>24</sup>

In 2008 relations between Russia and the EU became strained in connection with the war in Georgia, and the conclusion of a new PCA was postponed for a number of reasons, which also hampered Barents cooperation. In 2009 Russia’s five Barents regions could not participate in applying for EU funds to implement the Barents five-year programme, since the EU commission and Russia could not agree on the

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<sup>22</sup> Olav Schram Stokke, Geir Hönneland and Peter Johan Schei, “Pollution and conservation”, in Stokke et al. pp. 86 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Barents Observer 10 June 2008.

<sup>24</sup> .Margrethe Alnes, “Connecting Barents peoples”, in Atle Staalesen (ed.) *Talking Barents. People, borders and regional cooperation*, The Norwegian Barents Secretariat, Kirkenes, pp. 39 ff, <http://www.barents.no/barents-review.141647.en.html>, accessed 31 May 2010.

financial terms. The BEAC supported the cause of the Russian regions.<sup>25</sup> Another problem complicating trade and investments was the fact that Russia despite many years of negotiations was not a member of the World Trade Organisation, and the Nordic members have repeatedly called on Russia to join.<sup>26</sup>

Russian officials long hoped that the world financial crisis starting in 2008 would not affect the Barents cooperation, but they soon had to change their mind.<sup>27</sup> At the 2009 summit in Murmansk, Lavrov brought up the idea of establishing a BEAC bank or fund to support the regional projects at the expense of the states, and welcomed a Swedish and Finnish proposal to organize a first meeting of the economy ministers to promote the maintenance and expansion of the Barents cooperation. He also wished that the benefits of cooperation should not only benefit the border regions, but also the more distant Komi and Nenets region.<sup>28</sup>

Besides economic constraints there are also some political and administrative constraints in the Barents cooperation. While the Russian regions in the 1990s were quite independent and were relatively free to have foreign relations, this changed, when Putin in 2000 strengthened the federal power and its control of regions and created a Northwestern Federal District based in St. Petersburg under the president in 2000. The regions became more economically dependent on the federal budget and the president was empowered to appoint and fire the regional governors/presidents. In Murmansk the governor Yevdokimov was fired in 2009, accused of wanting to detach

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<sup>25</sup> Swedish chair, p. 4, BEAC, Möte i Barents regionråd, Brussels, 13 May 2009, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> BEAC, 11<sup>th</sup> session, Rovaniemi, 14-15 November 2007, p. 2, [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st).

<sup>27</sup> BEAC, Möte i Barents regionråd, Brussels, 13 May 2009 (A. Vasiliev, ”Informatsiia Komiteta starshikh dolzhnostnykh lits”), p. 1; 4<sup>th</sup> conference of parliamentarians, A. Vasiliev, Vystuplenie predsedatelia Komiteta starshikh dolzhnostnykh lits, Syktyvkar, 26 May 2009, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> BEAC, XII Session of the BEAC, Murmansk 15 October 2009, Sergei Lavrov, “Report of the Russian chairmanship”, p. 5,

[http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/All\\_Documents\\_of\\_the\\_XII\\_Session\\_of\\_BEAC.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/All_Documents_of_the_XII_Session_of_BEAC.pdf).

the region and give it to the Scandinavians and Americans who were interested in the Shtokman gas field (!).

Another problem with the Barents regional council in the 2000s was that only a few of its working groups were active and the sessions were attended by a limited number of people. In 2007 a Murmansk foreign policy document did not even mention the Barents cooperation.<sup>29</sup> An *ad hoc* group on organisational changes in 2007 found that for some Russian regions, the Barents programmes mostly provided image with no or few practical outcomes. Projects were mainly of a bilateral character (Murmansk-Finmark, Karelia-Västerbotten, etc.) while the whole idea of Barents cooperation was multilateral cooperation. Another problem was the lack of information among the regions about each other, which sometimes made it difficult to reach joint conclusions on concrete issues. On the Russian side this was partly due to the fact that the people involved in the Barents cooperation were civil servants who also had other responsibilities. The group therefore recommended the creation of a national Russian secretariat, but was pessimistic about the financing of it. Since it was also both time-consuming and very expensive to keep the working groups running, the group also proposed *ad hoc* and joint BEAC and BRC working groups.<sup>30</sup> Naturally, Russian attendance increased when Russia or a Russian region held the chairmanship and organised meetings in Russia.

Even though also the Barents Regional Council in 2007 called for a permanent Barents council in every country, Russia still does not have one.<sup>31</sup> In order to mitigate the information problems, an International Barents Secretariat (IBS) was opened during the Russian chairmanship in 2008 according to a previous intergovernmental

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<sup>29</sup> Atle Staalesen, “New times for Barents cooperation” in Staalesen (ed), pp. 18 f)

<sup>30</sup> BEAC, Ad-hoc group on organisational changes, “Towards a more effective regional Barents cooperation”, 14 May, 2007, pp.23 f.

<sup>31</sup> BEAC, Joint statement by the BRC at the BEAC XI session, 15 November 2007, p. 1.  
<http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/JointStatement20071114ENG.pdf>.

agreement, but it was claimed to have been initiated by Russia.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the Russian presidency, Foreign Minister Lavrov emphatically praised the IBS for its services. The IBS now has a Russian head. Yet, the secretariat is very small (five employees) and shares offices with the Norwegian one in Kirkenes. The latter has established information offices in three Russian regions with Russian personnel, tasked to follow up the projects and inform about the Barents cooperation.<sup>33</sup> Russia thus appreciated the economic support it received from Barents cooperation, but it did not contribute much to the organisation itself nor to the projects.

### ***The Russian view of the BEAC***

Being a co-founder of the Barents Council, Russia has consistently been positive of its aims and activities. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in 1993 hoped that the BEAC would become a prototype for a system of cooperation zones stretching down to southern Europe. He declared that the Arctic would cease to be a theatre of military competition and that it was time to open up the Russian North for equitable international contacts.<sup>34</sup>

President Medvedev's new Foreign Policy Concept of 2008 appreciated practical cooperation with Northern Europe, including the implementation of joint projects in multilateral structures in the Barents and Arctic region, also with respect to indigenous peoples.<sup>35</sup> At an OSCE meeting in Madrid in 2008, Foreign Minister Lavrov praised the BEAC for building an area of stability, trust and sustainable development. When visiting the BEAC offices in Kirkenes he called the cooperation unique and innovative, adding that "the further north, the closer the relations between

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<sup>32</sup> BEAC, XII session, Murmansk governor Dmitrienko, p.17.

<sup>33</sup> BEAC, The Norwegian Barents Secretariat, <http://www.barents.no/organization.139718.en.html>, accessed. 9 September 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Sergounin, "The Barents regional cooperation and the Russian security discourse", in Flikke (ed.), p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> President of Russia, "Kontseptsiiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii", 12 July 2008, p. 11. [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), accessed 11 August 2008 .

East and West”.<sup>36</sup> Opening the 2009 summit in Murmansk at the end of the Russian chairmanship, he explained that the success of the BEAC lay in concrete action in many small joint projects for the benefit of the local people.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, a foreign ministry official at an EU seminar in Brussels saw the BEAC as a model and (together with the Arctic Council) a key organisation in the Arctic, capable of solving all issues. Its secret of success was not giant projects but to implement small and medium scale projects, “not Shtokman but like the switching to energy-saving lamps”. The cooperation between the BEAC and the Regional Council created a synergy, which was a major factor of success, he stated.<sup>38</sup>

This Barents cooperation should be seen in the context of Russian conflicts with other neighbours in the last few years, such as Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus, and the growing competition over energy resources in the Arctic as a result of growing energy consumption and climate change in the Arctic. Medvedev’s National Security Doctrine of 2009 warned that competition over energy resources in the Arctic could lead to armed conflicts. The Russian military worry about NATO ambitions in the Arctic and their increased presence.<sup>39</sup>

Cooperation with the Northern neighbours and the BEAC is seen as an alternative to this, which even the Russian military appreciates. Thus Russia has intensified military contacts with Norway in the Far North, and the formerly closed Russian border regions have opened up to foreign visitors. When Commander of the Northern Fleet Admiral Nikolai Makarov visited Norwegian military bases in 2009, he also paid a visit to the Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes. There he stated that the High North is more peaceful than other regions and promised that the Russian Northern Fleet would always be ready to support such institutions in securing stability in the

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<sup>36</sup> Staalesen, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Vasiliev, “Vystuplenie predsedatelia Komiteta”, Brussels, 13 May, pp. 1 f.

<sup>39</sup> Staalesen, pp. 10 ff, Trude Pettersen, “Cross border security cooperation”, p. 63, in Staalesen (ed); Slizhevskii, 26 March 2010.

area.<sup>40</sup> This relaxed view of the Barents region clearly paved the way for the Russian-Norwegian sea border settlement in 2010, which further improved the atmosphere in the Barents.

### ***Russian economic priorities: trade and investments***

Turning now to the aims and priorities in different fields, the declared general aim at the founding of the BEAC in 1993 was to promote bi- and multilateral cooperation in many fields, e.g. environment, economy and technology, transport, tourism, culture and indigenous peoples. The Kirkenes declaration supported the reform process in Russia and expressed the conviction that the cooperation would contribute to peace and security in the area.<sup>41</sup> The main goal thus was to help develop Northwest Russia, emphasizing soft security issues, while military issues were omitted, which also Russia preferred. The 2003 anniversary declaration confirmed the commitment to a balanced approach to economic and social development and environmental protection.<sup>42</sup>

The priority of the Russian chairmanship in 2007-2009 was to “ensure sustainable development with an emphasis on social and economic factors, linking it closely to ... environmental requirements and also to support for indigenous peoples”. As for the economy, it wanted to pay special attention to trade liberalisation, including elimination of administrative and technical barriers, support of small and medium enterprises, promotion of innovation and information exchange networks, and to create a favourable investment climate.<sup>43</sup> Simultaneously with the Murmansk summit

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<sup>40</sup> Pettersen in Staalesen, pp. 68 f.

<sup>41</sup> BEAC, The Kirkenes Declaration, 11 January 1993, accessed 8 September 2010, [www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/459\\_doc\\_KirkenesDeclaration.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/459_doc_KirkenesDeclaration.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> BEAC, “Barents Euro-Arctic 10 year anniversary Declaration”, 11 January 2003, [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/462\\_doc\\_BarentsSummitDeclaration.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/462_doc_BarentsSummitDeclaration.pdf), accessed 1 June 2010.

