

# Foreign and Domestic Discourse on the Russian Arctic

Ieva Bērziņa

*The strained relations between the West and Russia regarding influence in Ukraine may lead to an increase in tension in other regions. The Arctic may become a potential zone of conflict due to its rich natural resources, new transportation routes, military significance, and unsolved territorial issues. The aim of this paper is to identify the governmental discourse of Russia's top officials describing Russia's state policy on the Arctic for foreign and domestic audiences. The paper focuses on the period from 2013 till 2015 when tensions in the relationship between Russia and the West increased due to the crisis in Ukraine. The units of analysis are public statements by senior officials of the Russian Federation in speeches and reports in the media. The major finding is that the Arctic should serve in Russian-Western rapprochement rather than becoming the next geopolitical hot spot.*

## Introduction: the regulatory framework of Russian Arctic discourse

This article aims to identify how Russian senior officials are communicating Russia's policy on the Arctic, the main guidelines of which are defined in several documents. The basic documents that the Russian government mentions as being the key decisions on Arctic operations (Government of the Russian Federation 2015) include: *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* (2008, September 18); *The Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic and national security for the period until 2020* (2013, February 20); *State Program of the Russian Federation 'Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period till 2020'* (2014, April 21); *Regulations on the State Commission on the Development of the Arctic* (2015, March 14); and *The Northern Sea Route Comprehensive Development Project* (2015, June 8). The first, *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond*, is the seminal document that lays the grounds for the implementation of state policy in the Russian Arctic. The development strategy document and the state program of socio-economic development of the Arctic zone document logically and sequentially follow on from the first document. The establishment of the State Commission on the development of the Arctic document is a significant step in the improvement of Russian Arctic governance. The project on the Northern Sea Route is aimed at the development of navigation up to 2030, but this document is classified.

*Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* defines the main objectives, tasks, strategic priorities and mechanisms of the Russian Federation's state policy on the Arctic, as well as a system of measures on the strategic planning of socio-economic development and Russia's national security in the Arctic. According to the document, Russia's national interests in the Arctic include: 1) the use of the Russian Federation's Arctic zone as a strategic resource base for the Russian Federation, in this way providing a solution to the social and economic development problems of the country; 2) the preservation of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation; 3) the conservation of the unique ecosystems of the Arctic; and 4) the use of the Northern Sea Route as a national integrated transport communication route for the Russian Federation in the Arctic (*Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* 2008: 2). So, Russia's key areas of national interest in the Arctic are natural resource extraction, international cooperation, environment and logistics.

In the seminal document, Russia's main goals in the Arctic are structured around six areas that are also defined as priorities in the development strategy: 1) socio-economic development – to expand the resource base for Russia's need for raw materials; 2) military security and the defence and protection of the state border – to ensure a favourable operational regime; 3) environmental safety – to protect the environment of the Arctic; 4) information technology and communication – to create a unified information space in the Arctic; 5) science and technology – to accumulate knowledge and to create modern scientific and geographic information bases for the management of the Arctic territories; and 6) international cooperation – to provide mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Arctic states (*Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* 2008; *The Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic and national security for the period until 2020* 2013: 3-4).

The foundations document also sets a time frame for the implementation of Russia's national interests in the Arctic. The three stages of development highlight the key milestones in the implementation of Russia's state policy on the Arctic. During the first phase from 2008 till 2010, Russia must prepare materials to justify the external border of its Arctic zone, broaden international cooperation, and implement various target programs and investment projects on the basis of public-private partnership. The main tasks of the second phase from 2011 till 2015, are to ensure international legal formalization of the external border of the Arctic zone, to restructure the economics of the Arctic zone based on the mineral-resources and aquatic biological resources in the region, to establish and develop infrastructure and a management system for Northern Sea Route communications for Eurasian transit, and to complete the establishment of a unified information space in the Arctic. The third phase from 2016 till 2020, should ensure the transformation of the Arctic zone into the leading strategic resource base of the Russian Federation.

In general, the implementation of state policy in the medium term should allow Russia to maintain its role as the leading Arctic power and is aimed at increasing comprehensive competitive advantages for the strengthening of Russia's position in the Arctic (*Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* 2008: 9-10). The subsequent documents specify the ways for achieving this goal. *The Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic and national security for the period until 2020* (2013) defines the basic mechanisms, and the ways and means to achieve the strategic goals and priorities for the sustainable development of Russia's Arctic zone and its

national security. The *State Program of the Russian Federation 'Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period till 2020'* (2014) includes the activities of the Russian Federation's sectorial national programs being implemented in the Arctic zone.

