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Geopolitical Factor of the Russian

Exploration of the Arctic Region

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**Abstract****Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University International Relations Programme****University of Tampere Department of****Political Science and International Relations****BRATUKHINA, ANTONINA:****Geopolitical Factor of the Russian Exploration of the Arctic Region****Master's Thesis, 67 pages, 3 attachments****International Relations****May 2011**

The Master Thesis considers the current internal Russian political discourse concerning the national geopolitical positions in the Arctic region and the prospects of Russian geopolitical and real (economic, military, strategic) presence in the region. The very process of elaboration and formulation of the geopolitical images, ideas and notions regarding the Arctic issue within the Russian geopolitical agenda is under research.

The recently emerged theory of critical geopolitical (or post-geopolitics) has been chosen as a theoretical ground for the thesis as a theory that permits to examine the very inner political discourse on the problem that is elaborated by the statesmen, political elite, officials and geopolitical experts. Similarly, the discourse analysis was implemented as an effective method of text assessment and interpretation of senses contained within the texts on the issue of Russian geopolitical factor in the Arctic exploration.

Keywords: geopolitics, critical geopolitics, critical approach, geopolitical factor, geopolitical discourse, internal political discourse, discourse analysis, the Arctic region, the Arctic Ocean, the Northern territories, Russian geopolitical agenda, Russian policy in the Arctic, Russian exploration of the Arctic.

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## Introduction

During the 2000<sup>th</sup> the rhetoric of current official documents and statements of the Russian political elite and state officials presupposes the strengthening of process of the national state positions' consolidation (along with the consolidation of the general geopolitical positions of Russian state). It has been proclaimed the restoration of Russia as great power (at least, as a regional power in the geopolitical sense) on the world arena. It can be seen from the general proclamation which the official strategies, development programs and statesmen' and national politician's speeches contain (including a number of statements in the concept of the Russian national security strategy to 2020 signed by the President in 2009).

One can claim that nowadays the internal and external state polity of Russia (along with its forming geopolitical strategy) is likely to be built on the restoration of the imperial type of statehood in its essence towards its own and frontier territories. The process of the restoration and strengthening of the ideas of Russian sphere of national interests and influence's maintenance (which has been reduced drastically since the USSR collapse) are strongly supported and spread within the Russian political elite, administration, political discourse, and popular perceptions. In this sense, today the concept of proximity and, therefore, the notion of "historical belonging" and "geopolitical rights" of the Northern Arctic territories (namely, the territories of dry land and sea areas which lie northward of the Polar circle and the Russian state borders and its 200-mile exclusive economic zone along with the territories of shelf and offshore area on these territories of Northern seas and the Arctic Ocean) are widely declared by Russian politicians and statesmen.

So, it would be correct to stress that today's geopolitical notions of the Russian leaders reflects the Russian purposes to gain and to save the leading geopolitical positions in the Arctic territories to a considerable extent.

The categories of above-mentioned “historical belonging” of the Arctic territories to Russia as a Northern power (in view of the fact of so-called self-given geographical, strategic and geopolitical belonging of that territories to the Russian natural sphere of national interests) are being actively used and spread within the national political discourse by the Russian political circles and leaders (along with the national leading geopolitical scholars). Thus, these categories are being transformed to the main state principles and strategic priorities, giving way to the formulation of general tasks of the further historical development of the Russian state.

The causes of this phenomenon can be interpreted as a real intention of the Russian political elite to rebuild the model of imperial development of Russian state (which is likely to take part within the contemporary official political course) and to restore the wide geopolitical presence of Russia (especially in the North as still there is little competition). At the other hand, it can be interpreted as a method of running policy made for political and popular effect aimed at the creation of popular perceptions and ideas of the Russian geopolitical restoration as a great power in order to strengthen political positions of the elite in the country.

This phenomenon along with the very process of its construction is interesting for the research precisely in the sense of study of the constructing mechanisms of the text (and senses which follow from the text) upon the topic of the Russian geopolitical presence in the Arctic as a strategic region for the state. Therefore, the concept of research is built on the epistemological positions of the theory of critical geopolitics that makes it possible to examine the process of predominant geopolitical ideas’ construction upon “the Arctic issue” within the existing social and political discourse in contemporary Russia.

The ongoing process of intensification of the discussions about the Russian geopolitical positions in the Arctic and their prospects in the political, expert and public circles prove the research topicality. It can be said quite definitely that these trends will continue during the further developments within the Russian politics towards the Arctic territories and its real actions in the region in future.

It has been made many researches on the topic of the modern Russian geopolitical realities, and particularly on the topic of the Russian geopolitical positions (and their prospects) in the Arctic region that have been made within both the research centers (as the Center of Geopolitical Studies of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Center of Conservative Studies of the Social Faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Academy of Geopolitical Issues) and the certain groups of researches and experts within the scientific periodical magazines in Russia and abroad (like the Russian geopolitical expert Vadim Tsyburskiy that in his works pays great attention to the prospects of the re-establishment of the Russian geopolitical influence on the territory of post-Sovien states that surround Russia and to the problem of development and exploration strengthening of the very Russian territories that extend from the European parts of Russia to the Far East).

Along with it it should be noticed that in Russian the very process of the social geopolitical ideas' formulation is not analized to the proper extent by the national geopolitical theorists, in general, they concentrate on the study of the essence of the very ongoing geopolitical processes and their details and explanation within the terms of classical geopolitical schemes of confrontation between regions, states, formations or civilizations. In that sense it could be summarized as a preliminary that the contemporary Russian geopolitical discourse is profoundly based on the theoretical and methodological notions of the clasical geopolitics that prevailed in the academic circles of the West as long ago as twenty years. Though it can't be concluded that the Russian geopolitical thought adopts all the Western geopolitical groundwork and ideas without the revision and innovation, the national geopolitical thought can be characterized as a combination of both its own original views and national interpretations of the Western classical and modern concepts.

The study process of the Russian policy of strengthening of its geopolitical precence in the Arctic alon with the present and future exploration of the regions' resourses (various ones) by Russia is run within the current Russian geopolitical and political discourse

more and more actively for the reason of the evident currency and topicality of this issue. But there is a lack of the research papers which are aimed to the study of the very social and psychological phenomenon of the geopolitical space formation and construction regarding the vast and rich (thus, geopolitically important) territories that lie northward to the Russian borders.

It's evident that the theoretical postulates of the classical geopolitics or those theories of multipolar and globalized world geopolitics that emerged after the end of the Cold War are not able to explain and to analyze profoundly and entirely the functioning process and the mechanisms of formation of these notions that are based on the different levels of perception namely the social, political, pragmatic and economic, ethno- psychical ones. What matters here is that the newness of the present research consists in this phenomenon's study and consideration concerning the realities of contemporary processes of the construction of ideas about the geopolitical positions of Russia in the Arctic regions.

As it has been mentioned above, the theory of critical geopolitics pays great attention to the research of processes of the geopolitical space construction and their social and psychological perception in the state. This theory was elaborated in the Western political science in the beginning of the 90<sup>th</sup> as some alternative vision to the space construction and explanation of current state of geopolitical affairs that according to the neo-theorists the classical theory of geopolitics was no more capable to reflect adequately as it was over geo-centrist (geographically determined), academically inert and ideologized, inflexible and inattentive towards the newly emerged factors that tended to define new development of the discipline (including, first of all, the process of sociological mental construction of the existing geopolitical spaces). As the classical geopolitical theory here gave the prior importance to the traditional factors of power distribution, the availability of military and natural resources, the hostile intentions of states in their mutual relations, all these factors fully correlated with the concept of political realism in the theory of international relations which has been elaborated by the classics of realism such as Hans Morgenthau.

An important point is that the Russian theorists and experts don't widely support the research methods of the theory of critical geopolitics and they consider it as a post-structuralist neo-critical discourse that can't be estimated as a real adequate alternative scientific theory. Though in the West the theoretical works and new concepts created within this approach by such scholars as Simon Dalby, John Agnew, James Sidaway, Claus Dodds, and Gearóid Ó Tuathail gained the state of a separated theory namely the theory of critical geopolitics or post-geopolitics (thus, one can find the breaking with the classical geopolitical theory and its bipolar visions towards the world state as a rigid structure of antagonism between the states of thalassocracy and tellurocracy – sea and land powers – towards more flexible and soft, inner focused geopolitics of the globalized and regionalized world). Many scientific papers and essays published in the various Western geographic and geopolitical magazines were used as a theoretical groundwork of the present research paper.

Scholars of the critical approach to geopolitics pay great attention not to the apparently real political organization of space (which can be seeming one) but, first of all, to the process of its social (psychological or figurative) construction. Thus, the main emphasis of the research will be made on the mechanisms of elaboration and implementation of image construction of geopolitical spatial conceptions drawn up by the state political leaders and state geopolitical experts.

The concept of critical geopolitics (the critical approach to geopolitics in its constructivist perspective) that tend to do the qualitative analysis of these mechanisms' nature is the theoretical ground for the present research. The empirical ground of the research presupposes the study of substantial aspects of the geopolitical ideas and notions' formulation concerning the declared Russian geopolitical positions and prospects of their development in the Arctic region made by the Russian political elite (which can also be affected by these ideas). It may include the analysis of the statements and speeches of political leaders, state officials, experts along with the analysis of the official papers regarding this issue.



As the problem of importance of geopolitical factor of the Russian presence in the Arctic region has been chosen as the issue for the present research, the scientific goal can be characterized as the revelation and analysis of the processes of formulation and declaration of the general geopolitical ideas on the strategic importance of the Arctic region for Russia and its geopolitical belonging (belonging to the sphere of the Russian natural geopolitical influence) elaborated by the Russian political elite, and the further functioning of these ideas within the Russian political discourse.

In order to reach the goal of research it's necessary to fulfil the following research tasks:

- to study the key factors of forming of the geopolitical ideas about the Arctic of the Russian political elite in its theoretical dimension; along with it it's necessary to reveal the preconditions of forming, the essential stages of development and the key postulates of the critical approach to geopolitics (post-geopolitics) as a chosen theoretical approach of study;
- to do the analysis of the principal research methods of the geopolitical ideas about the Arctic region exploration by Russia prevailing within the national state authorities; it's necessary to analyze the methodological instruments of the chosen theoretical approach with regard to the specifics of the research in order to lighten and structure the further case-study part.
- to examine the case-study part regarding to the chosen theoretical approach's propositions and to classify the geopolitical ideas of the Russian presence in the Arctic of the Russian political elite which define the current geopolitical ideas in the state; to analyze the substantial part of the Russian political elite and experts' statements and declarations, the official strategic papers

and documents on the Arctic region which form the Russian official geopolitical discourse concerning the critical approach to geopolitical.

Thus, the structure of the research is the following: the research consists of three chapters, namely the theoretical part (where the key aspects of the chosen theoretical approach of critical geopolitics are analysed), the methodologic part (which contains the analysis of special features and application of the chosen research method), the case-study part (where the factual material on the chosen subject is directly analysed).

An object of research is the contemporary Russian political discourse as the Russian political elite and state officials formulate it (as a number of diverse geopolitical ideas about the processes which are going or should be gone). Also the part of this object consists in the influence of this discourse upon the popular geopolitical perceptions of the existing geopolitical positions of Russia in the Arctic and their importance for the future development of the country.

Therefore, as a subject of research it can be outlined with the actual substantial aspects of the Russian state political discourse regarding the Russian geopolitical positions in the Arctic region and the prospects of these positions, also the mechanisms of this discourse's drawing up and formulation should be revealed.

What matters here is that in future the political discourse on issue of the Arctic region will continue to intensify in Russia and in other states as the prospects and possibilities of the region's economic (natural, biological resources), strategic, transport exploration will become more available and accessible. The more frequently declared intentions to explore the Arctic expressed from the part of various national and foreign political leaders and statesmen clearly prove this statement. The problem of the legal delimitation of the Arctic territories becomes more and more urgent on the international arena and in the Russian external policy's agenda.