<sup>43</sup> BEAC, “Program of the Russian Chairmanship in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2007-2009, 15 November 2007, [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEAC\\_Russian\\_Program.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEAC_Russian_Program.pdf); accessed 8 September 2010.

in 2009 an international economic forum was held in Murmansk with about 500 participants, including major energy companies and Russian banks. Foreign Minister Lavrov wanted this to become a permanent regional platform for business contacts.<sup>44</sup>

However, already at the end of the first Russian chairmanship in 1995-1996 the BEAC summit openly admitted that financing was a major problem and that there were obstacles to large-scale projects in Russia and to trade and business, including customs and transit procedures.<sup>45</sup> In several cases the Russian partners pressed the Westerners out when their joint company started to run a profit. Thus business cooperation got low priority from late 1990s, and more stress was put on health issues and people-to-people contacts.<sup>46</sup> At a Barents Industrial Partnership meeting in 2004 forest industries fretted that investors were seriously concerned by prolific and complicated registration procedures, frequent inspections, and tough fines for minor errors.<sup>47</sup> At the 2009 summit the Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr-Støre praised the economic forum, but called for a mechanism to address bottlenecks such as customs and bureaucracy.<sup>48</sup> President Medvedev in 2011 signed a new decree, forbidding foreigners to own land in Russian border areas, including almost the whole Kola peninsula, the cities of Arkhangelsk, Severodvinsk, Naryan-Mar (the Nenets ‘capital’) and Novaya Zemlya.<sup>49</sup> Even if this only codifies former practice, it cannot but complicate foreign investments. Thus even though Russia and the Nordic states

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<sup>44</sup> XII session, Lavrov, pp. 3 f.

<sup>45</sup> BEAC, Joint Statement of the Fourth Session, 5-6 November 1996, Petrozavodsk, p. 2-3, [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/495\\_doc\\_Petrozavodskcommunique\\_1996\\_e.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/495_doc_Petrozavodskcommunique_1996_e.pdf), accessed 6 Sept. 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Geir Hönneland, “Cross-border cooperation in the North: The case of Northwest Russia”, in Wilson Rowe (ed), p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> BEAC, “2<sup>nd</sup> Barents Industrial Partnership Meeting, Petrozavodsk, 5 October 2004, p. 2. [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/2985\\_doc\\_BIPII-Conclusions-Eng.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/2985_doc_BIPII-Conclusions-Eng.pdf),

<sup>48</sup> BEAC, XII session,, Gahr-Støre, p. 7. In early 2011 Gahr-Støre again urged regional Russian authorities to facilitate foreign investments and ownership. Baltic Observer, 4 February 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Barents Observer, 10 January 2011.



agreed on promoting mutual trade and economic cooperation, the practical project work in the Russian regions was and is hampered by endemic factors such as centralised decision-making, security concerns, bureaucracy and corruption.

### ***Transport, border and visa issues***

The issues of transport and border infrastructure are intimately connected with trade and investments. In the 1990s several BEAC projects in this field were devoted to the re/construction of Russian ports on the Arctic, railways and roads leading to Norway and Finland, and the international airports in the Russian Barents region.<sup>50</sup> A steering committee for the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) was set up in 1998, which drew up five-year action plans for multimodal integration.<sup>51</sup> It was introduced into the EU transport cooperation as one of four pan-European transport areas, partly profiting from Interreg funds. The BEAC 2003 Declaration made special mention of the need to facilitate transport and travel in the eastern and western directions.<sup>52</sup>

During its chairmanships Russia emphasized the importance of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which also was endorsed by the BEAC councils (with due regard for environment) and a special regional working group was formed.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Russian Barents regions called for support for the federal programme to build a railway connecting Arkhangelsk with Komi and Siberia (Belkomur), which required substantial financial backing.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the Russian transport strategy of

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<sup>50</sup> BEAC, Third Session, October 9-10, 1995, Rovaniemi, pp. 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> BEAC, Working groups, BEATA Action Programme 2009 (Proposal of the Russian Federation, 2008) [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/action\\_programme\(eng\).pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/action_programme(eng).pdf), p. 3. For a list of previous action programmes, see *ibidem*, pp. 4 ff:

<sup>52</sup> BEAC, Steering committee; Meetings, “Barents Euro-Arctic 10 year anniversary Declaration”, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> BEAC, Joint statement of the fourth session, 1996, pp. 3 f; Joint Communique, 2001, p. 4. [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/487\\_doc\\_Murmanskcommunique\\_e.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/487_doc_Murmanskcommunique_e.pdf): On the NSR, see Summers, pp. 29.

<sup>54</sup> BEAC, “Midterm Review Meeting”, Solovetskie Islands, 13-15 September, 2004, p. 2, [www.beac.st/?DeptID=8265](http://www.beac.st/?DeptID=8265), accessed 1 June 2010, p. 2.

2005 also gave priority to projects like building a pipeline system from Siberia as well as modernizing railways and roads between Murmansk and St. Petersburg, that is to say north-south.<sup>55</sup>

However, the Nordic neighbours were probably more interested in east-west connections on a smaller scale, which contribute to Barents integration. Along this line a Russian BEAC official has also stressed the need to harmonize Russian plans to make Murmansk a regional transport hub with improving the transit facilities in northern Norway.<sup>56</sup> This would benefit the increasing Russian export of raw materials, including fish, to the West. However, a general problem with BEATA cooperation as with other BEAC working groups is that it does not have its own budget. Each party covers its costs from the national budget, though the chair country pays for the organisation of its meetings on its territory.<sup>57</sup>

Concerning the border infrastructure, Norway and especially Finland have contributed to modernizing the border stations on both sides. As a result of this and of economic growth, the number of border passages each year has increased tremendously, for example at the Norwegian border from about 3000 in the 1990s to over 100 000 in the 2000s, which in turn has created many business and private ties across the borders – often hailed as one of the successes of Barents cooperation.<sup>58</sup> However, there are some problems. The queues are often very long, especially in southern Finland, due to slow and inefficient customs procedures on the Russian side.<sup>59</sup> The BEAC prime ministers vowed in the 2003 Kirkenes declaration that goods should pass the border in no more than two hours, but the situation did not improve.<sup>60</sup> In 2007 the Russian

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<sup>55</sup> BEATA Action programme 2009, p. 6, Protocol No. 19, 2009, p. 10,

[http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEATA\\_Moscow\\_06\\_October\\_2009\\_Meeting\\_protocol.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEATA_Moscow_06_October_2009_Meeting_protocol.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Vasiliev, “Vystuplenie”, 13 May 2009, Brussels, pp. 4 f.

<sup>57</sup> BEATA Action programme 2009, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> BEAC, XII session, Gahr-Störe, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Nilsen, “Border crossing exercises”, in Staalesen (ed), pp. 53 ff.

<sup>60</sup> BEAC, “Barents Euro-Arctic 10 year anniversary Declaration”, p. 1.

BEAC chairmanship again promised to simplify customs procedures. A Russian BEATA representative has pointed out that “single window” controls are under consideration and that road charges will not be imposed on some EU states.<sup>61</sup>

A closely related issue is that of visas.<sup>62</sup> Russians have complained about high fees and asked for visa exemption at BEAC meetings. At the 2009 summit Foreign Minister Lavrov declared that Russia was interested in the greatest possible simplification, particularly in the border zones, and announced that some settlements had been taken out of the security zone on the Russian side. Regional parliamentarians have also stressed the visa issue.<sup>63</sup> During its chairmanship in 2007-2009, Russia took the initiative to set up a new BEAC working group to promote tourism in the region. The promotion of tourism was already mentioned by the Kirkenes Declaration.<sup>64</sup> A Russian senior official in 2009 hoped that the financial crisis could boost tourism in the Barents region, since people would find this less expensive than for instance Thailand and the Seychelles.<sup>65</sup> Russia nowadays grants visa-free stay for three days on tourist ships in St. Petersburg.

In fact, Russia’s Barents neighbours have been quite forthcoming. Even though they adopted the EU Schengen agreement in 1996, they have taken steps to open consulates in Russia on a bilateral basis and liberalised the visa regimes. Finland, which has more trade than the others with Russia, has pushed for abolishing the visa regime between the EU and Russia and grants the highest number of Schengen visas to Russians in the EU, 80 per cent of them multi-entry. More than seven million

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<sup>61</sup> BEATA Protocol, no. 19, 2009, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> For an extensive analysis, see Minna-Mari Salminen, Arkady Moshes, *Practise What You Preach, the prospects for visa freedom in Russia-EU relations*, FIIA Report no 18, 2009, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki.

<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) of the Russian Federation, “Stenogramma vystupleniia i otvetov Ministra”, 15 October 2009, [www.mid.ru/doc](http://www.mid.ru/doc), accessed 8 September 2010; Barents Observer, 27 May 2007, Komiinform, 27 May 2009, [www.komiinform.ru](http://www.komiinform.ru), accessed 6 September 2010.

<sup>64</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> MID, Vasiliev, Brussels, 13 May, p. 4.

people pass the border every year.<sup>66</sup> Non-EU member Norway has actually tended to apply the Schengen rules more strictly than Finland and has less trade with Russia up in the cold Far North.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, in 2008 Norway started to issue so-called Pomor visas to Russians living in the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions, which allowed multiple entries without invitations.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, there are at least as many obstacles on the Russian side. The Finnish and Norwegian foreign ministers have pointed out that Russian passports do not meet the EU's technical standards and that there is a complex registration system for foreigners visiting or working in Russia, which the Nordics do not have. Russia also maintains a 25 km security zone along the borders under FSB control with ever changing rules, and several cases of security-related arrests and refusals of visas have occurred in the past. Partly as a result of all this, far more Russians visit the Nordic countries than vice versa.<sup>69</sup>

Summing up, one may conclude that Russia has profited from BEAC cooperation especially with regard to the border infrastructure, with most of the financing coming from the Finnish and Norwegian governments and EU funds. Even if the introduction of Schengen rules complicated the visa issues, the Nordic countries have made efforts to facilitate cross-border travel on a bilateral basis. Russia has invited tourism and called for visa-freedom at the BEAC meetings but at the same time kept its own restrictions for Nordic travellers. The visa issue mainly is a bilateral national one.

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<sup>66</sup> Over 700 000 visas have been issued every year since 2008, most of them in St. Petersburg, where a new application centre, located in a major shopping mall, was opened in February 2011. Barents Observer, 21 September 2009, 8 February 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Alexander Stubb, The road to visa-free travel", 9 November 2010, [www.formin.finland.fi](http://www.formin.finland.fi), accessed 17 February 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Nilsen, pp. 52 f.

<sup>68</sup> Baltic Observer, 4 February 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Stubb, pp. 1 f; Visa House, "Alexander Stubb: Visa-free regime between Russia and the EU is possible by 2018", 14 February 2011, [www.visahouse.com/news](http://www.visahouse.com/news), accessed 17 February 2011; Baltic Observer, 15 October 2009, 15 September 2010, 4, 8 February 2011.

