High stakes and poor implementation? Russia's Arctic policy in 2008–2017

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A. N. Kadochnikov*, Pushkin Leningrad State University (St. Petersburg, Russia)*
A. S. Simonov*, University of Helsinki (Helsinki, Finland)*

This paper aims to analyse Russia's Arctic policy in 2008–2017. We scrutinise its policy implementation in four policy fields – mining operations, environmental, military and transport policy (the Northern Sea Route). The research objective is to find out which policy fields did the Russian Government implement sufficiently and which ones – poorly in Russia's Arctic policy in 2008–2017? We use the document analysis as a research method. We find that overall policy implementation in the Arctic was insufficient. The degree of Russia's Arctic policy implementation depends on the policy field. While Russia successfully achieved the goals of military security in the Arctic, mining operations in the High North were implemented poorly. The Russian Government carried out environmental protection and the development of the NSR moderately with some programs and projects being reduced or even postponed in 2008–2017.

This study contributes to policy studies and provides an independent assessment for policy-makers and civil society actors. The analysis of government documents as a method pose the limitation in the sense that we use the data only from open sources as well as there is a risk of misinterpretation during the data collection stage. Future research can investigate which theory explains the best policy implementation in the Russian Arctic. Moreover, methodologically scholarship can apply computational text analysis methods to work with the massive amount of textual data.

Keywords: *Arctic, Russia, policy implementation, policy analysis, arctic policy, public policy*

Introduction

Scholarship has tended to scrutinise Arctic policy from the International Relations (IR) perspective through the classical IR questions – cooperation or conflict [1; 2; 3; 4]. There has been strong interest in the analysis on national public policies of arctic and non-arctic states in terms of strategies, policy priorities and key discourses [5, pp. 193–303; 6]. Yet, in the Russian-speaking scholarship, Russia's Arctic policy is considered as an important domestic dimension in which social-economic development and legislative framework approaches are dominating [7; 8]. Scholarship has tended to highlight the global governance and security aspects in the Arctic [9; 10]. To date, however, little research has thoroughly investigated Russia's Arctic policy implementation. We seek to analyse it through the public policy perspective and focus on domestic affairs [11].

The Russian Federation is an Arctic state which is to address environmental issues as well as to take advantage of economic opportunities in the region. Russia holds the biggest part of the Arctic and its part is the most populated, accounting for around 2.37 million people – that is more than a half of the whole population in the region (around 4 million people) [12]. The Arctic region accounts for 10 % of the Russian GDP [13].

Since 2008, the Arctic has become a strategic policy priority in Russian politics [14; 15]. In 2014, Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, declared that 'Russia has been increasing its presence in the Arctic for decades, and this direction in public policy must be clearly and consistently maintained [16]. The oil and gas exploration projects on the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean are potentially significant and beneficial for the Russian export-oriented economy. The success of such projects is crucial for Russia as it allows to maintain its leading position as an energy giant in the world. The Russian Federation focuses on the development of Northern Sea Route (NSR) and expects that the shipping along the NSR will become accessible and profitable soon [17]. It is supposed to serve as an additional impulse for the development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

Russia pays much attention to the successful development of military capabilities in the Arctic region [18]. Since 2013, Russia has maintained the intensive modernization and the deployment of new armed forces in the High North [19, pp. 43–61]. S. Shoygu, Minister of Defence, admits that no other country has ever tried to execute such massive military deployment in the Arctic [20]. The Russian authority considers environmental protection as an important task in the Arctic [14]. The Arctic region became a strategic policy priority for the Russian authority in 2008-2017.

Given the salience, political declarations and ambitious goals of the Russian Government, Russia's Arctic plans were not implemented at a sufficient level as it was initially conceived. Policy-makers claim that Russia's Arctic policy is slow and incoherent, and the overall policy implementation faces constraints and results in de-

lays in its realization [21; 22; 23]. For instance, Russia's Arctic public program of social-economic development had merely an analytical dimension, yet, the funding was not granted [24]. In August 2017, the same public program was revised with new indicators of implementation added to the program, and around 12 billion roubles were allocated from Russia's federal budget [25].

We present our research in the following structure. Section 2 presents methods and data. Section 3 outlines key policy areas in Russia's Arctic policy, including key actors, major risks and expected outcomes. In sections 4 and 5, we present the results and discuss the findings. In section 6, we reflect on the study limitations as well as outline possible directions for future research.