The State Commission on the Development of the Arctic is a coordinating body, providing for interaction between federal executive bodies, the executive bodies of subjects of the Russian Federation, other state agencies, local governments and organizations in addressing the socio-economic and other tasks related to the development of the Russian Federation's Arctic zone and its national security. The objectives of the commission are the protection of the Russian Federation's national interests in the Arctic and the achievement of the strategic objectives defined in *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond*, as well as a radical increase in the efficiency of governance in the Russian Federation's Arctic zone (*Regulations on the State Commission on the Development of the Arctic* 2015).

## Method

Discourse analysis has become a widely used research method in the study of international relations (Milleken 1999; Holzscheiter 2014). This is due to the fact that the political process, to a large extent, is constituted by acts of communication, and discourse analysis is a useful tool for understanding the relationships between concrete language use and wider social and cultural structures (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter 2007: 149). Political text and talk have political functions and implication (Van Dijk 1997: 14), therefore discourse analysis makes it possible to clarify the strategy behind political communication. The aim of the paper is to identify and compare foreign and domestic governmental discourse on the Russian Arctic as it is used by top officials from the Russian Federation. The analytical approach in this paper is based on the three stage discourse analysis process as is defined by N. Fairclough (1996: 26). The first step is the selection of the text units being used in the analysis. The next steps are interpretation and explanation by putting the text into a wider political context.

The documents containing the text units have been selected by using Google search results with the keywords being the surname of the Russian Federation official in combination with the name "Arctic." The selection of the top officials, whose statements and speeches were used in the analysis, was based on the consideration that the strategic level of Russia's state policy on the Arctic relating to the implementation of its national interests in the region and its interaction with other countries had to be covered. Obviously, it is not possible to draw a clear line between the officials' foreign or domestic discourse, because their statements can be perceived by both audiences. However, the discourse addressed to foreign audiences was identified by using officials who are authorised to represent Russia's foreign policy, the context of the discourse (for example, if it has been used at an international conference); and the source of the information (for example, an interview given to foreign media). Domestic discourse was identified by using officials whose activities are primarily focused on domestic issues and the sources of information – Russian news agencies and media, and the Russian language.

Statements by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Senior Arctic Official Vladimir Barbin, former Senior Arctic Official Anton Vasiliev, and Russia's Envoy to NATO Alexander Grushko were primarily selected for understanding the foreign discourse. Statements by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for

International Cooperation in the Arctic and Antarctic Artur Chilingarov, and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu were very much targeted at both audiences. Domestic discourse was identified by using the viewpoints from the Chairman of the Arctic Commission Dmitry Rogozin, Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, and sectoral ministers.

The messages for foreign audiences were searched using the keywords in English, whereas for domestic audiences, in Russian. In total, more than 40 documents – publications and broadcasts in the media, and the speeches of officials – were selected. The selection of documents was completed, when no new relevant information for the period from 2013 to 2015 was provided. The analysis was qualitative and inductive. The analytical categories were defined through text analysis, based on the interpretation and explanation of the researcher. It is especially important to mention that foreign and domestic discourse cannot be treated as separate entities – they have to be viewed in interaction, because in this way a better insight into its political use by Russia is provided.

### **Governmental discourse on the Russian Arctic**

Five categories of analysis were defined for structuring Russian Arctic foreign and domestic discourse as used by Russian officials: 1) Russia's national interests in the Arctic; 2) international cooperation; 3) Russia's perception of other countries' strategies; 4) militarization of the Arctic; and 5) symbolic actions. The statements by Russian officials were arranged and analysed according to these categories. Table 1 at the end of the article contains a summary of the findings.