## **Energy cooperation**

Concerning energy cooperation, the BEAC has ever since 1993 focussed on the environmental effects and underlined the importance of energy savings. The Russian chairmanship in its 2007 programme also focussed on this.<sup>70</sup> At the working group meetings on energy in 2009 Russian regional officials concentrated on cooperation on energy efficiency and renewables in Russian municipalities and proposed to work out an action plan.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time a foreign ministry spokesman declared that energy was central and could function as a platform for joint action in the region.<sup>72</sup> At the BEAC summit in Murmansk Lavrov stressed that developing the hydrocarbon resources of the Barents Sea continental shelf would strengthen regional cooperation and that the role of the BEAC in the world would grow.<sup>73</sup> At the concomitant Murmansk economic forum dedicated to “conquering the Arctic”, Murmansk governor Dmitry Dmitrienko said that Barents cooperation could be seen as a preparation for the Shtokman project, and federal ministers and representatives of large companies such as Gazprom and Total participated in the forum.<sup>74</sup> A Duma deputy also stressed the importance for the Barents region of the Nordstream project, which would diversify gas import routes to Western Europe.<sup>75</sup>

However, even though energy exploration and production are vital to the Russian economy and Russia has pushed for it, the BEAC has so far not been a forum for this.

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<sup>70</sup> BEAC, Program of the Russian chairmanship, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> BEAC, Minutes of the meeting of co-chairs, 18 March 2009, pp. 2 f, <http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/> Minutes of the meeting of the joint BEAC and BEAR working group on energy”, 24 September 2009, pp. 2 f, <http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/JEWG>, accessed 8 September 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Barents Observer, 15 November 2007.

<sup>73</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, pp.2 f.

<sup>74</sup> Novosti Federatsii, Regions.ru, 13 Oct. 2009; Staalesen, p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> BEAC, XII session, Pivnenko, pp. 20 f.

Instead this is a matter for the federal authorities, and the big energy companies are not involved in the BEAC framework.

Concerning the related issue of dividing the continental shelf in the Arctic, which contains rich energy resources, Lavrov has made clear that it is not discussed in the BEAC framework, but in bilateral negotiations.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, in 2010 Russia and Norway signed an agreement on the borderline between their economic zones in the Barents, which had been a bone of contention since the 1970s. The agreement included cooperation in energy projects across the sea border.<sup>77</sup> Thus the BEAC was not relevant for Russia's great energy production plans.

### ***Environment and climate***

Since the very beginning environmental issues have played a central role in Barents cooperation. The Kirkenes Declaration of 1993 especially noted the safety of the nuclear facilities, radioactive waste and nickel production on the Kola peninsula as special problems which also threatened the Nordic neighbours.<sup>78</sup> A lot of efforts were spent on boosting the safety of the Kola plant and handling radioactive waste from military and civilian activities, including nuclear submarines and ships in cooperation with a US-sponsored Arctic military environment cooperation programme (AMEC).<sup>79</sup> The summit under Russian chairmanship in 2001 thanked the parties who had assisted Russia with this.<sup>80</sup>

The Ten-Year Anniversary Declaration in 2003 noted with concern the impact of climate change in the Barents region. In 2009 the BEAC summit devoted much attention to environmental issues, e.g. stressing the urgent need to consider

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<sup>76</sup> .MID, Stenogramma, 16 October 2009, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> President of Russia, "News conference following Russian-Norwegian talks", 15 September 2010, [www.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/946](http://www.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/946), accessed 12 October 2010, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>78</sup> The Kirkenes Declaration, 11 January 1993, [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st), accessed 8 September 2010.

<sup>79</sup> BEAC, 4th BEAC Foreign Ministers Meeting, Joint statement, 5-6 November 1996, Petrozavodsk, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> BEAC, 8<sup>th</sup> BEAC Foreign Ministers Meeting, 2001, Joint Communiqué, p. 4.

environmental vulnerability in economic activities. It recognized climate change as a major concern and hoped for a successful agreement at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen. However, the Nordic governments were rather disappointed with the result of the conference. Assuming the BEAC chairmanship, Sweden gave first priority to strengthen cooperation by linking economic growth, climate change and sustainable resource use towards *an eco-efficient economy*.<sup>81</sup> At a BEAC meeting in Tromsö in February 2010, the environment ministers called for an action plan concerning climate change and to focus work on hot spots in the Russian member regions.<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned above, Russia had other priorities due to its economic crises throughout the 1990s. In line with this President Putin on his accession to power in 2000 reduced the influence of environmental agencies in Russia and suppressed the environmental groups, accusing them of serving foreign interests.<sup>83</sup> Assuming the BEAC chairmanship in 2007, Russia's order of priorities was sustainable development with emphasis on social and economic factors, "linking it closely" to environmental requirements. When specifying the environmental tasks, the programme aimed at eliminating environmental "hot spots", numbering nearly 50, to stabilize the climate system (!), to adapt to the negative effects of climate change, and to preserve biodiversity and protected areas, clean water resources, and forest preservation. When summing up the Russian chairmanship in 2009 Foreign Minister Lavrov, unlike other colleagues, hardly mentioned environmental issues, though he praised an intersectoral conference on climate change just held in Vadsö, Norway, not in Russia.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> BEAC, Chair state, Program of the Swedish chairmanship, p. 3, accessed 3 November 2010.  
[http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEAC\\_Swedish\\_Chairmanship\\_Programme\\_2009-11.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEAC_Swedish_Chairmanship_Programme_2009-11.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> BEAC, 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ministers of environment, 17 February 2010, Tromsö, pp. 2 f,  
[http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Ministers\\_Declaration](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Ministers_Declaration), accessed , 3 November 2010,.

<sup>83</sup> Hönneland, p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 16 ff; Program of the Russian chairmanship, pp. 2 f.

However, there was a recognition of the existence of environmental problems, especially among scientists, and Russia willingly received assistance in the environmental field. Contrary to the USA, Russia did ratify the Kyoto Protocol, which was duly welcomed in the BEAC.<sup>85</sup> In 2009 Russia adopted a climate security doctrine. President Medvedev in March 2010 instructed his government to implement it by drafting the necessary laws and regulations, warning of the impending problems and the lack of a clear organisational system for climate research. On the other hand he complained of the “carbon protectionism” of developed countries, which could limit Russian export opportunities regarding oil and gas, and finished by saying that concerning the consequences of climate change, the situation is not at all always as clear as the environmentalists think.<sup>86</sup> This ambivalent attitude also permeates Russian policy in the BEAC.

### ***Health issues***

Due to the economic and political turmoil, the health situation in Russia, not least in the northwest, became alarming in the 1990s. Fearing that infectious diseases would spread, the Nordic governments and international agencies started several medical aid projects in Russia. However, the health issue was not mentioned in the Kirkenes Declaration of 1993, and even though a conference of the Barents ministers of health took place in 1994, it did not become a priority until 1998, when a Health Cooperation Program focussing on HIV/AIDS and TBC, based on bilateral and international funding but without multilateral Barents structures, was launched.<sup>87</sup> Under Russian chairmanship the BEAC in 2001 praised the serious efforts at combating TBC but expressed deep concern about the increase of HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases in the prisons.<sup>88</sup> The 2003 Kirkenes Declaration urged the national

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<sup>85</sup> BEAC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Barents Industrial Partnership Meeting, October 2004.

<sup>86</sup> President of Russia, “Opening remarks at Security Council meeting on climate change”, 17 March 2010, [www.eng.kremlin.ru](http://www.eng.kremlin.ru), accessed 18 March 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Rowe, Hönneland, “Communicable disease control” in Stokke, Hönneland, pp. 53 ff.

<sup>88</sup> BEAC, 8<sup>th</sup> BEAC Foreign Ministers Meeting, 2001, Joint Communiqué, p. 9.



authorities to gain full control of the spread of TBC in the region “within ten years”. Russian health authorities at first resisted the WHO-sponsored DOTS tuberculosis strategy based on sputum smear microscopy on self-reporting patients, referring to the Soviet tradition of mass screening, surgery and hospitalization, but regional authorities soon accepted the DOTS, since it was backed by substantial funding, while the central authorities provided little.<sup>89</sup>

The Russian chairmanship in 2007 mentioned public health first on its agenda, focussing on promoting a healthy life style, prevention of alcohol, smoking and drug abuse, increasing availability of medication, and prevention of non-infectious diseases as well as socially significant ones like HIV/AIDS.<sup>90</sup> A subprogramme on Children and Youth at Risk was launched. At the end of the chairmanship Foreign Minister Lavrov said that the BEAC-backed programme to fight infectious diseases had brought considerable practical benefits to all participants.<sup>91</sup> The subgroup on HIV/AIDS reported great progress since 2004, and Russian representatives appreciated international projects for their role in building professional competence, new methods and modern technologies. However, it transpires that most projects depend on support from Nordic governments, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the EU Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being, and the WHO.<sup>92</sup>

### ***Indigenous peoples***

The indigenous peoples of the Barents region were especially noted in the 1993 Kirkenes Declaration. The working group in question, which includes representatives of the Saami, Vepsians and the Nenets, is the only one in permanent existence since 1995. The chairman has an advisory role to both the ministerial BEAC and the

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<sup>89</sup> Rowe, Hönneland, pp. 60 ff.

<sup>90</sup> BEAC, Program of the Russian chairmanship, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> BEAC, Joint working group on health, Annual report 2009, pp. 32 ff, 12<sup>th</sup> session, p. 68, Annual report 2008, List of projects, Vasiliev, Brussels, 13 May 2009., p. 5.

Regional Council, and one representative sits in the latter.<sup>93</sup> The programme of the Russian chairmanship in 2007 promised support to the indigenous peoples as the fourth point. It vowed to devote special attention to their involvement with regard to education, health, tradition and economic activity, and to use the office in Murmansk to these ends. A project to promote indigenous entrepreneurship was started, mainly with Norwegian support.<sup>94</sup> At the summit in 2009 the Russian chairman suggested that *all* the peoples should be represented in the working group, notably the Nenets and the Komi. The summit welcomed the Action Plan for 2009-2012 and the decision that the working group should be represented at all sessions of the senior officials and other BEAC working groups.<sup>95</sup> In February 2010 the first Barents indigenous peoples' congress in Kirkenes affirmed the rights of the Nenets, Saami and Vepsians to self-determination, which first and foremost should be achieved by receiving *permanent* status at the BEAC and the BRC: This proposal was upheld by the three peoples' organisations and forwarded for a decision to the 2011 summit.<sup>96</sup> So far, however, the Komi are not included as an indigenous people in the regional working group and its work (but are represented by an official of the Komi republic) since they are not classified as such in Russian legislation, because they exceed 50 000 persons.<sup>97</sup> Even though the Nenets are members of the working group they also have republican status and are represented in the Regional Council.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> BEAC, Program of the Russian chairmanship, p. 2, Working group of indigenous peoples, [www.beac.st/in\\_English/Barents\\_Euro-Arctic\\_Council/Indigenous\\_Peoples.iw3](http://www.beac.st/in_English/Barents_Euro-Arctic_Council/Indigenous_Peoples.iw3), accessed 9 November 2010; Wilson Rowe, Överland, "Indigenous issues" in Stokke, Hönneland, pp. 30 f.