Russia tends to pay more and more attention to the exploration of the Arctic territories, which lie northward of its state borders along with the intensification of the borders guarding in the North. An important point is that Russia stresses the high strategic importance of the Arctic region for the future development of its economy (this is emphasized within such Russian official papers and documents as the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008), Russian National Security Strategy until 2020 (2009), the Maritime Doctrine of Russian Federation until 2020 (2001), The basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective (2008), the Strategy of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020 (2010).

It is stressed the necessity of providing the Russian economic presence strengthening in the Arctic along with the further improvement of the whole economic, geopolitical, and geostrategic positions of Russia.

As a method of research it is used the discourse analysis which is applied by the critical geopolitics' theorists as an effective method of qualitative analysis of the textual structures and formation of senses (and revelation of these senses).

The very essence of this phenomenon within the frames of internal Russian political discourse is going to be considered in the present research along with the intention of doing some kind of forecast concerning the situation in the near future. In the case of this discourse's intensification (which nowadays is considered the most probable) it's necessary to observe those geopolitical, economic and strategic (in the sphere of transport, military, frontier guard) trends which would be developed on the Arctic territories by Russia. First of all, the forecast should be addressed to the prospect up to 2020 (this term is more frequently mentioned in the official papers, documents, and strategies) and further.

Concerning the chosen theoretical approach and method of research it's supposed to analyze the peculiarities of the national Russian strategy on its geopolitical positions and interests' maintenance in the Arctic region, the future prospects of the existing Russian strategic

interests' modification during the ongoing process of the Arctic delimitation on terms of the international law. Also the very substance of geopolitical ideas and notions concerning the Russian model of the Arctic expansion elaborated by the political elite and scientific community (within the existing general geopolitical discourse) about the highest importance of the Arctic region for Russia and the prospects of its development is the subject for forecast within the research.

## Chapter 1

# **The Key Factors of Forming of the Geopolitical Ideas About the Arctic Of the Russian Political Elite In Its Theoretical Dimension**

### *1.1 The Theoretical Grounds of the Research: the Contemporary Geopolitical Discourse and Its Critical Approach*

The concept of so-called “Critical Geopolitics” emerged and developed in the second half of the 20th century on the wave of certain social and cultural processes that happened in the Western scientific world and were inspired by the great world system changes. Those changes influenced greatly the most part of the scientific and philosophical studies held in that period of time in the most part of the human knowledge (not only in the sphere of politics or geography). It’s right to speak about the huge and systemic processes of evolution and transformation of the gnosiological (epistemological) principles of the theory of knowledge of the surrounding world.

The so-called structuralist paradigm that was the major one in the scientific way of study in those times and that had its own particular methods of knowledge no more could explain adequately the processes of functioning of those structures on which the paradigm was focused neither they could propose the appropriate answers and solutions of the scientific problems declared within the scientific-historical discourse. Moreover, the predominant scientific methods of structuralism didn’t give the clear explanations of the emerging, the latest modern social and political or cultural problems within the contemporary society including those like social unrest and disturbances in France in 1968 or the newly emerged feminist movement around the world, etc.

Thus, the all-European crisis of rationalism in the late 60<sup>th</sup> – early 70<sup>th</sup> led to the another change of scientific concept, as a result the ruling paradigm of structuralism was mostly excluded from the spectrum of scientific methods of study and scientific interest. That's why at the turn of the 70<sup>th</sup> – 80<sup>th</sup> those scholars who preserved the structuralist visions as the method of studies and as the way of thinking created their own new paradigm of the so-called post-structuralism<sup>1</sup>.

We can find among them such scholars like Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Julia Kristeva that worked within different fields of the human knowledge and fiction (scientific, historical, philosophical, psychological, culturological ones). Later they were such scholar like Michel Foucault, Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan, Roland Barthes.

As an ideological movement of philosophical and social and humanist thought the paradigm of post-structuralism was strongly inspired by such great system changes within the Western spiritual culture as the loss of prestige of the traditional science, the processes of general dehumanization of the social sphere, politics and art, the aggravation of social instability, increase of the possibility of disturbances and unrest within society, the loss of the general faith into the social progress. The main idea of the consequences of all this social realities was the theoretical reaction formed in the notions of general intentions of the post-structuralism intuitive way of reality perception and ways of its comprehension. So, the new paradigm could be characterized by its distrust for the concept of 'the whole', of the unity, of the universal knowledge. In other words, it's characterized by its distrust for all that is monolithic and solid in its nature, for monism, so it absolutizes the concept of 'the part', the whole partial, the fragmentariness, the differences, the individuation, the singularity<sup>2</sup>.

The ideologists and scholars of the post-structuralist paradigm saw the surrounding world as a mobile and flexible structure composed of the multiplicity of specific

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<sup>1</sup> Kohanovskiy V., Yakovlev V. The History of Philosophy, Ed. Fenix+, 2008. – P. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

structures like international relations, states, societies, etc. that lack such features as stability, clearness and homogeneity that were attributed them by the structuralist theorists.

The post-structuralist paradigm not only could give the explanation of such fragmentariness of the actual world processes that according to the post-structuralist scholars were accumulating in the world structures but also allowed a detached observer to study and perceive those processes by their individuation (i. e. by applying the methods of research criteria's free sorting, of unconditioned subjective study). So, conducting his study the very observer understands and takes into account that he is the integral part of the process and study (the logical chain named here "the object of a study – the subject of a study" is therefore closed up<sup>3</sup>).

Therefore, the post-structuralist practices were broadly implemented in various social sciences from political science to geography. Moreover, they enjoy wide popularity within fiction and philosophical literature (for example, see Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, et al.). Such post-structuralist methods of research as deconstruction of the research object or deconstruction of texts, et al. allow us to operate the structures as the main objects of knowledge in structuralism, at the same time making it possible for a researcher to single out and to stress the particular component parts he is interested in. Thus, post-structuralism gives the wide spectrum of research instruments which we may understand the nature of power mechanisms and of its opportunities to be changed with<sup>4</sup>.

The post-structuralist paradigm, therefore, gave strong impetus to the development of various theoretical studies within such sciences as political science, theory of international relations, culturology, philosophy, etc.

In particular, because of the influence of the newly emerged research methods of the post-structuralist paradigm the theoretical discourse of critical geopolitics became possible.

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<sup>3</sup> Poststructuralism: Post-Structuralism, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, Habitus, Roland Barthes, Books Llc, General Books LLC, 2010. P. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Weedon, Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Second edition 1997. P. 10.

The scholars of traditional geopolitics, thus, operated the categories of research within the structuralist paradigm though nowadays those scholars that operate the categories within the critical approach do not prefer to speak about their methods as a separate theory. So, one of the main theorists within the critical theory Gearóid Ó Tuathail stresses that critical geopolitics is “an approach rather than a theoretical system<sup>5</sup>”. The approach does not seek to revise somehow the essential categories and postulates of the maternal discipline of traditional geopolitics saving its theoretical apparatus and discourse.

As a separate approach critical geopolitics was formulated at the early 90<sup>th</sup> in the period of the USSR and the Comecon collapse, of the bipolar block global system’s end, in times when the traditional understanding of the world order was transformed within the traditional geopolitical approach and was revised because of its impossibility to react to the changes on the international scene.

Right up to the late 80<sup>th</sup> – early 90<sup>th</sup> traditional geopolitical science had and operated some set of core traditional preconditions, methods and categories that it worked out from the end of the Second World War and from the beginning of the bipolar system’s formation. Those categories, therefore, included such as balance of power, existing stable world order, the nature of state power and the influence of geographical factors upon it, geopolitical rivalry, the nature of sphere/area/region of influence, the nature of geopolitical interests of a state, etc.)<sup>6</sup>.

Inspired by such scholars as Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellén, Halford John Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Karl Haushofer the traditional theory of geopolitics became to be unable to predict very important global changes of existing world order in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But geopolitical theory in its essence always had very high level of theoretical flexibility as it operated very global categories (e.g. the phenomenon of dependence

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<sup>5</sup> G. Ó Tuathail. *The Critical Reading/Writing of Geopolitics: Re-Reading/Writing Wittfogel, Bowman and Lacoste* // *Progress in Human Geography*. – 1994. – Vol. 18. – N 3. – P. 313.

<sup>6</sup> Dugin A. *The Basics of Geopolitics*. Ed. Moscow, Arktogetya, 1997. C. 12.



of state acts and conduct, their units and their spheres of influence on some initially given set of objective factors of geography and resource basis).

Thus, within the theory of geopolitics one can observe rather successful coexistence and complementarity of various theoretical approaches that see the geopolitical model of the world and going processes within it in different ways starting from the dualistic geocentric world order of the systemic rivalry of Sea Power (Thalassocracy) and Land Power (Tellurocracy) and concluding with the concept of the Eurasian Passionarity created by Lev Gumilev<sup>7</sup>.

The newly emerged critical approach within the theory of geopolitics gained its conceptual shape in the beginning of 90<sup>th</sup>, started with publications of the works and articles by such scholars as Simon Dalby, John Agnew, James Sidaway, Claus Dodds, and Gearóid Ó Tuathail. In times of post-bipolar world the ideologists of critical geopolitics gave their own new definition of traditional geopolitical science as, above all, a discourse about the ways of dependence of our common geographical conceptions and ideas on the historical and political issues<sup>8</sup>. They pay attention of paramount importance to those mechanisms which existing geographical notions, perceptions and ideas about ‘space’ in its general sense are being constructed with by the theorists and intellectuals of geopolitics mainly from the politically and economically leading countries of “the World Core”<sup>9</sup>.

Gearóid Ó Tuathail who is known as a key founder of the critical approach in geopolitics marks out three prominent dimensions within it. The first dimension “is that it seeks to deconstruct the tradition of geopolitical thought as it has been represented in various intellectual histories within the discipline of geography<sup>10</sup>”, so it seeks to break off with the so-called geographical determinism of the traditional geopolitical approach of the former researches and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. – P. 152.

<sup>8</sup> ÓTuathail G., Agnew J. Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning and American Foreign Policy // Political Geography. – 1992. – Vol. 11 – N 2. – P. 191.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 195.

<sup>10</sup> G. Ó Tuathail. The Critical Reading/Writing of Geopolitics: Re-Reading/Writing Wittfogel, Bowman and Lacoste // Progress in Human Geography. – 1994. – Vol. 18. – N 3. – P. 313.

scholars. Also it means for the new approach its aspiration for showing that traditional categories and perceptions of geopolitics are not always defined and caused by the objective reality of given geographical conditions or natural resources and space. Therefore, the critical approach “brings (or at least claims to bring) the ‘methods’ of poststructuralist historiography to analyze how geopolitics emerged as a mode of analysis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and how a tradition came to be created around it<sup>11</sup>”.

The second dimension within the critical approach named by Ó Tuathail is its desire to analyze the mechanisms of constructing/making the geopolitical perceptions, views, and decisions on the state level and the very ways of their proliferation within running the real state policy. So, the approach declares its attempts to understand and explain the decision-making processes’ techniques on the state level that are based in their essence on the geopolitical perceptions of reality, as well as it feels itself capable to participate/collaborate in the processes of real state governance. As Ó Tuathail says, “critical geopolitics seeks to engage with the actual practice of statecraft. So far, this has taken the form of documenting and deconstructing how various intellectuals of statecraft spatialize international politics<sup>12</sup>”. So, the priority here is given to the very process of deconstruction of reality that is under study.

As the third dimension of the critical geopolitics’ studies the scholar names the intention “to displace our conventional understandings of the geographical in global politics<sup>13</sup>”. So far, here the very factors of space and geographical limits are questioned. Critical geopolitics turns its focus on the matter of the very phenomenon of space in running politics but not on the matter of its taken a priori categories’ influence on politics.