#### ***Russia's national interests in the Arctic***

The Arctic is a region of historical importance for Russia's strategic development and its national pride (Laruelle 2014). In the last decade, it once again became one of the priority regions for Russia after a period in oblivion during the collapse of the USSR. The strategic importance of the Arctic has been stressed by several top officials. In 2013, V. Putin noted that Russia had returned to a very promising region – the Arctic; therefore it should have all the levers for the protection of security and national interests there (Forbes 2013). Around the same time, the importance of the Arctic was also underlined by S. Shoigu (Rossiya 1 2013). A. Chilingarov stated that Russia's future was inextricably linked with the fate of the polar regions, and their development should be a national priority. This is mainly because, in the future, the Arctic will become the main resource base for the country – it is estimated that by 2050, the Arctic shelf will provide 20 to 30% of total Russian oil production (Rikin 2014).

During the meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation in 2014 on the implementation of state policy in the Arctic, V. Putin pointed out the main steps to be taken to preserve influence in the region. He defined six key tasks: 1) to improve the quality of governance by establishing the Arctic Commission; 2) to implement the *State Program of the Russian Federation 'Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for the period till 2020'*; 3) to implement the international legal formalization of the outer borders of the continental shelf of Russia in the Arctic Ocean; 4) to develop the Northern Sea Route; 5) to provide environmental security; and 6) to provide integrated security for the Russian Arctic zone and to create a new generation unified system of surface ships and submarines (Kremlin 2014). The tasks named by

V. Putin are in accordance with Russia's national interests in the Arctic as defined in *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond*.

As a priority region, the Arctic, for Russia, also has geopolitical significance. In A. Chilingarov's view, during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia will primarily be associated with the development of the Arctic shelf in a similar way as the space exploration and large-scale infrastructure projects in Western and Eastern Siberia at the time of the Soviet Union (Rikin 2014). D. Rogozin has admitted that without the Arctic, Russia cannot maintain its status as a great power (Bolotin 2015). He even places the development of the Arctic into the context of the annexation of Crimea as a general strategic direction for Russia:

Russia is beginning to feel the space and express the claims to the borders and its interests. Last year was a historic event – the restoration of the territorial integrity of Russia, a reunion with Sevastopol and the Crimea. This year there is a new look, a powerful new emphasis on the development of the Arctic. These are things of the same order (Staalesen 2015).

Linking the Crimean annexation with Russia's activities in the Arctic may indeed lead to concerns that the Arctic might be the next hot spot in Russia's relations with the West, although the foreign discourse on the Russian Arctic is different. The statements addressed to foreign audiences also include a focus on the targeted implementation of Russia's national interests in the Arctic (Vorobyov 2013), but they stress Russia's willingness to act within the framework of international legal norms. For example, one of the main points of the agenda, as explained by S. Lavrov, is the submission of a request regarding the continental shelf of the Arctic Ocean to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (Sputnik 2014b). Thus, the foreign policy discourse is aimed primarily at demonstrating that Russia will implement its national interests in the region according to the accepted norms and principles of international cooperation. In N. Patrushev's view, with the increasing role of Arctic resources in the global economy, this region is becoming an important arena for Russia's relations with foreign partners in the field of international, military, energy and information security (Egorov 2013). So, in terms of Russia's national interests in the Arctic an internal political ambition to be the leading power in the promising region can be detected, but at the same time there is a rational understanding of the need for international cooperation and respect for international legal norms as well.

### ***International cooperation***

According to *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic through 2020 and beyond* (2008: 3) some of the strategic priorities of Russian state policy in the Arctic are to maintain good-neighbourly relations with other Arctic states, both bilaterally and within regional organizations, including the Arctic Council and the Barents/Euro-Arctic region, to promote economic, scientific and cultural cooperation in the Arctic, as well as cross-border cooperation, including in the field of the efficient development of natural resources and the preservation of the environment in the Arctic. This is in contrast to the somewhat arrogant domestic rhetoric from D. Rogozin that Russia "should come to the Arctic and to make it hers" and that it does not care for what other countries think about its activities in the Arctic (Vzgljad 2015). In his view, the development of the Arctic is characterized by a battle over the first-mover advantages in the region (Vzgljad 2013).

The foreign discourse on the Russian Arctic is very much focused on the importance of international cooperation, mutual understanding and peaceful solution of the problems. A. Vasilev

gives a specific argument as to why there is no race for Arctic resources among the Arctic states. He stresses the fact that “according to Danish experts, up to 97% of proven reserves are located in the exclusive economic zone of the Arctic States”. In the view of this experienced diplomat, everything has already been divided up in the Arctic, and it is much more effective to pursue national interests in this region together (Vasiliev n.d.). In its foreign discourse, Russia emphasizes that there is a harmony of interests with other actors and indicates that there are no substantial contradictions that might lead to disagreements. For example, S. Lavrov has said:

The priorities of the starting Canadian chairmanship in the Council are close to us – development of resources of the North, the use of the Arctic maritime transport route, support of inhabitants of the Arctic region. They are largely concordant with *The Development Strategy of the Russian Arctic and national security for the period until 2020* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013).