<sup>94</sup> BEAC, Working groups, Action plan for indigenous peoples of the BEAC for 2009-2012, p. 12, [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/WGIP\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2009-2012\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/WGIP_Action_Plan_2009-2012_ENG.pdf), accessed 9 November 2010;

<sup>95</sup> BEAC, 12<sup>th</sup> session, Lavrov, p. 5, Joint Communique, p. 69.

<sup>96</sup> BEAC, "Increased status for indigenous peoples?", Newsletter\_1-2010, accessed 3 Nov 2010.

<sup>97</sup> BEAC, "Indigenous peoples in the Barents Region, ,[www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st); 12<sup>th</sup> session, Støre-Jakobsen, p. 22.

<sup>98</sup> Barentsinfo, [www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/document\\_database](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/document_database).

However, there are several problems with regard to the Russian indigenous peoples. Also they have suffered from the centralisation of power and the suspicion of the federal powers that foreign organisations may foment political opposition among (see below). They should therefore not be seen as independent actors like their Nordic brethren. They are also few and poor.<sup>99</sup> Most of the projects involving the indigenous peoples in Russia were financed by Norway and handled by its Barents Secretariat on a bilateral basis. Funds have also been misspent in projects with the Saami and the Nenets, and local conflicts have occurred.<sup>100</sup> The indigenous peoples totally depend on the authorities for participating in BEAC cooperation, and Russian officials have called for more funding so that indigenous representatives can participate in the working group activities.<sup>101</sup> Further, the expanding industrial sector, mostly connected with mining and energy extraction, encroaches on the rights of the indigenous peoples engaged in traditional herding and fishing, and also Western companies ignore them. This has politicized and split the Saami community, one part of which has problems with the Murmansk governor. Especially the Russian Saami have profited from the economic and political support of their brethren in the Nordic region.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Rescue operations***

Even though military issues are not in the purview of the BEAC, a new related topic for BEAC cooperation in the last decade has been civil-military rescue operations, the importance of which was actualized by the accident with the Russian strategic nuclear submarine Kursk in the Barents Sea in August 2000. Barents Rescue exercises have been held in Norway, Sweden and Finland since 2001 with some Russian

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<sup>99</sup> The Saami in Russia number about 2000, in Norway 50 000-60 000, in Sweden some 20 000, in Finland some 7 000 The Nenets are about 7 000, and the Vepsians in Karelia about 6 000.(BEAC, “Indigenous peoples in the Barents region)

<sup>100</sup> Wilson Rowe, *Överland*, pp 36 f.

<sup>101</sup> XII session, Vasiliev, 13 May 2009

<sup>102</sup> Christina Henriksen, “Indigenous peoples and industry”, in Staalesen (ed.), pp. 95 ff.

participation. In 2008 an intergovernmental agreement on emergency prevention was signed, which Russia hailed as a success for its chairmanship.<sup>103</sup> In the same year Russia held an international oil spill exercise and in 2009 it organised a Barents rescue exercise for the first time. It was led by a Russian minister and included both military and Security Service units, among the former a heavy amphibious aircraft (Beriev Be-200 Altair) which is a Russian specialty.<sup>104</sup> Belatedly, Russia has thus taken a growing interest in rescue cooperation with its small BEAC neighbours, especially after an intergovernmental agreement on such cooperation was signed.

### ***Human contacts, science and culture***

Already the Kirkenes Declaration emphasised the importance of promoting Barents cooperation in the fields of science and education, culture and human contacts in general. Ten years later, in 2003, the prime ministers welcomed an action plan for cultural exchange, encouraged youth mobility and efforts to form a Barents cultural identity.<sup>105</sup> Working groups for education & research and for culture were formed in 2001 and many projects were initiated and international meetings held. All this was facilitated by faster border passages and communications as shown above. Also the indigenous peoples were part and parcel of this.

Russia played an active role in this.<sup>106</sup> In 2007 the Russian chairmanship wanted to intensify cooperation in the field of education, for instance by developing academic and scientific mobility, to promote the mutual study of national cultures, to prepare an action plan for culture, and to develop youth contacts by holding a meeting of ministers and a youth conference. A second cultural programme for 2008-2010 was

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<sup>103</sup> MID, “Stenogramma”, p. 1, BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Baltic Observer 8, 12 September 2009, Pettersen, p. 67.

<sup>105</sup> BEAC, “Barents Euro-Arctic 10 year anniversary Declaration”, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> See BEAC, Joint communiqué, 2001, pp. 8 f.

started, and after the Petrozavodsk University held an international education and science conference in 2008 it became head of the new BEAC joint working group.<sup>107</sup>

However, there are some restricting factors. Also in this field BEAC cooperation with Russia to a large extent depends on funding from the Nordic states and the EU, so the value of cooperation with for example the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Northern Dimension, which has a new partnership for Culture, is often emphasized.<sup>108</sup>

Further, after Putin became president in 2000, Russian democracy became increasingly controlled, the political opposition and NGOs receiving support from abroad were harassed, and foreign criticism of the Russian political system was rejected. Thus the Norwegian Barents Secretariat since 2008 only gives grants to the Norwegian partners in cooperation projects in Russia and was careful not to support projects deemed as sensitive by the Russian side.<sup>109</sup> The records of the BEAC avoid criticising Russia, especially its claim to democracy. Consequently, Russian officials praise the BEAC for not politicizing the cooperation, but focussing on practical issues.<sup>110</sup> Curiously, the communique of the 2009 summit contains a pledge to improve the well-being and living standards of all peoples in the region “based on common democratic values” and calls for more cooperation with the non-governmental sector, furthering contacts people-to-people and among mass media.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 4; Möte i Barents regionråd, Vasiliev, “Informatsiia Komiteta”, 13 May 2009, p. 2, <http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/PROTOCOL+RegCouncil+13-05-2009+Brussels+SWE+annexes.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> BEAC, Joint working group on culture, Annual report 2008, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Alnes, p. 39, in Staalesen (ed.).

<sup>110</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 2, A.B. Sverchkov, “Predstavlenie predstavitelia predsedatelstva”, November 2007, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> BEAC, 12<sup>th</sup> session, Joint communiqué, pp.66, 74.

However, there is a wide gap between Russia and the other Barents member states in how democracy is defined and practised. This puts a harness also on Barents cooperation, especially in the human field.

As a way to bridge such differences and create more democratic legitimacy, the four main BEAC members hold biannual conferences of parliamentarians. Russia held the fourth such conference in Syktyvkar, Komi, in 2009 with many representatives from the Komi republic, but also civil servants and foreign ministry officials.<sup>112</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov praised this event as an important feed-back channel matching decisions with the Northerners' everyday needs and expectations.<sup>113</sup> A Russian official labelled the parliamentarians as 'grassroots'.<sup>114</sup> However, the Russian delegation was dominated by the ruling party in the Duma and naturally backed the official line.

### ***Cooperation with other organisations***

Not surprisingly, there exist some problems of coordination between the BEAC and the other regional organisations.<sup>115</sup> Already the Kirkenes Declaration emphasised the wish not to duplicate or replace work in other bilateral or multilateral forums, but to encourage common efforts. Ten years later the importance of coordination and cooperation with other intergovernmental regional bodies such as the Arctic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) for increased effectiveness was underlined.<sup>116</sup> As the activities have evolved, the BEAC and its working groups in different fields have become increasingly involved with and dependent on other organisations and institutions for financing, especially the EU and

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<sup>112</sup> BEAC, Partners and related organizations, "The Barents Parliamentary Conference", [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st), accessed 19 January 2011.

<sup>113</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> BEAC, Statement of Mrs Inna Tarysheva, Barents regional Council, 12 May 2009, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> On the external division of labour in the Arctic, see Young, pp. 16 f.

<sup>116</sup> BEAC Kirkenes Declaration, p. 2; BEAC, "Barents Euro-Arctic 10 year anniversary Declaration", p. 2.

Nordic and European banks. As noted, the EU Commission is a member of the BEAC, and the BEAC is a partner of the Northern Dimension (ND) cooperation between the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland.<sup>117</sup> A Russian BEAC representative in 2009 stressed the importance of cooperation with the ND and the Arctic Council, but warned that the BEAC should not be diluted by other organisations, since it had a clear regional identity and had good perspectives in its field.<sup>118</sup>

The Russian chairmanship in 2007 set out to enhance the effectiveness of the whole architecture of multilateral cooperation in the North and to promote the division of labour, synchronization and coordination of activities and avoidance of duplication of efforts.<sup>119</sup> To these ends Russia initiated the first meeting of the four organisations (AC, NCM, CBSS, ND) on the level of deputy foreign ministers in St. Petersburg, where recommendations were formulated. The foreign ministers Council agreed with the need for closer coordination, while recognising the growing role of the Arctic Council as the main vehicle for circumpolar cooperation.<sup>120</sup> Such meeting now take place regularly. Thus Russia has been active in trying to boost the effectiveness of the BEAC and its relations with other bodies, which also got support from the others, but without changing focus or merging the institutions.

## **Russia in the Arctic Council**

### ***The organisation and its limitations***

Turning now from the BEAC to the other important institution in the Arctic, there are many points of comparison. The Arctic Council (AC) was founded as a high level forum on Canadian initiative in Ottawa in September 1996 on the basis of previous environmental cooperation among the Arctic countries at least since 1991. Apart from Russia and the five Nordic countries, which make up the BEAC, the AC includes the

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<sup>117</sup> BEAC, “The Barents cooperation, p. 4 f, BRC, 15 Nov 2007, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> BEAC, Vasiliev, Brussels, 13 May 2009, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> BEAC, Program of the Russian chairmanship, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> BEAC, XII session, Lavrov, p. 5. Joint communique, p. 73.