Thus, we can find strong grounds for the discourse analysis in the critical approach in geopolitics, though it has its own particular features and the very concept of so-called ‘discourse’ tries to make revisions in order to open and stress the structure of actual

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<sup>11</sup> G. Ó Tuathail. The Critical Reading/Writing of Geopolitics: Re-Reading/Writing Wittfogel, Bowman and Lacoste // Progress in Human Geography. – 1994. – Vol. 18. – N 3. – P. 313.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. – P. 314.

political discourse and processes of its construction<sup>14</sup>). As critical geopolitics is “a problematizing theoretical enterprise that places the existing structures of power and knowledge in question<sup>15</sup>”, it points out the essential problem of scientific discourse within the discipline trying to single out the mechanisms of it – that is the methodical construction of mental political images that are strongly affected by the key ruling ideas of statecraft leaders and experts “from universities to military bureaucracies to strategic ‘think-tanks’<sup>16</sup>”. The way of constructing of these images is disputed even among the critical geopolitical scholars though it could be revealed through the scrutiny of principal types of geopolitical studies outlined by critical geopolitics.

### *1.2 The Epistemological Dimension: Four Types of the Research Discourse of the Modern Geopolitical Visions*

The structure of classic geopolitical discourse in fact can be divided regarding the heuristic research purposes into four general types that is to say into formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, and structural geopolitics. All this types are closely connected in epistemological sense though each one encompasses some special set of assumptions and spheres of their application and development<sup>17</sup>. In the sense of our study (namely, geopolitical factor of actual Russian position in the Arctic region) we’re especially interested in formal geopolitical tradition, partially in practical and popular geopolitical traditions and in structural geopolitics and existing discourse within it.

Formal geopolitics refers to the conceptions of geopolitical vision on the state official level and on the level of recognized science discourse that has been coined within so-called given geopolitical tradition and has its own historical origins and perspective. This type of geopolitical vision tends to reflect in general the set of most important geopolitical theories,

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Muller. Doing discourse analysis in critical geopolitics // *L'Espace Politique*. – 2010. – Vol. 12. – P. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail. Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society // *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, editors Colin S. Gray, Geoffrey Sloan. Frank Cass Publishers, 1999. P. 107.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* – P. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Simon Dalby, Gearoid O. Tuathail. *Rethinking Geopolitics*, Routledge, 1998. P. 30.

visions and traditions<sup>18</sup>. So, dealing with formal geopolitics the critical approach seeks to contextualize the predominant paradigm and visions trying to find concrete historical and discursive grounds of such visions' appearance. In case of Russian presence in the Arctic region we should find out historical and discursive grounds that were coined and being operated with by our political elite and statecraft representatives for the explanation of prevailing Russian perception of this region in geopolitical sense.

Popular geopolitics as it is understood within the critical approach that lies on the level of mass social perceptions is conducted through mass media, cinema, literature, etc. and reflects all the popular and widespread ideas concerning the object or phenomenon<sup>19</sup>. Here the phenomenon of so-called mass/common geopolitical perceptions is under study. Therefore, the geopolitics in the mass view is considered as some set of popular political and geographical discourses and subjectivities<sup>20</sup>. In this sense the mechanisms of popular geopolitical images' creation is under study along with its application through mass media and other information sources by the politicians and specialists (in present study the mechanisms of the typical mental model's creation about the Russian geopolitical, geographical and historical belonging of the Arctic are under consideration).

Practical geopolitics as it is named within the critical approach is devoted to the study of the everyday practice of statecraft<sup>21</sup> as it is being realized through concrete political steps and decisions along with the understandings and ideas of how it should be run. So, this type of geopolitics is reflected in the existing predominant visions on the state policy (usually foreign policy). All the programs and actions of the state officials and political forces considering their geopolitical vision are under consideration as they reflect existing perceptions of the geopolitical situation of the state and also can predetermine its actions in the international relations.

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<sup>18</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail. *Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society // Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, editors Colin S. Gray, Geoffrey Sloan. Frank Cass Publishers, 1999. P. 111.

<sup>19</sup> Simon Dalby, Gearoid O. Tuathail. *Rethinking Geopolitics*, Routledge, 1998. P. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Gearoid O. Tuathail. *Problematizing geopolitics: survey, statesmanship and strategy // Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. New Series. – 1994. – Vol. 19. – N 3. – P. 269.*

<sup>21</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail. *Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society // Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, editors Colin S. Gray, Geoffrey Sloan. Frank Cass Publishers, 1999. P. 111.

Structural geopolitics describes the existing burning and urgent political issues on the global stage or within different regions of the world affected by these issues. So here one deals with some special set of new structural phenomenon that emerged recently (in the last twenty or ten years). Within the very structural discourse we can speak about new geopolitical realities of the post Cold War world<sup>22</sup>. Now the problem of the processes of delimitation and demarcation of the Arctic region within the existing geopolitical realities and within the rules of international law is receiving its importance and currency. Also it's important to understand the deep reasons of the Russian perception of the Arctic region as the continuation of its native territory and as the geopolitical and strategic recourse for its economy and the power positions in the world.

The mechanisms of forming of these processes are based on different levels of perception that are social and political, economic, ethnic, and mental ones. The key point of the study is to consider all those levels in respect of the actual existing processes of the Russian geopolitical ideas' construction concerning our state's geopolitical positions in the Arctic region.

One of the key categories of the Russian perception of the Northern territories beyond its boundaries that derives from the geopolitical vision on the existing Russian strategic positions in the world is the category of so-called geographical proximity or compactness of the territories that have been annexed. This category implies the special set of characteristics of the neighboring region and presence of the key features such as territorial/geographically spatial proximity, compactness of the space between two estimated regions and existing preconditions of historical ties development<sup>23</sup>.

One should remember that the model of the geographical proximity do not reflect only the existing European practice of this phenomenon i. e. the effective neighborhood of two of more economically developed cites, towns or regions that are legally separated by the state

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<sup>22</sup> Gearoid O. Tuathail, Timothy W. Luke. Present at (Dis)Integration: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization in the New Wor(l)d Order // *Annals of the Assosiation of American Geographers*. – 1994. – Vol. 84. – №3. – P. 381.

<sup>23</sup> Gearoid O. Tuathail. Political geography III: dealing with deterritorialization // *Progress in Human Geography*. – 1998. – Vol. 22 – N1. – P. 85.

boundaries. In the sense of our research it's more likely to be the modern geopolitical phenomenon reflected in terms of globalization and the diffusion of economic and spatial region perception<sup>24</sup>.

All these features imply not only the possibility of economic development and activity in the region (active or passive as it is in the case of the Russian Federation and its Northern marine frontier territories of the Arctic region) but also the mental perception of the very historical perception of the region and its possession that can be very beneficial in pure economic terms let alone the mental perception of the historical presence of Russians in the Arctic region – in the naturally rich Northern seas and strategical pre-frontier territories of the Arctic Ocean.

Therefore, the geographical proximity as a geopolitical and region science phenomenon (in this case it can be considered this way, according the geopolitical science's revisions of space and security concepts of the post-Cold War period<sup>25</sup>) means not only the pure geographical spatial closeness but also the economic proximity and links, mutual interdependence of the territories.

Here speaking in terms of the critical approach to geopolitics one must consider the Russian formal and structural discourse of the day – the perception (also with its recent transformations) of the post-Cold War and post-Soviet Russian geopolitical existence. Evidently, it has been transformed and shifted considerably after the USSR's collapse. But here the phenomenon is closely linked with another concept, namely the concept of the historical Russian perceptions of the nearest frontier territories and its historical interests and influence on them<sup>26</sup>.

Like it will be showed below these two closely connected concepts are defused in the formal and structural elements of the contemporary geopolitical and internal plitical discourse in Russia. After that these perseptions tharefore are being transformed and represented in this way in the practical and popular geopolitical traditions in the country.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. – P. 87.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. – P. 87.

<sup>26</sup> Tsyburskiy V. Geopolitics for “the Eurasian Atlantis” // Pro et Contra. 1999 – Vol. N 4.

Per se the concept of the geographical proximity in geopolitics is no more a pure geographical term but rather a structural and mental one that can help to divide, to structuralize somehow the outer territories and regions, to spatialize the mental geopolitical map<sup>27</sup> of the contemporary globalized reality and territory of the world. So rather than real estimations of the Russian presence in the Arctic regions and its profits in economic and geopolitical sense (that, nevertheless, can be hardly overestimated) there is the particular interest of how these geopolitical visions upon the special Russian presence in the region are being emerged and reflected in the contemporary Russian political and geopolitical discourse.

Another concept of the Russian perception of the Arctic region as a region of the highest geopolitical importance of the day is the concept of pragmatism. It encompasses different factors of geopolitical and none-geopolitical visions of the prospect of Russian special (strategic) interests in the neighboring region and the Russian present and future economic capacity to develop and explore the region that nowadays is not so economically active<sup>28</sup>.

The concept of pragmatism is connected not only with the economy science but also can be partially related with the traditional geopolitical vision of the world and the existence of the particular spheres and regions of some states economic and therefore strategic and political/geopolitical interests. Within the revised concept of the post-Cold War geopolitics and its critical approach the phenomenon of pragmatism can be considered as an element of the newly structuralized system of the existing post-bipolar and globalized world order and as a mechanism of the realization of the state interests that are very multiplied being at the same time the economic, geopolitical and strategic (related to the issues of the state security) ones<sup>29</sup>.

We can clearly see it in the case of the Russian presence (and the perceptions of its rising necessity) in the Arctic region being considered as a strategic one for Russia with its

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<sup>27</sup> Simon Dalby, Gearoid O. Tuathail. *Rethinking Geopolitics*, Routledge, 1998. – P. 118.

<sup>28</sup> Caitlyn L. Antrim. *The Next Geographical Pivot: The Russian Arctic in the Twenty-first Century* // *Naval War College Review*. – 2010. – Vol. 63. – N3. – P. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Tsyburskiy V. *Geopolitics for “the Eurasian Atlantis”* // *Pro et Contra*. 1999 – Vol. N 4.

geopolitical importance together with the Russian declared economic and political responsibility in the region (see Chapter 3).

So, the concept of pragmatism of Russia in the Arctic is expressed by its declarations of special Russian rights for activity in the region (classical geopolitical category of influence) along with its responsibility for the situation there. One can observe the links of the above-mentioned concept (that has both political and economic features of the real presence) with the concept of geopolitical interests and presence of influence. Yet, this concept nowadays has less geo-power orientation in its sense providing to create new modern set of geopolitical perceptions that would characterize the new ‘forms of organizing space’<sup>30</sup> when the functional boundaries is no more so necessary and strict condition to dominate over some region or another.

According to the critical approach to geopolitics these two concepts – the concept of the Russian pragmatic politics in the Arctic region and the concept of its geographical proximity – are being coined within the inner statecraft processes. Therefore, one should investigate the principles of their elaboration (the elaboration of these geopolitical ideas per se) within the circles of the state political elite (formal and structural types) along with the phenomenon of the running of these principles in the real policy of the Russian state (practical type).

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<sup>30</sup> Gearoid O. Tuathail. The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millennium // *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. – 2000. – Vol. 90. – N1. – P. 171.



*1. 3. The Contemporary Russian Geopolitical Discourse About the Arctic Region In Its Theoretical Vision and Key Factors of Its Forming*

The classical geopolitical theories and schemes with its variations along with national philosophical and geopolitical schools (like Eurasianism) trends are quite popular in today's Russian geological and political discourse (both in scientific and practical and popular ones)<sup>31</sup>. Yet the Russian geopolitical agenda is still highly geo-centralized in its theoretical and practical perceptions and concepts.

Within the Russian national geopolitical study the critical approach of geopolitics or the theory of so-called post-geopolitics is highly criticized by its west-centric and globalized positions of analysis. Post-geopolitical theorists are seen as a ideologist who deny the very grounds of the discipline namely the classical antagonisms of the world poles of influence and force, the separations of the regions and the system of the distribution of the region and global power and who shift the dualism of this confrontation inwards, on the level of interior national perception and state discourse (and on the least level of a single person's vision). So, the very post-structuralist epistemological methods of the critical research are not correct in the sense of the current Russian geopolitical discourse<sup>32</sup>.