One of the slogans often used in foreign discourse is similar to the name of the international conferences which have been organized by the Russian Geographical Society since 2011, “Arctic – the territory of dialogue.” For example, this slogan was used by V. Barbin for stressing that cooperation in the Arctic Council is resistant to such external challenges as the crisis in Ukraine over which there are disagreements between Russia and the other countries of the Council (News.rin.ru. 2015). From Russia’s perspective, the Arctic Council is the best platform for international cooperation. S. Lavrov states that the Arctic Council ensures the legitimate rights of the states which have direct access to the Arctic Ocean. This institution sets the rules of engagement in the region, as well as the safe and careful use of its enormous wealth. In S. Lavrov’s view, no one is mentioning any conflict or talking about confrontation at this forum. Everyone is interested in the Arctic being developed through cooperation and respect for international law, including decisions about the boundaries of the continental shelf (RT 2014). A. Grushko’s idea, that members of the Arctic Council proceed from the fact that the Arctic states have enough instruments to solve problems that might naturally emerge in this region by means of talks, cooperation and on the basis of international law, can be added to this (The Arctic Monitor 2015).

A. Chilingarov has expressed the view that Arctic development could actually melt the ice between Russia and the West (Rosneft 2014). His view is based on previous positive experience, for example, the Russian and Norwegian maritime delimitation agreement signed in 2010, as well as common and interdependent interests. In A. Chilingarov’s view, Russia can develop the Arctic shelf on its own, but it would be more effective and less expensive for all sides to do this together with the Western partners (Rikin 2014). Here, the term “the Western partners” can be understood to include not only countries, but also such actors as energy companies like Exxon Mobil, Total and others that are interested in cooperation with Russia, despite the sanctions. The joint US Coast Guard’s and Russian Border Guard’s international exercises that will take place in the autumn of 2015 can also be mentioned as another example of continuing cooperation (Sputnik 2015).

### ***Russia’s perception of other countries’ strategies***

The tense relations between Russia and the Western countries have been transferred at a rhetorical level to the Arctic due to the conflict in Ukraine. Russia’s involvement in Ukraine provides solid grounds for the West to promote the image of Russia as an aggressor and a potential threat. In 2014, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that Canada and the US need a united front in response to Russia’s aggressive reopening of military bases in the Arctic (Peritz 2014). Likewise,

the former Foreign Minister of Canada, John Baird, told a Danish newspaper that Ottawa was determined to promote and defend the sovereignty of Canada in the Arctic against the Russian threat that manifested in the reactivation of a Soviet-era base on its north-eastern coast, and fly-bys by Russian aircraft (RT 2014).

S. Lavrov reacted to such rhetoric with a strict statement: “There are accusations flying about that we are trying to make a land-grab during a latter-day gold rush. This is nonsense. We don’t want the Arctic to become an arena of conflict” (RT 2014). It should be emphasized, however, that an exchange of sharp words between Russia and Canada in relation to the Arctic had already been present before the crisis in Ukraine. For instance, in 2011, A. Vasiliev also had to respond to Canada’s complaints about Russia’s provocative behaviour in the Arctic. At that time he said that such views arise from a lack of knowledge of reality, and the inertia of human mentality (Blanchfield 2011). S. Lavrov rejected Western efforts to present Russia as being aggressive in the Arctic by stressing that Russia has legitimate rights to pursue its interests in the Arctic like any other country:

The countries that have northern borders must ensure their security, including in the northern region, like in any other part of their territory. This is an axiom: wherever you are and whoever surrounds you, you have to think about your security, including military security. It would be naive to imagine that because we are talking about the Arctic this principle does not apply (Vorobyov 2013).