United States and Canada, which means that five of the eight member states also belong to NATO.<sup>121</sup> However, while military security issues are avoided in the BEAC framework, they are expressly excluded by the AC statutes.<sup>122</sup> Unlike the regional Barents Council, the AC encompasses the whole Arctic part of the globe and can address global issues like climate change. Yet, as will be shown below, the agenda is a little different from that of the BEAC.<sup>123</sup>

Like the BEAC, the AC was founded by an intergovernmental declaration, not by a treaty which had to be ratified. It can be described as a decision-shaping rather than decision-making body, as it provides guidelines, best practices and knowledge for other international bodies, where decisions can be taken.<sup>124</sup>

In contrast to the BEAC, six organisations of Arctic indigenous peoples are “permanent participants” along with the member states, among them the Russian Arctic Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), which represents 41 small groups (below 50 000), the Saami Council, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and the Aleut International Association, all with Russian branches. However, these participants are not allowed to vote on decisions.

The AC also has many observers. Besides a number of international organisations and NGOs, there are six non-Arctic permanent observer countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands). Along with them, China, Japan,

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<sup>121</sup> Denmark includes representatives from Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which have home rule. It should be noted that Greenland strives for independence, and if it succeeds, Denmark will no longer be an Arctic state.

<sup>122</sup> AC, Declaration on the establishment on the Arctic Council, 19 September 1996; <http://arctic-council.org/article/about>, accessed 11 November 2010.

<sup>123</sup> For a discussion on global, functionally specific arrangements versus regional, functionally broad arrangements in the Arctic, see Young, pp. 11 ff.

<sup>124</sup> AC, Arctic News, News archive, 27 Jan 2010; <http://arctic-council.org/article/>; accessed 11 November 2010; Elana Wilson Rowe, “Russian regional multilateralism: the case of the Arctic Council”, in Wilson Rowe and Torjesen (eds.) (2009) pp. 3 f. See also Young as quoted in the introduction and pp. 15 ff.



South Korea, Italy and the European Commission have participated as *ad hoc* observers in recent years and applied for the status of permanent observers but have been rebuffed.<sup>125</sup> It has been argued that the number of observers would be too great as compared with the member states. (For the Russian view, see below.)

Similar to the BEAC, the AC chairmanship rotates every second year and holds a concluding Council summit on the ministerial level, and since 2009 deputy ministers meet every year. Senior Arctic officials (SAOs) meet every six months, and decisions are taken by consensus. Also the AC has a parliamentary backup with a standing committee, which prepares the biannual conferences.<sup>126</sup> Here the European Parliament is a member.<sup>127</sup> The AC further has six permanent working groups (in the BEAC 16), supported by scientific and technical expert groups, which produce a wealth of reports. The working groups are steered by management boards typically consisting of government officials.<sup>128</sup> The AC thus offers Russia official contacts with many countries, including the US superpower, on several levels.

Russian foreign ministers have participated in most summits, and the leading diplomat V.I. Churkin (later to become ambassador to the UN) was involved when

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<sup>125</sup> AC, Senior Arctic Officials Report to the Ministers, April 2009, Tromsø, p. 3; AC, Meeting of SAOs, Final report, October 2010, p. 11, <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/>, accessed 30 November 2010. The EU application was backed for example by Sweden and Norway, but was stopped in 2009 mainly by Canada on behalf of its indigenous peoples, who opposed the EU ban on seal products. (EUobserver.com, 30 April 2009, accessed 11 November 2010) For more on the members, observers, and *ad hoc* observers such as China and the EU, see Granholm & Kiesow, pp. 15 ff, and Summers, pp. 38 ff.

<sup>126</sup> The first Arctic parliamentary conference was held by the Nordic countries in 1993, and the second including Russia, Canada, the USA and indigenous organisations was held in 1996, also before the AC was officially formed. (Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, Conferences, <http://www.arcticparl.org/conferences.aspx>, accessed 23 March 2010.

<sup>127</sup> In 2010 the ninth conference called on the Arctic Council to arrange a summit at the level of heads of state and government. (Conference of Parliamentarians, Conference Statement, p. 4)

<sup>128</sup> Concerning the problem of top-down policy in the AC, see Young, pp. 17 f.

Russia held the AC chairmanship in 2004-2006, and many other officials and experts have been involved in the activities.<sup>129</sup> However, it is noteworthy that the Russian SAO, Ambassador Anton V. Vasiliev, also often has represented Russia in the Barents Council. This seems to indicate that the Russian Foreign Ministry does not want to spend so much on personnel and/or that the two councils are seen as related, which they surely are. Further, since the statutes do not specify which ministers should participate in the summits, for instance the USA usually sends other ministers than the secretary of state.

Further, like in the BEAC, there are some problems of continuity with the rotating chairmanship. In order to remedy this, Norway, Denmark and Sweden in 2006 adopted common priorities for their consecutive chairmanships and instituted a joint AC secretariat for 2006-2012 to take care of the administrative work and the AC website, based in Tromsø (where there is also a Norwegian Polar Institute). Just like in the BEAC there are also the problems and costs associated with translation of texts and speeches (Russian-English), especially for experts and indigenous representatives.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, the AC does not have its own budget, so the chair country is responsible for the meetings, but not for experts and projects, which depend on external and national contributions.<sup>131</sup> Thus, due to its economic crisis Russia was largely absent until 1999, and it has rarely proposed and financed new projects. Its contributions have largely been in the form of administration and experts. Other member states

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<sup>129</sup> MID, Sergei V. Lavrov, "Stenogramma vystupleniia i otvetov na voprosy", 14 April 2005, p. 3; Wilson Rowe (2009), p. 10.

<sup>130</sup> AC, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, Final report, Torshavn, 19-20 October 2010, pp. 2,6: According to the Rules of Procedure, a host country should make "reasonable efforts to provide for Russian interpretation" AC, Founding documents, Iqaluit, 17-18 September 1998, p. 8, <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive>, accessed 23 March 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Geir Hönneland and Olav Schram Stokke, "Introduction", in Stokke and Hönneland, p. 3. AC, Rules of Procedure, September 1998, p. 8; Young, p. 10.

have had to cover travel costs for Russian experts and even ministers. This has undercut Russia's declared commitment to multilateralism and its prestige as a leading power as well as contributing to 'donor fatigue' among the partners. Russian projects have further tended to focus on Russia instead of trans-boundary issues, and there is a predilection for bilateral projects rather than multilateral ones as the AC statutes require.<sup>132</sup> However, when Russia's economy recovered in the 2000s, it could contribute more, and despite the financial crisis in 2009, Russia for instance allotted (belatedly) its share to the project support trust fund, which was necessary for receiving support from the Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation (NEFCO) and make the fund operational.<sup>133</sup>

Similar to the BEAC and more pronounced, there is an informal inner circle in the AC, namely the five Arctic *littoral* states including Russia but excluding Finland, Sweden and Iceland.<sup>134</sup> In 2008 the Danish foreign minister and the premier of Greenland invited the other littoral states to a much publicized meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland. A special declaration was issued, in which the states paid allegiance to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for the solution of territorial issues and discarded any need for a new comprehensive international regime in the Arctic analogous with the Antarctic treaty. They promised to develop new measures to improve the safety of maritime navigation, reduce the risk of ship-based pollution, protect the fragile environment and strengthen search and rescue capabilities. At the end 'the Arctic Five' promised to continue contributing actively to the AC and other

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<sup>132</sup> Elana Wilson Rowe, p. 8, 11

<sup>133</sup> AC, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs), Final report, Ilulissat, 28-29 April 2010, p. 13; <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/SAO%20Report%20Ilulissat.%20FINAL.PDF>, accessed 30 November 2010; Meeting of SAOs, Final report, Torshavn 19-20 October 2010; p. 13. According to the latter source, the Fund amounted to 739 800 Euros as of December 2009. Russia included its contribution in the 2010 budget and the documents only waited for the Prime Minister's signature.

<sup>134</sup> Geographically, Iceland is in fact located above the Polar Circle thanks to the little island of Grimsey.

international forums.<sup>135</sup> In March 2010 a second Arctic Five meeting was held in Canada, and a decision was taken to enhance expert-level cooperation on working out scientific material for territorial claims, the creation of an Arctic hydrographic commission, and the adoption of a mandatory regime of shipping in polar waters.<sup>136</sup> For the first time a US Secretary of State took part, namely Hillary Clinton. However, not only Finland, Sweden and Iceland criticised the holding of separate meetings of five littoral states for weakening the Council, but at the meeting also Hillary Clinton criticized Canada for not inviting them and the aboriginal leaders.<sup>137</sup> The tendency towards an inner circle thus not only threatens to weaken the Arctic Council but also to split the five. Still, since several states also talk about expanding the staff and resources of the Arctic Council, the future of the inner circle is uncertain.

### ***The Russian view of the Arctic Council***

Just like with the Barents Council Russia appreciates the multilateral cooperation in the Arctic Council. Finishing the Russian chairmanship in 2006, Foreign Minister Lavrov praised the Council for being an “equal and mutually advantageous partnership, life-based and oriented towards the needs of people”.<sup>138</sup> In 2009 he even said that all problems in the Arctic, including climate change and reducing ice cover, can be successfully resolved within special international organisations such the AC, and at the 2009 summit he mentioned the Arctic Council in the first place.<sup>139</sup> Western-oriented Russian analysts saw the great disturbances in European air transport caused

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<sup>135</sup> AC, The Ilulissat Declaration, 27-29 May 2008, <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/Ilulissat-declaration.pdf>, accessed 11 November 2010. See also Granholm (2009) p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers, The Arctic, Conferences and events, Anton Vasiliev, “Is the Ilulissat declaration adequate?”, 26 May 2010, p. 2; [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org), accessed 17 November 2010.

<sup>137</sup> National Post, 29 March 2010, [www.nationalpost.com](http://www.nationalpost.com), accessed 17 November 2010.

<sup>138</sup> MID, Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 2006, p. [www.ln.mid.ru](http://www.ln.mid.ru), accessed 30 November 2010.

<sup>139</sup> MID, Transcript of remarks, 29 April 2009, AC, Arctic News; News archive, 2 March 2009.

by the volcano eruption in Iceland in April 2010 as yet another call for more Arctic cooperation.<sup>140</sup>

One may safely conclude that Russia is among those members who do not want to grant permanent status as observers to for instance China, Japan and the EU.<sup>141</sup> Further, Russia has been a supporter of the narrower circle of the Arctic Five. At the special meeting in Canada in 2010, Russian officials defended the five states format.<sup>142</sup> The senior representative Vasiliev rejected all talk of ‘multilateral governance’ as attempts to “get a piece of the pie”. In his view only five states have continental shelves in the Arctic Ocean and strive to extend the limits, only they are directly responsible for the practical management of the ocean, its security and safety of navigation, and only they face the threats emanating from melting ice. Quoting the Ilulissat Declaration, he said that there is no need to develop any new comprehensive legal regime in the Arctic Ocean beyond the UNCLOS.<sup>143</sup> In another context Ambassador Vasiliev referred to the conclusion of the Russian-Norwegian sea border agreement as a result of good cooperation between coastal states.<sup>144</sup>

At the same time Vasiliev assured that the five states’ cooperation did not weaken the other organisations, but instead promoted the efforts to create the first legally binding AC agreement on search and rescue operations. Vasiliev even proposed that the AC

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<sup>140</sup> Dmitrii Trenin, ”Arktika – novyi fasad, ne novyi front”, in Dmitriy Trenin & Pavel Baev (eds.) *Arktika: Vzgliad iz Moskvy*, Moskovskii Tsentr Karnegi, Moscow 2010, p. 12.