Within the Russian mainstream geopolitical discourse there is a lack of attention towards the issues of the Russian Northern geopolitical agenda's elaboration, the main vectors of the Russian geopolitical precense's research are vocused on the European (the Western one), the Southern and the Eastern dimensions whereas the peculiarities of the Northern vector and the geopolitics in the Arctic still stay untoched considerably. The reason of the absence of the states

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<sup>31</sup> Fokin S. The Russian School of Geopolitics // Geopolitics: Manual, editors Mikhailov V., Ternovaya S., Fokin S. Ed. RAGS, 2007. – C 133.

<sup>32</sup> “Post-geopolitics VS. Geopolitics of Multipolar World”: seminar resume, Web-site of the Centre of the Conservative Research, URL : <http://konservativizm.org/konservativizm/geopolitika/270910194349.xhtml>

and, therefore, the geopolitical actors (with their interests) on the territories northward of Russia nowadays is seen as a groundless one.

In spite of the fundamental Russian geopolitical science's scepticism and criticism towards the post-geopolitical postulates some theoretical grounds of the critical approach can be applied correctly to the present research namely the concept of the inner understanding (to some extent, self-understanding) of the Russian state and elite perceptions of the contemporary geopolitical positions on the frontiers (on the Northern frontiers of the Arctic) and the very mechanisms of elaborating of such perceptions.

The critical concept of the contemporary Russian geopolitical vision one can find in the works of Vadim Tsyburskiy and his researches (generally inspired by the previous concept of Samuel P. Huntington and his visions of the geopolitical and world-view division between different civilizations<sup>33</sup>) in the sphere of the Russian geopolitical boundaries and peripheral regions around the state which are called "Limitrophe states" or the "Great Belt of the Limitrophe states" (that are the former member-states of the Soviet Union, being nowadays the independent post-Soviet republics). The states of "the Great Belt" around Russian boundaries being formally independent provide the buffer zone between one giant geopolitical actor – Russia and its great territory and the rest local regions of the geopolitical influence like European region, the region of the Middle East and the Far East, etc.<sup>34</sup>.

The concept of Tsyburskiy implies the relative absence of the actual Russian geopolitical presence on the territories of its past Soviet times high influence, its lack of communication (along with the lack of the necessary means in its disposal to provide the geopolitical influence) with the regions separated from Russian by the belt of the Great Limitrophe<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Samuel P. Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations? // The Foreign Affairs.* – Vol. 22. – 1992-1993. – P. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Tsyburskiy V. *The Land Beyond the Great Limitrophus: From Eurasian Russia Towards Russia in Eurasia // Business and Politics,* 1995. N 9.

<sup>35</sup> Tsyburskiy V. *The Island of Russia, Geopolitical and Chronological Essays,* Ed. ROSSPEN (Russian Political Encyclopedia), 2007. – C. 107.

Therefore, Tsyburskiy draws a conclusion that Russia should revise its long-term historical geopolitical concept of the high Euro-centrism and to accept the real fact that it should shift the focus of its geopolitical and historical and world-view orientation towards its vast Central and Eastern parts of Ural, Siberia and the Far East territories<sup>36</sup>. So here it can be seen much in common with the model of the Russian geopolitical presence in the Arctic region on the Northern boundaries and the territories to the North of them along with the concept of the geographical proximity and the economic and political pragmatic strategy of Russia in the Arctic.

Evidently, the ongoing shift of many states' attention towards the Arctic region (its vast territories, rich natural and fresh water recourses, transport possibilities) can't cast doubts on the fact that the geopolitical and strategic importance of the region is growing. Therefore, within the Russian political elite and scientific discourse the interest in further forming of the national Arctic agenda will increase (concerning formal, structural and practical parts of the general Russian geopolitical perceptions that are closely connected).

The domestic Russian critical concept of Tsyburskiy (which can be attributed as a formal geopolitical discourse within the national Russian geopolitical science) towards that revises the classical geopolitical vision on the positions of Russia on the world stage gives way to the more profound and fresh researches to the problem of the Russian geopolitical possibilities of today and of the nearest future that have been shifted considerably since the USSR collapse and the consolidation of the contemporary Russian state and its reorientation from the over-Eurocentric geopolitical course of the 90<sup>th</sup> towards more differentiated strategy of geopolitical presence and its intensification not only in political sense, but in geostrategic and economic

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<sup>36</sup> Tsyburskiy V. Russia as a Country Beyond the Great Limitrophus: Its Civilization and Geopolitics, Ed. Editorial URSS, 2000. – C.114

ones<sup>37</sup> (including the Arctic region in the nearest future and, what is more important, for the long-term prospect<sup>38</sup>).

So, concerning the afore-mentioned concepts of the critical geopolitics and the post-structuralistic methods of research, the principle factors of the process forming the key ideas about the geopolitical presence of Russia and its exploration of the Arctic region can be named in the following way:

- The idea of the geographical proximity and contiguity of the Arctic territories to the Northern Russian borders that correspond to the key Russian concept about its historical area of the natural geopolitical influence (that is proved once more within the model of the preferable geopolitical behaviour of modern Russia outlined in the concepts of Vadim Tsyburskiy);
- The concept of proclaimed Russian pragmatism (both in economic and strategic and political sence) that nowadays can be admitted as a general principle of the Russian formal geopolitical discourse (in the official state documents, strategies and development programmes on the Arctic issues<sup>39</sup>);
- The recognition of the fact (by the Russian political elite and statesmen) that the Arctic region will be the most economically and strategically useful for the state along with its rather accessibility for the exploration process and the possibility to control the region that is to prevail and dominate there (factors of geopolitics);
- The acceptance of the fact that the Russian geeopolitical agenda should be further layed out the specifics and outlined conforming with the Russian national interests by the Russian officials and the political elite;

All the factors are closely connected with the very process of construction of the Russian geopolitical agenda in the Arctic region, so here all the materials concerning these

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<sup>37</sup> The basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective (2008) // Rossiyskaya Gazeta №4877, 30.03.2009.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 3.

process and perceptions are necessary to analyze including official documents, declarations and statements. Study of the process of perceptions' construction about the geopolitical importance of the Arctic for Russia and its actual geopolitical presence there gives way to the understanding of the ongoing and future Russian strategic acts and steps there within its continuing exploration.

## Chapter 2

### The Principal Research Methods of the Geopolitical Ideas

#### About the Arctic Region Exploration by Russia

#### Prevailing Within the National State Authorities

##### *2.1. The epistemological grounds of the contemporary post-geopolitical discourse in its post-structuralist view*

Based on the post-structuralist ontological and epistemological grounds, the critical approach to geopolitics that is implied within the present research presupposes the appropriate methodological instruments and ways of research.

As it has been outlined in the Chapter 1 the post-geopolitical concept as a concept scientifically based on the post-structuralist sights of research (within the epistemological grounds) and, thus, in many senses breaks off with the tradition of the highly geo-centralized vision of the tradition discipline of geopolitics adding many other scientific instruments of research taken from such disciplines as history, political science, psychology and social science<sup>40</sup>.

The post-structuralist paradigm (and therefore the critical approach of geopolitics) within its epistemological part presupposes the special set of research methods and features that helps to investigate and understand the so-called “cultural codes” within the processes and phenomenon under study. These are the followings:

- The very perception of the human being as a subject (and at the same time as an object) of knowledge is under consideration of the post-structuralist paradigm. Within the paradigm the human understanding and interpretation first of all reflect non-systemic and non-structuralized phenomenon. The cause of this fact lies in the nature of the human process of

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<sup>40</sup> Merje Kuus. Critical Geopolitics // URL : <http://www.heinebuch.de/include/Thema1322/pdf/02.pdf>

thinking that is its subjectivity, individuality of features, speciality of one's psychic and mental system, etc. In that sense the most important feature of the process of thinking and knowledge for a human being is his own desire to investigate the scientific or other phenomenon of the world that as a result defines all the rest processes of scientific knowledge, the peculiarities of the social and cultural reality<sup>41</sup>.

- Also the post-structuralism stresses the importance of understanding the mechanisms of human society's (as a whole structure) functioning that are reflected in the terms of "power (dominance) – submission" of all the social ties and relations. Thus, here it could be observed some revised type of social structure that is realized by the post-structuralist theorists.

- The concept of the text's nature has very strong importance within the post-structuralist paradigm that is the very perception of the text in its emotional and unconscious sense is under consideration. Thus, the direct sense of the textual information is no more under the central study, but the unique and non-systemic elements of the text are highly important, the perception of the text by the recipient on the level of intuition and unconsciousness reflects the basic and profound understanding and mental influence of the perceived information (that is understood more like set of symbols and impetus having influence on the reader that conscious and clear bits of the concrete information)<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the post-structuralist scholars pay great attention to the process of the text construction and the revelation of its key systemic elements that play the most important role in the process of the text's adoption while reading it. In this sense the concept of the text perception and its further symbolic mental transformation is highly important for the present research.

- The post-structuralist scholars consider the concept of the interpretation of the sign as a basic and key element of the study process and knowledge. "The notion of the arbitrary character of the sign<sup>43</sup>" here is reflected in the phenomenon of the very opposite sense

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<sup>41</sup> Anthony Giddens. *Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Production of Culture*. // *Social Theory Today*, ed. by Anthony Giddens, Jonathan H. Turner. Stanford University Press. 1988. P. 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* – P. 203.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* – P. 203.

of the sign's initial meaning, so it lacks the final and ultimate sense that one could name as a real but has the multiplicity of meanings that depends on the reader and recipient of the sign/text. Therefore, one can observe the absence of structural source within the sign interpretation that is underlined by the post-structuralists. The mechanism of the sign construction and its further interpretation within the mass mental perception is in the centre of the research.

- The intention of the post-structuralist theorists to break off with the classical approach towards the scientific knowledge is reflected in the concept of the logocentrism and universality principles' revision as the principles and canons that are wrong in its sense that put the percipient into the incorrect field of the senses and notions fixed (inflexible) by the scientists. The objectivity and logic of the scientific research are considered by the post-structuralism as a function of the empowerment of authority (that is power), so one can't speak about any verification of it as it's impossible in conditions of the very final objectivity and correct perception's absence. It should be mentioned that there is no any constructive alternative proposal made by the post-structuralist scholars, nevertheless they propose the way of the re-interpretation of the mechanisms of the scientific methods' perception along with the methods of focusing the attention not on the initial (superficial) layers of the scientific (and other) texts with their original sense but on the more profound ("unreadable") elements that influence inconspicuously on the recipient (reader) mental condition and notions<sup>44</sup>.

Thus, the principles of epistemological view on the scientific process and the process of reality's construction is reflected in the critical approach to geopolitics as it's one of the concept based on the post-structuralist vision. The phenomenon of the space and senses' construction within the discipline of geopolitics are specially under consideration of the above-mentioned approach. Thus, the very mechanisms and principles of the concepts of space, power and resource distribution depend on the geography and understanding of these concepts'

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. – P. 206.



construction are under study of the case of geopolitical ideas concerning the Arctic region exploration by Russia and the Russian political and geopolitical agenda on the Arctic.

*2.2. The application of methodology of the contemporary post-geopolitical discourse: the discourse analysis as a method of the senses' extraction*

Studying the process of the Russian geopolitical agenda's formulation it's necessary to do the texts and signs analysis of how the geopolitical notions toward the Russian positions in the Arctic region are elaborated by the Russian government within the official texts, statements and other sources of constructing field of the geopolitical notions about the Russian geostrategic position in the Arctic. Thus, it can be seen the mechanisms of the geopolitical views' elaboration within the Russian political elite and the ways they further affect the very political elite and the Russian policy and strategy run toward the Arctic.

Existing geopolitical views toward the Russian presence and exploration of the Arctic region can be found within the contemporary political discourse that can be outlined from the official texts, news, statements and speeches of the Russian officials. All these materials can be reflected through the source of texts (and, therefore, signs that carry the important message of these texts and represent some existing ideas and senses) and their semantic analysis based on the post-structuralist groundwork (taken the post-structuralist paradigm as a method of analysis).