While some of the political leaders of Western countries attempt to strengthen the image of Russia as a potential threat in the Arctic region, Russian officials promote the idea that it is other countries that are attempting to make the Arctic a conflict zone. For describing the strategy of the Western countries as a whole, Russian officials often refer to NATO. In the view of S. Lavrov, NATO doctrines and analyses occasionally say that the military factor is likely to grow in the Arctic in the context of the intensifying battle for natural resources (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2014). A. Grushko says that there is no clear NATO strategy in the Arctic, but from time to time, certain forces in NATO try to push the idea that the Arctic may soon become a battle-ground and that the alliance must secure access to energy resources in the Arctic (The Arctic Monitor 2015). Likewise, in D. Rogozin’s view, NATO countries have been thinking since 2009 about building up military activity in the Arctic (Vzgljad 2013). Thus, there are no contradictions between foreign and domestic discourse with regard to the description of NATO’s increasing interest in the Arctic region.

S. Shoigu also noted that developed countries that do not have direct access to the polar regions are striving insistently for the Arctic. They are taking certain political, military and economic steps in this direction (RT 2015). N. Patrushev also stressed that Arctic resources are attracting the attention not only of the Arctic countries, but are also of interest to the EU, China, Japan, South Korea and other countries. Their interest, firstly, has been determined by natural resources and new transport routes (Ivanov 2013). But according to S. Lavrov, this will not lead to an “Arctic Race,” because:

International law on Arctic waters clearly determines the rights of both coastal and other states. This includes access for developing the extraction of mineral resources, oil and gas deposits, as well as managing marine biological stocks. International law also regulates the ability of countries to expand the external

border of their continental shelf. Today's complicated international situation does not create any significant changes to the established order (Sputnik 2014a).

The same position has been expressed by V. Putin who has said that although many perceive Russia's activity in the Arctic with caution and are afraid of it, Russia will act in the framework of international law (TASS 2014).

### ***Militarization of the Arctic***

The discourse around the militarization of the Arctic is the most contradictory, but it arises from the so called 'security dilemma' when an effort by one side to maximize its security increases threats to the other, thus escalating tension in international relations (Herz 1950). Russia's increasing military presence in the Arctic is based on the grounds that other countries pose a threat to Russia. V. Putin recalled that there are US nuclear submarines along the coast of Norway and that the flight time of missiles launched from them to Moscow is just 16-17 minutes (Forbes 2013). According to N. Patrushev, there is regular US Navy and Royal Navy submarine activity in the Arctic, that there are at least three weekly flights of patrol aircraft, and that about 10 major events in operational and combat training are planned to be held there every year. The US has also created a united armed forces base in Alaska, Canada is building a port in Nanisivik and a military training facility in Resolute, and Denmark has created a united command for the armed forces of the Arctic. N. Patrushev concluded that in such circumstances Russia cannot just watch war preparations by foreign countries near its borders (Ivanov 2013). Two years later, S. Shoigu announced that "a permanent military presence in the Arctic and the ability to protect the state's interests by means of armed struggle is seen as an integral part of the overall national security policy" (Shoigu 2015).

A. Vasiliev provided additional pragmatic and more neutral arguments for the increasing military factor in the Arctic. In his view, the Russian military build-up is based on Russia's concern with defending its northern regions due to climate change. Russia has a 20,000 kilometre border on the Arctic Ocean. Previously, it was a secure border of frozen ice, but it is now melting because of rising temperatures. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen Russia's military presence to protect the country from illegal border crossings, illegal immigration, organized crime and terrorism (TASS 2014). The position of a US Senior State Department Official during the Background Briefing on the Arctic Council Preview complements the peaceful discourse of A. Vasiliev, which is intended to underline that there are no actual grounds for tension in the region because of increasing military activity by Russia:

Arctic maneuvers [sic], military operations, I'm not – I have not seen anything that goes much above and beyond what we've seen in the past decade or so from the Russians. What has happened is, for instance, the Norwegians and the Russians have been conducting joint military exercises up until when the sanctions were invoked. Because of the sanctions, we're not allowed to have military-to-military contact and operations, so they've done it separately. When the Norwegians did their exercises, it got no notice. When the Russians did their exercises, it was portrayed as Russian aggression. I'm not sure that they've done anything more than they've done in the past, and they have a right to take necessary steps to preserve their sovereignty of the waters that they're responsible for (U.S. Department of State 2015).