<sup>141</sup> See report on Norway as supporting greater Chinese role in the AC (ITAR-TASS, 26 January 2010) The supporters say inter alia that it is essential to improve cooperation with non-Arctic states, since most of the pollution in the Arctic region stems from outside.(Hill-Marta Solberg, “Report to the Eighth conference of Arctic parliamentarians”, 13 August 2008, Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians, p. 7.)

<sup>142</sup> One may add that the official Russian definition of ‘Arctic’ includes only the Arctic Sea and the littoral states (but excluding Iceland.). Sovet Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii, “Osnovy gosudarstvennoi politiki RF v Arktike”, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> Vasiliev, 26 May 2010.

<sup>144</sup> AC, Meeting of SAOs, April 2010, p. 20.

should be strengthened by having its own budget, a permanent secretariat and decision-making powers.

In the Russian view, the Arctic is characterized by low tension, growing cooperation and mutual trust, and the experience could even be a model for other, less stable parts of the world.<sup>145</sup> Contrary to Russian militaries and nationalists, who warn of increased NATO activities in the Arctic, Foreign Minister Lavrov has stated that the practical activities of the Arctic Council debunk every prognosis that the area is becoming a potential source of conflict. He in 2010 assured that Russia is not intending to increase its armed presence there and saw no problems in the region which could motivate violence (*silovyykh reshenii*) or the presence of military blocs.<sup>146</sup> The Russian press has even claimed that according to a UN convention signed by all littoral states the Arctic should remain a demilitarized zone and that only scientific expeditions be allowed.<sup>147</sup> At the same time, Russia's right to have military forces there is taken for granted.

Russia thus sees the AC as a forum for peaceful cooperation just like the BEAC, even though more NATO states are included. The inner circle of the Arctic Five is seen as a useful forum for discussing sensitive issues such as territorial issues which concern Russian national sovereignty. Even though Russia accepts trade investments and trade with outside states in the Arctic, it appears anxious to keep the EU and particularly China outside the AC. China has shown a growing interest in the Arctic, and officials have claimed that “no nation has sovereignty over it and that China has an indispensable role to play in Arctic exploration “since we have one-fifth of the world’ population”.<sup>148</sup> This is an intriguing issue, but it cannot be elaborated here.

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<sup>145</sup> Vasiliev, 26 May 2010, [www.norden.org](http://www.norden.org).

<sup>146</sup> Slizhevskii, *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 26 March 2010.;MID, “Transcript of remarks”, 29 April 2009, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Golos Rossii, 30 March 2010.

<sup>148</sup> Linda Jakobsson, “China prepares for an ice-free Arctic”, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, no.2, 2010; Summers, pp. 38 ff; “Arctic research to be beefed up”, China.org.cn, 10 February 2011.

## ***Environmental protection and climate***

Turning now to the various practical issues of AC cooperation, the general aim of the Council is to promote cooperation and interaction among the member states – with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other inhabitants – particularly on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection.<sup>149</sup>

The latter is defined as maintenance of Arctic biosystems, biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. All the working groups are more or less engaged in large-scale environmental assessment and monitoring with regard to climate, pollution and wildlife. However, the assessments do not identify offenders and non-compliance, and no regulation takes place.<sup>150</sup> Gradually, under the impact of reports on accelerating climate change, climate issues have become more prominent, and a special ‘task force’ on short-lived climate enforcers such as black carbon, methane and tropospheric ozone was formed in 2009.<sup>151</sup>

Even though Russia gave priority to social and economic issues (see below), during its AC chairmanship in 2004-2006 it accepted the majority view on prioritizing ecology and nature protection, which it also wanted to improve.<sup>152</sup> Its first initiative probably was to present a national action plan to protect the marine environment from anthropogenic, land-based pollution in Russian Arctic regions. This plan was adopted by the working group on Protection of Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) and welcomed by the Council in 2002, but it was criticised and delayed due to its exclusive focus on Russia.<sup>153</sup> In June 2009 Russia adopted a *strategic* action plan for the protection of the Russian Arctic Environment, presented a proposal on

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<sup>149</sup> For a discussion on balancing environmental protection and sustainable development in the AC, see Young, p. 17.

<sup>150</sup> AC, The Tromsö Declaration, p. 1; Wilson Rowe (2009), p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> AC, The Tromsö Declaration, pp. 2 f

<sup>152</sup> MID, “Stenogramma”, 14 April 2005, p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Wilson Rowe (2009) pp. 8 f, AC, Documentation, The Inari Declaration 2002, p 3.

implementation to the AC senior officials in 2010, and invited the Arctic states and international financial institutions to participate.<sup>154</sup>

In a new working group on contaminants (ACAP) Russia further worked out an integrated hazardous waste management strategy focussing on Russia, including terms of reference and project proposals, and also offered to host a secretariat, all of which was appreciated by the ministerial Council in 2009.<sup>155</sup> After Russia took over the workshop chairmanship, the need for extending the scope from pilot to full-scale projects was stressed.<sup>156</sup> The work plan for 2009-2011 included for example inventory development and safe storage of obsolete pesticides, control of dioxin releases, and studies on mercury-containing waste in Northwest Russia in cooperation with NEFCO with respect to financing.<sup>157</sup> However, in 2010 the SAOs noted that the waste management strategy was not sustainable until a destruction capacity was available in Russia, and the steering group was called upon to contribute to this.<sup>158</sup>

Russia has further proposed a project on remediation of contaminated areas on Franz Josef's Land, which was well received, and the Russian Ministry of Health has funded a project on pollutants, food security and indigenous peoples.<sup>159</sup> During its AC chairmanship Russia also prepared for the International Polar Year 2007-2008, where climate issues played a great role, and even suggested a Polar Decade.<sup>160</sup> However, it was silent in discussions on establishing observing networks concerning climate

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<sup>154</sup> AC, Meeting of SAOs, Final report, October 2010, p. 10.

<sup>155</sup> Wilson Rowe, (2009) p. 18; AC, Documentation, The Salekhard Declaration, 26 October 2006; p. 6.

<sup>156</sup> AC, Working groups, ACAP, The Russian vision on activity. 2008, pp. 2 f, <http://arctic-council.org/filearchive/russian%20vision%20%282%29.pdf>, accessed 21 December 2010.

<sup>157</sup> AC, Working groups, ACAP Work Plan for 2009-2011, p. 1; AC, SAO Report to Ministers, Tromsø, April 2009, pp. 1, 25 f.

<sup>158</sup> AC, Meeting of SAOs, Final report, October 2010, p. 11.

<sup>159</sup> Wilson Rowe (2009), p. 9.

<sup>160</sup> MID, "Stenogramma", 13 April 2005, p. 1, AC, The Salekhard Declaration, p. 3, AC, SAO Report to Ministers, April 2009, pp. 16 f; Meeting of SAOs, October 2010, p. 15.



change (SAON) and was not prepared to contribute to building up a spatial data infrastructure handled by the national mapping agencies.<sup>161</sup> Maybe this had to do with problems of granting access of scientists to Russian Arctic areas.<sup>162</sup> To sum up: even though environmental protection was no Russian priority, Russia did play a fairly active role in the pertinent working groups, and it clearly was the main beneficiary of the scientific and practical cooperation in the field – in a very similar way as in the BEAC.

### ***Economic and social issues***

The founding Declaration of the Arctic Council begins by affirming its commitment to the well-being of the Arctic inhabitants and to their economic and social development, improved health and cultural development. However, under the following chairmanships, these aims were gradually overshadowed by environmental concerns.<sup>163</sup>

In contrast, the priority of the Russian chairmanship 2004-2006 in the AC was to find a more balanced approach by seeking to increase efforts in the social and economic spheres, at the same time as the traditional AC priority work in the environmental field was continued. The declared aim was help the people in the North to live comfortably, in a clean environment with full access to education, social services and medical assistance. Foreign Minister Lavrov explained that while the Western states generally had solved their socio-economic problems in the north, these problems in Russia were still acute.<sup>164</sup> In fact, ever since 1999 Russia has emphasized its concern for its northern peoples, including health and housing, in the AC. During its chairmanship Russia sponsored the first workshop on sustainable development in

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<sup>161</sup> AC, Meeting of SAOs, November 2009, p. 9; April 2010, pp. 14 ff.

<sup>162</sup> Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic region, 13 August 2008, [www.arcticparl.org](http://www.arcticparl.org), accessed 23 March 2010.

<sup>163</sup> AC, *Declaration on the establishment*, 19 September 1996; p. 1; The Tromsø Declaration 2009, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>164</sup> MID, Stenogramma, 13 April 2005, pp. 1, 5.

Salekhard, and organized an economic forum in St. Petersburg, gathering all the regional organisations so as to help elaborate an action plan on sustainable development, which should favour economic cooperation. Russia further launched a proposal on linking up the AC with the UN Urban Housing Program, which focuses on industrial housing. All working groups should submit their activities to the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), which Russia then headed, and the action plan (SDAP) should be a compiled database of all projects resulting in greater coordination.

The first proposal was eventually dropped due to lacking interest among the others. The second caused “longer discussions and controversies” and was criticized for entailing too much paperwork and centralisation, but a mechanism of implementing the action plan was nevertheless adopted, according to which every working group each year should submit an updated project list in a certain format to the AC secretariat, so as to identify gaps.<sup>165</sup> In this case Russia seems to have had some influence. The working group is alive and well with a new action plan on issues ranging from health and culture to energy and IT, and an increased focus on human health, including advice on diets and breast feeding, is acknowledged by the Council.<sup>166</sup> In 2010 a survey of living conditions in the Arctic, focussing on the Inuit, Saami and the peoples of Chukotka, was finished and hailed as a major achievement.<sup>167</sup>

Thus, while economic development was no priority for the other Arctic Council members, it was a priority for Russia for the above-mentioned reasons – similarly as

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<sup>165</sup> AC, Working groups, SDWG, Activities of the AC in 2004-2006, p. 1, The Salekhard Declaration, 26 October 2006, p. 4; Wilson Rowe, (2009) pp. 12 ff.

<sup>166</sup> AC, Working groups, SDWG Work Plan for 2009-2011, pp. 1-5; AC, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, 28-29 April 2010, p. 10 f.

