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**Lost in a sea of words?  
Discourses of the Russian Geopolitical Thinking on the Arctic**

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Abstract

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This thesis focuses on the geopolitical thinking of the Russian Federation in the Arctic areas, especially as it pertains to the role of the modernization of the Russian economy and to the importance of the sea in world politics. The aim is to contribute to the better understanding of Russia's arctic politics and to the different actors in Russia through using Critical Discourse Analysis to study Russian official and political discourses. Moreover the focus is to scrutinize, how Russian geopolitical thinking constructs the Arctic and how the Russian geopolitical thinking relates to John Agnew's concept of modern geopolitical imagination.

Russia's politics towards the Arctic, or more precisely, the success of those policies will determine the future for this energy-dependent state. According to John Agnew's concepts of modern geopolitical imagination, Russia views the Arctic as natural and sovereign part of the country. Russian geopolitical thinking in the north closely relates to the geopolitical and national interests of the country. Discourses traced in the research material were discourse on modernization, on country's sovereign rights and on cooperation. In addition, the Arctic appears to be the strategic treasure trove for the country, which secures the future economic growth and sustainable stability. Simultaneously, the political leaders have often emphasized the demand for the modernization and the need to get rid of the energy revenues as a fundamental guarantee of the development of the country. Overall, the Arctic has served as a useful identity-building project, especially as a platform to reinforce a great power mentality.

Key words: Russian Federation, Arctic, Geopolitics, Geopolitical Thinking, Critical Geopolitics

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## 1. Introduction

Russia's equal position in world politics and maintaining its sovereignty in the changing world has been at the core of Russian political argumentation since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The most powerful person in Russian politics during the last decade, Vladimir Putin, described in 2005 that the Soviet break-up was “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>1</sup>. Further the question of the geopolitical belongingness of Russian Federation has been discussed. Moreover, a plausible defence establishment and the modernization process have also been Russia's top priorities. Many scholars have stated that Russia has been in a quest for gaining its great power (*velikaya derzhava*) status back<sup>2</sup>.

Russia is geographically the largest country in the world and plays an important role in the regional and global energy market. With the growing energy prices the attention has also turned to the natural resources in the Arctic areas. In addition, the Arctic became more “heated” with the evidence that global warming is shrinking polar ice and opening up new shipping lanes in the high north. The Arctic region covers one fifth of the planet's landmass and has potential in many spheres. Russia is an Arctic country; about 70 percent of the Russia's landmass is located in northern latitudes, extending from Russia's land border with Norway to the Bering Strait and to the Russian coast of Pacific ocean in the Far East. Therefore Russia holds a key role in international debate over the Arctic and its future prospects.

Simultaneously with the aroused interest also possibility for a dispute over the governance and control in the Arctic has become more agitated. In 2010 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev held a Security Council meeting concentrating on prevention of possible national security threats arising from the global climate change. The president stated that developing the Arctic is crucial to Russia's future. Further he demanded Russia to designate its territory and sea-areas in the Arctic.<sup>3</sup> Consequently Russia has been in a quest of claiming a large share of the region's mineral resources, which are located in the sea bed of the Russian Arctic, in the continental shelf<sup>4</sup>. The debate and future prospects on global warming and the possibilities in the Arctic in reference to the natural resources, as well as the unsolved situation in the territories of the Arctic

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1 Putin 2005.

2 See e.g. Kanet 2007, Neumann 2008a and Oldberg 2010.

3 Medvedev 2010.

4 The ownership and borderlines of the Arctic continental shelf is unsettled. More in chapter 5.2.1.

suggest that the *role of the sea* in world politics has altered. The global warming and the growing significance of the Arctic areas also effect to the perception of Russia in reference to its belongingness or in its *geopolitical thinking*.

Russia's growing interest to the Arctic has also influenced the topical theme of modernization in Russia. Modernization has recently specially referred to the economic modernization of the country; to edge the economy from Soviet type of planned mass production to innovative and modern high-tech. Nonetheless, a question remains; what does a country whose economy and thus basic functions of society are based on strong state, authoritarian-type of "sovereign democracy" and budget revenues on energy do in times of energy possibly becoming scarcer and the energy industry requiring for a new, modernized infrastructure? During the past years, 50 % of Russia's budget income has become from the oil and gas sectors. Out of all exports of the country, 70% is raw material, out of which half is going to the EU countries.<sup>5</sup> Russia is currently still reliant on the oil and gas fields, which have been exploited already during the Soviet times.

The interest to the new resource-rich areas in the north has been articulated; in 2008 president Medvedev named the Arctic as a future strategic base for natural resources. Another goal has been to preserve Russia's role as a leading arctic power<sup>6</sup>. During the last few years Russia has carried out several impressive acts to proclaim more authority at sea. For example several expeditions have been carried out in the Arctic sea and the Lake Baikal. In addition, the tasks assigned to the naval forces of the Russian Federation (*Voyenno-Morskoy flot, VMF*) have received new types of tasks. Since 2006 Navy has secured Russia's energy sources at the Arctic regions and conducted surveillance of the existing infrastructure for the energy exports, such as the Nord Stream<sup>7</sup>. These events suggest that the role of the sea might be changing in contemporary world politics. It is thus interesting to probe how such changes are reflected in the Russian geopolitical thinking.

The starting point for this paper is that the geopolitical thinking of the Russian Federation since the Soviet break-up has been subject to change. Further this thesis focuses on the Russian geopolitical thinking on the Arctic areas, which have been recently drawing attention from the international community. I have chosen to study geopolitics as a discursive practise; how

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<sup>5</sup>Economy Watch 2010.

<sup>6</sup>Arctic paper 2008.

<sup>7</sup>Rosbalt 2009.

Russian geopolitical thinking is constructed and represented. What type of discourses can be traced in the Russian geopolitical thinking? In reference to the Arctic, how is the modernization process represented?

The thesis follows the tradition of *critical geopolitics*, in which the geographical space is perceived as a product of political and cultural thinking rather than something ‘natural’ or ‘objective’. Moreover the focus is to scrutinize, how Russian geopolitical thinking constructs the Arctic and how the Russian geopolitical thinking relates to the concept by John Agnew; *modern geopolitical thinking*. According to Agnew, long before the academic discipline of geopolitics was developed, there was a certain way of thinking geopolitically and understanding the spatially of power.<sup>8</sup>

The goal of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of Russia as an actor in world politics. This paper is relevant due to the fact that Russia is significant actor in the Arctic, but its Arctic politics have not been extensively studied. The growing interest towards the Arctic by Russia and by other arctic states will be defining the future development in the area. Whether the future is cooperation, confrontation or something else, it is crucial to have understanding and stand-points on the politics of the Russian Federation.

The research material can be divided into two categories; firstly the official statements of Russian political elite and policy papers relating to the Arctic. Secondly, the material from political commentators and officers will be examined<sup>9</sup>. Studying Russian geopolitical thinking according to these two types of data sources reveals a new, wider look on Russia’s geopolitical thinking and policy towards the Arctic region. Lastly, the goal is to investigate how the Arctic debate relates to the modernization process of the Russian Federation.

The next chapter outlines the historical and present approaches to the Russian North as a domestic and international space and examines some features of the ongoing debate over the Arctic. This is followed by an introduction to the northern military presence, which is one of the issues driving attention to the north. The chapter following the introduction outlines the theory of critical geopolitics. Then the methodology of critical discourse analysis will be presented. After that

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<sup>8</sup> More about Modern Geopolitical Thinking in chapter 4.

<sup>9</sup> More about the data demarcation process and research data in chapter 3.

the actual analysis of the research data will be performed, followed by discussion and lastly, the concluding remarks.

## 1.1 The Arctic Debate

The debate over the importance of the Arctic and its potential has become more intense during the recent years with the research results indicating that the polar ice is shrinking increasingly fast. In winter conditions the Arctic is under a thick layer of ice, but the summer and navigable season in the areas closer to the world's northeast shores is getting longer each year. The north became important during the Soviet times; it was the area rich in natural resources. In the 1960s Russia first started exploiting vast oil fields in the Siberia. Even today a major part of the oil and gas Russia is producing comes from these fields. On this account the natural resources in the Arctic are crucial for the country's future, considering that the economic growth during the recent years in Russia is based on petro-revenues. Furthermore a concept of 'mastering the north' (*osvoenie severa*) played a corresponding role in the planned economy. The north (*Russkij sever*) has always been occupying a crucial role in the Russian discourse, both in public and elite level<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the term Russian north<sup>11</sup> has been said to contain a perception of the (geopolitical) discourse of the importance of the region to the Russia/Soviet Union.

The concept of Arctic refers to the area surrounding the North Pole; usually it is thought to be the areas north of the Arctic Circle (66° 33'N). Even though the definition of the Arctic Circle might consider being artificial, it is simultaneously clear to all parties. This area contains the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Further when talking about the Arctic five, it means the five riparian countries of the Arctic Ocean. Although the concepts of the Arctic and the high north are used quite freely, it is important to note that the concepts are not exact synonyms; moreover the usage of these words varies across different languages, national discourses and international arenas.

The Russian Arctic is thought to include the northern parts of mainland Russia, undisputed territorial waters and Russia's border claims in the far north with unsolved and contested status. In the Arctic Strategy of Russian Federation (2010) the Arctic zone of the country (*Ark-*

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10 See eg. Baev 2009, Blakkisrud 2006.

11 This is only applicable when talking about the term in Russian and to the Russian audience.



*ticheskaya zona Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, AZRF*) was defined to include oblasts of Murmansk and Archangelsk, Krasnoyarsk krai, Autonomous Okrugs of Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets and Chukotka and lastly, the republic of Yakutia.

Russia is the largest country in the world in total area. To add to this, when looking at the population in the high north about the half of the inhabitants of the Arctic areas are Russian. Russia is, and wants to be perceived as, a pre-eminent Arctic great power<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, as the CIA world fact book states, it is “unfavourably located in relation to the major sea lanes of the world”<sup>13</sup>. One has to bear in mind that transport in the Arctic and in the Baltic Sea is growing rapidly year after another and due to the climate change the all-year icecap in the Arctic Ocean will in the future diminish. The prolongation in the navigable season will ensure a greater attention to the Arctic and especially to the Northern Sea Route (whose sovereignty is asserted by Russia). New shipping lanes would revolutionize the global maritime infrastructure. With the new sea lanes cargo from Europe to Asia could avoid the politically volatile Middle East and the piracy of the coasts of Africa.

The Arctic is furthermore known as the treasure trove of natural resources and already today much of the gas produced in Russia comes from the bordering areas of the Arctic. According to US Geological Survey, the Arctic could potentially have 13% of the world’s undiscovered oil, 20% of undiscovered natural gas liquids and about 30% of yet unfound natural gas<sup>14</sup>. Besides the energy resources, arctic areas are also rich in other resources like minerals, game, fish, fresh water and if the subarctic is included, forest. Add to this the arctic nature with its extreme and vulnerable conditions and the indigenous people of the north, their lives and sources of livelihood are depending on the surrounding nature as has been the case since the beginning of times.

Currently approximately 40% of the world’s population is without safe drinking water. Two thirds of the global fresh water is ice, so a lot of this resource lies in the North Pole<sup>15</sup>. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea grants “sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting...natural resources” over a 200 nautical miles exclusive zone from the

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12Around two million Russian nationals live in the area north of Arctic circle 66°66’N.

13The CIA world fact book 2009.

14US Geological Survey 2008.

15Wikipedia; Water Politics.

coast.<sup>16</sup> This gives Russia a notable maritime presence beyond its northernmost territory. Furthermore, if a country wants to apply for an extension in its exclusive zone, it has to offer evidence. According to the Law of the Sea, a “natural prolongation of land territory”<sup>17</sup>, such as the continental shelf, can be a reason to extend the economic zone beyond the 200 nautical mile limit. While reliable knowledge of the natural resources and the ownership of the continental shelf in the Arctic are still missing, Russia has been active in committing expeditions and collecting support to its claims in the Arctic. To conclude, this study will inspect how the historical discourse of the Russian north relates to the contemporary geopolitical thinking in the Arctic.

## **1.2 Northern Military Presence**

During the Tsarist and Soviet times, the naval forces of the country were a matter of honour. Furthermore, the Northern Fleet of the Russian Navy has been present in the north since World War II. After the war the Soviet fleet was commanded by Admiral Gorshkov, who predicted that the future warfare would be solved with modern submarines.<sup>18</sup> During the war the German fleet had used the fjords in Norway as bases for its submarines and therefore offered a useful example for the Soviet Union. After the war Soviet fleet programmes were set to create an effective submarine fleet. In 1950’s the new, nuclear-based power gave the submarines new reliability and made them truly capable of independent operation below the surface of the water. As strongholds the fleet would have the Murmansk fjord and the northern coastline.

During the Cold War the Soviet Navy was built up to be the second biggest naval force in the world, moreover it had an extensive monitoring system that kept the Kremlin updated, specially on the presence of US and NATO vessels in the international waters. The strategic importance of the northern waters grew simultaneously with the Cold War politics; the USA and the Soviet Union were geographically closest to each other in the northeast areas. Moreover the Northern Fleet has in military-strategic meaning important mission in country’s military strategy; the Ballistic missile submarines are important in the so-called nuclear triad. The Arctic and the Barents Sea

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16 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982, Part V, especially Articles 55-7. The ‘baseline’ is defined under Part 2, Article 5 as ‘the low-water line along the coast.’

17 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982: “The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.”

18 Gorshkov 1975, 192-198.

have been said to be the most militarized spaces in the Cold War world<sup>19</sup>. Russian north further gained importance in the Soviet Union with the shipbuilding and maritime industry concentrating to the area. Also relating to the Soviet military-industry, many factories were set up to the Arctic region. Especially Murmansk oblast developed good infrastructure and connections to the other parts of the country and thus the peripheral north had become one of the most strategically important war industrial areas. In addition to the military-industry, many natural resources, such as nickel, iron, oil, gas and coal, were treated in the area. After the Soviet Union ceased to exist many of the military bases and most of the nuclear submarines were not maintained properly and their condition gradually deteriorated. When the arms race calmed down, also the military-industry of the Russian north drifted into trouble.<sup>20</sup>

In the Soviet break-up Russia also lost many strategically important coast lines and ports. Additionally, many vessels were no longer owned by Russia. The Cold War was a powerful frame of reference, which had appointed the strategic significance of regions such as the Arctic. Since then times have changed. In comparison with the 1970's and 1980's, the present state of the Northern Fleet of the Russian Navy is modest and many vessels are deteriorating, including the nuclear reactors on board its submarines<sup>21</sup>.

The Kursk disaster befell the Russia armed forces in August 2000. This nuclear-powered submarine was reported to be missing in Barents Sea, 60 km north of the Russian port of Severomorsk. Within a few hours when the first news reports were published, it became obvious that a catastrophic accident had occurred. Notwithstanding the human tragedy, attention was also drawn to the potential nuclear disaster. The event soon gained attention in international media. Shortly a question was asked from the Russian side; was there another vessel involved? In the following days there were failed attempts to rescue the crew. Many countries offered help and special rescue equipment. The help was then accepted from Norwegian and British experts, but it was too late.<sup>22</sup>

The disaster was followed by accusation and criticism towards Russian actors. A British newspaper concluded that "The Kursk disaster was not just a terrible human drama, but a meta-

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19 Dodds 2003,205.

20 More about strategic importance of the Russian north, e.g. Rowe 2009.

21 E.g. Åtland 2011.

22 Timelines of the event in media: e.g. RIA 2005, BBC 2000.

phor for the decline of a superpower and for the decay of Russia's armed forces<sup>23</sup>” It was suggested that misdirected sense of pride and fear of foreign navies using disaster to gather intelligence were reasons for Russia's reluctance to invite outside help<sup>24</sup>. Claims of Russia's attitude being still based on Cold War conceptions were common. Partly due to the media writing and criticism, newly elected President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was forced to make an ignominious apology on behalf of the armed forces. In the same speech he vowed to rebuild Russian Military<sup>25</sup>.

The event was even described to denote the state of Russian armed forces, since the Kursk catastrophe was not the only accident, but gained international attention. According to some scholars, the Accident became a symbol of Russia's capability to maintain or regain its status as a great power.<sup>26</sup> It can thus be stated, that after the year 2000 more actions were carried out to reaffirm Russia's status as an important actor in international politics and particularly ensure the capability to operate in the future credibly. President Putin started by suspending high rank officers and gave speeches to convince his willingness to act. Among others, a year after the Kursk strategy a new strategy paper was released, concentrating on the naval issues of the Russian Federation<sup>27</sup>.

Russia has since 2000 also started rebuilding its naval forces and improved the profile of the Navy not just in the Arctic, but also in the Baltic Sea. One reason for the growing activities in the northern waters is to secure the natural sources.<sup>28</sup> Further not only the military fleet, but also the polar fleet of ice-breakers and other commercial and scientific vessels are a part of the modernization programmes of the country.

It is thus legitimate to argue that after the year 2000, with new president in the office, there has been change in the geopolitical (and great power) discourses. This paper will contemplate how the change has affected the geopolitical thinking of the Russian federation. Russian engagement in the High North, both domestically and internationally, plays against the background of geopolitical, political and social change in Russia. In contrast to the militarization of the Arctic space during the Cold War, the immediate post-Soviet years were greeted with high levels of cooperation in the North with environmental, social and military issues. Today, the opening shipping lanes and

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23 Dodds 2003,204.

24 Dodds 2003, 205.

25 E.g. Vomack 2000. BBC 2000.

26 Dodds 2003,204.

27 Maritime Doctrine 2000.

28 Rosbalt 2009.

the potential natural resources of the Arctic is again drawing attention towards the north. At this time the attention can be seen not just local among the arctic actors, but gaining a global character.

Accordingly, this research will scrutinize the Russian geopolitical thinking through different kinds of material and thus generate an overall picture based on the significance of the themes introduced earlier. The next chapter will introduce the concept of this study more specifically.

## **2 Background to the Research Problem**

The structure of this chapter is as follows: The first section will providing insights into the previous research made on the Russian geopolitical thinking. The second section will introduce the research task and the scope of the study. Finally, in the last section the research questions will be introduced.