Methodology

Russia's Arctic policy is a complex unit of analysis as it includes mostly the parts of regions, multi-level institutional structures and agencies with diverse interests. Therefore, the systematic overview and in-depth analysis can shed light on the state-of-art in the Russian Arctic. In this article, we aim to investigate: **which policy fields did the Russian Government implement sufficiently and which ones – poorly in Russia's Arctic policy in 2008–2017?**

We analyse Russia's Arctic policy in 2008–2017 as the first official government document was released in 2008 and the Arctic has gained strategic importance for the Russian authority [14]. The research method is the study of government documents. The data comes from the official documents such as public policies, public programs, speeches, minutes from the meetings and sessions, press releases and interviews as well as conferences and other relevant public events concerning Arctic policy. We extracted the data from publicly available repositories, namely government websites (the Government of Russian Federation, respective ministries – Ministries of Defence; Natural Resources; Transport; Public Commission on Arctic development), Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Accounts Chamber of Russia, Rosstat (economic indicators), media (e.g. Barents Observer, Interfax) and state-owned companies' websites (Gazprom, Rosatom). The study of academic journals, public reports and relevant sources from think tanks (e.g. The Center for Strategic Research) enriched the dataset.

The piece of analysis will be valuable for policy-makers and civil society while evaluating policy implementation and designing strategic planning [26; 27]. Our article will contribute to Arctic policy implementation studies.

Russia's Arctic policy: key areas

The scientific expedition «Arktika–2007» symbolised the establishment of Russia's Arctic policy [8]. Its political significance was that Russia's flag was established on the bottom of the North Pole to demonstrate Russia's Arctic ambitions. In 2008, Russia was one of the first countries which adopted a long-term public policy in the Arctic [14], and, in 2013, Russia outlined instruments and the implementation stages for its Arctic policy [15]. In 2014, the public program on social-economic development was adopted and then revised in 2017 [24; 25].

However, the government actions were sometimes inconsistent with its plans and intentions that caused a lack of implementation in Russia's Arctic policy. For instance, the goals and objectives of the public program (2014) were not consistent with the official public policy document in the Arctic (2008) [24; 14; 28]. The direct funding for the federal public program (2014) was not taken into consideration by the Russian Government. However, the public program was revised in 2017 and the funding was allocated starting from 2018 [25; 28].

In 2008–2017, the Russian Government was implementing Arctic policy in the context of an unfavourable economic situation [29]. The Russian authority has made key decisions in Arctic policy when there were a supportive economic situation and a positive GDP growth (2008 – the release of public policy, 2014 – the release of a public program, 2017 – its revision). The unstable economic situation in Russia in 2008-2017 made the Russian government allocate money rationally through the federal budget, and it limited a set of policy options for the government.

We compile Table 1 that provides the overview of key policy field in Russia's Arctic policy in 2008-2017. We proceed with our analysis of policy implementation in each field – mining operations, military, environmental and transport policy (the Northern Sea Route).

Table 1

Key policy fields in Russia's Arctic policy in 2008-2017

Policy field	*Key actors*	*Major risks*	*Expected outcomes*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*
Mining operations	• Ministry of Economic Development • Ministry of Industry and Trade • Public Commission on Arctic Development, • Public company «Gazprom» • Public company «NK Rosneft»	• Low efficiency of resource extraction in the Arctic • Lack of technology, capabilities and the equipment to work in harsh climate conditions • Legal constraints with the status of external border of the continental shelf in the Arctic • Monopoly of Gazprom and Rosneft on resource extraction on the continental shelf • Low investment attractiveness of the Russian Arctic for foreign companies	• Make the Arctic a strategic resource base of the Russian Federation
Military policy	• Ministry of Defence	• Difficulties with public funding in the context of economic crisis and austerity measures • Pressure from international society regarding the militarisation in the Arctic	• Increase Russia's military presence in the Arctic • Provide military security of Russia in the Arctic zone
Environmental policy	• Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment • Ministry of Foreign Affairs • Representative of the President on the Issues of Environmental Activities, Environment and Transport (S.B. Ivanov) • Representative of the President for international cooperation in the Arctic and Antarctic (A.N. Chilingarov) • Public Commission on Arctic Development	• High level of accumulated environmental damage in the Arctic • Increasing negative anthropogenic and technological impact on the Arctic environment • Strengthen environmental collaboration with Arctic countries	• Ensure environmental security in the Arctic zone and the areas of the Arctic Ocean • Ensure sustainable development in the Arctic • Develop international environmental cooperation between the Arctic and non-Arctic countries
Transport policy – the Northern Sea Route (NSR)	• Ministry of Industry and Trade • Ministry of Transport • Public Commission on Arctic Development • Federal State Budgetary Institution 'The Northern Sea Route Administration' • The State Atomic Energy Corporation 'ROSATOM'	• Lack of infrastructure capabilities to use the NSR • High navigation risks in the Arctic Ocean • Need for the construction of new icebreakers and the development of small aviation	• Increase the level of shipping via the NSR • Make the NSR a national and unified transport route

Source: The authors retrieved the data for key policy fields in the Russian Arctic in 2008-2017 from the official documents [14; 15; 24; 25]

Results

In this section, we present the results of the empirical analysis per policy field. We start from mining operations and military policy, and then we proceed with environmental and transport policy.