Thus, the methodology of the post-structuralist epistemological paradigm has given great impetus to the development of constructivist critical approach to geopolitics (post-geopolitics). Within this approach the method of the discourse analysis is considered as the most efficient and substantial as it can reveal the very deep senses (not only pure informative and direct sense's part of a text) concealed in the text (semantic signs of the text).

The discourse analysis is applied as the main methodological instrument within the present research. This type of analysis allows studying both the qualitative contents of the

social and political discourse concerning the Russian geopolitical positions and the exploration prospects in the Arctic region along with the issue (geopolitical ideas) of its belonging to Russia (as it has the highest strategic importance for the state and also is located nearby with the Russian “legal and natural” borders that corresponds with the geopolitical idea of geographical proximity and, therefore, with the idea of geo-territorial compactness of Russian territories and the areas of its geopolitical influence and presence). As a result this type reveals the mechanisms of this social and political discourse’s influence within the society’s perception of the main geopolitical ideas.

The post-geopolitical theorists consider the method of discourse analysis as a constructivist way of research revealing the difficult process of the mental constructions’ creation and building about some processes or occurrences that lie beyond the target group (the group that is being affected by this influence), but then are being recalled (reproduced) within the public opinion of this target group (or a single person). Thus, these constructions create the psychological picture of the surrounding world stressing the importance of one set of factors and depreciating the importance of another one<sup>45</sup>.

Within the present research the attempt has been made to analyze such constructions (within the current Russian geopolitical discourse) as the geopolitical importance of the Arctic region for Russia considering its territorial proximity, the strategic importance for the state and the currency of extensive model of the Russian territorial expansion to the North as a part of natural geo-economic process.

The method of discourse analysis, as it can be seen, is based on the ontological elements of the theory of social psychology which methodology is applied within the critical geopolitics (as distinct from the theory of classical geopolitics which operated the methodological instruments of political geography, political science and theory of international relations). In this sense, post-geopolitics runs the critical analysis of the general set of initial

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<sup>45</sup> Petrenko V. The Constructivist Paradigm in the Psychological Science // *Psichologicheskii jurnal* – 2002 – Vol.23 – N 3 – P. 113.

geopolitical assumptions and concepts proposing the critical revision of the very concept of geopolitics as a discourse practice that is operated by the men of statecraft and scientific intellectuals when they create the spaces within the international policy in order to present them as a 'world' of separated types of persons, places and dramas<sup>46</sup>.

Within the very critical geopolitics as a constructivist practice the method of discourse analysis (analysis of texts) plays the most important role in revealing and stressing the creation of so-called 'mental construction' that are made as geopolitical perceptions and ideas. Also "in the analysis of the social construction of world politics – the mainstay of critical geopolitics – authors in critical geopolitics have taken recourse to discourse analysis as a tool for coming to terms with such diverse issues as the rhetorical production of marginality, resistance and otherness through geopolitical discourses (e.g. Kuus, 2004) or the constitutive and disciplining power of geopolitical discourses as truth regimes (e.g. Gilbert, 2005; Ó Tuathail, 1996). Similarly, discourse and discourse analysis have been among the most popular concepts to study the formation of geopolitical identities (e.g. Newman, 2000)<sup>47</sup>", stresses Martin Müller.

"The adoption of the discourse concept in critical geopolitics has brought attention to the contexts of the geopolitical construction of meaning. Proponents of critical geopolitics have argued that a discursive analysis of geopolitics must take into account *the particular political and social contexts in which geopolitical power is embedded* (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). These tallies with Angermüller's (2001) definition of discourse analysis as focusing on the link between text and its context. For discourse analysis, texts are not containers of self-referential meaning, but the recorded traces of discourse activity, which can never be completely reduced to text (Angermüller, 2001, p. 8)<sup>48</sup>".

Thus, we're especially interested in the research of the very context of existing geopolitical ideas and their emergence (along with the external causes provoking them).

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<sup>46</sup> ÓTuathail G., Agnew J. Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning and American Foreign Policy // Political Geography. – 1992. – Vol. 11 – N 2. – P. 157.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Müller , «Doing discourse analysis in Critical Geopolitics», L'Espace Politique [En ligne] , 12 | 2010-3 , mis en ligne le 11 février 2011, Consulté le 22 avril 2011. URL : <http://espacepolitique.revues.org/index1743.html>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, the geopolitical factor of the Russian presence in the Arctic region and its exploration contains the set of different factors of internal Russian geopolitical discourse (that, in turn, is closely connected with the various political, geo-strategic and economic factors) made up and run by the national politicians (political elite) involved in the process of statecraft and geopolitical concepts elaboration (here one should divide the quantitative types of geopolitics within the existing official geopolitical discourse, so they can be different).

Thereby, the national social structures and settings (which are so-called within the discourse analysis) along with the national historical notions within the geopolitical views' model (the notions of compactness and geographical proximity of the Northern Arctic territories as factors of belonging to the natural Russian territories of geopolitical interests, influence and involvement) must be considered within the analysis of contemporary Russian geopolitical discourse on the issue of Russian presence in the Arctic and exploration of the region.

Here it must be taken into account the relative newness of the studying phenomenon as it can be seen from the example reflected in the scheme concerning the present state of discourse analysis within the critical geopolitics that yet pays insufficient attention to the study of epistemological links between the categories of proximity and structure in geopolitics<sup>49</sup> (see attachment #1). Therefore, two categories of geopolitical vision – the category of (geographical) proximity and the category of structure (namely, the structure of geopolitical self-perception of Russia) – are under consideration of the research case study along with the very nature of constructivist links between them.

The category of geographical proximity of the Arctic to the Northern border of Russia encompasses more sub-categories that lie on the constructivist ground of the current geopolitical discourse, though it can be found within the more classical geopolitical vision of the Russian historical type of territorial widening and its simultaneous geographical compactness<sup>50</sup>. So, this category can be characterized as a Russian national vision (or, as it is seen by the critical

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Tsyburskiy V. The Island of Russia: the Prospects of Russian Geopolitics // Polis – 1993. – N 5.

approach, inner state self-constructive perception that is both affected and affect by the state politics, political elite and experts) of its own model of geopolitical influence's distribution.

The geopolitical first-priority positions (or even privileged ones) on the territories of the vast Arctic region (from the Northern Russian borders to the North Pole) are seen by Russia (and are defined nowadays in its official policy) as a natural state. Hereby, the categories of geographical proximity and the category of structure (as it was said above, the structure of geopolitical self-perception of Russia) are connected directly on the level of inner perception.

To stress that fact, the appropriate materials of various aspects of geopolitics (formal, structural, popular and practical ones) should be analyzed. Thus, the sampling of all the national documents and papers concerning the issue of the Russian geopolitical factor in the Arctic region's exploration and future development (within the Russian geopolitical influence and real presence) with regard to the chosen research categories (of the Arctic geographical proximity and its national perception constructed by the politicians) should be made to reveal the nature (and its importance) of the geopolitical factor in the Russian exploration of the Arctic region and to show whether the Arctic region is seen as a natural sphere of the Russian geopolitical ambitions and influence (according the category of its geographical proximity).

As formal geopolitics refers to the ideas and concepts elaborated by those who are involved into the official politics with the newly stressed emphasis on the institutional, political and economic aspects in geopolitics (also it may be the concepts made by the academic scientists and analytical centers)<sup>51</sup> the discourse analysis run on its grounds should reveal and stress those elements of contemporary Russian official geopolitical discourse that correspond to the ideas of the Russian natural geopolitical presence necessity in the Arctic as a neighboring region of economic accessory and historical belonging to the Russian sphere of influence. Thus, the categories of geographical proximity and structure of geopolitical influence within the region

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<sup>51</sup> Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought / Ed. by K. Dodds, D. Atkinson. - London: Routledge, 2000. – P. 332.

should be reflected in the analyzed material (namely, official papers, strategies, policy documents of the Russian authorities).

In addition to that the discourse analysis of the leaders' speeches with opinions regarding the Russian state positions to the Arctic should be run within the practical and structural dimensions of geopolitics outlined by the critical constructivist approach. Here the categories of the Russian declared pragmatism in the Arctic exploration and the expressed necessity of and readiness for the international cooperation in the Arctic (with one of the head positions of Russia in the process) should be outlined and explained.

The qualitative substantial sampling of materials devoted to the topic of the Arctic region and its discourse analysis 'decoding' the constructive senses of the contemporary Russian ideas on its policy in the North elaborated by the authorities should be accomplished in order to do further conclusions about the Russian real geopolitical abilities in the Arctic (the perception of them), the actual geopolitical state agenda upon it, and the prospects of geopolitical presence and exploration of the region conducted by Russia.

## Chapter 3

### **The Contemporary Geopolitical Ideas on the Russian Positions in the Arctic Region in the Russian Official Political Discourse**

#### *3.1. The case study of the official Russian geopolitical positions declared within the principal state papers and documents*

Within the present research it's necessary to consider briefly the actual Russian position in the Arctic region separating the problem of development and exploration of the Russian national territories that lie beyond the Arctic circle and the discourse on this issue and the problem of more broad character namely the geopolitical dominance and actual presence of Russia (and its prospects) in the whole Arctic region including the ocean waters and territories of the Arctic being under the international jurisdiction.

Nowadays Russia has leading positions in the process of the Arctic exploration (it concerns not only its national territories of dry land, seashelf and 12-miles zone of territorial waters but also the 200-miles exclusive economic zone and the other territory of the Arctic Ocean). The length of the Arctic coast within the national territories of Russia extents to 22 600 km while all the rest summary length of the Arctic territories being under the national jurisdiction of other states makes up 38 700 km<sup>52</sup>.

The general type of the Russian official declarative or strategic papers can be analyzed from the point of view of the discourse analysis as a set of special elaborated political (and geopolitical) statements formulated on general terms of the state policy as it is seen in perfect type of the Russian policy running. Thus, these program documents and strategies (the

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<sup>52</sup> Bartsis I. Concerning the Legal Status of the Russian Arctic Sector // *Pravo i Politika* – 2000. – N 12.

declarations, as they could be named) are perfect instruments to uncover the ideas and notions on the Russian world political and geopolitical positions (or the desirable ones) that predominate over the existing official political discourse (as they have been elaborated and approved by the national government and officials).

The main discourse analysis's elements of the existing official documents by the Russian authorities could be characterized as a stressed process of the Russian political and geopolitical positions' re-strengthening. The image of the contemporary Russia is seen as a state of multiplied interests' representation and as a state of the real presence of influence. Concerning the Russian geopolitical positions' strengthening in the Arctic it could be outlined that the strong intention of the geopolitical pretense (with the plans of the strengthening of the real economic, transport, and military presence in the Arctic) is clearly expressed within the main official documents of the general sense along with the special papers concerning the Arctic.

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008) reflects the wide spectrum of the declared strategic directions of the Russian interior and exterior policy including the re-strengthening of the geopolitical state positions in the neighboring regions. The main categories of text include the issues of national security, cooperation, environmental protection, activity against terrorism and other international threats<sup>53</sup>. In general, the paper can be characterized as a declarative text on the officially expressed intention of the Russian authorities to revise the out-of-date political priorities and orientations of the state of the late 90<sup>th</sup> and to show the newly elaborated Russian external policy's principles and its new position towards (as a restored great power) the ongoing global geopolitical, political, economic processes. It is stressed in the text that "the reaction of the Western states on the prospect of the loss of its monopoly on the global processes' influence turns to the particular inertial guideline of the deterrence of Russia in the political and psychological sense"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008), Official Web-site of the President of the Russian Federation, URL : <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/785>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



The Russian National Security Strategy until 2020 (which was signed in 2009) is one more document aiming to emphasize the intention of the Russian authorities to declare the strong external (geopolitical) position (along with the internal one) of Russia and its intention to stand up for its geopolitical and security interests<sup>55</sup>. Here, one can observe the connotation between the formal geopolitical discourse (as it could be named so because of the strong geopolitical part that is presented in the document) and existing geopolitical views of the Russian political elite aimed for the creation of the new perceptions of the Russian geopolitical influence's broadening (the latent meaning of this process and its purposes stay under consideration of the critical approach as it may be a double or triple sense phenomenon).