<sup>167</sup> AC, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, Final report, 19-20 October 2010, Torshavn, p. 7, [www.arctic-council.org/filearchive](http://www.arctic-council.org/filearchive), accessed 11 November 2010.

in the BEAC. Russia was especially active in the appropriate working group and also seems to have had some influence on the decisions and activities.

### ***Energy issues***

In line with its economic priorities the Russian chairmanship 2004-2006 also favoured the idea of a new energy dimension in the AC with the aim to ensure sustainable oil and gas production in the Arctic zone. The ensuing common Council declaration welcomed increased cooperation in the field and turned over the issue to the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG).<sup>168</sup> When Norway, which is also a major energy producer, took over the chairmanship, it included natural resources management in its AC agenda. The SDWG work plan for 2009-2011 thus emphasises access to energy as a prerequisite for the existence and development of Arctic communities (heating, power, light and transport) and special energy studies have been made.

However, the Council documents at the same time underline that the management of the natural resources must be sustainable with due regard for environmental risks, and that also renewable energy and environmentally-friendly technology should be promoted. In 2009 the Council urged its members to precaution and to apply the polluter-pays principle.<sup>169</sup> Russia in 2006 had to admit problems in forging an energy dialogue in the AC.<sup>170</sup> The 2007 Oil and Gas Assessment, which surveyed existing and best practices in Arctic petroleum extraction, was initially supported by Russia, but Russia delayed the project for a year, be it on account of problems in obtaining data from the private sector or that such information had to be cleared with the highest

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<sup>168</sup> MID, Address, 2006, p. 2; AC, The Salekhard Declaration, 26 October 2006, p. 4.

<sup>169</sup> AC, Working groups, SDWG work plan for 2009-2011, p. 5; AC; Salekhard Declaration, 26 October 2006, p 4; Tromsø Declaration, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> MID; Lavrov, "Transcript of remarks and replies to media questions", 26 October 2006, p. 1, [www.in.mid.ru](http://www.in.mid.ru), accessed 30 November 2010.

authorities, or simply lack of interest in environmental effects.<sup>171</sup> In 2008 Foreign Minister Lavrov promised that in the exploitation of the Shtokman gas fields, Russia would not accept double standards and attempts to limit natural competitive advantages.<sup>172</sup> The Russian attempts to discuss energy issues in the AC run in parallel with similar attempts in the BEAC, but were similarly rebuffed by the other members who took a more conservationist position.

### ***Marine shipping and its consequences***

In line with its economic priorities Russia has further wanted to promote the Arctic sea communications in the AC framework as well. During the 2004-2006 chairmanship minister Lavrov emphasised Russia's interest in improving the Northern Sea Route and its infrastructure for intercontinental cargo transport, which was threatened by competition from transit routes south of Russia. The development of air transport and cooperation in the field of information technology, including an Arctic network, was also mentioned. However, regarding transport little was achieved.<sup>173</sup> It should be observed that Russia (as well as Canada) insists on maximum national control over the sea routes for both security and economic reasons. At an AC meeting during the Russian chairmanship Sweden fretted over the high tariffs charged for ice-breaker services even concerning scientific expeditions, and Russia finally reduced the fee by 50 per cent.<sup>174</sup>

With respect to the increased access and navigation in the Arctic, the AC was (and is) more interested in national and international regulations to advance the safety of Arctic marine shipping, including marine pollution prevention, reducing accident risk,

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<sup>171</sup> Wilson Rowe, (2009) p. 16; Kristine Offerdal, "Oil, gas and the environment", in Stokke & Hönneland, p. 150.

<sup>172</sup> MID, Lavrov, "Vystuplenie Ministra" Ilulissat, 28 May 2008, p. 2, [www.mid.ru/ns-dos.nsf](http://www.mid.ru/ns-dos.nsf), accessed 25 January 2011.

<sup>173</sup> MID, Lavrov, "Stenogramma", 2005, p.2; Transcript, p. 1, Address, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> Wilson Rowe (2009) pp. 7, 15.

and improve emergency response. A growing problem since the 2000s has been the number of tourist ships, especially around Greenland and Svalbard.

Most of this work has taken place within the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group, and a shipping assessment (AMSA) was produced with recommendations concerning the use of fuel, ship design, training, protected areas, etc.<sup>175</sup>

Indeed, Russia also took part in this. As for the shipping recommendations, Russia announced its willingness to lead some of the activities.<sup>176</sup> In the Arctic Five format Russia favoured cooperation with the UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in order to adopt a mandatory regime on shipping in polar waters, and a proposal was made that only ships with double or triple hulls should be admitted.<sup>177</sup>

Just like in the BEAC, Russia thus tried to promote transport development in the AC, especially concerning sea shipping, but most of the other members were more interested in using the AC for protecting the environment, and Russia also joined this effort.

### ***Emergency prevention***

The issue of shipping logically leads over to the problem of emergency prevention, preparedness and response. For this purpose there is a special AC working group (EPPR), which focusses on oil and gas transportation and extraction, radiological and other hazards and natural disasters. During its chairmanship Russia took the initiative to propose an intergovernmental agreement on prevention of emergency situations in the Arctic.<sup>178</sup> Even if the other members were reluctant to enter a treaty process and

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<sup>175</sup> AC, The Tromsø Declaration, p. 4, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, April 2010, p. 11.

<sup>176</sup> AC, Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, 12-13 November 2009, p. 5.

<sup>177</sup> Ibidem, p. 5, Nordic Council of Ministers, Vasiliev (2010) p. 3, AC, Arctic News, News Archive, 2 July 2009; Tsentr Parlamenskikh Kommunikatsii, “ParlKomm “, Ob itogakh vtoroi ministerskoi vstrechi”, 30 March 2010, [www.parlcom.ru/index](http://www.parlcom.ru/index), accessed 31 May 2010.

<sup>178</sup> MID, “Stenogramma”, 2005, p. 2.

the Salekhard Declaration stated that the existing treaties and agreement provided the necessary framework, the working group was admonished to start a number of projects and activities.<sup>179</sup> Russia launched a project on creating safety systems in oil and gas projects and conducted several exercises on how to handle radioactive emergencies, for instance one near Murmansk in 2010, attended by international observers and sponsored by the AC. An international emergency conference was held in Chukotka in 2009.<sup>180</sup>

In April 2009 the AC ministerial meeting in Tromsø finally decided to establish a task force to prepare an international agreement for the 2011 summit on search and rescue (SAR) operations by air and at sea in the Arctic. The task force was headed by Russia and the United States, all eight states participated, but no agreement was reached on whether non-member states in Europe and other continents interested in Arctic shipping and research should be allowed to be observers in the intergovernmental negotiations. The competent Russian organ was the Ministry of Transport.<sup>181</sup> As a practical measure Russia proposed the creation of a combined coastguard of the five polar nations. The issue was also discussed in the Arctic Five format.<sup>182</sup> The problem of oil spills received special attention after the American oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, just like Russia did in the BEAC, Russia pushed for a formal intergovernmental agreement on rescue operations in the Arctic Council. This meant closer, paramilitary cooperation with the USA among others, while non-littoral, non-Arctic states were

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<sup>179</sup> AC, Salekhard Declaration, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>180</sup> AC, Arctic News, 6 August 2010, Meeting of SAOs, November 2009, p.7; AC, Working groups, EPPR, Report on 2006-2009 activities, pp. 3ff.

<sup>181</sup> AC Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, Nov 2009, pp. 6f, AC, Meeting of SAOs, April 2009, pp. 12 f; Portnews, “Mnogostoronniy document”, 25 February 2010, [www.portnews.ru/nesww/51988/?print=1](http://www.portnews.ru/nesww/51988/?print=1), accessed 25 March 2010.

<sup>182</sup> AC, Arctic News, 2 July 2009, ParlKomm, 30 March 2010; Barents Observer, 4 January 2011.

<sup>183</sup> AC, Arctic News, 31 May 2010.

kept outside. Also on this issue Russia is quite active, thanks to the urgency of the matter and past experience. The agreement is to be signed at the AC ministerial meeting in May 2011, when Sweden takes over the chairmanship.

### ***Indigenous peoples and their culture***

As mentioned, the indigenous peoples are well represented in the AC at different levels and contribute to setting the agenda. There is no special working group devoted to them as in the BEAC, but they are targeted in most projects. The urgent need to support Arctic cultures and languages was recognized by the 2009 Council and a special secretariat was established in Greenland in 2009.<sup>184</sup>

When Russian officials emphasized the need for economic development for its poor Northern population and attracting the necessary financial resources, they specifically mentioned the indigenous peoples, who are indeed poorer than those in the other states. But it should be noted that the majority of people in Murmansk and other towns are immigrated Russians or other nationalities. Another complication is that the Russian definition of 'Northern' means regions with permafrost, which means that 70 per cent of the country is covered, including most of Siberia and Altai on the southern border.<sup>185</sup>

The AC has indeed helped Russian indigenous peoples in many ways as shown above, and Russian authorities have of course also taken initiatives on their behalf. The formation of the AC likely spurred the formation of the RAIPON and the cross-border Aleut organisation, which both subsequently received support from Canada and other partner states.<sup>186</sup> During its chairmanship Russia took the step to introduce a cultural dimension by stressing the importance of preserving the traditions, history

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<sup>184</sup> AC, Tromsø Declaration, pp. 1, 5, 8; Meeting of Senior Arctic Officials, October 2010, p. 9.

<sup>185</sup> AC, Working groups, ACAP meeting, 3 March 2008;

<sup>186</sup> Wilson Rowe, Överland, p. 37f, AC, Meeting of SAOs, Nov 2009, p. 10.

and culture of the indigenous peoples, and a conference on cultural cooperation was held in Khanty-Mansiisk.<sup>187</sup>

At the concluding Council meeting in 2006, the members agreed to stress the need to improve the well-being and eradicate poverty among the indigenous and other Arctic residents, and to include them in decision-making.<sup>188</sup> Several projects were then launched which concerned these peoples, for instance one on persistent toxic substances, which investigated aquatic food chains with the involvement of several Russian federal and regional authorities and was partially funded by the Russian Ministry of Health.<sup>189</sup> The AC is also carrying out several studies on the spread and handling of hazardous substances and waste in Russian regions with Russian support. An AC community action initiative has helped to remove local sources of pollution in the Nenets region in cooperation with RAIPON. In 2008 another team recovered 2 000 abandoned drums in Chukotka.<sup>190</sup>

In 2010 Russia got approval for adopting a BEAC project on indigenous entrepreneurship as a common project for all four regional organisations (including CBSS and the Nordic Council of Ministers). The project should include cooperation between the indigenous groups in the Barents region, keep contact with the Canadian Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and be financed mainly with EU, Nordic and Norwegian funding. RAIPON also organised a meeting in Moscow on the effects of industrial development and climate change on indigenous populations.<sup>191</sup> The Russian ambassador to Denmark in 2009 told the Greenlanders that the growth of shipping and the exploitation of natural resources may affect the ethnic and cultural composition of the Arctic, and warned that “any new form of colonialism” should be

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<sup>187</sup> MID, “Address” 2006, p. 2; AC, Salekhard Declaration, 2006, pp. 4 f.