### **2.1 Previous research; the Soviet Dissolution and the Rise of Geopolitical Thinking**

The research over Russia's geopolitical belongingness has gained popularity during recent years among the scholars of International Relations and political science. Consequently institutes of strategic and geopolitical studies, scholars of geography, history and military studies, journals of academic and policy-relevant geopolitics have been proliferating in Russia since the disintegration of Soviet Union. By the same token the states have started to show interest towards the Arctic and therefore a growing amount of policy papers and strategies have been released. Besides Russia, also Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and USA have published their Arctic strategies<sup>29</sup>.

After many decades of International Relations and geopolitics being 'bourgeois' and 'highly reactionary' science in the Soviet Union, in today's Russia geopolitics is back sublimely. The previous research over the geopolitical thinking in Russian Federation has been divided in this chapter into several categories, which are presented in more detail below.

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<sup>29</sup> Russia has published a document in 2008 with the title "The fundamentals of Russian state policy in the Arctic up to 2020 and beyond", which is considered to be the strategy paper on Arctic issues. In 2010 Russia also published a Development Strategy focusing on its Arctic Regions. European Union also might be publishing an Arctic paper in the future.

Firstly and quantitatively the biggest category is the Russian research (in Russia and elsewhere) over Russia's geopolitical belongingness in the Post-Soviet space. This category includes the research made under IR and political science, but also in military-strategic studies. Moreover in Russia there is a large number of "semi" or non-scholar, popular literature about the geopolitical orientation and history of the country.

The second category is the (mostly) 'western' research over the Russian geopolitical orientation and research. This category also encompasses the research made over the discourses of Russian political actors and their argumentation, over the Russian identity and public opinion.

The third category is the growing research interest to the geopolitics of the Arctic and the future prospects of the high north. Historically this category has mainly been about the environmental factors, such as the vulnerability of the arctic nature, but recently energy politics, future governance of the region, the natural resources and ethnographical (and social) studies of indigenous people in the far north have gained popularity. In addition, the study of the possible effects of the climate change, the security aspects and the future cooperation in the Arctic have been studied.

This thesis relates to all three categories linking them together in relevant parts. The Russian research origin is not used widely largely due to the fact that it is not part of the school of International Relations and more than being an academic research, most of it can be referred to as non-scientific, popular literature.

In addition to the geopolitical orientation, also the Russian identity has been studied. Especially since the Soviet times Russian academia, policymakers as well as the media concentrated on how to characterize the borders and the entity of the new Russia. Russian IR-scholar Andrei Tsygankov argues that the Soviet disintegration contributed to a *great sense of cultural trauma*, which has since produced a high degree of contestation in the geopolitical discourse of the contemporary Russia<sup>30</sup>. He goes on that the post-Soviet geography is being reconstituted as a result of discursive strategies chosen by the Russian intellectual and political elites, instead of any fixed or 'natural' geopolitical interests. Also some of the statements by the political elite conclude that challenges that Russia had to face after the dismantling of the Soviet Union were largely not just social, but *geopolitical in nature*. To add to this, it has been argued that Russia views the Arctic as a *com-*

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30 Tsygankov 2003,103.

*perspective of the losses in its neighbourhood* after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>31</sup> the ongoing conflicts in the post-Soviet space have partly been triggering resurgence in literature concentrating on the geopolitical thinking.<sup>32</sup>

Russian geopolitical orientation has been studied both from inside and outside of its borders. Based on his study Tsygankov suggested that geopolitics could offer possible solutions and answers to the unstable condition of the Russian state. The internal challenges resulting from the dismantling of the Soviet regime as well as the conflicts on the country's periphery would be best resolved by *constructing an overarching geopolitical vision and strategy*, rather than solving the problems one by one on an ad hoc basis. Further he saw that the Soviet break-up did not end the era of Russian political elite and academia viewing the problems and challenges in terms of a wider geopolitical thinking.<sup>33</sup>

The most well-known Russian geopolitical thinker at the moment is Alexander Dugin, who has been politically active and strongly involved in the so-called Eurasian movement.<sup>34</sup> Outside Russia, e.g. Dmitry Trenin and Andrei Tsygankov write about Russian geopolitics. Some other Russian specialist on geopolitics include Kamaludin Gadzhiyev, Vladimir Kolosov, Nikolai Mironenko and Nikolai Nartov<sup>35</sup>. The Russian geopolitics has been studied outside Russia during the recent years by e.g. John O'Loughlin, Gearoid Ó Tuathail, and Alan Ingram, along with, Vladimir Kolosov, D. Kerr and in Tampere University by Sirke Mäkinen. Many of the current research projects about Russia concentrate on the energy politics and Russia's relations towards 'the West', whereas Russian geopolitical writing usually concentrates on Russia itself and mostly uses the traditional geopolitical orientation<sup>36</sup>.

Besides the energy and the security aspects of the high north, also the environmental and human prospects are gaining more prominence, including the future deposits and arrangements for the nuclear waste in the Arctic areas and the questions concerning the indigenous people of the north and their living conditions. In the field of International Relations also the governance and future scenarios are in the focus of many current research projects, such as in Pami Aalto's project on

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31 Blunden 2009,122.

32 E.g. Tsygankov 2003, 102.

33 Tsygankov 2003,2.

34 More in detail in chapter 4.

35 More in chapter 4.

36 More in chapter 4.

the sustainable energy in Russia. Furthermore, the Arctic has been recently studied from the point of geopolitics by Norwegian Pavel K. Baev, who is specialized in Russian military, security and energy politics and by Lassi Heininen, whose interest lies especially in the environmental and security aspects of the Arctic.

The possible models for future governance and the prospects for different international forums and the manner of future negotiations over the questions concerning the Arctic have been contested. Along with the scholarly interest many states have become active; even the European Union has published a paper that could be referred to as an arctic strategy. According to some scholars<sup>37</sup>, unlike other arctic states, such as Norway or Canada, *Russia does not have a unified strategy towards its north*. Questions of the arctic areas are broad; social, economic, political, military and even conceptual. Consequently, Russian policy is dispersed across a variety of different policy fields, from domestic migration and regional policies to global energy politics. One example of the complex Russian policy towards the Arctic is that the State Committee on Northern Issues (Goskomsever), who governed the arctic issues, was disbanded and re-established six times in its seven years of existence (1992-2000). After the year 2000 the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade became the most central body in the coordination of the northern policy.<sup>38</sup>

Even though the policy of Russian Federation towards the Arctic has been elaborated to be just individual statements rather than a coherent state policy, in this research the Arctic politics of Russian Federation is lifted to the podium<sup>39</sup>. Anyhow, the claim that Russia's Arctic policy is just individual statement was made before the Russian Arctic Strategy came out in 2010. The “individual statements”, as well as the strategy papers are constructing the policy of Russia towards the Arctic and thus representing geopolitical thinking. This paper will contribute to a better understanding of the policy, which has been claimed to be reacted alarmist by western experts and media. According to Kefferputz, “the west has failed to take account the multi-dimensional nature of Russian policy”.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the discourse studied in this research is not an over-arching, national, discourse, but a political discourse that can be pointed out, studied and elaborated. Simultaneously the political and economic interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic are so undeniable that the Arctic region will remain in the political discourse also in the future.

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37 Rove 2009,2.

38 Rove 2009,3.

39 Baev& Trenin 2010.

40 Kefferputz 2010, 7.



The aim of this study is to scrutinize the different sources and illustrate how Russia defines and addresses northern spaces, people, opportunities and challenges. What this study adds to existing knowledge, is that it will concern Arctic as a politically important region and tries to combine the existing knowledge to the critical discourse analysis based on the research data. Evidently the Arctic in this research is seen as an important factor formulating the country's geopolitical thinking and its foreign policy. The combination of the documents produced by the political elite together with policy papers and secondly the commentators and the officers will help to grasp not just the official discourse, but the possible alternative discourses of the interest groups. In addition, the aim is to compare and relate their understanding and conceptions to the geopolitical thinking formed by previous research. Moreover the theoretical framework, critical geopolitics and Agnew's Modern geopolitical thinking, offer tools to analyze the outcome.

## **2.2 Justification of the Research Task**

The Arctic issues, Russian politics towards the Arctic as well as Russian security strategy have been studied in Russia and elsewhere, as presented earlier. What this research adds to the previously existing knowledge is that there will be new type of material used besides earlier research outcomes and further the material will be analyzed through critical geopolitical orientation. The contested nature of Russian geopolitical belongingness will partly determine whether or not the Arctic region will be maintained as a widely approved area of cooperation and a terrain for peaceful coexistence. This thesis contributes to a better understanding of the politics and policies in Russia. Further this thesis is relevant to the extent that the Russian Federation is a remarkable actor in the Arctic region and with other Arctic states it is defining the future development in the area. Whether it is cooperation or confrontation, it is crucial to have well-grounded understanding towards Russian policies and geopolitical thinking. Misunderstanding or failing to interpret actions of Russia and its *raison d'être* in the high north could lead to unjustified policy responses. This could have harmful consequences and put the peaceful developments in the Arctic at risk.

One of the initial ideas for this paper was the hypothesis that the growing importance of the Arctic regions in World politics has also affected the Russian geopolitical thinking. The northern and north-western territories of the Russian Federation have during the last decades thought to been the most peaceful and stable, while the strategic and geopolitical focus has been in

the more unstable parts in the southeast regions of the country<sup>41</sup>. Thus it will be interesting to see, how the situation is observable in the discourses traced in the research material.

The Second hypothesis relates to the role of the sea in world politics. Many of the aspects in the growing global interest towards the Arctic are connected to the sea, such as the new opening logistic opportunities or access to the new energy resources and to other natural resources. Further the modernization process in the north and the new investments to the infrastructure proved this type of interest shift towards the north. How the role of the sea present in the material and what is can be said about the modernization in reference to the Arctic?

My reasoning implies that there is a need for a rethink on the nature of the Russian geopolitical thinking. Further the activities and politics of Russia in the Arctic region and especially the multi-dimensional nature of the Russian political discourse should be discussed. Russian geopolitical thinking is not a homogenous concept. It could be argued that it is highly diverse and varies from actor to another. This thesis aims to contribute to the better understanding of Russian actors and manoeuvres in the Arctic and northern areas as well as its policies concerning the issue. Further this research provides an overview of Russian policies and analyzes the discussion over the high north in several types of sources. The research data will consist of official publications, written documents, speeches and comments from political leaders, commentators and also from military officers<sup>42</sup>.

### **2.3 Research Questions**

The main question for my research is:

What characterizes the Russian geopolitical thinking? How Russian Geopolitical Thinking constructs the role of the Sea and the Arctic?

Consequently the aim is to see, how is Russian location and belongingness constructed in the research material in relation to the Arctic? What are the basic factors and elements in the Russian geopolitical discourses? Furthermore the aim is to see, how modernization

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41 Two wars in Chechnya, 5-day war with Georgia and generally the unstable situation in the Caucasus after the Soviet break-up have drawn Russia's (geo)political (and strategic) thinking to these areas.

42 More about the research data in Chapter 3.3.

is presented in reference to the Arctic and the geopolitical thinking of the Russian Federation. Moreover the goal is to scrutinize more widely, how the growing importance of the Arctic is perceived and affecting country's geopolitical thinking?

By answering these questions it is possible to construct and comment on the Arctic debate in Russia and elsewhere. Moreover the Russian geopolitical thinking on the Arctic might offer possibilities to comment on wider geopolitical thinking of Russia. Even though the aim is to study northern areas, they are not separate from the rest of the country and the geopolitical thinking is not reducible to some parts of the country<sup>43</sup>.

Since my main aim in research is to characterize the contemporary Russian geopolitical thinking, especially as it pertains to the role of the sea and modernization in the European north, the material has to be relatively new. The following chapter will introduce the methodological orientation and the research material used in this thesis.

### **3. Research Method and the Primary Material**

This chapter will introduce the chosen methodology, Critical Discourse Analysis after Norman Fairclough. But first a few words about the theoretical background, which is post-structuralism in International Relations. Finally the collected research data and the demarcation process and the data filter used to narrow down the material will be presented.

#### **3.1. Post-structuralism in IR as a Theoretical Background**

Post-structuralism is often described not as a complete theory, but more of a critical standpoint taken in the research process. It came to International Relations in the 1980's and is often not thought to relate to the so-called fourth debate of IR, which was prominent at that time. Instead, post-structuralism introduced a new set of questions and concerns to the research or "a meta-theoretical critique for realist and neo-realist theories".<sup>44</sup> Overall, the questions that post-structuralism raised were not fitting to the traditional thinking of IR's great debates.

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43 More on geopolitical thinking in chapter 4.

44 Campbell, 2007,206-

Post-structuralism pays attention to the importance of representation and identity in the “production” and comprehending of international relations. It scrutinizes “who are the ones that are telling something and especially what they are telling”.<sup>45</sup> Post-structuralism further emphasizes the relation between knowledge and power. One of the characteristics of post-structuralism is to have the theory as practice instead of separating theory and practice. Thus, post-structuralism is said to be about mapping the interpretations, and therefore it matches well with the chosen theory of critical geopolitics, which is also part of so-called critical social theories.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

*Discourses help people to arrange their thoughts and to categorize the world*<sup>47</sup>.

Discourse analysis first came into social science with the so-called linguistic turn. It was perceived as a cross-disciplinary project to merge the insights from linguistics and hermeneutics with the essentials from social and political science<sup>48</sup>. Discourse Analysis is not a homogenous method; more of characteristic to it is a certain criticality and a reformulation of established concepts. In discourse analysis meanings are socially reproduced and rather referred as representations. In this thesis representations of Arctic are especially under scrutiny; what kind of socially produced meanings or representations are given to the Russian North? Discourse in this study refers to a specific series of representations and practices, which are producing meanings, constituting identities, establishing social relations and making political and ethical outcomes more or less possible<sup>49</sup>. To elaborate further, how these representations of the Russian Arctic construct the Russian geopolitical thinking or what kind of discourses one can locate in this Russian geopolitical thinking? A crucial role in this paper is to study the written language. Nevertheless, this study is not a linguistic research, but it exploits the method of discourse analysis, which is also used in the study of language.

It can be noted that discourse analysis has been used in many research in the field of International Relations. Especially it has been applied to the study of conflict and war, peacemaking and in the feminist field of International Relations. In addition to social science, discourse analysis has been used for example in linguistics, culture and media studies. To add to this, the study of

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45 Campbell, 2007,206.

46 Campbell, 2007,206.

47 Jokinen & Juhila 2002, 66.

48 Torfing 2005,5.

49 Campbell 2007, 216.

identities, narratives and rhetorics is usually thought to be part of discourse analysis. It has been said, that the discourse analytic orientation sees research as a comment that will bring forth new viewpoints to the conversation<sup>50</sup>. Crucial is to arouse new sights and perspectives, to trigger discussion, not to state something final and definite. In the case of studying Russian politics with the discourse analytic orientations it might definitely open up new perspectives, because this methodology is not very popular among Russian academic research tradition.

It has been stated that the discourse analysis gave a new analytical perspective, which focused on the rules and meanings that condition the construction of social, political and cultural identity<sup>51</sup>. With the help of discourse analysis e.g. research on Russian identity has gained many new standpoints. Further discourse analysis could be said to widen the analysis of e.g. a single (political) text or speech to the social, cultural and identity aspects. Nevertheless, the discourse analysis is not always viewed as a methodology; some see it setting theoretical and metatheoretical assumptions and thus working as a comprehensive theoretical research orientation<sup>52</sup>.

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) emerged in the late 1980's and was inspired by Michel Foucault's analysis of the discursive practices, but criticizes his quasi-transcendental understanding of discourse<sup>53</sup>. CDA aims to reveal the hidden relations between objects, such as language, power and ideology. Moreover CDA sees language as the primary domain of power and ideology. According to one of the founders of CDA, Norman Fairclough, it is as much of a theory as it is a method. CDA is a theoretical perspective on language and more generally to semiosis (which includes to the analysis e.g. visibility and gestures). Thus, in this thesis the methodological choice of CDA enables analyzing the Arctic and geopolitical reasoning in the wider context; to construct a geopolitical thinking of Russian Federation, which has the historical, identity and cultural aspects in the analysis. Fairclough accentuates that the ideological nature of language should be one of the major themes of modern social science<sup>54</sup>. Thereby in this thesis the language is set as the most important object of the research. Taking into account that this is not a linguistic research, some of Fairclough's aspects, such as the analysis of visibility and gesture (semiosis) are set aside.

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50 Jokinen & Juhila 2002, 66.

51 Torfing 2005,1.

52 E.g. Kroger & Wood 2000, 206.

53 Fairclough 1992, 38-39.

54 Fairclough 2001,2.

According to Jacob Torfing, post-structuralist discourse analysis has offered a great amount of sophisticated concepts and arguments that helps us to transcend the objectivistic, reductionist and rationalistic bias of modern social science. Further it has radicalized hermeneutical alternatives by emphasizing the role of discourse and politics in shaping social, political, and cultural interpretations. Discourse theory has persuaded to notice new aspects in research, such as knowledge paradigms, identity formation and the discursive construction of sentiment norms, values, and symbols.<sup>55</sup> To elaborate further, CDA has often power relations and the (linguistic) structures that maintain and produce them as a starting point for research<sup>56</sup>. Accordingly the concepts are often “loaded” and drawn from post-structuralist origin. As a result CDA sees discourse not just restricted to spoken or written language, but broaden the concept to the wider set of social practices. As Chouliaraki & Fairclough enter up:

“It is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as discourses as well as processes that are taking place outside discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantively shaped by these discourses.”<sup>57</sup>

CDA rejects the dominant view of language as primarily a referential system and theorizes language both as practice itself (in its pragmatic or ‘performative’ dimension) and as representation of practice (in its semantic dimension).<sup>58</sup> Language has this ‘double capacity’, which is crucial to the process of signification and thus language creates discourses. In the study of Russian geopolitical thinking in the Arctic one can state that there have been some actual events or claims, but when studying the representations of these cases, there can be traced discourses behind the individual statements. Without a doubt it is the discourses in the geopolitical thinking, which are interesting to analyze and might give new viewpoints to the research. This thesis will concentrate on written language, even though with the discourse analytics orientation also other types of data, such as media discourses, pictures published in different types of material, popular films or for example maps, could easily be used.