“The NSS (The Russian National Security Strategy until 2020) mentioned a large number of objectives to be reached in all security dimensions, but it remains to be seen whether these can be achieved. However, for the first time in a strategic security document, the NSS concluded with a number of indicators, such as economic growth, the unemployment rate and the level of military modernization. If these indicators are monitored and policy is adjusted accordingly, then the chances of successfully reaching the targets will be better than if no benchmarks had been provided<sup>56</sup>”. It is particularly stressed in the paper that “energy has been gaining weight in Russian security thinking since Putin’s second presidential term. Indicative of the crucial importance given to energy (resources and security) was that the NSS mentioned this item more than five times<sup>57</sup>”.

In the part of the Russian geopolitical and real presence in the Arctic region and its importance for the future national development “the document highlights the role of energy security. It associates Russia’s international position and strength with its energy reserves, and states that a pragmatic policy and political use of its natural resources has strengthened Russia’s influence on the international stage. The strategy asserts that in a long term perspective the

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<sup>55</sup> The Russian National Security Strategy until 2020 (2009), Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Federal Issue №4912, 19.05.2009

<sup>56</sup> Marcel de Haas, Henning Schröder. No. 62: Russia’s National Security Strategy // Russian Analytical Digest, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Bremen, Germany. – 2009. – N 62. – P. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

attention of international policy will be focused on access to energy reserves, including on the continental shelf in the Barents Sea and other parts of the Arctic, in addition to the Middle East, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia<sup>58</sup>” Thus, the document outlines the Arctic region’s recourses importance for Russia as primarily economic and security one.

The Maritime Doctrine of Russian Federation until 2020 (2001) pays special attention to the Russian geopolitical presence in the Arctic region emphasizing it as a separate regional direction of the Russian marine activities. The context of the emphasis is also primarily economic and security one: “National Maritime Policy for the Arctic regional direction is determined by the particular importance of providing free access of Russian fleet in the Atlantic, wealth of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Russian Federation, the crucial role of the Northern Fleet for the defense of the state of marine and ocean areas, as well as the increasing importance of the Northern Sea Route for sustainable Development of the Russian Federation<sup>59</sup>”.

Therefore, according to the Doctrine the main proclaimed goals (long-term objectives) of Russia in the region are the followings: “research and development of the Arctic to the development of export-oriented economic sectors, priority social problems; protecting the interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic; the creation of ice-class vessels for shipping, specialized vessels for fishing, research and other specialized fleets; account the interests of the state defense in exploration and development of bio-resources and reserves of mineral resources in the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Russian Federation; creation of conditions, including those with the capacity of the region for the home and use of marine capabilities, ensuring the protection of sovereignty, sovereign and international rights of the Russian Federation in the Arctic regional direction; restriction of foreign naval activities in the agreed areas and zones on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements with the leading

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<sup>58</sup> Russian national security strategy, Geopolitics in the High North, URL : [http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=87:russian-national-security-strategy&catid=1:latest-news](http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87:russian-national-security-strategy&catid=1:latest-news)

<sup>59</sup> Maritime Doctrine of Russian Federation 2020, English authentic text, [http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Russian\\_Maritime\\_Policy\\_2020.pdf](http://www.oceanlaw.org/downloads/arctic/Russian_Maritime_Policy_2020.pdf)

maritime power; ensuring the national interests of the Russian Federation in relation to the Northern Sea Route, centralized governance of the transport system, icebreaking services and the provision of equitable access to interested carriers, including foreign; updating and safe operation of nuclear icebreaker fleet; the interests of the Russian Federation to the delimitation of maritime areas and the bottom of the seas of the Arctic Ocean with Arctic coastal States<sup>60</sup>”.

Thus, within the Maritime Doctrine the concrete set of geopolitical factors that Russian is particularly interested in were outlined – the importance of the Russian interests’ protection, the possibility to take control over the Arctic territories in ecologic, military and border guarding sense. Along with it, it can be clearly seen the certain preoccupation on the issue of possibility to fulfill the exclusive economic activities by Russia in the Arctic territories.

All these factors denoted in the text of the Doctrine can be estimated as an expression of the declared Russian policy of pragmatism in the Arctic. Thus, the structure of the geopolitical vision on the Russian presence in the Arctic nowadays and in future has high importance within the official Russian geopolitical discourse as it has been reflected in the program documents of the state (like in those ones of the general character so as in those ones of the special character).

The very ideas of the Russian geopolitical interests in the Northern region and the prospects of its real presence there are elaborated by the national political experts regarding the presupposition of the Russian geopolitical dominance in the region that today could be agreed with. It corresponds with the idea of the general Russian geopolitical reinforcement and its reorientation to the Northern territories in the medium- and long-term prospect as a natural sphere of the Russian economic prosperity<sup>61</sup>.

Nowadays Russian authorities have approved two program documents of that kind, which disclose and substantiate the Russian vision on its positions in the Arctic region and the future development of the region regarding the state necessities, namely the basics of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Maritime Doctrine of Russian Federation 2020, the Official Web-site of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, URL : <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/34.html>

state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective (signed in 2008) and the Strategy of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020 (signed in 2009).

The basics of the state policy in the Arctic till 2020 contains the complete set of issues and goals that has been formulated by the Russian authorities in order to reflect the existing declared official geopolitical guideline (first of all, for the interior perception) of Russia to run the policy of the strategic superiority over the region based on the factor of geographical proximity of the Arctic territories and, therefore, on the notion of their natural geopolitical belonging to the sphere of the Russian influence. The idea is reflected in the texts of special papers regarding the Arctic namely the basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective and the Strategy of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020.

The present paper is the most important strategic document concerning the Russian Arctic territories perspectives though it affects only the sovereign Russian Northern territories' status defining the priorities of the actual and future economic, social and strategic development of the Northern territories i. e. "use of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation as a strategic resource base of the Russian Federation; providing the solution of problems of social and economic development of the country: maintenance of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation; preservation of unique ecological systems of the Arctic; use of the Northern Sea Route as a national single transport communication of the Russian Federation in the Arctic (the Northern Sea Route); and national interests determine basic objectives, primary goals and strategic priorities of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic<sup>62</sup>".

The formulated goals prove the intention of the Russian authorities to develop in future the Northern Russian territories strengthening this way the further Russian presence

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<sup>62</sup> The basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective (2008), English authentic text, <http://img9.custompublish.com/getfile.php/1042958.1529.avuqcurreq/Russian+Strategy.pdf?return=www.arcticgovernance.org>

(economic, political, geopolitical ones) in the Far North (including the territories of the Arctic ocean and Northern seas being in the international access). Along with it Russia continues to claim the widening of its Arctic sector, claims are based on the arguments that the Lomonosov Ridge which is an underwater 1800-miles mountain ridge lying underneath the Pole, and the Mendeleev Ridge are the natural extensive mountain ridges of the Eurasian mainland where the territory of Russia is situated (see attachment #2).

It is said in the UN's press release upon this issue that "on December 20, 2001, Russia made an official submission into the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (article 76, paragraph 8). In the document it is proposed to establish new outer limits of the continental shelf of Russia beyond the previous 200 mile zone, but within the Russian Arctic sector. The territory claimed by Russia in the submission is a large portion of the Arctic, including the North Pole<sup>63</sup>".

The UN commission asked for the additional researches, so the Russian authorities are confident in the territorial (geopolitical) success in this issue guaranteeing the huge profit for the Russian economy, transport abilities, the whole geopolitical benefit and advantages. If Russia proves the rightness of its claims that the Mendeleev and Lomonosov mountain ridges are the natural extension of its state continental shelf it will make almost the half part of the Arctic Ocean (including the North Pole) the sovereign Russian territory with the 200-miles of the exclusive economic zone around it. Such international claim of Russia underlines the state's growing interest of gaining various types of control over the vast Northern territories including the strengthening of geopolitical control (predominance) over the territories that could be included into the so-called Russian Arctic sector but are not the national ones.

Within the internal perception of the Russian geopolitics in the Arctic and the ways it should be run the formal geopolitical discourse could be characterized as a direction which Russian authorities and political elite pay great attention to. It is underlined in the Strategy

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<sup>63</sup> COMMISSION ON LIMITS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF RECEIVES ITS FIRST SUBMISSION, Russian Federation First To Move To Establish Outer Limits of Its Extended Continental Shelf, the UN Press Release SEA/1729, 21/12/2001, URL : <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sea1729.doc.htm>

of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020 (written in 2010) that was elaborated regarding the provisions of the basics of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and for a further perspective and the provisions of the Russian Security Council's meetings on this topic and the commissions of the Russian government<sup>64</sup>. It is a very detailed document aimed at the comprehensive analysis of the Russian current positions in the Arctic region and their prospects in future, the necessary and possible actions and measures that need to be fulfilled by the state in order to reach the goals claimed in the Strategy and other official program documents.

The discourse analysis of the document reveals the most interesting key elements of the claimed Russian geopolitical vision on the Arctic territories and the issue of its natural belonging to the sphere of geopolitical influence of the state. The Strategy stresses, "Being the highly special region at the same time the Arctic zone is indissolubly connected with the rest Russian territory being *the integral part of its national identity, legendary legacy of the past and the future development (italics added)*. In the foreseeable prospect the Arctic zone will perform mission of the financial and economic support of the state transition to the innovative model of development. New recourse mega-projects of the Arctic region exploration should launch new great innovative impetus in the each sphere of the Russian economy including the key Russian industries such as mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, military-industrial complex, research institutes, as well as they should serve the purpose of the financial support for the investing projects' realization providing the Russian transition to the innovative economic model<sup>65</sup>".

Here in the text of the present Strategy it can be seen both notions based on the factors of the Arctic geographical proximity to Russia and thus its integral belonging to the state natural sphere of influence and geopolitical involvement in this sphere cited as a given fact along

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<sup>64</sup> Strategy of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020 (2010), official web-site of the Ministry of the Region Development of the Russian Federation, URL : [www.minregion.ru/upload/documents/2011/03/3103/pr\\_strateg\\_azr.doc](http://www.minregion.ru/upload/documents/2011/03/3103/pr_strateg_azr.doc)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

with the ideas of the Russian economic pragmatism run during the present and future process of the region's economic exploration reflected in the text. The concept adds, "At the same time the active economic development of the Arctic zone is the important means for the national interests' provision and protection in this macro-region. <...> *The Arctic zone's separation as an independent object of the state policy is caused by the high concentration of the geopolitical, defense, economic, ecological, and scientific interests of the Russian Federation within the macro-region*<sup>66</sup>" (*italics added*).

The discourse analysis of the present documents elaborated by the Russian authorities and reflecting the official Russian vision on the prospects of the Arctic region's exploration proved the stable domination of notions and ideas of the necessity of the Russian strong geopolitical presence in the region and the Russian government's aims for conducting this process in present and in future prospect. The critical geopolitics tends to consider the profound reasons of such preoccupation of geopolitical positions as an interior political process within the very political elite and policymakers that elaborate the state policy regarding their own geopolitical perceptions, which in their turn are based on the general vision of the historical preconditions, general perception of the current political situation (the analysis of advantages and disadvantages of one or another state political course), etc. Thus, as a result, the process of the geopolitical ideas' elaboration turns to be interdependent of these two interacting processes of its creation in its essence.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

*3.2. The case study of the official Russian geopolitical positions declared within the contemporary state political discourse*

The whole spectrum of official materials concerning the Russian geopolitical positions in the Arctic region as it is being elaborated by the state officials could be divided into the part considering the geopolitical role of Russia in the region and the part regarding the concrete Russian policy running (regarding the policy of Russian economic pragmatism in the region and the measures connected with this strategy). The very perception of the Arctic region by the Russian political elite and the ideas that reflect the model of Russian state vision towards the geopolitical prospects in the region can be reflected by the analysis of official statements and speeches of Russian political leaders, high officials along with those political agenda that is being held in Russia nowadays regarding this aspect of Russian policy. There is special interesting in those materials reflecting the geopolitical perceptions of the state officials to the Russian positions in the Arctic and the way they should be developed/transformed.