<sup>188</sup> AC, Salekhard Declaration, 2006, pp. 3-4.

<sup>189</sup> Wilson Rowe (2009), p. 13.

<sup>190</sup> AC, SAO Report to Ministers, April 2009, p.25, AC, ACAP Work Plan for 2009-2011, p. 1; Meeting of SAOs, Final report, October 2010, p. 11.

<sup>191</sup> AC, Meeting of SAOs, April 2010, p. 18.



avoided.<sup>192</sup> Thus, Russia has pushed for the sake of the indigenous peoples, naturally those in Russia in particular, in the AC, and this has also received material support from the others. It is done on a much larger scale than in the regional BEAC. Again, the Russian indigenous peoples cannot be seen as independent actors as those in the other member states.

## **Which Russian interests do the BEAC and AC meet?**

If we now return to the issues mentioned in the Russian Arctic doctrine presented in the beginning of this paper, we may conclude that the BEAC and the AC have not been useful forums for the first mentioned, presumably most important, national interest, namely to develop the resource base for its socio-economic development, in the first place energy resources. Russian officials have tried to forward its interest in dealing with energy production in the organisations, but the other members have generally been more interested in using the organisations to promote energy saving and to protect the environment from the risks of energy exploration and production. In general, Russia and its major companies thus advance their energy interests mainly in bilateral relations with other countries and their companies, for instance Norway.

Regarding the energy potential Russia is also vitally interested in defining its economic zone in the Arctic. The Barents Council is seen as inappropriate for this issue, but Russia has supported discussing it in the format of the Arctic Five on the basis of international law, which is a way of excluding other interested parties. However, again, the sea border deal with Norway of course was a bilateral affair.

The primary Russian goal in the BEAC and Arctic councils according to official declarations has gone beyond energy issues, namely to promote its socio-economic development in general, and this is also a stated goal of both organisations. Here Russia has met more understanding and support, and has also been able to exercise some influence. BEAC projects in healthcare, especially in fighting infectious

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<sup>192</sup> AC, Arctic News, 2 July 2009, accessed 4 March 2010.

diseases, have been praised by Russian officials. However, Russia has been less successful in using the BEAC for promoting trade and investments, partly because of its own trade restrictions and corruption. Here other forums may be more suitable, such as the EU-Russia economic partnership and the Northern Dimension partnership.

Concerning the development of the Northern Sea Route, which was specifically mentioned as the fourth national interest in the Arctic doctrine due to its importance for the Arctic infrastructure and its potential in international trade, Russia has tried to advance it in both the BEAC and the AC. However, little has been achieved in this regard so far, partly because the other members again have emphasized the environmental aspects, partly because of Russian security concerns and high tariffs.

Beyond the Northern Sea Route, Russia has called for broad cooperation in developing its transport infrastructure and communications with the West, which has been an important issue in the Barents Council. Here Russia has met better response from its Nordic neighbours and a number of projects have been carried out, especially regarding the border stations, so that cross-border trade with the Nordic states has increased tremendously since Soviet times. Russia recently got support for setting up a BEAC working group to promote tourism in the Arctic. However, cross-border trade and travel are still to some extent hampered by the EU Schengen rules on the Nordic side, and bureaucracy and security restrictions on the Russian side.

The Russian Arctic doctrine further mentioned the protection of ecological systems as the third among its national priorities. Indeed, environment protection was a key aim of both the BEAC and the AC, embraced by all the other partners, and most projects and research activities were in this field. Increasingly, climate change became an issue. Russia has indeed played an active role in the respective working groups, and in the Arctic Five format it also called for rules concerning the environmental risks of shipping in polar waters. Unlike the USA Russia signed the Kyoto Protocol and launched a climate security doctrine in 2009. However, as already noted, economic development was Russia's primary interest, and Russia was wary of international

restrictions on its oil and gas production, and environmental groups in Russia were strictly controlled.

Even though the indigenous peoples were not mentioned as a fundamental national interest in the Arctic doctrine, their welfare was one of ten ‘strategic priorities’. Thus Russia strove to strengthen their roles in BEAC and AC decision-making and took initiatives to further the peoples’ social, cultural and economic interests. Here some successes were achieved thanks to the understanding of the other members. But like all other interest groups in Russia, the indigenous actors were weak and totally dependent on the federal authorities.

Concerning the second most important national interest mentioned in the Arctic doctrine, maintaining the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation, the BEAC and the AC were specifically mentioned as suitable tools. Indeed, these were also overriding aims, when the councils were created and developed. Russian officials have often praised the councils for building stability and trust through practical cooperation, indeed as models for East-West cooperation. Russia supports the aim of both forums to focus on soft security issues and to avoid military security issues. However, when both the BEAC and the AC started to discuss sea safety and conduct search and rescue exercises in order to handle accidents and natural disasters, which involved civil-military cooperation, Russia also joined in. It agreed to head an AC task force together with the US, which was to work out an international agreement and even proposed to form a combined coastguard of the five polar nations.

One may conclude that the BEAC and the Arctic Council do not and cannot do much to meet Russian hard security concerns such as keeping NATO forces out and satisfy key interests such as delineating economic zones and developing energy resources in the Arctic.<sup>193</sup> However, the Barents Council promotes cooperation with the Nordic neighbours, the Arctic Council also with the United States and Canada, and both serve

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<sup>193</sup> This confirms Överland’s conclusion concerning the Shtokman and other Russian Arctic projects, op.cit, pp. 141 ff.

to build confidence and help to alleviate severe economic, social and environmental problems in the vast Russian Arctic. While the Arctic Council is more fact-finding and less practical than the regional BEAC, it brings more prestige and influence to Russian policy-makers because of its global reach.

## **Conclusions on Russian policy in the BEAC and the Arctic Council**

The above analysis of cooperation in the Barents and Arctic Councils indicates that Russia has benefitted more than the other member states from a great number of aid projects and scientific investigations. This is quite natural since Russia is the geographically largest Arctic country and its problems in most cases are more severe. The other states are concerned about the Russian problems, partly because these tend to spread and may affect also them and ultimately the whole world. This is especially evident in the Barents Council, where the small Nordic countries have done a lot to support the neighbouring Russian regions. Russia has also acknowledged this. In the 1990s Russia played a rather passive role in both councils and could not contribute much to the common activities due to its persistent economic crises. When President Putin strengthened the political control and the economy recovered in the 2000s, Russia became more active and started to contribute more to common projects on Russian soil.

Just like other states Russia mainly acts to promote its own interests, and its policy in the two Arctic institutions reflects the domestic political and economic needs and concerns. Since the issues in both forums are similar and overlapping, Russian policy in them has many similarities as showed above, but there are several differences, partly depending on the geographical scope and who the other members are. In the Barents Council the EU and its members play a prominent role, in the Arctic Council NATO countries have a greater impact.

Throughout the 2000s, Russia has been interested in the formal workings of the councils, in improving the effectiveness by promoting the division of labour and

coordination of activities inside and between these and related organisations. It has suggested strengthening the structure and powers of the Arctic Council, endorsed the meetings of an inner circle of five littoral states, and it does not back granting permanent observer status to big non-Arctic actors such as the EU, China and Japan. Since the councils have limited powers and the Russian participants in them need authorisation from above, Russia has been especially keen on underpinning decisions with intergovernmental agreements, e.g. when they come close to security issues, and more anxious than the others in filling legal voids and formalising decisions.<sup>194</sup> Another general conclusion is that Russia has been quite active in suggesting plans and projects, but less able to implement them and provide its share of resources, leaving a gap between words and deeds.

Russia thus is an active member of both councils, advancing its own proposals and at the same time playing by the agreed rules. It exerts some influence, especially in the BEAC, where it is the biggest country, but it also bows to majority opinions and accepts compromises. Even though the national interests naturally differ, no serious clashes jeopardising the smooth cooperation in the councils are on record. Judging from this experience, Russia thus is able to cooperate on an equal footing with big and small Western states. Concerning a recurrent question raised in the introduction, Russia in these forums has avoided such claims to a privileged position on the strength of its power and size as are otherwise often made to domestic audiences and in hard-security oriented organisations.

However, this harmonious cooperation has come at a price for the Western states. The records of the two councils do not contain the usual Western criticism of deteriorating Russian democracy and human rights in the 2000s, nor of Russia's external policy towards for example the Baltic states and Georgia, nor any Russian responses or criticism of Western policy.<sup>195</sup> The wide differences in values are papered over. One

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<sup>194</sup> See also Wilson Rowe (2009), p. 17.

<sup>195</sup> See also Alyson Bailes, "Human rights in international and regional security", *Yearbook of Polar Law*, University of Akureyri, 2011 (forthcoming).

may presume that more frank discussions on contentious issues take place in the corridors.

Obviously, the Russian interest in the BEAC and the AC is limited by the fact that the councils have few resources of their own. Most projects depend on funding from national governments, international organisations and banks. Russia's engagement in these regional forums is therefore intermingled with its bilateral relations with the member states and with wider organisations such as the EU and the UN, which have greater political weight and economic resources. BEAC and AC cooperation, however, facilitates Russia's bilateral contacts on many levels both with important neighbouring states like Norway and with the USA. Conversely, good bilateral relations favour multilateral cooperation. Even if Russia may prefer bilateral relations, where it has more influence due to its size, there is no real contradiction.

Looking into the wider context, Russian cooperation in the Barents and Arctic Councils thus helps to preserve stability and build confidence in this quiet part of the world, which makes it easier for Russia to concentrate on more threatening and urgent problems along its periphery, for instance in the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>196</sup> The ambitions of the EU and China in the Arctic and the Russian response are topics for future studies.

Finally, as observed by the British professor and former ambassador Alyson Bailes, the limitations of the two councils in question in terms of staff, finance and ambitions may actually be their strength as they cover fields that other institutions do not reach. Their soft security approach makes them comfortable for Russia, concerned as it is with hard security and its national sovereignty.<sup>197</sup> The Barents Council and the Arctic Council should thus be seen as complementary to NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, where issues like military security, economic development, democracy and human rights are extensively discussed with Russia.

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<sup>196</sup> See also Vendil Pallin, p. 10.

<sup>197</sup> Bailes' communication with the author, 22 January 2011.

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