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55 Torfing, 2005,4-5.

56 Jokinen & Juhila 2002, 56.

57 Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999,4.

58 Chouliaraki 2000,277.

Evidently, ideologies are closely linked to power and power relations create conventions as means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore CDA treats the discourse as a social practice and scrutinizes the influences of political, social and cultural surroundings on discourse. CDA aims to make discourse more visible and transparent, since it is “an indigestible power object in modern societies”<sup>60</sup>. According to Fairclough, ideology often implies distortion or false consciousness, modification of the truth according to one’s interests. The only way of gaining access to the truth is through representations of it. Thus all representations include a particular view, certain values as well as goals.<sup>61</sup> This study will grasp the ideology, the goals and the values presented in the discourses found in the Russian geopolitical thinking. It has to be noted, that all representations in the discourses are not equal, moreover there can be made comparison and evaluation on them<sup>62</sup>. Therefore the aim is to study, what the representations of the Russian Arctic geopolitics include and exclude, from where the discourses emerge and what type of factors and interests influence their formulation and projection.

According to Fairclough, one has to scrutinize the three dimensions of a communicative event; the texts, the discursive practices and the socio-cultural practice. Discursive practice refers to processes of text production and consumption whereas socio-cultural practices refer to the social and cultural going-on which the communicative event is part of.<sup>63</sup> So the most interesting aspect of any discourse is its context, processes in which the construction of certain discourse is possible. Thus, the analysis of Russian geopolitical thinking in the Arctic would not be possible without referring also to the wider (geo)political discourse and events in Russia.

### **3.2.1. Criticism towards the Discourse Analysis**

The critics pointed towards the discourse analytics often reflect on the hermeneutic approach to text analysis and to the broad context which is used in the analysis. Widdowson has criticized the term discourse itself: “It is something everybody is talking about without knowing with any certainty just what it is: It is in vogue and vague”<sup>64</sup>. Further the goal of making the social world more transparent is criticized also for possibly making it more simplistic. Even when the dis-

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59 Fairclough 2001,2.

60 Fairclough 2001,19.

61 Fairclough 1995,46-47.

62 Fairclough 1995,47.

63 Fairclough, 1995,97.

64 Widdowson, 1995.158

courses are found, they cannot determine the actions completely. Simultaneously the very large theoretical framework is sometimes said not to be fitting to the actual research data. The criticism is indeed based on the idea that discourses and study over representations are too wide in focus, too generalizing, and carry the attitudes and opinions of the author. Nevertheless, CDA has not even claimed to be dispassionate or objective research (as objectives social research does), but engaged in the discussion and committed<sup>65</sup>. It can be thought as a form of intervention in social practice and social relationship.

The biggest criticism is, nevertheless, pointed to the political stances taken by researchers<sup>66</sup>. CDA often openly and explicitly positions the research on the side of the dominated group and against the ruling party. As an illustration, the typical research interests are often ideological in character, such as nationalism, racism or gender equality. In discourse analysis the results that the researcher is producing are not objective, but rather constructed with the help of analytical tool in the research. As a result, interpretations are always relative and argued on a basis of the author's knowledge, but never to be understood as universal facts. To conclude, the standard of careful, throughout and systematic analysis applies with equal emphasis to CDA as to other approaches.

Despite the criticism pointed towards CDA it appears to be the most fruitful methodology for this paper, mainly because of four reasons. Firstly, discourses in reference to the Russian Arctic are not a much studied area. Secondly, the material used in this research differs from earlier research made on the subject. Thirdly, discourse analysis in general is not widely used in Russian academia, and might therefore offer new viewpoints and prospects. Finally, the tools from CDA, such as representations and discourses reveal and help to analyze the ideological factors in the Russian geopolitical thinking.

### **3.2.2. Key Concepts of CDA**

The most important concept in CDA is *discourse*, which refers to the fact that there are several ways of using language, in relevance to the audience, the speaker and the forum. Discourse analysis will try to reveal the meaning beyond the linguistic properties, to reveal the ideo-

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65 E.g. Van Dijk 2011, 358.

66 More on Criticism e.g. Meyer 2001, Titscher et al., 2000.



logical nature<sup>67</sup>. Discourse is referred to as specific series of representations and practices, which are producing meanings, constituting identities, establishing social relations and making political and ethical outcomes more or less possible. For example, the discourse of Russian ownership of the Arctic constitutes to a Russian identity as a northern great power<sup>68</sup>. Thus, discourse is reduced to a subset of a broader range of social practices.<sup>69</sup> All forms of social practice happen in the context of a certain discourse (or discourses) which can be broadly defined as relational systems of signification<sup>70</sup>. One just cannot state something without the sediment discursive practice, which is constantly modified and transformed by what we are doing, saying or thinking. Further, there is not just one system of language, but many, which in the use of language constantly recurs and constructs new significations.<sup>71</sup>

By more concrete level discourse is language as *social practice*, determined by social structures<sup>72</sup>. The cooperation discourse in reference to the Arctic, presented in Chapter 5.1., is stronger in the international arenas, where social structures between states are being exposed. In these arenas it is important to create mutual understanding and common discourse. Thus, CDA views language as a socially conditioned process, conditioned also by other, non-linguistic parts of (international) society<sup>73</sup>. Social practices include all kinds of linguistically mediated practices; spoken, written as well as images and gestures that social actors exploit in their production and interpretation of meaning. E.g. social classes or different interest groups produce ideological discourses to maintain their hegemonic power or to establish a new one. Overall, ideological discourse contributes not only to the reproduction of social and political order, but also to its transformation. The three different discourses, found in this research (presented in Chapter 5), all vary in reference to the time, place and the actor.

*Representations* are socially produced meanings, how something is literally represented. For example, the representations of 'the north' in Russian geopolitical thinking might be interesting to see. Moreover *signification*, or how subjects and phenomenon are named, is in the

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67 Paltridge 2006, 2-3.

68 Presented in chapter 5.2.

69 Torfing 2005,7.

70 Torfing, 2005,14.

71 Jokinen & Juhila 2002.67.

72 Fairclough 2001,14.

73 Fairclough 2001,19.

central part in the analysis. For example the signification of the Arctic can be scrutinized in the different discourses. In different discourses same events can be named different, as seen through different 'lenses'. Thus, in this research also signification processes in different types of data can be explored.

### 3.2.3. CDA Application

In CDA the status of the data is high, since it is thought to be the actual focus of the research itself, not a description of the subject<sup>74</sup>. Consequently according to Fairclough, the analysis should be on three levels; texts, identities and relations. Further the representations in the texts should be investigated; how is the world (people, relations) represented? Also the identity formation should be probed; what identities are set up and why? Altogether the relations between those involved (actors, identities, representations) have to be explored.<sup>75</sup> According to Fairclough, a part of one's identity is to use language in a certain way<sup>76</sup>. Hence, it will be interesting to see in this research, does the different actor chosen to my research material talk in a same way. Do they belong to the same or different discourse(s)?

Neumann further advises three steps in analyzing discourses: delimiting text, mapping representations and layering discourse.<sup>77</sup> Discourses are not separable and their position should be outlined in relations to others. Neumann writes about showing the intensity and location of a discourse:

“The more such things may be specified empirically, the better the analysis. The idea is to include as many presentations and their variations as possible, and to specify where they are to be found in as high degree as possible.”<sup>78</sup>

Different representations in discourses vary on their historical depth and in degree of dominance/marginalization<sup>79</sup>. Good analysis also finds the changes in the intensity. In any case it has to be noted, that the political actors do not usually speak as individuals, the text and speeches have gone through editing and moreover they are representatives of their countries, governments

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74 Suoninen 1993,49-50.

75 Fairclough 1995,5.

76 Fairclough 2001, 123.

77 Neumann 2008, 62.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

and institutions. Without a doubt also censorship (and selfcensorship), legal factors or other unrevealed factors should be somehow tried to be scrutinized in the analysis. Thus, it is necessary to take in-depth critical analysis of the contributors and more specifically, of the audience the message is aimed at. CDA helps revealing to what extent their statements, claims, assertions, and denials are the product of their own individual agenda and how these are negotiated in contrast to other groups.

According to Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, statements produce reality. Moreover they remark that it is not essential, if the actor's statements are done consciously or not.<sup>80</sup> This legitimizes my research as a research of the geopolitical reasoning in the material, in which the actor might have not initially aimed to comment on the geopolitical thinking itself.

### **3.3. Demarcation and the Scope of the Study**

According to Neumann, one of the starting points for discourse analysis is cultural competence, in which the researcher needs to recognize the shared understandings in the society. Nevertheless, there is a flip side with cultural competence; the researcher should not become naturalized or part of the studied object. Neumann refers to this with maintaining *marginal gaze*.<sup>81</sup>

In this thesis the geopolitical thinking is constructed through discourses found in the collected research material. In the formulation of Russian geopolitical thinking, I will look into official, political and "naval" aspects in the discourses, so the aim is to have material from different types of inputs. All the material in this research is from open and public sources. Further the material was relatively easy to access, since almost everything was available online. The basic guideline for data collection was source criticism, namely the pursuit to obtain the information from various and different types of sources. On the whole this paper studies the political discourse in Russia, which includes speeches, interviews, reports, analysis and debate by political leaders, officers of the armed forces, experts and other public figures. Some parts of my research data could also be recognized as a part of media debate, since in contemporary times political actors use media to distribute their message. Thus, the data has gone through a data filter, to achieve a certain amount of source criticism and to be able to somehow limit the amount of text scrutinized. In the media for example, the articles had to be directly referring to the actors which I intend to quote.

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80 Jokinen et. 1993, 42.

81 Neumann 2008, 64.

Moreover the research was narrowed to north-western Russia and to the Arctic areas of the European north. My primary data will comprised of several types of material, in which comments are made on (geo)political issues in the Arctic areas or Russia's naval forces. The research data has been systematically collected over time, leaving from the Kursk disaster and the publication of the Russian Maritime Strategy in 2000. The immediate discussion about the Kursk disaster however, is not qualified as such. The primary material is from three types of sources; firstly the strategies, doctrines and other official publications by Russian Federation, which are considering the subject. Secondly the official statements, speeches and commentaries by President Putin and later President Medvedev will be considered. Thirdly the articles, interviews and comments made by Russian officers and specialist journalists are explored<sup>82</sup>. Published in Russia after the year 2000, this material provides a fair representation of Russian geopolitical discourse. I have used the Integrum database<sup>83</sup> to get access to Russian media sources, and the huge amount was then limited by using the data filter which is introduced in the next page.

Firstly; official policy sources include:

- Maritime Doctrine accepted in 2001 (Morskaya Doktrina),
- Arctic Strategy paper 2008 (henceforth Arctic paper). Foundations of the state politics of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for 2020 and beyond. (Ru. Osnovy gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Arktike na period do 2020 goda i dalneishuii perspektivu)<sup>84</sup>,
- National Security Strategy 2009 (Ru. Strategia natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda) and
- Military Doctrine 2010 (Ru. Voennaya Doktrina)
- Strategy of the Arctic Development and National Security 2010 (henceforth Arctic Strategy) (Ru. Strategia Razvitiya Arkticheskoi zony Rossijskoj Federaczii i Obespecheniya Nacziionalnoj Bezopasnosti na Period do 2020 Goda.)<sup>85</sup>

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82 With this type of add in the primary data I wanted to have other type of input included, outside of policy-makers, academia and political elite. It turned out that since Russia (earlier Soviet union) has a compulsory military service, there is no difficulties on finding writings from people who have served in the Armed forces. The retired officers tend to follow the discussion and comment.

83 Available in universities: ([http://www.integrumworld.com/int\\_prof.html](http://www.integrumworld.com/int_prof.html))

84 Strategy was published on the Russian Security Council' website in the end of March 2009.

85 In English: Strategy for the Development of the Arctic zone of Russian Federation and ensuring the National Security until 2020. Paper has been published in October 2010 in the Webpage of Russian Ministry for Development and has been signed by President Medvedev.

Secondly; speeches by two leaders of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev after the year 2000 to this day will be considered. These speeches have to deal with the issues of the Arctic or Naval forces. In this category I have 12 speeches. The speeches are analyzed as written language, since there were not available filmed versions.

Third type of material is drawn from the Russian media and limited with the help of *data filter*: text had to be fitting for all of these four benchmarks to be qualified: (Text had to be :)

1. Either about Arctic issues or about Russian naval forces in the high north.
2. Publication after 2000 (the Kursk disaster and discussion as such not fitting for criteria)
3. Published in a Russian media that is nationwide.
4. Writer can be a
  - a) Journalist, but has to have served or written extensively about the armed forces of Russian Federation.
  - b) Officer in Russian or foreign armed forces.

With this data filter the articles are from nine different newspapers in Russia, as well as from some qualified webpages.

- Barents Observer 1 article
- Itogi (Results) 1
- Kommersant (Businessman) 2
- Kommersant Ogonyok 2
- The Moscow Times 1
- Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper) 3
- Ria Novosti (Russian International News agency) 6
- RBK Daily 1
- Rossijskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper) 1

Internet-based sources included Russian Naval portal flot.ru, the Internet pages of the Institute of Strategic Studies and Analysis, isoa.ru.

Moving on to the next chapter I will move to the actual analyze of my research data, presented above.

## 4. Towards the Russian Geopolitical Thinking

Firstly in this chapter a brief history of geopolitics as a discipline will be introduced. It is, as later will be elaborated, mainly a ‘western’ discipline, but as a concept used widely in different connections. After that, some criticism towards the geopolitics as a field of research will be disclosed. Then, the tradition of critical geopolitics will be scrutinized. In the last part the theoretical tool for my research, the concept of Modern geopolitical thinking by John Agnew, will be introduced. This theory sees geopolitics as a wider mode of thinking, not just a scientific tradition.

### 4.1. Geopolitical Tradition

Geography or more specifically the body of a state interested early political scientists. Geopolitics as a concept was first mentioned by a Swedish geographer Rudolf Kjellén in 1899. His idea was that states have natural geographic body. According to Kjellén, the study of geopolitics meant studying the territory and the essence of a state. Apparently, Kjellén started the geopolitical research; nevertheless, this had very little influence on the later schools of geopolitics<sup>86</sup>.

After Kjellén geopolitics was mainly pursued by geographers and army officers, such as Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), Alfred Mahan (1840-1914), Nicholas Spykman (1893-1943), Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) and Karl Haushofer (1869-1946). These scholars are usually thought to be part of the school of classical geopolitics and mostly referred to as geopolitical tradition. In Russia, first geopolitical thinkers are said to be N. Danilevsky and L. Mechnikov, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the Second World War and afterwards geopolitics inherited accusations of Nazi connections and thus came marginalized. Nevertheless, much of the research orientation stayed in particularly in military academies, usually studied in the field of strategic studies. Thereafter, in the 1970’s geopolitics became more popular because of the great power politics of the Cold War. This western tradition of geopolitics became later on re-examined by political geographers and international relations scholars with the help of *critical geopolitical* theorizing.

Naturalization of binary division ‘us’ versus ‘others’ reached its zenith in the geopolitical schemas proposed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly, these borders have been drawn in Europe to divide *the other* from *us*, for example Edward Said in his Oriental-

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86 Moisiso 2001, 15.

ism<sup>87</sup>. In geographical literature the divide has been historically between land and sea powers, like in American General Alfred Mahan's argumentation<sup>88</sup>. To demonstrate the Post-Cold War globalized world Samuel Huntington created his theory of civilizations which were based on cultures<sup>89</sup>. Moreover in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the discussion came the opposition between land and sea powers, first noted by the ancient Greek writer Thucydides in his Peloponnesian War. In this reasoning, the geographical location suggested the 'fate' of the nation. Russia in relation to this tradition is usually thought to be the perfect example of 'geopolitical land power'.

During the Soviet times geopolitics was not that widely practised and actually it was conceived as pseudo-science and associated with fascism. Geopolitics was unnecessary in the Soviet society, because *homo soveticus* could survive everywhere despite the conditions and surroundings<sup>90</sup>. However, even though the discipline of geopolitics was not exercised and the word 'geopolitical' mentioned, it survived as an interdisciplinary practise and revived soon in 1990's after the Soviet Union collapsed.

Russian geopolitical thinking has its origins in westernism versus eurasianism (or historically westernism and slavophilism) -debate. Further the discourse of imperialism or "great powerness" (*derzhavnost*) has been in the core. Russian geopolitical tradition relies especially on the work of British geographer Halford Mackinder and his theory about the geographical pivot of the world, which according to Mackinder was the Eurasian continent. In his theory, Eastern Europe gained much emphasis.<sup>91</sup> From the two historical schools, Eurasianism emphasizes geopolitical and cultural uniqueness of Russia. Westernism, on the contrary, saw Russia as part of the western tradition and culturally close to Europe. Eurasianism as well as Westernism has not been just an intellectual, but also a political movement. Especially eurasianism from the 1930's onwards emphasized Russia's geopolitical and cultural independency, or 'self-standing' (*samostoianiye*). The founders of the 'Eurasian School' were the Trubetskoi brothers at the beginning of the 20th century. Contemporary leader and main theorist of this orientation is A. Dugin. Despite the strong Eurasian school, there are also a number of independent geopolitical scholars in Russia, namely I. Busygina, K. Gadzhiev, M. Iluin, R. Turovsky and D. Zamyatin.

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87 Said 1978.

88 See Mahan 1890.

89 Huntington 1993,22-25.

90 More on Hauner 1989, 217.

91 See Mackinder 1904.

## 4.2. Criticism towards the (Classical) Geopolitics

The most prominent critique towards geopolitical tradition is its naturalistic attitude. The classical geopolitical school saw very little space to analyze; moreover the classical geopolitics is based on the idea of a *natural gaze*, or eye as a witness, not an interpreter.<sup>92</sup> Classical geopolitics is closely linked to the political realism, where the interpretation is based on power-politics and states prioritizing their interest over ideology or moral concerns.