Nowadays, it can be seen the increasing attention towards the Arctic region by the Russian political elite and authorities and the process of interests' intensification toward the Arctic as a strategic geopolitical priority of Russia.

In general terms, the essential directions of Russian policy in the Arctic and toward the present region were underlined by the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, namely the transition of the Arctic zone to the key strategic national base of the Russian Federation in the future prospect; the strategy for peaceful and stable cooperation and development of all the interested partners in the region; the preservation of the unique ecosystems of the Arctic and support of the scientific nature conservation infrastructure; development of the Northern Sea Route as a national strategic transport corridor in the Arctic



region<sup>67</sup> (all principles correlated with those expressed in the paper of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period till 2020 and the Russian Arctic strategy).

Moreover, Putin expressed great attention of the state's policy towards the process of permanent support and enlargement of the Russian presence in the Arctic both on its national territory and in the Russian sector of the Arctic ocean. He stressed that Russian government “will promote the rise of new national sectors and trends of economic growth in the Arctic along with the efforts to attract new large-scale national and foreign sources of investment to the region<sup>68</sup>”.

The government's efforts to consolidate the national political and economic discourse about the Arctic within the state and to promote its positions and proposals in this sphere to other states and foreign companies were aimed to be represented within the new governmental initiative of the Arctic International Economic Forum that has already been held two times and is going to be held for the third time in the city of Murmansk in October 2011. The tasks outlined within the Forum reflect the currently existing Arctic agenda of the Russian authorities:

1. “Foundation of the expert pool for the whole complex of Arctic issues;
2. Approval of the Forum as a consolidated information online and offline arena on the Arctic;
3. Positioning of the Northern Sea Route as an alternative international transport channel;
4. Increase of the investment prospects of the Russian part of the Arctic;
5. Monitoring of the foreign initiatives concerning the Arctic<sup>69</sup>”.

These tasks could reflect the existing geopolitical vision of the state officials that determine the current agenda upon the Arctic within the Russian policy that encompasses the

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<sup>67</sup> Vladimir Putin outlined the Russian Priorities in the Arctic, information agency Baltinfo, URL : <http://www.baltinfo.ru/2010/09/23/Premer-Rossii-vydelil-prioritety-Rossii-v-Arktike-163673>, 23.09.2010, 13:22

<sup>68</sup> Vladimir Putin: Russia will explore the Arctic Considering the Ecological Requirements // Rossiyskaya Gazeta, URL : <http://www.rg.ru/2010/09/23/arkt-putin-anons.html>, 23.09.2010, 13:45

<sup>69</sup> Arctic Forum, EN, Forum 2010, Tasks, <http://www.arcticforum.ru/?lang=en&cat=about&sub=tasks>

very intention of Russia to head the process of the Arctic exploration, therefore, to be in the leading geopolitical positions on the issue of the Arctic further exploration (by means of the actions of economic character, the actions of the inner state policy's determination, by means of the action on the international arena concerning the process of the legal international Arctic delimitation as it has been outlined above).

Russia has advantages of the geographical proximity to the territory of the Arctic and the primary preferential positions (Russia being an Arctic coastal state has “sea-based and coastal resource development, inland access to the coast and to the ocean transport routes, runs the politics of increased commitment to freedom of international navigation enabling it to rise the integration into maritime trade<sup>70</sup>”) that is understood by the national political elite and is aimed to be used for the further Russian influence increase in the region.

In that sense, the new geopolitical prospects for Russia in the Arctic depend on the policy on the popularization of the idea of the Arctic as a core geopolitical direction for Russia in the long-term period. “In the twenty-first century, an accessible Arctic will lead Russia to turn northward, not just to exploit Arctic resources but to connect its Asian interior to the rest of the world through maritime trade. <...> In a new geopolitical vision for the twenty-first century, Russia takes a role not as a renewed heartland but as a maritime state that draws its strength from its Arctic coast and watershed<sup>71</sup>”.

The Minister for foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov underlined the geopolitical importance of the Arctic region for Russia as a natural territory of the state's interest, having stressed at press conference that followed the ministerial meeting of five Arctic Ocean coastal states in Ilulissat, Greenland on 29th of May 2008 that, “A considerable portion of our territory lies in the Arctic zone, and *Russia itself is a part of the Arctic*. The shoreline length of Russia in

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<sup>70</sup> Caitlyn L. Antrim. The Next Geographical Pivot: The Russian Arctic in the Twenty-first Century // Naval War College Review. – 2010. – Vol. 63. – N3. – P. 23.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. – P. 35.

the Arctic Ocean reaches 20 thousand kilometers. Therefore the Arctic vector is invariably among the foreign policy priorities of the country<sup>72</sup>” (*italics added*).

The Arctic policy of Russia, thus, has two aspects interrelated with each other namely the very geopolitical aspect (which encompass the widening of political influence and strengthening of political presence in the region, here the institutional aspect can be included) and the intensification of the economic activity that could lead to the Russian practical dominance over the region. At the present, these aspects are strongly underlined by the state political elite on different levels and are connected with the issues of the future Russian strategic security.

The Russian Vice Premier Minister Sergey Ivanov stressed the necessity of the active economic and scientific activity in the Arctic zone that would ensure the protection of the national interests in the macro-region. The Arctic and Polar scientific expeditions have the highest priority. The Russian authorities nowadays are especially concerned in the process of the Russian sector borders’ definition and delimitation as it is realized that the future political and economic possibilities could be very beneficial for the state. Thus, it is paid more and more attention to this issue. After the Marine board meeting held in 2010 Sergey Ivanov claimed “Russia has its natural future development in the Arctic zone as it has always been *the essential part of its national identity and the model of expansion widening of territories* (*italics added*). The Northern Sea Route now could help to develop the future transport system of a state and the increase of new national technologies’ production<sup>73</sup>”.

The strategy of economic pragmatism of Russia in the Arctic region closely correlates with its formulated principles of geopolitical presence and its widening that is being under attention of the national political elite during last years. The factor of the Russia energy

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<sup>72</sup> Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference Following Ministerial Meeting of Five Arctic Coastal States, 776-29-05-2008, the Information Newsletter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/bl.nsf/78b919b523f2fa20c3256fa3003e9536/5247e9aa56909bccc32574580048b696!OpenDocument>, 29.05.2008.

<sup>73</sup> Aristov I. The Arctic Course: the Marine Board approved the Expedition for 30 trillions of dollars // Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Metropolitan Issue №5302 (223), 04.10.2010.

and resources provision plays great role in the process touching these two aspects. Nowadays the general amount of natural gas and oil resources in the Russian sector of the Arctic is estimated in more that 100 billions of tonnes of conditional fuel (see attachment # 3) that rises the geopolitical interest of the Russian government in the region for the long-term prospect.

The Minister of natural resources of the Russian Federation Yuri Trutnev stressed that the Strategy of the Russian Arctic Zone Development and the National Security Ensuring until 2020 and other program documents that have been recently elaborated and passed by the Russian authorities serve as “basement for the long-term state program of complex development of all Arctic territories of Russia. This program will include a set of measures of the Arctic natural resources’ exploration and development of the produce processing industries in the Arctic regions, the provision of more easy transport access to the Arctic territories that should cause the increase of national and foreign investments to the newly emerging regional projects there (including shipbuilding)<sup>74</sup>”.

The perception of the Arctic territories as a highly important strategic resource for the national economic development (and possibility of the political stable situation) in future that prevails within the political elite and state authorities is reflected in the speeches of the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. On the Security Council meeting held in 2008 he outlined the main Russian political vectors of action in the Arctic, “It is not an overstatement to speak about the Arctic region as a strategic one for our country. The big amount of the long-term goals’ solution is connected and depends on the process of development and exploration of this region. Nowadays the most important task for the Russian authorities is to transform the Arctic into the Russian base of resources on the long-term prospect, thus the Russian geopolitical and economic interests in the region should be protected and defended. There is a high necessity to create the

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<sup>74</sup> Tejmur Abdullaev, Aleksey Chichkin. To Drill Closer to the Pole: the Russian Economic Presence in the Arctic Is Rising // Rossiyskaya Biznes Gazeta №776 (43), 16.11.2010.

appropriate legislation including the legislation upon the external border of the Russian continental shelf that would regulate the Russian actions in the region in future prospect<sup>75</sup>”.

“According to the experts’ estimations there can be around one quarter of all the world shelf hydrocarbon stocks in the Arctic continental shelf and for Russia the practical use of these resources could be an essential condition for its energy security<sup>76</sup>”, stressed Medvedev on the Security Council meeting in 2008 that gave the impetus to the intensification of the Russian policy on the Arctic.

According to the Russian authorities one of the prior tasks for the Russian positions in the Arctic should be the resolution of Russian territorial claims and delimitation of the Southern borders of the Russian territorial waters and exclusive economic zone in the Arctic. “Russia should define its Northern borders legally, we estimate the Arctic territories of Russia as 18% of the whole territory of the state, at the same time 20 000 km of state border extend in this region<sup>77</sup>” stressed on the Russian Security Council meeting its Secretary Nikolai Patrushev.

Thus, discourse analysis of main speeches and statements of the Russian officials shows the most important geopolitical factors involved into the process of the elaboration of the Russian official policy towards the Arctic region are the followings:

- The geopolitical ones (both factors of the state spatial staying in the Arctic, its self-perception as a Northern state reflecting its historical identity and existing geopolitical ideas of the state dominance in the region which prevail within the current political discourse on the Arctic);
- The economic ones (those are closely interrelated with the geopolitical factors being the key state long-term interests in the region);
- The transport ones (which would ensure the Russian key positions in the process of the future Northern Sea Route transport system’s functioning);

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<sup>75</sup> Dmitry Medvedev: the Arctic Has a Strategic Importance for Russia, Information Portal Vesti.Ru, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=209616>, 17.09.2008, 12:55

<sup>76</sup> Ilyin A. The Arctic Borders Will be Settled: The Security Council Members Discussed the Northern Strategy // Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Federal Issue №4753, 18.09.2008.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

- The security ones (those are aimed at the strengthening of the Russian real presence in the region including the protection of its national borders and national waters, the monitoring of the Arctic territories that lie Northward in order to ensure the neutrality of the region and its ecological security including the space monitoring and other security measures that guarantee the geopolitical presence of Russia).

All these factors were reflected in the state official political discourse rather recently. Nowadays Russian policy turns to the Northern territories as its interior geopolitical discourse is shifting gradually to the North as a space of rather non-intensive geopolitical presence and competition. As Russia has historical experience of such territories' exploration and development and perceive the Arctic as a natural part of its own self-identity it has more advantages in the process of the future profound development of the Arctic.

## Conclusion

As it has been revealed, the present Russian geopolitical agenda continues to be elaborated and detailed in the whole aspects of its general directions. The Arctic geopolitical direction within the current Russian geopolitical agenda could be characterized as the most actual and new direction. It's clear that in long-term future prospect Russia needs the Arctic region's resource (in various senses) to develop its economy and the whole industrial complex (that should be innovated adapting to the new realities of the further exploration of the Far Northern territories), the vector of Russian resource expansion (and, thus, the geopolitical one) tends to be turned to the North.

Along with it, it should be clearly understood that the today's Russian presence in the Arctic and the very level of its exploration has many benefits for the state comparing to other Arctic and non-Arctic states. Russia has necessary infrastructure and facilities to maintain the functioning of the Northern Sea Route, it runs many scientific and research programs (using icebreaker ships, drifting research Arctic bases), it has rather big military and border guarding forces in the Arctic territories and can fulfill the security actions in its national waters and beyond (it's the biggest military contingent from all Arctic states). All this permits Russia to have strong geopolitical position today and to strengthen it in future.