From S. Lavrov's point of view, there are no problems in the Arctic that require NATO's involvement or any military solutions at all (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



2014). In his view, the Arctic region is not influenced by the current difficult international situation (Sputnik 2014b). From Russia's viewpoint, the Arctic is a peaceful region and there are no direct military risks. Therefore, the Arctic should remain a zone with a minimum of military activity (Sputnik 2014).

### *Symbolic actions*

Geopolitical competition in the Arctic also has a symbolic dimension. One of the most significant episodes of this kind of tension occurred in 2007 when a Russian expedition to the North Pole headed by A. Chilingarov planted Russia's flag in the seabed of the North Pole. This was perceived with outrage in the West, because from their point of view it was a symbolic act by Russia in claiming the Arctic territories. However, in recent years, Russia has placed an emphasis on cooperation rather than its solo achievements in the Arctic. S. Lavrov, in a speech in the Arctic Council in 2013, stressed that there was a rather symbolic trip to the North Pole by senior officials of the Arctic Council together with N. Patrushev and A. Chilingarov. During the trip, photos were taken with a background of the flags of eight countries and the flag of the Arctic Council that had high historical value (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013). It was a diplomatic gesture that Russia respected the interests of other countries. During this speech, he also invited his international colleagues to the third international Arctic Forum organized by the Russian Geographical Society. The title of the conference also carries a symbolic meaning – "Territory of Dialogue," which highlights Russia's efforts for cooperation with other states.

**Table 1.** Foreign and domestic discourse on the Russian Arctic

<b>Category of analysis</b>	<b>Foreign discourse</b>	<b>Domestic discourse</b>
Russia's national interests	The implementation of Russia's national interests in the Arctic is based on international cooperation within the framework of international legal norms.	The Arctic is a very important region for Russia. The Arctic is an integral part of Russia as a great power. Russia is a leading power in the Arctic.
International cooperation	The Arctic Council is the best platform for international cooperation. There is no confrontation in the Arctic Council. The Arctic may promote rapprochement between Russia and the West.	There is a battle over the first-mover advantage in the Arctic. The Arctic should be Russia's.
Russia's perception of other countries' strategies	The Western countries are attempting to make the Arctic a conflict zone by presenting Russia as being aggressive.	The increased interest by other countries in the Arctic creates security risks for Russia.
Militarization of the Arctic	Russia's military build-up is a legitimate ensuring of its national security, a reaction to the military activity of other countries and the effects of climate change. There is no need for military solutions in the Arctic.	Russia is ready to protect its interests in the Arctic by military means.

Symbolic actions	The Arctic is a territory of dialogue. Photos with the Arctic partners at the North Pole.	Solo photos of Russia's explorers and officials at the North Pole.
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## Conclusions

The foreign and domestic discourse on the Russian Arctic balances between the need to maintain favourable relations with international partners and, at the same time, to achieve competitive advantages in the region. In the domestic governmental discourse there is a stress on the strategic importance of the Arctic for Russia. The development of the Russian Arctic is vitally important for Russia as a great power. Russia's geographical location and historical achievements in the region give it a natural competitive advantage for being the leading power in the region. The strategic aim of Russia's state policy in the Arctic is to keep that status and to develop it further. "Making the Arctic Russia's" is the essence of the domestic discourse which contradicts its cooperation-oriented foreign discourse, but these discourses serve different purposes. Since the domestic discourse is targeted to internal audiences, one of its functions is to maintain national pride, and at a symbolic level, Russia's achievements in the Arctic provide the foundation for that.

Whereas the aim of the foreign discourse is to maintain favourable relations with partners, there is an emphasis on cooperation. However, this contradiction can be used in arguing that Russia is hiding its true intentions and is misleading other states. Some of the leaders of Western countries are indeed attempting to portray Russia as an aggressor in the Arctic. However, it would be more appropriate to say that Russia's military build-up in the Arctic is primarily a tool of strategic deterrence. That assertion is based on the consideration that all the major players in the Arctic region are developing their military presence, and that Russia is indeed placing an emphasis in its foreign policy on the interdependence of interests in the Arctic, the necessity for cooperation and respect for legal norms. Therefore, it is much more likely that the Arctic could serve instead for Russian-Western rapprochement rather than becoming the next geopolitical hot spot. At the same time, using a peaceful and defensive foreign discourse, Russia is winning time to strengthen its position in the region, which does not exclude the possibility of an escalation of conflict in the future.

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