Moreover classical geopolitics was accused of being racist with its euro-centrism and seeing Western civilization (or white race) as naturally superior. Also the accusations of imperialism or geographical determinism were observed. Critical geopolitics leaved behind the aspects that geopolitics has been criticised for; it has its base on post-structuralist reasoning and discourses, to elaborate further it has abandoned the state-centric understanding of power as in classical geopolitics. In critical geopolitics, the power is probed through investigating the discourses. These discourses are in this study presented in the following fifth chapter. However, first we will look at the critical geopolitics more closely, followed by introducing the theory of Modern Geopolitical Thinking by John Agnew.

## 4.3. Critical Geopolitics

*In complex post-modern times...geopolitical visions and visionaries seem to thrive.*

Gearoid Ó Tuathail<sup>93</sup>

As mentioned above, the theoretical choice for this research will be critical geopolitics, which has been separated from both classical and so-called new geopolitics. Critical geopolitics views the geographical space as a product of political and cultural imagination, rather than something 'neutral' or 'objective'. The Arctic is not a neutral region in this study; rather it follows these considerations raised by Critical geopolitics, in which political thinking is tied with representations of geographical space. For example politicians might argue, what they see appropriate in a given situation, with the audience at the situation and what they see suitable for their own purposes.

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92 More on O'Tuathail 1996,23.

93 O'Tuathail 1998, 2.



As Sami Moisió points out, common feature for scholars who use critical geopolitics is that geopolitical phenomenon are socially and politically constructed<sup>94</sup>.

Critical geopolitics tends to contest big geopolitical theories of the 1900's and draw attention to the multiplicity of the postmodern society. Further the aim in critical geopolitics has been drawing attention to the fact that geographical knowledge is one type of power, which O'Tuathail refers to as geo-power<sup>95</sup>. Simon Dalby has articulated: "a world that is structured through geopolitics is never equal"<sup>96</sup>. Critical geopolitics has also wanted to go apart from so-called geostrategy, which is mainly in the military science used as a realistic "new wave" of using terms from classical geopolitics. Thus, this paper tries to reveal the power construction in reference to Russia's Arctic and further, how this power is presented in the discourses of Russian geopolitical thinking.

Critical geopolitics is thought to originate from Gearóid Ó Tuathail's book *Critical Geopolitics*, published in 1996. In this book he develops his 'critical theory of geopolitics'. With the prefix 'critical' scholars wanted to attach geopolitics to a wider tradition of critical research. Furthermore critical geopolitics examines how the world has been portrayed in political activities, how reality has been mapped and mastered. Critical geopolitics emphasizes the socially constructed nature of geographical space and draws out attention to possibilities of re-evaluation of political order beyond the understanding of the Westphalian world. Further according to O'Tuathail and Dalby<sup>97</sup>, critical geopolitics has several key arguments; firstly, they emphasize the need to go beyond the state practises and move towards delineating the particular cultural myths underlying these practises, such as the myth of national uniqueness. Secondly, in critical geopolitics the boundaries are considered in a broader sense than just by power and domination. The critical geopolitics is "concerned as much with maps of meaning as it is with maps of states. The boundary-drawing practises... are conceptual and cartographic, imaginary and actual, social and aesthetic."<sup>98</sup> The borders and boundaries in reference to the Russian geopolitical thinking will be considered in the discussion chapter.

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94 Moisió 2003,27.

95 O'Tuathail 1996.

96 See e.g. Dalby 1994 for more about gender-geopolitics.

97 O'Tuathail and Dalby 1998, 1-8.

98 Ibid,4.

According to John Agnew, geo-politics or study of geopolitics is “study of the geopolitical representations and practises that underpin world politics or the examination of geographical assumptions, designations and understandings that enter into the making of world politics.<sup>99</sup>” Further about the geopolitical thinking Agnew has written, that military, or more specifically a strategic dimension to contemporary geopolitical thinking is continuously a matter of attention; however, the empire is not only about military force, neither the contemporary hegemony is a matter of military force or territorial conquest<sup>100</sup>. Nevertheless, many wars and conflicts even today are justified in language explicitly geographical terms<sup>101</sup>.

The geopolitical thinking affects the nature of politicians’ and other political actors’ geopolitical argumentation. Further it can be defined as “interpretative culture and traditions within which a state makes sense of its identity and encounter with the world of states, and codifies a set of strategies for negotiating that encounter<sup>102</sup>” Thus, changes in geopolitical culture reflect also the changes in the primary functions of a state or further, the military forces. According to Simon Dalby<sup>103</sup>, earlier the main tasks for the armed forces were patrolling the peripheries against external threats and secondly internal pacification, administration and policing. The latter has grown in importance after the end of the Cold War when the focus was much more on the spatial struggles for power and influence between great powers. The geopolitical thinking is further important in the construction of threats; how these threats are mapped, specifying important places and marginal places, and in turn the justifications for certain kinds of military forces best fitting for dealing with dangers in these specific places. Moreover, even when the threat perception might have changed, the language used is still based on territorial strategies, consequently the language changed from great power rivalry to geo-economic rivalries<sup>104</sup>.

The most known critical geopolitical scholars are John O’Loughlin, Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Vladimir Kolossov, as well as John Agnew and Simon Dalby. In Finland critical geopolitics is researched by Professor Pami Aalto, who has studied post geopolitics of the European north. Russia also works of D. Zamyatin are close to the critical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics and Arctic has also recently been studied by Klaus Dodds, Richard Powell and Jason Dittmer. Moreover

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99 Agnew 1998,2.

100 Agnew 2005.

101 Dalby 2008, 415.

102 O’Loughlin et al. 2004, 5.

103 Ibid.

104 Agnew & Corbridge 1989.

in Finland the Arctic has been studied recently by Sami Moisio, Timo Koivurova and Lassi Heininen.

Also Russian geopolitical thinking has been studied before. For example Smith and Timmins have studied Russian's relations to NATO and the EU. Further so called geopolitical storylines have been studied by O'Loughlin, O'Tuathail and Kolossov. They studied after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks the geopolitical storylines of the Russian political elite, public opinion and between those two.<sup>105</sup> Also Sirke Mäkinen used geopolitical storyline in her doctoral thesis about the Russian political parties' geopolitical argumentation.

#### **4.4. Agnew's Modern Geopolitical Imagination**

John Agnew wrote about his concept of modern geographical Imagination in his book "Geopolitics, re-visioning world politics" which was published in 1998. With re-visioning the world politics he meant that the end of the Cold War and the declining military viability of even the largest states, growing global markets, expanding transnational capitalism and the modes of governance alternative to that of the territorial state (EU, IMF, UN, WB) have begun to undermine the possibility of seeing power as solely a spatial monopoly exercised by states. Further Agnew has noted that despite the changing meaning of military capacity, many contemporary conflicts even today are justified in language explicitly by geographical terms<sup>106</sup>. Agnew argues, that even though the geopolitics as a discipline is fairly young, long before it was born as an academic discipline there was a certain geopolitical thinking. John Agnew calls this *Modern geopolitical imagination*. This thinking came into being when Europeans first encountered the rest of the world. Consequently the onset of the capitalist world economy and the growth of the European territorial state started parcelling out areas.<sup>107</sup> According to Agnew Modern geopolitical imagination was given birth to by the capitalist world economy and the growth of the European territorial state<sup>108</sup>.

This idea introduced by Agnew will be also guide line for the next chapter, which contains analyze of the research data. Even if this theory emphasizes geopolitical factors, it does not mean that other type of factors is lower in value. The world is and has been throughout the history

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105 O'Loughlin et al 2004..

106 Dalby 2008, 415.

107 Agnew 1998,3.

108 Agnew 1998,3.

actively ‘spatialized’, ‘divided up’, ‘labelled’, ‘sorted out’ into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser importance by political actors and scholars<sup>109</sup>.

Agnew saw break-up of the Soviet Union, the NATO and the EU expansions as well as regional separatist movements in different regions easy to scrutinize with the geopolitical imagination. More lately questions of the organization of power combined with those of geographical definition raised by the global warming and the retreat of the arctic ice caps. Thus also the changing political situation in the high north can easily be studied with geopolitical theory. Consequently, the concept of modern geopolitical imagination is a historicist one and offers tools but does not provide ready answers. The modern geopolitical imagination does not presume a set of fixed beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and practices that remain essentially unchanged throughout the history<sup>110</sup>.

In Modern Geopolitical Thinking the different areas of the world are organized hierarchically according to religious, ‘racial’, climatory or civilizational factors. The divisions or boundaries are drawn between the self and the other or more precisely between known and unknown or friendly and hostile places. Further modern geopolitical imagination has four fundamentals, which preceded the later ones. First fundamental was born during the Age of Discoveries, a *global vision*. Before this the unknown was pictured as a source of chaos and danger, but the global vision allowed seeing the *world-as-a-whole* and thus provided for a concept of world politics.<sup>111</sup> This objective and natural view is according to Agnew, a *view from nowhere*. The most well-known representations of the dichotomy of known and unknown are that of a dichotomous east and west. Edward Said wrote, that “Europeans define themselves negatively, against others whose nature is largely unknown<sup>112</sup>”.

The second fundamental in Agnew’s Modern Geopolitical Thinking is “translation of time into space”, which means that different regions of the world seem to present a certain period of time. Further it means that the regions are in different phases of ‘historical development’. Places could have been named “developed”, “primitive”, “modern” or “backward”. This type of thinking enabled the idea of superiority of some places over others. According to this fundamental also

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109 Agnew 1998, 2.

110 Agnew 2003, 128.

111 Ibid. 8.

112 Said 1978.

Europe was often represented as most developed and thus, superior. According to Agnew, even after the colonialism has decreased, the western imperialism continues through the discursive practises.<sup>113</sup>

The third fundamental is state-centric understanding of spatiality of power. Thus, the world is made of territorial actors or states opposed other forms of policy. Agnew names this feature as a *territorial trap*.<sup>114</sup> The state defines its borders, which are also borders of society and internal and external affairs are seen as completely separately. Yet the concept of territorial trap is not always applicable in the modern world, the drawbacks are becoming obvious. On the one hand, territorial trap owes much to the perceived changes in the relations between states and to the emergence of a global society in which states must share power with other types of actors. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War even the largest states, growing global markets, expanding transnational capitalism and modes of the governance alternative to that of the territorial states (e.g. EU, IMF, and WB) have begun to undermine the possibility of seeing power as solely a spatial monopoly exercised by states.<sup>115</sup> In this research, nevertheless, the state is in the centre. The state policy towards the Arctic will be scrutinised.

The fourth fundamental is the idea that pursuit for states interest or security is relative to those of all others. Power is thus thought to be proportional.<sup>116</sup> Modern geopolitical imagination frames world politics in term of global context in which states view power outside their boundaries, gain control (formally and informally) over less modern regions. There is a rivalry among states to avoid overthrown. Behind this is state's necessary for ontological security<sup>117</sup>. In Agnew's Modern geopolitical thinking only the rivalry guarantees the well-being of a society. This pursuit provides the geographical framing within political elites and mass publics in the world in pursuit of their own identities and interests<sup>118</sup>.

To conclude, the modern geopolitical imagination, like the construction of global space, was never set for all time<sup>119</sup>. The building blocks or principles have remained more or less

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113 Agnew 1998, 45.

114 Agnew 1998, 9,49-50.

115 Agnew 1998,50.

116 Agnew 1998, 68-70.

117 Agnew 1998,9.

118 Agnew, 1998,2.

119 Agnew 1998,122.

the same, but the end product is somewhat different. Historically these fundamentals did not suddenly spring forth during the birth of territorial states, but there are long-standing historical roots that still influence on the geopolitical thinking of states. Hence, the modern geopolitical thinking can and should be adjusted to the technological and economic changes of the contemporary world.

#### **4.5. Critical Geopolitical Concepts**

Russian geopolitical thinking in my research will assume that spatial imagination is a crucial part in shaping future political and cultural boundaries of Russia. Moreover the geopolitical thinking in this research refers to the idea that geographical belongingness is gaining more emphasis in the age of globalization and global energy market; geographical entities have their position in the political discourse, even though the meaning of geography to a country might be different than in history. In the geopolitical thinking the geographical space will be viewed as a product of political and cultural imagination, rather than as something ‘natural’ or ‘objective.’<sup>120</sup> To elaborate further, geopolitical thinking is not unchangeable; it is built in its context. The presumption is, that geopolitical thinking is embodied in the Russian policy towards the Arctic, further it legitimizes the discourses. According to Agnew, in modern geopolitical thinking it is common to describe an area with a single feature, to *essentialize*. Moreover the comparison between two regions is often made with only one criterion and thus the aim is to *exotize*. Third common feature is to change the quantity of some perceived difference, that is, to *totalize*.<sup>121</sup>

### **5. Discourses of the Russian Geopolitical Thinking**

This chapter will analyze the three discourses traced in the research data (introduced in Chapter 3.3). The first discourse based on the representations of *cooperation in the Arctic* (Chapter 5,1), the second discourse represented the *sovereign rights of the Russian Federation* (Chapter 5,2) and the third included the concept of *modernization* (Chapter 5,3).

To locate the discourses CDA offered applicable tools; the emphasis was drawn on how the different concepts or geographical issues were presented, what type of meanings or in CDA, *representations* they gain. The basic question was “how the Arctic is re-presented in the material?” Since in this paper non-linguistic parts of the language (like gestures, body language,

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120 More on Chapter 2.1 Towards Critical Geopolitics

121 Agnew 1998,33.

popular literature films and pictures) were not noted, the emphasis was on the written text and the layout. The territorial claims, expeditions and other political acts were also noted.

Another concept offered by CDA, *signification*, was also helpful; it denotes the naming of a phenomenon or a subject. For example the research conducted in the Arctic sea in 2007 gained various different significations; moreover the Arctic strategy released in 2010 was for the *development* of the Arctic region – not for the example stabilizing or modernization of this area. According to CDA, an ideological discourse contributes “not only to the reproduction of social and political order, but also to its transformation”<sup>122</sup>. Thus, these discourses do not only maintain the status quo, but construct new types of possible meanings to the Arctic, and thus produce possible transformations in the geopolitical thinking. Further there were differences in the depth and intensity of different discourses.

The analysis based also on Agnew’s modern geopolitical thinking<sup>123</sup> and the geopolitical aspects on the material. According to Agnew, contemporary geopolitical thinking is continuously a matter of attention; however the empire is not only about military force, neither the contemporary hegemony is matter of military force or territorial conquest<sup>124</sup>. Thus, the geopolitical aspects are traced in the discourses and are ideational in nature.

The logic of the following chapter is that after introducing each of the discourses and the representations in them, following this the discourse will be parcelled to some representations and scrutinized mainly in chronological order.

## **5.1. Discourse on Cooperation**

*It’s difficult to survive in the Arctic when you are alone; it is well-known time-tested fact. Arctic nature itself makes individuals, groups of people and entire countries dependent on each other.”*

Prime Minister Putin in the International Arctic Forum in 2010<sup>125</sup>

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the cooperation in the North became vivid, it evolved specially in the fields of environmental, social and military cooperation. (See pages

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122 More on CDA in Chapter 3.

123 See chapter 4.

124 Agnew 2005.

125 Putin 2010.

4-7.) Typical cooperation involved different types of nuclear safety and social development cross-border projects with Nordic and Russian partners. Moreover collaboration on environment-related issues was common and in the military field cooperation became more accurate when borders became more open and the rivalry of the Cold War ended. The new types of cross-border projects created new arenas for communication and enhanced atmosphere of trust between the actors involved. Consequently this type of cooperation led to the creation of many new international organizations and actors in the 1990's, such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Region and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Simultaneously the Northern Dimension was introduced in the 1990's. During the 1990's Russia's participation was sporadic in the financially challenging times of 1990's, but it has more recently become relatively active participant. All these different forums and spheres of cooperation depict the importance of the cooperation in the north. Overall, the cooperation discourse has been strong in the Russian north; because of the stable border areas that Russia shared with Nordic countries and because of special interest pointed by Nordic countries to Russia.

At times Russia's participation in the cross-border projects was more indolent<sup>126</sup>, but the importance pointed to cooperation in the state-level has been found in the national strategies that have referred to the Arctic issues. Towards the end of the research period this discourse has grown stronger. It has made its way to the public speeches by President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin.

### **5.1.1. Cooperative Forums and Projects**

The ambivalent representation of *cooperation* in the north was noticeable especially in the beginning of the research period. In the Maritime Doctrine (2001) 'cooperation' gained different types of representations; the doctrine views cooperation as *important*, but at the same time as a *threat*. Cooperation might contribute to the "inevitable competition, (which is) on the way"<sup>127</sup>. The paper refers to *possibility* of cooperation, but then again clearly emphasizes the sovereign rights of the country<sup>128</sup>.

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126 Russian representatives not from the high-level and cooperation not mentioned in the domestic political arena.

127 More about assertive politics in the Chapter 5,2.

128 More about Russia's sovereign rights discourse on next subchapter.



“The essence of the national policies of the major maritime powers and the majority of the world community in the foreseeable future will be an independent action and cooperation in the development of the oceans.<sup>129</sup>”

The Maritime Doctrine was partly a disappointment when being scrutinized; it contained very little concrete measures or decisions for the naval forces or for the Arctic areas. The fact that the paper presented an extensive list of different *maritime activities* made it very wide in focus. Thus, the Maritime Doctrine was supposed to cover everything from fishing to security politics in reference to the sea as well as to inland waters.

Further the Arctic gained representation in the Maritime Doctrine as an area with *economic potential through the cooperation*. The bottom line was to depict how the oceans could be exploited and how Russia’s own interests in economic sense could be guaranteed. The economic interest as such links together with the cooperative discourse, since in the northern areas mutual projects are needed to gain the best possible financial outcomes. Further according to the cooperative discourse, non-military means are being underlined as the important ones for solving the possible conflicts and determine the future of the northern areas. As the Maritime Doctrine states, there is

“A principle of political-diplomatic, economic, information and other non-military means in resolving conflicts in the oceans and the removal of threats to natural security of the Russian Federation with the maritime areas<sup>130</sup>”

### **5.1.2. Cooperation in a Unique Setting**

Recently many countries with an interest in the Arctic region have published their Arctic Strategies. The Russian Arctic Paper<sup>131</sup> was released in 2008 and called *the Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond*. The paper represents the Arctic as *a unique area*, with many possibilities for cooperation. According to the Arctic Paper, the region has specific type of nature and should be maintained as *a zone of peace and cooperation*. Russian Arctic Paper also names *sustainable development* and *environmental conservation* as important areas for cooperation. Interestingly, one of the goals in this strategy is to create a more *positive image of Russia*. Further the strategy envisions increased cooperation with neighbouring coun-

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129 MD (The Maritime Doctrine) 2001,1.