As a goal for the present thesis it was defined the revelation and analysis of the processes of formulation and declaration of the general geopolitical ideas on the strategic importance of the Arctic region for Russia and its geopolitical belonging (belonging to the sphere of the Russian natural geopolitical influence) elaborated by the Russian political elite, and the further functioning of these ideas within the Russian political discourse. The issue of the Russian geopolitical presence in the Arctic region and the necessity of its strengthening tend to gain more popularity over the last years as the prospects of the Arctic exploration (and its increase) for Russia as a strategic direction of future development have been clearly realized by

the national political elite. The economic benefit turns to be the political one for the national authorities as it guarantees the stable national economic development for the long-term prospect (all this aspects are clearly reflected as economic and geopolitical trends within the national strategic and program papers concerning the very Arctic agenda and the general policy line of the Russian political elite).

At the same time the two political directions within the Russian Arctic agenda should be separated as they have different legal aspects:

1. The Russian policy towards its inner national Arctic territories including the territories of those regions of the Far North of both mainland and islands and its continental shelf and territorial waters (here the geopolitical vector tends to be more sustainable and long-term considered including such aspects as social politics for the indigenous population and technical modernisation of existing infrastructure);
2. The Russian geopolitical positions towards the exterior Arctic territories of the unsettled national belonging (so-called 'terra nullius') and its geopolitical claims for the dominance over the largest sector of the Arctic Ocean based on the underwater delimitation researches (here Russian authorities tend to run rather stable and firm policy aimed for the legal international delimitation of the Arctic territories that would be beneficial for Russia if its claim would be approved by the UN commission, so here one can speak about the strong policy of expansion to the Arctic and widening of the Russian requirements and geopolitical interests in the region).



The following factors defining the process of elaboration of the national geopolitical discourse on the Arctic can be outlined:

1. Russian interior idea of the Arctic as an essential part of the national territory and national identity along with the perception of the Arctic-orientated vector of present and future Russian economic and geopolitical development;
2. Rather new idea of the Russian economic pragmatism in the Arctic namely the declared peaceful forward exploration of the Arctic natural, transport, fishery, strategic spatial resources using the existing preconditions of the Russian existing infrastructure;
3. More general geopolitical idea of the widening of geopolitical and economic influence in the Arctic up to the North Pole with the territorial acquisition done under the international rules.

The contemporary Russian geopolitical discourse concerning the issue of the Russian presence in the Arctic region is still insufficiently worked out in details by those who formulates the general principles of the Russian geopolitical agenda namely the state officials and political elite. Nowadays the problem of necessity of the Russian exploration of very advantageous region of the planet (both in economic, strategic and geopolitical senses) is not realized in full sense by the state authorities for many reasons (still there is a lack of reliable scientific data about the peculiarities of the region, there is an inertness of state policy towards the further Russian presence and exploration widening, etc.).

Along with it Russia still has not elaborated the detailed and effective strategy (geopolitical agenda and appropriate plan) and practical methodology of realization of actions in the Arctic, thus, there is no strong national geopolitical presence there. As it has been said above, it is caused by the fact of absence of the necessary general program aimed for the positioning and promotion of the Russian image as a leading Arctic power on both interior and interstate levels.

Certainly, Russian authorities make certain steps towards this direction including the permanent policy of participation into the international meetings connected with the Arctic problems and their solution, the launch of several information resources specialized on the aforesaid topic, the attempts of the Russian information agencies to formulate to some extent the policy that would reflect the Arctic topic within the Russian politics. Though, nowadays still the Arctic agenda and the Russian geopolitics towards the Arctic region continues to stay the insufficient, irregular, perfunctory and situational one. On the international level still the strong Russian geopolitical position is absent and the existing Russian policy in the Arctic keeps staying very weak and insufficiently stressed and defended.

What matters here is the fact that in future prospect for the effective Russian policy in the Arctic (along with the possibility of its geopolitical positions' strengthening both in the country and on the international stage) the intensification and widening of the popularization and advocacy of Russia as an Arctic power is very useful. It is evident that it's high time for the Russian political elite and policymakers to shift the traditional Russian political vector aimed only to the protection of the state's recourses interests towards the fulfillment of more global geopolitical tasks laying in the context of general world processes and processes of the Northern territories' future development.

As it is seen by the critical geopolitical approach the ideas and perceptions of the very necessities of own interests are the main essential condition for the geopolitical agenda's elaboration. Thus, the categories of the natural belonging of the Arctic territories to Russia, the economic guided principles of future development in the region are the factors of the Arctic national policy principles' formulation as it has been outlined in the official speeches and program documents. Guided by its own political interests of staying in power, the Russian political elite tends to use the appropriate geopolitical ideas, which correspond to the strategy of long-term prospect of the national exploration of the region as a geopolitical space with rather low level of conflict and low level of geopolitical presence. In this sense Russia still has strategic

and geopolitical advantages though the Russian authorities should intensify the policy of the Russian interests' defense as the future geopolitical tension in the Arctic is likely to be inevitable.

Nowadays the Russian policy in the Arctic is criticized by the USA and other states interested in the weakening of the Russian geopolitical expansion to the North. In the Western mass media it is strongly stressed the insufficient effectiveness of the Russian government over its own Northern territories, thus, the strategy of increase of the foreign economic and humanitarian presence is being formulated. In order to provide more earnest geopolitical image of Russia as an Arctic power in the country (on the national internal level of popular geopolitical perception) the Russian political elite should intensify the formal and popular geopolitical discourse (interior and exterior ones) aimed for the strengthening of the perception of the Arctic as an essential and integral part of the Russian great-power identity.

It's clear that with the process of intensification of the interior and international political discourse on the geopolitical issues of the Arctic territories' belonging the quantity of the scientific and expert researches regarding the Arctic range of geopolitical problems will increase.

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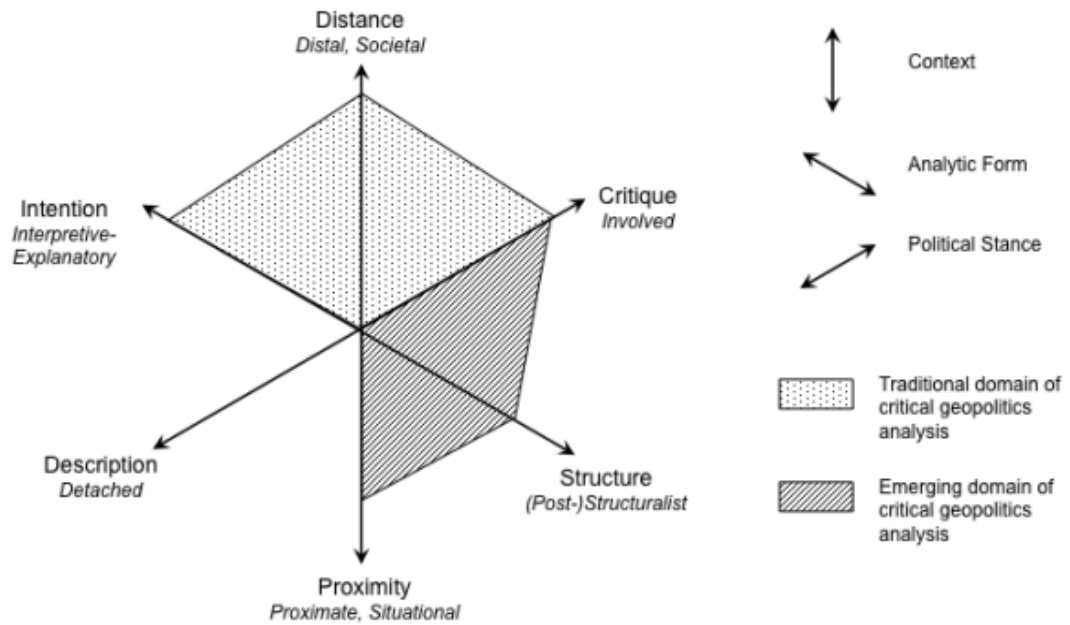
URL : <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sea1729.doc.htm>



## Attachments

### Attachment # 1

#### Three core dimensions of approaches to discourse analysis in critical geopolitics



Source: Martin Müller, Doing discourse analysis in Critical Geopolitics, L'Espace Politique [En ligne], 12 | 2010-3, mis en ligne le 11 février 2011, Consulté le 22 avril 2011. URL : <http://espacepolitique.revues.org/index1743.html>

## Attachment # 2

## RUSSIA'S ARCTIC CLAIM



Source: BBC News, Russia plants flag under N Pole,  
URL : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6927395.stm>, 2 August 2007, 17:22 GMT

### Attachment # 3

The general reserves of oil and natural gas in the national Arctic sectors (in bns. of tons of conditional fuel), according to the national energy agencies' data (2009/2010)

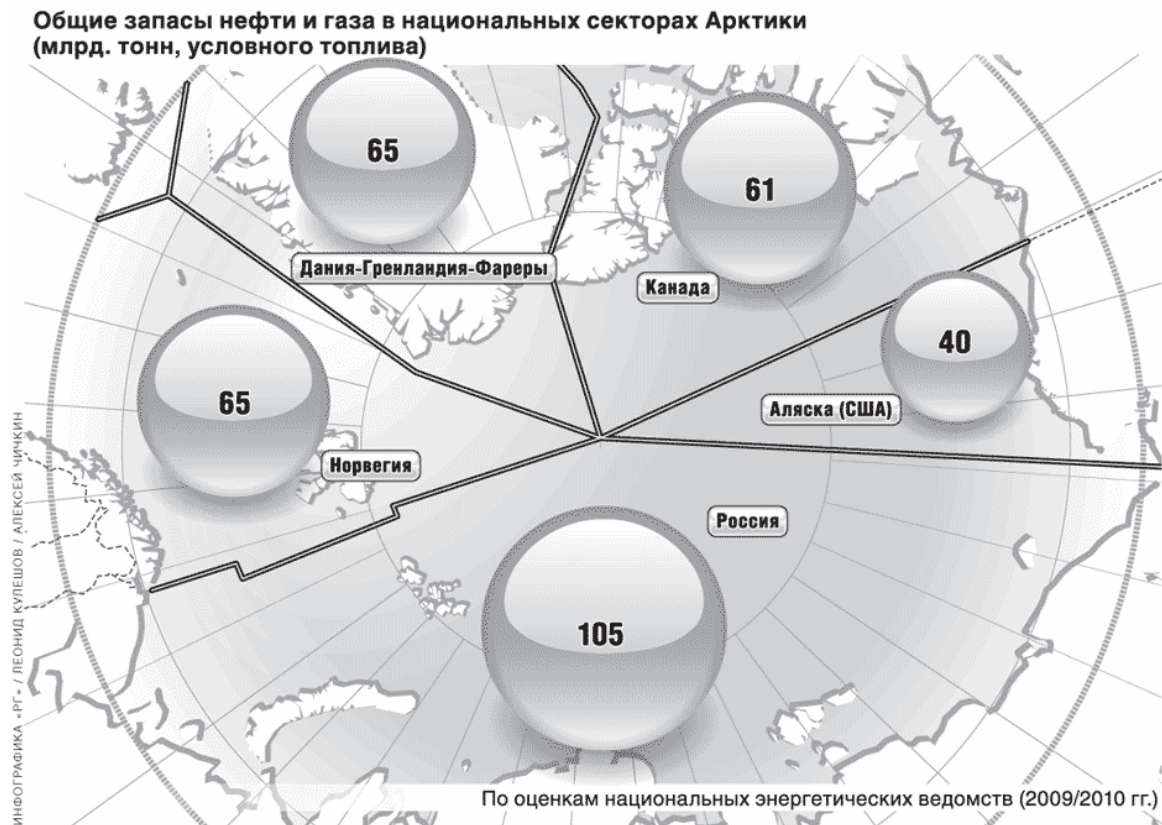
Russia – 105;

Norway – 65;

USA (Alaska) – 40;

Canada – 61;

Denmark-Greenland-Faeroe Islands – 65.



Source: Tejmur Abdullaev, Aleksey Chichkin. To Drill Closer to the Pole: the Russian Economic Presence in the Arctic Is Rising // Rossiyskaya Biznes Gazeta №776 (43), 16.11.2010, URL :

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