130 MD 2001,3.

131 Not a strategy paper, as the one published in late 2010.

tries in the fight against terrorism, drug-trafficking, illegal immigration and environmental protection.<sup>132</sup>

The fact that the Russian Arctic Paper<sup>133</sup> was released in 2008 marked the re-emergence of the north as a separate policy field. Before this point the trend was to have northern policies along with other policy field and the measures were taken just to answer ad hoc situations and problems, concerning for example social and economic crises in the north. The Arctic strategies have appointed out several perceptions towards the Arctic areas and how it should be treated. Further in the Arctic strategies countries propose their solutions for the future governance or ownership of this space. The Russian version of Arctic policy paper itself reminds a lot of similar papers by other Arctic states. The more thorough strategy was then released in 2010. The 2008 paper represented and emphasized soft security issues, such as human security and environmental factors. Further this paper maintained the cooperative discourse in the Russian Arctic policy, since the representation was the *common interests* of all Arctic states.

The cooperative discourse in reference to the Arctic also relates to the discourse over the Antarctica, which is the area that could naturally be compared to the high north. The unsolved situation in the Antarctica was solved with the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 and has since then guaranteed in the continent peaceful co-existence, cooperation and non-militarisation. Antarctica is even nowadays dedicated to science and research.

Temporally, the cooperation discourse was the most intense in 2010, when Prime Minister Putin talked in the international forum called “Arctic –territory of dialogue”. The name of the seminar itself underlines the cooperation discourse in reference to high north. Further the audience was international, mainly researchers, officials and some of the political elite of Arctic countries’. The message of Prime Minister Putin was basically praising the coexistence and the prospects for cooperation in the north. Before the conference Putin had concluded that the forum “will discuss the existing disputes in calm and neighbourly manner... will listen to each other rather than exchange threats on non-existing issues.”<sup>134</sup> Further Putin had a speech about the highly motivated environmental protection in the high north, as well as strengthened the cooperation discourse by introducing the concept of *common arctic home*:

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132 The Russian Arctic Paper 2008.

133 Literally: Foundations of the state politics of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for 2020 and beyond.

134 RIA 2010.

“While we are taking care of a steady and balanced development of the Russian north, we are working to strengthen our ties with our neighbours in our common arctic home. And we think that preserving the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation is of the utmost importance. It is our conviction that the Arctic area should serve as a platform for uniting forces for *genuine partnership* in the economy, security, science, education and the preservation of the north’s cultural heritage.”<sup>135</sup>

Further in the same forum Putin saw, that there is a *need for consensus* on several issues concerning the Arctic and thus the countries that have substantial experience in the Arctic have *a special responsibility*. Putin represented the Arctic and its natural resources subject to competing and growing “geo-political interest”, but at the same time emphasized UN’s role and said that all claims should be done according to international law. Just after the claims on continental shelf and the explorations in 2007-2008, Putin’s appearance in the Arctic forum was surprisingly conflict-averse. Further it emphasized not just cooperation, but need for consensus, mutual interests and the interdependence that the harsh arctic conditions create to all the inhabitants of the north<sup>136</sup>.

One of the most trust-building actions in the cooperative discourse was in 2010, when Russia and Norway signed a treaty that ended the 40-year old dispute over areas in the Barents Sea. Indeed, when signing the treaty, President Medvedev said that “In the Arctic, it is possible to move on without NATO.”<sup>137</sup> Therefore the cooperation discourse in the north for Russia – is applicable as long as it does not mean another military block like NATO. Most directly NATO’s role in Russian geopolitical thinking was put out in the 2010 Military Doctrine, which aligned; “main external threats of war comes from NATO’s expansion east to Russia’s borders<sup>138</sup>” Interestingly, in the Military Doctrine one can find no reference to the Arctic. The region was not listed as a possible source for a conflict or as a direction of importance in military sphere. Thus, when it comes to the northern areas, cooperation is more desirable than confrontation, even in the documents that survey the possible threats for the Russian Federation.

### **5.1.3. Economic Motivators**

Russian Arctic Strategy (2010) offered some 170 pages of detailed, regional and sectoral development plans for the ‘Arctic zone’ of the Russian Federation. The development plans of the Paper included chapter of the representation of the economic importance of the Arctic zone. Ac-

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135 Putin 2010.

136 See the quote in the beginning of this sub chapter.

137 Ogonyok 2010b.

138 Military Doctrine 2010.

According to the strategy, arctic economy should be changed from current post-Soviet economy to a modern, innovation-based economy. This is achievable through the many “megaprojects” and innovations that are being planned to the arctic region. Further the paper emphasized the role of cooperation in various fields due to the *strategic partnership* with other arctic states. Ultimately the chapter that covered the theme of national security of Russia Federation in the Arctic was available only to Russian officials. The following sentence highlights the multiple viewpoints that this strategy paper takes into account when addressing the situation and the motivations for the developmental goals in the Russian arctic:

“The solutions for challenges in the Arctic zone that take into consideration the peculiarities of the region will lead to increasing competitiveness in the north and in the rest of the country. Further goods and services produced in the Arctic zone serve not just regional, but also sub-regional and global markets, and enhance the quality of life and the welfare of the population in the region. The policy helps in production of a significant socio-economic change and leads the Arctic areas to the path of a sustainable growth, to the preservation of traditions (...) Moreover the policy ensures defence and security in all spheres of life and strengthens the strategic partnerships with other Arctic states. It also intensifies international cooperation with countries that study development and exploitation of the Arctic areas and resources, ensuring the optimal position for Russia in the macro-regional division of labour and furthermore in maintaining the political stability and in strengthening the international authority of the Russian Federation.<sup>139</sup>”

The development paper sees places for development in its social and environmental scenes but also in economic situation. The cooperation is brought in the field of resource extraction, which relates to the fact that for fully exploitation of the Arctic resources Russia still needs some development and know-how. Overall, the cooperative discourse is very tightly linked to the energy extraction in the far north. Under the Russian law only Gazprom and Rosneft can carry out production activity on the county’s continental shelf, but they have shown very little interest in exploring the Eastern Siberian and Chukotka seas<sup>140</sup>. The president of Rosneft has shown and estimated costs that have given the officials an honest idea of the tremendous price tag that exploring the far north would cost<sup>141</sup>. Because the resources are not easily accessible, there has to be more cooperation in the future. At the moment it seems that the Russian actors are not taking the risks by themselves, moreover the majority of the know-how has to be imported. The money was not a problem for the

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139 Arctic Strategy 2010, 6-7.

140 Situation with hand-picked oil companies might change in the future.

141 Kommersant 2008.

Russian companies and investment plans in the late 90's, but during the financial crisis of the recent years even the state companies rescheduled or cancelled the exploration activities. However, the political debates over the Arctic energy resources continue. If I had taken more material under examination on the economic aspects, such as the Gazprom and Rosneft strategies and releases, the representation of the economic interest of the cooperation discourse would have been even stronger.

In any case, Russia has clearly recognised that technological and financial help is needed to get the Arctic energy projects running. There are several possible substitutes for the Siberian fields in the Arctic, such as the fields on the Yamal Peninsula and offshore fields like the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea. Most of these potential fields are located far from existing infrastructure and are in environments where it is more difficult to operate than in the western Siberian fields. Consequently, the production costs are likely to be even higher in the future, which increases the need for investment and decreases the will to start exploiting. Foreign know-how and finance are required for the development of the Russian gas industry. In August 2011 some hints about the growing activities in the north were published; Rosneft and American ExxonMobil signed a contract on the exploration of the Arctic energy resources. They are developing one of the world's largest gas fields, Shtokman, 600 kilometres northeast of the city of Murmansk.<sup>142</sup> Gazprom is also planning corresponding projects in the Yamal peninsula.<sup>143</sup>

It seems that the Russia Arctic Strategy emphasizes every other aspect of the Arctic zone, except the ownership over the natural resources. The paper further reiterates the strategic importance by stating that:

“The arctic zone serves as a *strategic resource base* for the Russian Federation and *provides the solution* of socio-economic development challenges of the country. The arctic zone produces more than 80% of Russian gas and is a very important region for the mining industry.<sup>144</sup>”

The current situation that energy prices are staying relatively high, might affect the ability and will for Russian actors to carry out the development goals set in the strategy. As it admits, the energy revenues coming from the Arctic areas have provided so far the solution for country's socio-economic problems.

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142 RIA 2011b.

143 Kommersant 2010a..

144 Arctic Development Paper 2010,9.

To conclude, Russian geopolitical thinking includes a cooperative discourse in reference to the Arctic. This discourse constructs the Arctic as a potential source for cooperative actions, mainly concerning the economical and ecological spheres of the state policies. Accordingly this discourse depicts Russia as a main actor in the Arctic region, whose interest is to have functioning relations with other actors that tackle same type of challenges. Definitely the cooperation is mainly needed to secure the viability of the area and the effective utilization of the potential sources of economic gains. Main terms to characterize the cooperative discourse are such as *interdependence*, *mutual interest and consensus*, but also since the economic interest; *exploitation* and *utilization*. The international forums on the Arctic issues on their part maintain the cooperative discourse and strengthen it through the common projects and vivid interaction in the low-level cooperation and in political arenas. These cooperative forums remain high in interests even after 20 years since the Soviet break-up. Anyhow, Russia has not adopted a role of an active agenda setter in these forums; instead it is a participant and follows the discussions. Russian representatives to these international forums have abstemiously seem to be avoiding the issues that may seem to be of greater (strategic) importance, such as security, foreign policy, economic issues<sup>145</sup>. Russian geographic society<sup>146</sup> has even started its own new international forum in Russia, first one with title of “Arctic - territory for dialogue” gained much publicity in Russia, mainly in its ecological openings. Interestingly, there are also signs that environmental problems are recently being reclassified as strategic and thus less open. It can refer to the fact that e.g. the large nuclear waste problem in the Arctic sea is from military-specified origin and situated close to military bases in the north. This might lead to an evident drawback for Arctic cooperation, since environmental field maintained much of this cooperation after the first enthusiasm of 1990’s dissipated. Russia’s interest to negotiate in multilateral forums in general has not too often involved politically problematic issues<sup>147</sup>. Thus, it will be interesting to see in which forum and in what manner the future questions of Arctic space will be discussed.

## **5.2. Discourse on Sovereign Rights of the Russian Federation**

Historically the question of Russia’s ‘ownership’ over the Arctic was irrelevant – during the Soviet period the north was a closed, nationalized space. A huge sector covering almost one-third of the Arctic Ocean was designated to Soviet Union as its territorial waters. Also the indige-

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145 Rowe 2009, 6.

146 The Chairman of the Board of Trustees is Prime Minister Putin.

147 E.g. Rowe 2009.

nous people of the north and northern resources played an important part in the planned economy, According to Baev<sup>148</sup>, the emphasis during the Soviet times in the north positioned the Arctic as a firm factor both in the national identity and conceptions of security and sovereignty. Simultaneously it resulted in Russia inheriting from the Soviet Union an overpopulated north, not very adoptable to the ideas of market economy. The discourse of Russia's sovereign rights in the Arctic areas became vivid after the geopolitical situation changed rapidly after the end of the Cold War. But the historic motivation is not the only representation – the discourse of sovereign rights of the Russian Federation is more nuanced than it at first might seem.

### 5.2.1. Geographic Belongingness

Russia's sovereign rights discourse relates to the country's ability to work in the Arctic conditions. In April 2000, only an o month after President Putin entered the office, he went on a nuclear submarine called 'Russia' for a meeting on the future prospects of the development of the northern seas. Already then Putin indicated the need for urgent rebuilding of country's ice-breaking capacity to provide Russia's *return* to the Arctic waters. A couple of months later in August, arctic areas gained more attention, when a nuclear-powered submarine Kursk sank. The first and probably the last image mistake for Putin were, when during the tragic events in the Kursk he was having vacation in Sochi. Later Putin promised to reinvigorate the Navy and increase the military spending.<sup>149</sup>

As early as in 2001, a year after the Kursk disaster President Putin made clear in his speech in Severodvinsk that the Navy of today's Russia is not just to secure the borders of the country, but also to ensure the preservation of natural resources. "Thanks to the fleet, *we can use* the vast natural resources, which are located in the seabed."<sup>150</sup>

Partly due to the tragic events in Kursk Russia published the Maritime doctrine in 2001. The doctrine aligned so-called *maritime activities*, which were in the field of research, development and the further *use of the oceans*. These maritime activities were put out in the interest of Russia's security, sustainable economic and social development<sup>151</sup>. In this way the usage of the phrase *use (or exploit) oceans* also refers to sovereign rights over the high north. In the beginning of the Doctrine is written, that the essence of the Russian national maritime policy is to achieve Rus-

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148 2009,3.

149 BBC 2000.

150 Putin 2001.

151 MD 2001,1.

sia's *national interest*, not just in its territorial waters and inland marine waters, but also in its continental shelf and on the high seas<sup>152</sup>. The last two are the ones that have been under a debate and still remain unsolved. The doctrine further introduces the *national interest* of the Russian Federation in the Oceans, which are

- Inviolability of the sovereignty of the country in maritime waters as well as in the airspace above them, on the floor and subsoil;
- Sovereign rights and conservation of natural resources, carried out in the exclusive economic zone and in the continental shelf of the Russian Federation;
- The freedom of the high seas; including freedom of navigation, operation, fisheries, research, freedom to lay submarines and pipelines.

The fact that the continental shelf is emphasized is another way of stating that the areas that Russia claims are part of its policy. In the objectives it is clearly listed that Russia pursues for “*realization and protection* of sovereign rights over the continental shelf of the Russian Federation for exploration and exploitation of its resources”.<sup>153</sup> Hence, according to the Maritime Doctrine the continental shelf would be kept as a *strategic reserve*. It argues the Navy to be one of the tools for the foreign policy of Russia and it is designed to protect the interests of the country by military methods, the *maintenance of military-political stability* in the adjacent seas, military security with marine and ocean areas.<sup>154</sup>

The Doctrine contains a representation of Russia as a historical and geographical sea power, which has sovereignty to act as a global actor, which has natural access to three oceans and a long history of naval activities and research<sup>155</sup>. Even when the Doctrine did not offer that much of a new view on the Arctic areas as such, it brought up a tendency or a demand for more widely organized and motivated utilization of the naval areas. It means all the maritime activities, economical together with military to be put under development at the same time and under the same command. To achieve this goal a new instrument, a Maritime Council, was set up to pursue for an overall coordination of maritime activities in its tasks as well as the supervision of the execution of the maritime doctrine. In this way also the soviet concept of ‘mastering the north’ could have been seen as brought back to the discourse.

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152 MD 2001,2.

153 MD 2001,2-3.

154 MD MD 2001,8-9.

155 MD 2001.



As of 2001 Russia really kicked speed to the political debate over the Arctic space with its submission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the most influential regime for maritime borders and for solving the disputes, but even this agreement applies only partially to the Arctic basin<sup>156</sup>. The submission proposed to move the outer limits of Russia's continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly there was an immediate response by other littoral states of the Arctic Ocean and especially USA reacted to Russia's claim to have Lomonosov Bridge, which is located in the seabed of Arctic Ocean and reaches up to the North Pole. An international recognition of this claim would have increased the exclusive economic zone of Russia by 1, 2 million square kilometres<sup>158</sup>. Thus, Russia's claim was almost the size of the Soviet territorial waters. To this claim United Nations demanded more evidence, but it was obvious that the Russian discourse on ownership of the region grew stronger.

Russia presented a new claim in August 2007 and gained much publicity with an expedition made by two mini submarines, led by a famous scientist, and later the special representative of the President in the Arctic, Artur Chilingarov. They planted a titan-made flag on the sea bed in the North Pole. Thus they proved Russia's ability to act in the north and also started the international media debate, if the Arctic was becoming an area for a race for the natural resources and territorial claims. The act was seen as a symbolical attempt to legitimize the territorial claim sent to the UN earlier. The expedition was acknowledged by the political leaders in Russia as a scientific episode and they emphasized that the disputes should be solved in an appropriate international setting. Putin declared shortly after Chilingarov's 2007 expedition this "cocksure" bid to the UN was coming, but no new bids were sent. The maps sent by Moscow have said to be too unclear, the detailed maps collected by Chilingarov stay secret.<sup>159</sup> One of the challenges Russia is facing, is that the UN preferably would make decision, if there would be scientific evidence on the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges. But the country lack in the technology, by which rock samples and other type of researchable objects could be collected. According to the specialist, geophysical and seismological

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156 Under international law, the Arctic five countries have 200-mile exclusive economic zone in the Arctic. Moreover under the UNCLOS (United Convention on the Law of the Sea) a country can show its continental shelf beyond this limit and thus claim more of the ocean floor.

157 UN 2009.

158 Baev 2010,7.

159 Baev 2010.28.

methods do not substitute the deep sea drilling<sup>160</sup>. For now it seems that to get the samples Russia would need international cooperation, which it is more than hesitant to do in the issues concerning the continental shelf.

### 5.2.2. Sovereign Rights and Possibility for a Confrontation

According to the Wikileaks material, Admiral Vladimir Vysotsky has assessed the situation in the North in August 2008 in the following way:

“While in the Arctic there is peace and stability, however, one cannot exclude that in the future there will be a *redistribution of power*, up to armed intervention.<sup>161</sup>”

Because of the strategic importance of the Arctic, the state maintains a certain level of control over the operations in the area. In July 2008, President Medvedev signed a law on Arctic resources, according to which the research for possible energy resources from the continental shelf will be allowed only to the companies picked by the government. In other words, the government is empowered to choose companies to develop resource extraction on the continental shelf. Medvedev commented on the law by saying “The continental shelf is our *national heritage*”, which was interpreted as indicating that the development of the Arctic will be left to Russian state-led companies. When further asked about the cancellation of auctions, Medvedev said “This was done consciously to ensure *rational use of this national wealth*”<sup>162</sup>.

As it says in the Russian Arctic Paper (2008), Russia needs to secure its borders in the Arctic to “exercise on this basis Russia’s competitive advantage in the production and transport of energy resources<sup>163</sup>.” Further the paper stated that there is a need for “establishing a Russian Federation Armed Forces group of conventional and other forces, military formations, and bodies (above all border guard forces) in the Russian Federation’s Arctic zone, capable of *guaranteeing military security in various military-political situations*”. Moreover the fact that the Security Council of the Russian Federation released the arctic paper reveals that Russia’s main focus was in the Arctic is military development rather than tackling the socio-economic questions in the first hand. Overall, the sovereignty discourse emphasized the military presence to ensure the national interest.

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160 This was stated by the director of the Russian Academy of Sciences Oceanography Institute. NG 2009a.

161 Greenpeace 2009.

162 Harding 2009, TOR 2009.

163 Arctic Paper 2008.

Quite soon the situation was clarified in the media that the bottom line in the strategy paper was to ensure more border guards to the Arctic, not a quest to have it militarized.

The Arctic Paper points out that “Russia will create by 2020 a new group of forces to protect its *political and economic interests* in the Arctic.” To this Admiral V. Popov, the former commander of the Northern Fleet clarified that “That is not about the creation of a new strike force. The military component will be optimized to accomplish new tasks. [Referring to arctic group of forces] The main focus will be on tasks performed by border guards.”<sup>164</sup>

After that the international community might have had expectation that Putin would have continued and strengthened the new type of more assertive discourse on sovereign rights, it could have continued from his (often interpreted as aggressive) Munich Security Conference speech<sup>165</sup> and the sudden war in the summer of 2008 against Georgia. The National Security Strategy (2009) emphasized the sovereignty discourse by stating that Russia managed to overcome the political, social and economic crisis of the 1990’s and now it has a *restored possibility to protect its national interests*. Further the strategy sees the transition from bloc politics to the multilateral diplomacy and resource potential of Russia and its pragmatic policy *expand opportunities of the Russian Federation to strengthen its influence on the world stage*.<sup>166</sup> The strategy’s representation of the energy resources is central; they are depicted as more and more crucial and strategically important in the future. In this discourse further the possible confrontation in the Arctic areas is noted. It could be said that Russia went in its Security Strategy far beyond usual diplomatic discourse over the resources with stating that “we cannot rule out the use of force to resolve problems that arise in the *competitive battle for resources*.”<sup>167</sup>

### **5.2.3. Strategic resources**

Soon after the financial crisis hit on the Russian budget it also forced the country to look for new investors in its energy complex and in the Arctic. The law signed in 2008 by Mr. Putin limiting foreign investment in strategic sectors including energy seemed to be inappropriate only a year after. In 2009 Natural Resources Minister Y. Trutnev said that investment legislation prevents the development of natural resource investigations, because Gazprom and Rosneft are investing too

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164 RIA 2009.

165 Which has often be said to have reflections from the Cold War rhetorics.

166 Security Strategy (SS) 2009.

167 SS 2009.

little. Further Putin asked for new investors with the cooperative manner: “we are looking for new partnerships and want you to feel that you are part of our team.”<sup>168</sup> Very little interest was appointed at that time towards the new Arctic investigations, maybe due to the financial crisis, but also the lessons learnt from cooperation in the Russia’s Far East in Sakhalin.

The content of the discourse on sovereign rights has been in a flux towards the end of the research period; even the officers have adopted some parts of the discourse. Interestingly, the tasks of the naval forces could have been argued to have been changing; wider spectrums of duties have been introduced, amongst them assisting the energy technology and infrastructure. In 2009 deputy chief of staff of the Russian Navy, vice admiral O. Burtsev stated: "It cannot stay away from this issue and Russia, for which the Arctic region is not only hydrocarbons, but an *area of combat training of submarine crews*." He noted that the Russian submariners have extensive experience diving under the ice. Thus, the *potential* of Russia as an Arctic actor was again represented.<sup>169</sup>

Russia has throughout the history been emphasizing the bilateral relations over the intergovernmental arenas and thus also the Security Strategy (2009) states that the transition in world politics from bloc politics to multilateral diplomacy might strengthen Russia's influence. The paper further represented the *resource potential* that would strategically guarantee Russia's influence.<sup>170</sup>

#### **5.2.4. Sovereign rights and remilitarization of the Arctic**

A metaphor of the *reviving naval power* of the Russian Federation could be the titan-made flag that was placed to the sea bottom underneath the North Pole in 2007<sup>171</sup>. The two vessels were not operating in high sea areas, which are rich in natural resources, instead their expedition went to areas where foreign ships might be able to move freely and possibly pose a threat to Russia’s security. Moreover in August 2007 a Russian researcher, Sergei Balyasnikov from the Russian Arctic and Antarctic Institute stated: “It's a very important move for Russia to demonstrate its *potential in the Arctic*... It's like putting a flag on the Moon”<sup>172</sup>. Russia's manoeuvre to claim the Arctic areas around it to own possession reflected reaction from other Arctic countries condemning

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168 Ekspert-Ural 2009. More on cooperative discourse in Chapter 5,1.

169 RIA 2009b.

170 SS 2009.

171 BBC 2007.

172 Ibid.

such allegedly archaic practices<sup>173</sup>. Hence, in the May 2010 Prime Minister Putin told members of the Russian Geographic Society, that:

“There has been much ado around the Arctic region. You know how the [Russian] flag was erected [on the seabed] and how negatively our neighbours reacted to this. Nobody has ever stopped them from erecting their own flags. Let them do it. But we work under the rules established by the United Nations and in line with international maritime laws.<sup>174</sup>”

The quote shows, how the Russian *potential* is represented; something that is important to Russia, but simultaneously not meant to be an assertive action to claim the Arctic. Russia wants to emphasize the international law in problem solving.

Thereafter in 2009 the National Security Document represented the situation in the north, that “in competition for resources, it cannot be ruled out that military force could be used for resolving emerging problems<sup>175</sup>”. Further it had a message that “the existing balance of forces near the borders of the Russian Federation and its allies can be violated”. President Medvedev talked about the security threats arising from global climate change; in this speech he saw the situation with other countries in the Arctic region becoming more and more active in the High North. The other actors were perceived attempting to limit Russia’s access to explore and develop its Arctic energy deposits, was “inadmissible from legal point of view and unfair in terms of Russia’s geographical location and very history.”<sup>176</sup> At the same time, interestingly in the Military Doctrine of Russian Federation (2010), one can find no reference of threat from the Arctic.

Concerning the assertive discourse of Russia's ownership over the Arctic areas, it is good to note that already the Maritime Doctrine represented a particular importance of *free access* to the Atlantic. Another crucial role was played by the Northern Sea Route. Although the reference is made to the military means; there were actually no requests or efforts by neither the Defence Ministry nor the government to beef up the presence. Consequently this situation somewhat changed in the spring of 2011, when Putin declared new types of Arctic brigades will be established in the Russian Arctic. The Arctic brigades according to the chief editor of the journal “Russia in Global Affairs” were probably never to be used. “Russia only expresses the seriousness of its

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173 Ingram & Dittmer & Dodds & Moisio 2009.

174 RIA 2010.

175 National Security Document 2009.

176 Medvedev 2010.

claims. Two brigades are only a *symbol of this intention*.” Furthermore he refers to the brigades as *hypothetical*.<sup>177</sup>

The Russia had a plan that it would claim the territory lying beyond its current economic zone by the end of 2010 and thus establish its outer borders further in the Arctic by 2015<sup>178</sup>. The ongoing discourse and the actual claims suggest that the sovereignty and the borders in the Russian north are actually very important to the country. In June 2011 Prime Minister Putin said to the ruling United Russia party meeting, that

“We are open for a dialogue with our foreign partners and with all our neighbours in the Arctic region, but of course, as far as our own *geopolitical interests* are concerned, we shall be protecting them firmly and consistently<sup>179</sup>”

Further during the summer of 2011, Russia conducted more explorations to collect evidence on the continental shelf (More on p.44). Admiral Vysotsky was asked in reference to the growing importance of the Arctic, what are the tasks for the naval forces. He answered:

“Currently in the Arctic areas Russia is facing a wide range of challenges and threats that can adversely affect the *economic interests* of our country. Russian policy towards the Arctic is to *enhance peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation*. The task of ensuring the *economic activity* of Russia in the sea off the agenda has not been removed. The situation requires developing and upgrades the combat potential of the Pacific and Northern Fleets. In general, the Defence ministry believes that the implementation of targeted bases of state policy in the Arctic in 2020 and beyond will enhance Russia's status as a *leading arctic power, the strengthening of its security and sustained economic development*.<sup>180</sup>”

So the discourse of the naval force had turned to emphasize the peaceful cooperation and the important economic activities in the Arctic. The answer to the suspicions that the establishment of the arctic brigades faces, Vysotsky explained the challenges the northern areas of Russia are facing, and how they could be solved:

“You already know that the decision to create two brigades to *protect the interests of Russia* in the Arctic. In creating these teams we take into account the experience of the

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177 NG 2011.

178 Maritime Doctrine 2001,7.

179 Moscow Times 2011.

180 RIA 2011a.

armed forces of Finland, Norway and Sweden, where such compounds exist long ago.<sup>181</sup>”

He added that the interest in the Arctic is increasing; it is not only Russia, but also other countries, outside the traditional thought of “Arctic actors”, who are showing their interest. According to him, the actions of these countries have a systematic, coalition nature. Amongst them, Vysotsky said that China, Japan and Korea and other (not so) “well-known Arctic countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand have showed interest. And this might only be the beginning<sup>182</sup>.”

In the sovereign rights discourse the representations of *national interest* and *national security* are important. *National Security* is explained in the Arctic paper as:

“state of protection individuals, society and state from internal and external threats and enforcing constitutional rights, freedom, decent quality and standard of living of citizens; sovereignty, territorial integrity and sustainable development, defence and security of the state<sup>183</sup>”

These factors are presented in many policy papers, as well as in speeches as a metaphor for Russia’s growing geopolitical interest on the Arctic. Moreover the national interest has been the core term when talking about military presence in the Arctic. Overall assessment of Russia’s military capacity with the focus in the European North, the sovereignty discourse could be at times been interpreted as assertive and some of the actions as remilitarization of the Arctic. Nevertheless, the notable weaknesses in Russia’s strategic posture in the north make it senseless to consider re-launching a military brinkmanship to the North. To add to this Moscow would hardly be able to impress its potential competitors. In reference to the assertive policies, the resumption of Russia’s arctic military activity does actually pose a threat of accidents but raises safety concerns. Overall, the question of the discourse on Russia’s sovereign rights is not about international security cooperation or maritime safety, but more of a showcase of Russia military heroics.

### **5.3. Discourse on modernization**

*“If St. Petersburg is Russia’s window to Europe then Murmansk is the gateway to the world. Ambitious projects to have a corridor from Europe to North America and Pacific would be taken more seriously in developed surroundings.”<sup>184</sup>*

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181 RIA 2011a.

182 Rossiiskaya Gazeta 2011.

183 Arctic Strategy 2010,8.

184 Itogi 2007.

Especially during President Medvedev's *modernization* has been high in the political discourse. He has pursued for more innovative and technology-friendly policies in Russia. The modernization discourse has been his key proposition for overcoming financial crisis as well as the country's *dependency on petro revenues*. The discourse of modernization is penetrating many specific areas of political life in Russia, also the Arctic. The three representations in this discourse are the modernization of the maritime infrastructure and the fleet, economic modernization and the social and innovative modernization. An interesting point in the modernization discourse in reference to the Arctic is that already the Maritime Doctrine stated in 2001, that the principle of the fleet should be changed and there should be development for the unification of the infrastructure in relevance to the military and to the country's economic needs<sup>185</sup>. This was also the question a couple of years later, when the Baltic Fleet was assigned to secure the building process of the Nord Stream pipeline and secure the economic interests of the Russian Federation.

### **5.3.1. Modernization of the Fleet and the Infrastructure**

The logic behind the argumentation is that after the ice-free months in the north are getting longer, Russia's own potential to act in the north should be guaranteed. At the moment Russia has more than a thousand ships with a total of deadweight of around 15 million tonnes. However, more than 60 percent of this tonnage is transported under foreign flags. Russia's own Navy provides only four percent of their foreign shipping. The ruling United Russia party activated on marital issues on 2006, when it decided to start a project called "St. Petersburg - the Sea Capital of Russia" A special representative of the President of the Russian Federation in international co-operation in the Arctic and the Antarctic Chilingarov (Also on p.46), was appointed as the coordinator of the project .<sup>186</sup> Prime Minister Putin said in St. Petersburg in 2009 that "We need an icebreaker fleet, we need these kinds of ships, in the Arctic, and here, in the Baltic, to serve the growing volume of shipping<sup>187</sup>," but the fact is that the shipping is not growing (at least yet) and most of the ships are foreign. Furthermore Russia would in this sense need to develop its innovative sector and investment policies. Paradoxically, even the Chilingarov's expedition in 2007 was sponsored partly by foreign investors<sup>188</sup>. Moreover it is not just the fleet, but also the infrastructure

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185 MD 2001,4.

186 He is also "an outstanding Russian oceanologist, Hero of the Soviet Union and Hero of the Russian Federation, a Doctor of Geographic Sciences, a Corresponding Member of Russian Academy of Science." Global Port 2011.

187 Trenin 2010, 18.

188 Trenin 2010,18.



is seen as a target for modernization plans; Vladimir Mihailitsenko, a captain of the Northern Fleet has argument:

“Russian ports in the Arctic are in terrible condition. From all of the key ports in the Northern Sea Route from the Kara Strait to the Bering Strait, Anadyr is the most modern - thanks to the ex-governor Abramovich. Even Dudinka, owned by Norilsk Nickel desperately needs modernization.”<sup>189</sup>

Also other ports in the Russian north are owned by companies that work on basis of business and profit, not like during the Soviet times, when there was also a social responsibility to keep workplaces in the city. Obviously after the Soviet disintegration many towns in the periphery have suffered from losses in the infrastructure, industry and investments. Moreover the modernization refers also to the wider global possibilities. Mihailitsenko sees opportunities in Asia:

“In general there are not enough ports in the northern regions (...) Lena River Shipping Company, which manages the port in Yakutia, has been waiting since 2006 for the completion of the railway to Yakutsk. When it is finally built, the port will have new customers and maybe even interest to these transport facilities from China will materialize.”

Overall, the discourse on modernization is not just on the highest state-level, but in the minds of people. It is represented as something hopeful and definitely needed. Admiral Vladimir Kuryedov, who was the head of the Naval Forces from 1997-2005 said in 2005 after another deadly accident that the Russian Navy has *stepped on a rake*. This same officer asked for a resign of his post after the Kursk disaster, but Putin did not allow him to. In these two cases the accusations were pointed at the commanders of the Northern Fleet. Admiral Masorin, who lead the Navy from 2005-2007 was famous for his loud statements about large-scale plans to modernize the fleet. For example in June 2007 he promised that there would be six new aircraft carriers and a notable number of new ships, raising the fleet to 300 battleships.<sup>190</sup> He was not responsible for this type of projects and was sacked shortly after.

Overall, the problem with the modernization discourse seems to be, that it does not apply to the real life. The Arctic modernization projects seem to be hard to motivate to the people. Secondly, large share of the money allocated to the state-run mega projects will slip to someone's pocket, not to the actual project. Thus, a need for more supervision over the actors in the north is

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189 Ogonyok 2010a.

190 Kommersant 2005.

needed. It should be questioned; has the Maritime Strategy or the Arctic Strategy actually helped in modernization of the North, or do they just maintain the discourse?

In 2008 president Medvedev stressed that the financial crisis should not effect on the modernization of the Russian Armed Forces, “*our country has now power and means to actualize the plans* – not like in the 90’s, when we can actually say that there was a failure of upgrading the armed forces and naval forces as part of it.”<sup>191</sup> Russian Arctic Strategy Paper (2008) underlined the resource base and Arctic shipping routes as Russia’s future for economic development and modernization.

In president Medvedev’s speech in 2009, given in the Sevmash shipyard about the future prospects of the Russian underwater naval forces, the main points were that the problems have remained the same, but the problem of today is, that not all the production capacity is used as is should be. In Medvedev’s opinion the emphasis should be put on creating *competitive modern technology*, which would also meet the quality requirements of foreign countries<sup>192</sup>. Further the President noted in 2010 in a Security Council meeting, that it is important to establish new financial and institutional mechanisms and incentives for companies to modernize their technology, particularly in the Arctic areas, which are absolutely crucial for studying climate change<sup>193</sup>.

Lately Putin has talked more about humane prospects of the Arctic, in the 2010 Arctic forum he emphasized; “there is a need to create top-quality, comfortable living conditions for local people and pursuit for a frugal attitude towards the indigenous people of the High North”<sup>194</sup>.

It is not very common for Putin to represent the modernization discourse, but he often involves other types of words to emphasize, that Russia needs development and innovation. At the same speech he proposed, that there should be an active exchange of ideas, innovations and practical experience in the Arctic areas.<sup>195</sup> Thus, it can be noted that when the investments and the modernization of the infrastructure of the north is sometimes hard to motivate, the feature of soft values will step into the discourse. No-one is against of guaranteeing better living conditions for the people, but many might not agree on investments to an obscure region as Arctic.

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191 Arctic Paper 2008.

192 Medvedev 2009.

193 Medvedev 2010.

194 Putin 2010.

195 Ibid.

Recently Russian governmental actors have discovered that many of the Russian vessels only existed on paper and actually many of the vessels had been leased to foreign companies with long contracts. This affected the developing plans and expeditions in the North, part of which then has been committed with the help of Norwegian and Canadian actors'.<sup>196</sup> One has to remember, that when talking about quantity, even in the Soviet times, when the financing of the Navy was guaranteed, not all the ships of the Russian Navy were in battle condition simultaneously. It has been estimated, that the amount was about 10-15%, when for example in the USA half of the ships are always out of the bases. Russian scientists have recently gained much more funding on the Arctic issues, even a new university has been set up in Arkhangelsk, after Putin's decree in 2010<sup>197</sup>. There has been much trust to the Russian scientific community to help to prove the political claims and state of affairs regarding to the continental shelf in the Arctic.

In the summer of 2011 a new ice-breaker called "St. Petersburg" was put into operation. Another called "Moscow" is also in progress. It was estimated that Russian shipbuilding industry and orders to also foreign shipyards are in rapid growth. Russia's political will to invest heavily on its icebreaker fleet means not only new expeditions are more capacity in the Arctic, but more capacity for development of its shipbuilding industry and infrastructure of the north. Invest in the icebreaking fleet may "be paid back sooner than we think", because the Arctic shelf can thus be explored<sup>198</sup>.

### **5.3.2. Social, Innovative and Secure Modernization**

The Arctic strategy (2010) is a paper concentrating on modernization, since the purpose of this strategy is to pursue for

*"innovative modernization of the economy and sustainable growth to ensure the national security in the waters and land-based regions, as well as individual safety and security of the population, further to strengthen the role and place of the Arctic region in the economy of the Russian Federation."*<sup>199</sup>

The analyzed goals in the Arctic Strategy were to be achieved with an eight-step programme; they all related to the development of scientific knowledge, to modernization of the

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196 RBK 2008.

197 Barents Observer 2010.

198 NG 2009b.

199 Arctic Development Paper 2010,14.

governance and to investments into human capital. Moreover the Strategy also listed other points for further development; the legal system, sharing the foreign and local know-how and the modification of the economy in the north. Thus, all of the development goals in the Strategy contributed to the modernization discourse. Obviously the Arctic Strategy was expressly for the *development* of the Arctic region – not for example stabilizing or peacefulness of this area. The representation of the ‘development’ in the modernization discourse is interesting; it refers to something neutral and positive, whereas stabilizing might refer to an unstable situation at the moment. Furthermore modernization is thought to strongly present President Medvedev’s policies, so this type of naming is probably the most neutral way.

In the summer of 2011 commander-in-chief of the Russian Fleet, admiral Vysotsky was asked about the consequences of the Maritime Doctrine, which was being adopted ten years ago. The answer of the highest naval officer in Russia was interesting. Seemed like the *national interest* of the Russia had become include much larger section of the state policy, than before. Also the modernization discourse was presented, but not as modernization of the Navy, but as *sustainable economic development*:

“Obviously, the naval activity should be sufficient for *providing military security*, but also to endorse *sustainable economic development*. Russia has a wide range of national interests in military, economic, international, information, border, ecological and other spheres, the protection of which is connected with the Naval forces in the world ocean.<sup>200</sup>”

Certainly the reasoning has moved from the ‘modernization of the Navy’ discourse closer to the current message of the political leaders as well, that the tasks of the Navy are not just (traditional) military, moreover the tasks are more and more interlinked with a *wider spectrum of national interest*. The discourse has turned to support the wider understanding security. Vysotsky continued:

“Above all, (the interest is in) ensuring a safe access to the Russian resources and to the oceans, further the development and management of natural resources for *socio-economic development* is important, as well as preventing a domination of any state or military-political blocs. The latter is of great importance to the national interests of Russia, especially in the surrounding seas.<sup>201</sup>”

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200 RIA 2011a.

201 RIA 2011a.

Admiral Vysotsky admitted in July 2011 that Arctic is growingly important to Russia, since "Right now a broad spectrum of challenges and threats is being concentrated in the Arctic." He reiterated that NATO might be a source of a tension because the alliance has "marked the Arctic as a zone of its own interests."<sup>202</sup>

To sum up, modernization discourse contains the representations of the *retrieval of the developed, innovative and socially equal north, which can thus produce well-being*. Moreover it includes a prospect of rebuilding not just the armed forces and naval fleet in the north, but also the cargo potential and the infrastructure. The innovations and new equipments would thereby used for economic purposes in the high north and for higher level of utilization of the energy resources and logistic possibilities. As a whole the socio-economic and humane side of the modernization discourse has grown in importance towards the end of the research period. This aspect was specially acknowledged in the latest policy document, the Arctic Strategy.

## 6. Discussion

The Russian geopolitical thinking might at first seem to be following the economic interest of the country, but in deeper look it is maintaining the *national interest* and the pursue for restoring the great power status of Russia. Moreover, the Arctic policy of Russian Federation is much more varied than it might seem at first sight. According to the research material, characteristic to the geopolitical thinking of the Russian Federation in the arctic areas is a balancing situation between on the one hand the sovereign rights and the traditional security threats, and on the other hand the cooperation with other Arctic states in reference to the development and to the economic issues in the north. Overall, the Russian geopolitical thinking also contains elements of the wider security conception, with guarantying the economic interest and stability of the area. According to this research material, there was three discourses traced; *discourse on cooperation, on Russia's sovereign rights* and *on modernization*.

All the discourses link together; it is important that the cooperative discourse is maintained to achieve the economic goals, which are also closely linked to the discourse on moderniza-

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202 Time 2011.

tion. Again, an important aspect in the Russian geopolitical thinking is to maintain and secure the *national interest and sovereignty* of the country. *National interest* usually refers to the natural resources and to the discourse on sovereign rights of Russia (Chapter 5.2). According to the sovereignty discourse, the aim is to have a sovereign power over the Arctic regions and moreover to maximize the ownership of the possible resources in the region. Simultaneously the sovereignty discourse might also lead to the country's isolation from the existing cooperation in the area. By comparison, Moscow might assume that the 'position of strength' leads to a more flexible situation in the cooperation and in the possible confrontation in the Arctic. Instead it is, for its part, enhancing the atmosphere of unreliability and mistrust. The Russian geopolitical thinking on the Arctic has elements of a global great power discourse, but emphatically the aim is to have the status as an *Arctic great power*.

### **6.1. Russian Geopolitical Thinking on the Arctic**

According to John Agnew's concepts of modern geopolitical imagination, Russia sees the Arctic as *natural* and *sovereign* part of the country. Russian geopolitical thinking in the north relates closely to the '*geopolitical*' and '*national*' interests of the country. They are used almost interchangeably.

Consequently the concept of '*strategic importance*' is important in the geopolitical thinking; it refers to the significance of the geographical area as such, but also to the importance of many sectors closely linked to the Arctic. The strategic meaning is further being *essentialized* in the Russian geopolitical thinking by raising it to the most essential characteristic of the region. Furthermore the nature of the north is pivotal feature in the Russian geopolitical thinking. The nature of the Arctic is represented as something particularly special, different and remote, but simultaneously it is the nature that offers premise for the resources, which are central in the thinking. Lastly the nature of the Arctic is being *exotized* in the Russian geopolitical thinking, due to its extraordinary character.<sup>203</sup>

Geopolitical thinking of the Russian Federation is representing the country as a sovereign great power of modern world. Or at least the 'great powerness' is the ultimate goal. Nevertheless, some of the discourses refer to the Russia's eminence as an 'Arctic power', rather than as a

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203 Concepts were explained in the chapter 4.5.

global player (pp.49, 56-57). Again, the Russian geopolitical thinking concentrates on the national interests and securing the role of the country now and maintaining the influence in the future. According to Agnew's theory of modern geopolitical imagination, Russia has acted according to a '*global vision*'; it is part of the international society, by its cooperative discourse and by often highlighting the role of the international law. Nevertheless, it is often acting according to its own 'national interest'.

Second aspect from modern geopolitical imagination, concept of *translation time into space* in the case of the Arctic, offers at least two viewpoints. Firstly, a need for a modernization and the future prospects in the Arctic makes the Russian arctic in its geopolitical thinking as something 'outdated' and 'passé'. Moreover it has a representation of something that was developed earlier, but then left aside without a notice. In turn, the potential in the Arctic affects to the thinking and represents it as 'promising' and 'auspicious'. The contrast of these two representations is present not just in the Arctic, but in the Russia geopolitical thinking in a wider scale; there is often something outdated, 'retro' or nostalgic, but also a hint of a future potential and discourse of high expectations.

During the research period (2000-2011) the intensity in the discourses found shifted slightly; in the speeches of the political leaders some environmental and more humane aspects were represented towards the more recent days. Also the personal differences of Putin and Medvedev were noted; Putin's ambition was to rebuild the Navy as part of the armed forces, to gain the honour and glory of the Soviet armed forces back. In turn, Medvedev supported the idea of modernization, mainly to attract new innovations and to update the equipment to the meet the demand of the contemporary technology. During his presidency the discourse has shifted more to view the supporting role in economic functions as part of the tasks for armed forces. Consequently, the biggest attention to the rebuilding of the fleet were started during the Putin's presidency, moreover the modernization discourse by Medvedev fitted very well to the same goals. Again, the presidencies of these men also happened in different economic situations; during Putin's presidency Russia was gaining immense petro revenues whereas during the Medvedev's post the financial crisis hit hard to the economy.

The Arctic debate has recently concentrated mostly to the issues that are related to the arctic sea areas, such as the continental shelf and the energy resources. Historically, but also currently the importance of the naval and commercial fleet is of great worth in the north. Thus, the

sources commenting on military aspects gave more perspective to the research<sup>204</sup>. The officers presumably had the strongest reasoning on Russia's sovereign rights and on 'national interest' in the Arctic. Secondly their interest is to have the vessels modernized. These two priorities were quite expected. To reach their interests the threat perception is characterized to include NATO or the 'west', but also other arctic states and states that have expressed their interest in the Arctic<sup>205</sup>.

The strategic importance of the possible economic benefits gained from the High North is further said to trigger unstable situation in the north. A valuable movement for the future development of the naval forces has been towards the end of the research period, when also these actors have started supporting the economic goals of the political elite, such as the energy extraction and growing cargo business. Furthermore their representations have turned to seeing the energy resources as strategic goods of the country. The interaction between the Russian Naval Forces and the energy industry might also be growing, since during the recent years the vessels of the naval forces have gone through an enormous facelift and received tasks of securing the underwater pipelines and energy resources.

There are some contradictions in the Russian geopolitical thinking and in the discourses of the political elite; firstly, cooperation in the energy extraction is needed at the same time as the Russia's sovereign ownership for the possible future findings should be sealed. Secondly, the Arctic appears to be the *strategic treasure trove* for the country, which secures the future economic growth and sustainable stability, but at the same time President Medvedev has many times emphasized the need and demand for the modernization and to get rid of the energy revenues as a fundamental guarantee of the development of the country. President Medvedev's key propositions for overcoming dependence on petro revenues were far from anything to do with the Arctic; space technology, nuclear energy, information technology, energy efficiency and pharmaceuticals.<sup>206</sup> Large icebreakers and other heavy equipment for operating in the far north remain to be the tools of trade and development of the far north, rather than nanotechnology and pharmaceuticals. Energy revenues have provided the financial lifeline of the country, but have simultaneously reduced incentives for modernizing Russian industry and much-needed structural reforms. The energy and mineral wealth has actually not served as the facilitator and financer of economic reforms and modernization, as it

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204 Even though e.g. officers are usually thought to not to take part in political life.

205 Recently also growing Asian powers, such as China, have been included in the threat perception, even in the Arctic.

206 Medvedev 2010.



appears in the discourse; unquestionably it has subsidized the old economic system and enabled the prolongation of actual modernization.

The financial crisis of the last few years affected the energy sector and especially the planned investment schedules; moreover it hit hard on the investment schedules in the Arctic areas<sup>207</sup>. Nevertheless, in the political discourse and to the Arctic policies of the country it had very little influence. One could say that the global market situation after the crisis is not the same as before; the oil and gas markets have changed and the prospects are much more unstable. The unstable situation in the gas market and in the big oil-producing countries in the Middle-East is helping also the Russian north to stabilize and even to raise its position in the market. Anyhow, the quest for more oil and gas is on, and the openings of the Nord Stream pipeline did not slow down or decrease the importance of the Arctic energy sources.

## **6.2. Sabre-Rattling or Just Domestic Politics?**

The most tension or highest activities were in the Russian politics in the Arctic during the years 2007-2009. At that time the expedition to the Arctic sea was conducted, simultaneously the Russian Arctic paper was published. After 2009 the activities were quieter, until the mid-2011, when Putin stated that there is a new claim coming to the United Nations over the possible expansion of Russia's economic zone beyond the standard 200-mile limit. Simultaneously the new Arctic brigades were announced. More generally, the political discourse during the financial crisis of 2008 onwards in my opinion shifted from extraction and exploration plans to guaranteeing the territories to Russia in the foreseeable future. Hence also the task of the Navy was becoming more mixed with the commercial fleet. It could be argued that Russia is putting the *national interest* in front of the economical ones. The tendency of having protectionist economic policies is not easily fading even in the north, where cooperation is without fail, needed.

The Arctic is significantly a terrain of nationalistic, great power discourse aimed to the Russian audience. Various aspects in the discourses of the Russian geopolitical thinking could be interpreted as apparatus of domestic politics and aimed to the domestic audience. Nevertheless, the situation and a claim in front of an "own" audience can and should not be threaten differently

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207 Due to the financial crisis the Shtokman field explorations were partly postponed, and one option could be to start the extraction in (easier accessible) Yamal peninsula.

from the discourses in international arenas. Certainly the most interesting comments in the chosen material were often the once that were given to the party members. For example in the Arctic Forum in 2010 Putin's speech was clearly appointed to the mainly non-Russian specialist audience of this type of event. He clearly emphasized the natural and social aspects of the high north and of the indigenous people. He talked about the arctic as a *common home* for all inhabitants. This speech was not very typical by Putin, underlining the fact that ecological reasoning has gained presentable status among the Russian political elite. The tone in his voice could have been different if there would have been just Russian audience sharing the view on the situation in the north.

Besides the economic and military factors, that are affecting the geopolitical thinking, also ideational and historical factors play an important role what comes to the geopolitical thinking of Russia in the Arctic areas. As mentioned earlier, Russia has a long history of 'special relationship' with its north. In Soviet times the concept of mastering the north' (*osvoenie severa*) was crucial to the planned economy, since many of the natural resources were extracted in the North. Further there were projects of boosting more migrants to the north as well as controversial projects of "helping" the indigenous people with building them new apartments. The ideological importance of the north was observable especially in Putin's rhetoric. Putin's image is to be an action-figure type of strong leader who with his macho appearance supports the build-up politics of a new, powerful and self-assured Russia. To add to this, managing and controlling the wilderness and the 'unknown' of the north may serve as a reassurance that he is the right man for his post. High North (and the Russian wilderness) has served as a useful identity-building project, specifically as a platform to reinforce a great power discourse.

One could claim, that there are numerous acts to diffuse possible tensions in the high north. For example concerning the Northern Sea Route, there should be an agreement about foreign ships in Russian waters. The 1982 Convention allows vessel to make 'innocent passage' through the exclusive economic zones and provides for free navigation in the 'high seas' beyond<sup>208</sup>. Further, the submarines could be forced to go on a surface when approaching exclusive economic zones. On the contrary Russia is investing heavily on its commercial fleet and to the infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route and searching for international cooperation in future infrastructure projects.

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208 UNCLOS 1982. part 2, Article 8(2), Article 17; part 7, Article 87.

Explaining and interpreting Russian geopolitical thinking to the Arctic cannot reduce to the mere military and security policy. Russia has been increasingly active in the cross-border cooperation and in intergovernmental organizations. Most importantly Russia has last year successfully signed an agreement over the maritime border with Norway and thus ended a 40-year border dispute. This rapprochement has resulted in joint naval exercises and more close cooperation in marine rescue patrols. It should be noted that even when many have stated that Russia is wowing to rebuild its naval forces, the amount of newly built ships and bought foreign ships does not keep up with the pace that the old vehicles are getting into museum value. It is literally process of a rebuilding more than repairing.

The Russian Navy as well as the whole armed forces is embroiled in the same challenges as the rest of the country. Further the concerns do not differ from the ‘West’ that much; e.g. rapidly aging population, effects from the global climate change and equipment of the armed forces. Thus, there is a well justified need for a constructive, complex reform in both the implementation and monitoring of Russia’s Arctic policies. The need simultaneously rebuild the economic, political, and military potentials of Russia, with the goal of restoring the status as a great power is a massive task.

### **6.3. Future prospects and solutions**

When thinking about future prospects of the region, it would be an exaggeration to think at the moment that the Arctic Ocean could be declared to be “no man’s land” like the Antarctica, as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science<sup>209</sup>. Hence, a total demilitarization of the region is out of the question because the Arctic has a strategic importance not just to Russia, but also to other states. Overall, the time has gone by for this kind of rhetoric, but the situation with the borders and natural resources of the north remains unsolved. As for the natural resources, they are becoming scarcer in the future. In the end the question is not just about the energy resources, but also other natural resources, such as the water.

Overall, it will be interesting to see how the situation in the Arctic develops. For sure the development and modernization of the Arctic (as many things in Russia), are dependent on global energy market and prices. What if the situation in the Arctic would change to the opposite

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209 Antarctic Treaty 1991.

direction that we now think? In the worst case scenario Russia would become an energy import country, due to its failed policies and unrealized investments in the north. Russia's politics towards the Arctic or more precisely the success of the policies will determine the future for this energy-dependent state. There are no guarantees that the oil and gas extraction in the harsh Arctic conditions would be a success story, or even a profitable case, moreover it is not even guaranteed that there is as much of those resources as some scholars say. In the event of growing oil and gas extraction from the Arctic, there would also still be the resources available in other parts of the globe, like in the Middle East. It remains to be seen, how the political regime changes of the spring 2011 affect to the global energy market.

There was no attempt to form policy recommendations in this paper, but some notions can be made based on the study. A possible solution to the current, expectant atmosphere could be that the Arctic actors would enhance both civilian and military cooperation. Overall, the cooperation should stay and grow in all levels of cross-border cooperation, from tourism and student exchange to high level political meetings. Visa regime should be removed in reciprocal agreement. The investment climate should be made more pleasant.

The growing cooperation between Russian and other countries in Arctic issues would enhance the socio-economic prosperity and overall modernization of the region. Furthermore, instead of mere 'cooperation or confrontation' setting, which is often describing the arctic geopolitics, according to this research there is also a domestic (Russian) drive for modernization, which is not based on cooperation with other countries. Hence, the concept of modernization is interesting in reference to the country's northern policy. It is repeated, but shown no evidence of actually producing anything outside the discourse until the recent years. What was crucial and interesting is that the arctic policy itself has been developing during the research period and only after the Arctic Strategy Paper in 2008 and the Arctic strategy in 2010 it can be said without reservation to be an independent policy section in Russian politics.

As for the military presence, both Russia and NATO could try to maintain their military presence north of the Arctic Circle in a minimum. In the Arctic areas such fields as environmental, social policy, education, energy and mining fields, but also infrastructure and shipping could easily be topics for a greater cross-border projects.

Usually most of the infrastructure investments in Russia are done by state-owned companies and are colossal in size. Again, it remains to be seen how open the future infrastructure and other types of mega-size projects in the Russian Arctic will be for foreign companies. The Arctic states could try to make their military plans and budgets as open as possible; it would minimize the potential for misunderstandings and failed interpretations. The countries could provide information on their planned military investments in advance and allow more foreign observers to visit their bases. This would offer a good confidence-building in the relations of the Arctic states.

Russian leaders would have to clarify their meaning of the 2009 National Security document, or elaborate more on the plans for building more bases in the north and train forces to specialize in Arctic warfare. There are some mixed messages since at the same time Russian political leaders emphasized, that the strengthening of the Arctic presence meant more border guards and control due to the growing transport in the area. On the other hand, the military exercises in the Arctic should not be treated as something extraordinary; in the end it is the task of the armed forces' to analyse and predict possible future scenarios and the country's ability to react to the possible threats.

There is a growing need for not only the 'low politics' cooperation, but also negotiations in higher level on Arctic issues between Russia and other Arctic states. Russia's assertive discourse over the ownership and the legitimate rights in the Arctic is in sharp contrast to the "west's" concern for the fate of the polar bears and in environmental causes. The different agendas were revealed for example, when Russia started the Nord Stream pipeline constructions. In many of the countries the pipeline project was considered to be a matter of security politics, whereas in Finland Nord Stream was kept only as an environmental question. In Russia the pipeline was considered to be "strictly business", but interestingly about the same time that the process began, the Navy was assigned to secure Russia's energy deposits and their shipping.

Perhaps the best possible and already working framework for cooperation in the military sector could be the Arctic Council, which has been a forum in other fields except the military issues since 1996. On the other hand Russia is usually not so keen on coming to multinational arenas, especially on 'high political' issues, which the Arctic, due to its strategic interest, apparently is. The fact that Russia has emphasized the United Nation's role in disputes and in solving the territorial claims in the Arctic shows, that Russia has a positive view to the United Nations as a global ac-

tor. As in other cooperation in the arctic, Russia views very little areas that the cooperation should be in international arenas. Throughout the cooperation different NGO and the EU could offer a new type of cooperative regime in the high north. While the outcomes out of the international organizations and other cooperative arenas in the Arctic region have been debated and the content of these discussions has often been claimed to stay in the safest (non-strategic) zones of cooperation, such as environmental and social issues, the cooperation has stayed and developed.

Despite the growing interest and possible reasons for a conflict in the north, the conditions for resolution and peaceful development in the Arctic are probably more promising than in many other regions with similar colliding interests. Firstly, the countries operating in the Arctic could be characterized as economically developed and politically stable. These types of countries are more likely to be predictable in their policies than so-called less-developed and politically unstable countries. Secondly, the basis for comprehensive agreements and consensus already exists. Moreover there are already intergovernmental actors that deal with the Arctic issues. The cooperation is active and growing on issues such as environmental monitoring, maritime search and rescue, this type of civilian cooperation could have also spill over effect to the security situation in the region.

What comes to different actors in the Arctic areas, the Arctic countries share a common interest, and particularly the interest is avoiding the Arctic becoming yet another area of instability. The most significant players – the USA and Russia, are facing much greater challenges in other parts of the world. Russia could be said to have concerns with its southern and eastern borders, in addition also keeping an eye on China's military might. The USA continues to be a notable military player in the Pacific and defending the interests of itself in several conflicts in the developing world.

#### **6.4. Russia and the North**

The Russian drive for modernization got hit hard by the global financial crisis, but more recently it has been shown that the effects were more in the schedule than in the actual projects. Investments to the Russian Arctic are in increase again. Moreover a breakthrough in the modernization of Russian Federation would generate projects in the High North and help Russia to fulfil its ambitious visions in the north. The ultimate risk for Russia's policy in the Arctic is that it is still

very fragmented outside the policy level; different ministries and actors are using the ‘Arctic debate’ to lure more budget funding to their policy sectors (economic, infrastructure, military, regional actors). Overall, the comprehensive and systematic planning and control are lacking behind outside the strategy level.

In the future Russian geopolitical thinking hopefully gains a strong environmental discourse, it seems that there were already mentions about the environmental actors in the research material, but it was not at the same level as other discourses. The ecosystem in the Arctic is fragile and the mishandling the standards and waste may result in irreversible damage and ecocatastrophes. In June 2011 Putin has admitted:

"We need a really big cleanup for the region and the disposal of litter and fuel barrels, which have been accumulating around stations, military bases and northern settlements for decades. I was there last year and took a closer look: this is something terrible, litter is lying around in quantities you cannot even imagine, and those barrels are rusting, leaking substances into the environment.<sup>210</sup>"

The future prospects for the Russian high north look predominantly bright; the talks about the ‘Arctic race’ or a possible confrontation in the region are somewhat exaggeration. Overall, the Russia discourse over the Arctic could be characterized as hopeful, positive and expectant. Finally it seems that the financing what President Putin has allocated ten years ago is beginning to effect the situation in the North. Apart from environmental reservation and clean-up plans, there are investments to the infrastructure, vessels and industry. The opening shipping lanes intrigues interest not only from Europe and Russia, but globally. With the Arctic Ocean gaining more navigable days also the already existing infrastructure gains more attention. The effects are not only seen in the situation in the cities by the Arctic Ocean, but the growing cargo and other types of usage affect the cities by the major rivers which flow into the Arctic Ocean, like the river Lena<sup>211</sup>. In the future Russia might even think about setting some transit fees to cover the expanses of the infrastructure projects in the north. Same type of policy has already been introduced to the flights over the vast desolate lands of Siberia.

## **6.5. Is geopolitics still applicable?**

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210 New Europe 2011.

211 Also other countries, like China, have indicated their interest to the shipping potential in the big rivers in Siberia.

Geopolitics can in many ways be said to be a term from the past. Geographical space for a state does not mean the same in the modern world of technological innovations and globalized production of food. Land is not needed for example for cultivation (in a same scale) as 200 years ago. Nonetheless, it is an important factor in the identity-building and in nationalistic discourse of a country. It is the land, which entails the glory and pride of a nation. In Russian the country is called the motherland (*Rodina*). Thus, the meaning of geographical space has changed to become an important tool in patriotic great power discourses of a country. Moreover many of the conflicts are explained in geopolitical terms even today, at least in Russia. As President Putin has argued, the collapse of the Soviet Union has been a biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.

It would be a mistake to assume that the natural resources are the only potential source of a conflict in the Arctic areas. The Kremlin is to a large extent not concerned on the acquisitions of territory for natural resources, but more of keeping foreign powers out of what it regards as a strategically important possession of its own. As with the disputed areas in the north, it seems that even if the whole icecap of the Arctic would melt the usable areas for oil and gas would stay reliably close to the shores<sup>212</sup>. More interestingly however, on top of the globe or for example in the Russia's claimed areas between the Lomonosov and Mendelejev ridges is assumable nothing to extract. This fact proves that the resources are not the only explanatory reason for the Russia's claims over the Arctic areas and to the interest drawn to it.

## **6.6. Further Research - Different Actors and Variables**

As for the extraction of the natural resources in the Arctic waters, Russia does not at the moment have the ability and the know-how; there is a demand for cooperation. One could think that since the traditional oil-producing regions of the Soviet Union, such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan became independent, the relative importance of the northern regions, such as Siberia and the Arctic, has grown. I would argue that the main focus in Russian geopolitical thinking is still in its southern regions, but the interest is growingly also appointed towards its northeast regions. It is often stated, that Russia's north-western regions are the most quiet and peaceful, whereas in the south the security situation is not always that stable. Moreover the north is gaining interest also globally, recently also other (non-arctic) actors, such as Japan and China, have showed interest on

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212 RIA 2010a.



the Arctic issues. Again, it will be interesting to see, how the balance in the north will change if these actors outside the traditional influential countries will join the discussion.

The future research about the Arctic region could involve more non-Arctic actors. The new shipping lanes will definitely boost the interest of other Asian countries as well, such as Japan and Korea. China as a growing power and a new actor in the region could offer interesting prospects. China has an interesting maritime policy otherwise also, so this could add to the picture. Moreover China has deployed a research ship to investigate the north and thus has clearly showed interest to become an actor in the Arctic region. To add to this, China has stated that the non-arctic states should be involved in the discussion and the outer continental shelf and international submarine areas should be announced to be “common human heritage.”<sup>213</sup>

Speaking of different actors, USA seems to be observing the situation in the Arctic from a little distance. The fact that the country has not signed the UN’s law on seas seems to lead to role of a bystander. USA has recently pulled of its permanent air force base from Iceland and for example reduced the material that it stored in Norway<sup>214</sup>. Another researchable actor could be the European Union, since it has offered some initial papers for its Arctic policy. According to Russia's view, EU should not be involved in the Arctic cooperation more than at the moment. Stronger role for EU could in Russia's view turn the situation in the north 'unbalanced'.

The investments to the Russian north has not always come to touch the grass root level; this study can’t say much about the living standards and conditions in the north or about the situation of the indigenous people. The humane side of this change would be a good title for further study. One of the problems with Arctic modernization projects seems to be the difficulty in motivating the importantness to the people. 'The Arctic' in general to Russians something not very concrete, and they rather want the federal money affect to their own every-day-life and living conditions. In a poll made during the summer 2011 6% did not know the Arctic was part of the Russia, another 6% of answer confused with Arctic and Antarctic. Overall, 30% of the 2500 answerers were ready to

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213 Spears, 2011.

214 USA has only three ice breakers that are capable working in the arctic areas, whereas Russia has 18, of which seven are nuclear powered.

move to the Arctic region, because it is often associated with higher salaries.<sup>215</sup> Thus, the Arctic could be said to have a positive, but not a very emotional image.

Also the environmental questions should be taken into consideration, since there have been signs that the environmental thinking has been adapted even to the highest political level<sup>216</sup>. Consequently with the environmental protection questions the problem of the future global fresh water deposits can be raised – on this account, the northeast part of the globe is not the one that is to suffer the most from the lack of fresh water. It has been estimated, that in the future even the confrontation over the energy resources could be transformed to conflicts over the fresh water. Thus, there could be a further research made to map the standpoints of different possible actors and factors in the Arctic region – even the non-traditional ones.

Another interesting research topic would be the epistemic community in Russian Arctic policy. This type of research would scrutinize, who has formulated the interest of the Russian state, furthermore who is seen to be a powerful person or institution in reference to the country's policy. Formulation and thickness (or looseness) of the epistemic community in Russian arctic policy would request interviews on Russian actors and real investigation process. Simultaneously it would offer new insights to the formulation and to the processes of constructing the policy.

## **7. Conclusions**

During the recent years the Arctic issues have become centre of growing attention especially in the Arctic countries. Many of them have published their Arctic strategies and the future prospects for the region's natural resources, infrastructure and shipping potential, and moreover its strategic importance of the Arctic areas have been brought to daylight. This paper concentrated on the discourses found in the reasoning of the Russian political elite, policy papers and specialists on Arctic and maritime issues. The theoretical framework offered the critical geopolitical orientation of the International Relations and methodological tools were from Critical Discourse Analysis. Thus, the socially constructed nature of geographical space was emphasized.

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215 Nord News 2011.

216 E.g. Putin 2010.

In the research material of Russian actors three separate but partly overlapping discourses were traced; discourse on cooperation, on sovereign rights of Russia and on modernization. Furthermore the goal was to scrutinize more widely, if there is a trend in world politics that the importance of the sea is growing. With the specific look to the Arctic geopolitics it is also possible to construct more complete picture of the Arctic debate in Russia and lastly, to characterize the geopolitical thinking of Russian Federation.

One could claim that Russia's policy towards its north is weak. It is not consistent; moreover the results of the policies have been hard to define. The situation has somewhat changed during the recent years when arctic politics have emerged to the high-level speeches and due to the publication of Arctic Strategy in 2010. The recent financial crisis effected to the investment plans and to the Arctic discourses, but more in the schedules than in the actual operationalization. Nevertheless, before the crisis the message was more of emphasizing sovereign rights of Russian Federation, whereas recently more cooperative discourse has arisen. As mentioned earlier, the Arctic is not just important in the country's foreign policy, it is emphatically important in domestic politics. Evidently in the scenario of unsuccessful execution of the country's Arctic policies Russia could even slip in the role of an energy import country. To add to this, a lack of budget revenues from energy sector would have dramatic consequences to the Russian society, when currently roughly a half of the Russian budget comes from the energy sector. In Russian political discourse the Arctic is considered to be the guarantee for the country's modernization, the economic growth and moreover, the great power status.

After the Soviet Union disintegration, a geopolitical reasoning grew stronger in Russia, nevertheless, the Russian geopolitical thinking is not a homogenous concept, and it is highly diverse and varies from actor to another. The results of this research suggest that there is a need to rethink the nature of Russian geopolitical thinking and activities in the Arctic region and especially the multi-dimensional nature of the Russian political discourse. The discourse on modernization in reference to the Arctic gives new interesting points of views; at the same time the economic structure of the state remains unchanged, the political discourse proclaims modernization.

One of the initial ideas was that the growing importance of the Arctic regions in the World politics has also affected the Russian geopolitical thinking. After this research one can state that the Arctic has an important share on the concept, but the geopolitical thinking of Russia is not

reducible just to the north. As stated earlier, northern and north-western territories of the Russian Federation have recently been the most peaceful and stable and thus more emphasis could have been drawn to the southeast parts of the country. In the turmoil of last decades Russia could be said to only been able to react on ad hoc –basis, but due to the stable petro revenues it is recently also investing more to the future. The worrying trend is that the country is still almost only investing to the energy and military sectors. A major share of the other investments is from foreign companies and is not really helping Russia to modernize the structure of its economy.

Second hypothesis was that importance of the sea in world politics has grown. According to this research material there has been growing interest paid to the meaning of world oceans – The maritime doctrine with its wide range of maritime activities made way to the new cooperation in the Arctic Sea. Moreover the importance of new (underwater) pipelines emphasizes the possibilities that new technique has brought. Furthermore the Northern Fleet of Russian naval forces has received huge investments and remains in the position of the most important fleet of the country. Also the icebreaking fleet is being strengthened due to the growing economic interest and shipping possibilities.

Third initial idea was to inspect, what type of meaning does the Arctic have in the Russian geopolitical thinking. According to the material, ‘Northern’ and ‘Arctic’ have a special meaning in the Russian discourse; the Arctic is not represented just in the military-security discourses of the country or in reference to the economic prospects, moreover the Arctic is a crucial part in the ‘national interest’ and ‘sovereignty’ discourses. Russia sees the Arctic region (and its natural resources) belonging to itself not just because of the historical reasons, but also scientifically, geographically, mentally and culturally. The north is an important factor in the Russian identity formation and elementary aspect in the country’s geopolitical thinking. Russia is an Arctic superpower and its strategic thinking towards its northeast regions has not significantly changed since the Soviet times.

The open questions in the arctic geopolitics are not very easy to solve. Could there be a multilateral agreement on the usage of the natural resources, kind of what was made over the Antarctica in 1959<sup>217</sup>? One option is what is knowingly supported by the USA and China, that the Arc-

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217 The difference between these areas, nevertheless, remains the same. Whereas Antarctica is a remote continent, not knowingly rich in natural resources Arctic is rich in resources, and growingly important to the global logistic.

tic could remain “ownerless” with internationalizing the area as “human’s common heritage”. A whole another question then is, how this heritage would be reserved and based on whose decisions? It seems that the different actors have different perceptions about the problems that have to be solved as well as to the actual process.

One of the key findings in this thesis has been that Russia hasn’t had a clear and sustainable policy towards its Arctic regions. Many of the state policies do not include Arctic questions and the Arctic Strategy (2010) did not gain any publicity and rather works as a memorandum. The other finding is that since the Russian policy towards its north has been hazy, also the single statements made in the public by state officials, seem to be overly interpreted. Especially ‘western media’ likes to overanalyze the speeches; headlines of ‘the Arctic race’ or ‘strengthening the military presence’ are according to this data, not always realistic.

Moreover the state of for example, the Russian Fleet in the north was in so bad condition after the collapse of the Soviet Union that even a slight investing on the area seems to be a ‘great race’. Anyhow, Russia is not the only actor “strengthening” the presence in the north, so have done e.g. Norway, Canada and China. The trend to give Russia a role of an ‘aggressor’ in the Arctic affairs is not always justified. Not only the policy of Russia is far more complex than indicated, it does not differentiate so much from the policies of the other Arctic states. What differs, are the economic potential and the need for new investments and modernization of the structure of the economy. Energy companies as well as the infrastructure in Russia are mostly state-owned and carried out in different state programmes with federal funding. Thus the geopolitical thinking in state policies towards the region was important to research.

Critical geopolitics emphasizes that the perception is socially and politically constructed. In the case of the Russian geopolitical thinking on the Arctic, the theory is very useful; to the Arctic regions are not just implemented different sorts of anticipations and hopes, moreover it bears out the Russian identity as a northern, special country. The Russian geopolitical thinking on the Arctic sees Russia most of all as an Arctic superpower, and secondly as an international actor.

One could claim that the political boundaries are much more elusive and fluid instead of stable and changeless, whereas the geographical boundaries are almost unchangeable. This might be one of the reasons, why Russian actors prefer and found geopolitical reasoning useful. It is clear

that the Arctic politics of the Russian Federation will show and determine how the state controlled economy will succeed in the modern world politics.

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