1.1. Mining operations

Lively discussions on mining operations in the Arctic started in 2011–2012. By 2020, the Russian authority expects that the Arctic will become a leading strategic resource base of the Russian Federation [14]. The logic behind was that it would produce revenues to Russia's federal budget and, on the whole, it would accelerate the development of the Arctic zone [15].

Nevertheless, the plans of the Russian authority were not implemented actively. By 2018, only four huge Arctic projects on mining operations had been launched: YAMAL LNG (launched in 2017), Novoportovskoe field (launched in 2016), Bovanenkovskoe field (launched in 2012), the Prirazlomnoye project (launched in 2013) [30; 31; 32].

The active involvement of foreign companies (e.g. BP, Total, ExxonMobil) in the Arctic mining projects was the result of Russia's policy of cooperation in the Arctic in 2009–2010. The deals with foreign companies were concluded following the principle: the Russian Government grants access for foreign companies to mine fossil fuels in the Arctic while foreign companies invest money and provide technology for deep-sea drilling [8]. Foreign companies required transparency and clear partnership conditions, and the Russian Government was not agile in its decisions and could not create a transparent legal framework for investors. These circumstances slowed down the development of Arctic oil and gas projects [8].

However, the situation has changed dramatically after imposing sanctions on Russia in 2014 [33]. For instance, the joint project in the Kara Sea between Rosneft and ExxonMobil was stalled in 2014 [34]. Most importantly, after imposing sanctions on Russia, foreign companies stopped making plans to develop joint Arctic projects with Russian companies. The sanctions against Russia caused the withdrawal of foreign companies and investors from the ongoing Arctic projects [34]. As a result, since 2014, the imposed sanctions made Russia's ambitious plans on the mining operations on the continental shelf hardly possible to be implemented.

In 2011–2012, the oil prices went extremely high (110$ per barrel) that opened a way for Arctic projects with high risks [35]. Yet, in 2014–2015, sharp fall in oil prices and the shale revolution in the world made the majority of mining operations projects less profitable since they required huge investments and time [22]. For example, the development of Shtokmanovskoye field was suspended due to insufficient gas demand and the shale revolution in the US [36]. However, in 2012, the Shtokmanovskoye field was expected to be launched by 2017, yet, the joint project of «Gazprom» and «Total» was not renewed [36]. The Shtokmanovskoye field is expected to be launched by 2025, yet, the gas extraction in this area is considered unbeneficial with high environmental risks [37].

The majority of mining projects on the continental shelf are highly beneficial but only in the medium term as they require long-term investments, time and pose environmental risks. In 2014, oil extraction on the continental shelf in the Arctic accounted for a modest 3% of total oil extraction in Russia [33]. The oil and gas production on the continental shelf has largely remained potential and ambitious future projects for the Russian Government.

The Prirazlomnoye Project has become the only successful project on the Arctic continental shelf. Long-term and enormous public funding and domestic technology were key factors for its successful implementation [38]. However, the Prirazlomnoye Project is rather an exception than a rule as other fields on the continental shelf (Shtokmanovskoe, Leningradskoe, Rusanovskoe) were not developed.

The development of oil and gas production was suspended after 2014 when the external environment has become negative for further projects' implementation. We identified a set of factors which can explain a lack of the development of mining operations in the Arctic:

- low energy prices made Arctic projects unprofitable
- environmental risks in the context of fragile Arctic ecosystems
- insufficient level of technology for mining operations on the continental shelf
- inability to attract foreign companies to develop Arctic oil and gas projects
- absence of the public-private partnership mechanism
- unappealing tax regime for private companies to invest in Arctic projects on the continental shelf.

To sum up, mining operations in the Arctic were implemented poorly by the Russian Government. Most oil and gas Arctic projects had been suspended or cancelled.

1.2. Military policy

Military security in the Arctic has become a salient policy issue since 2014 when the new united strategic command 'North' was established to operate military forces from Murmansk to Anadyr [20]. In December 2014, the Northern Fleet was created as a special military region with the purpose to protect Russia's public interests in the Arctic [20]. By 2018, Ministry of Defence set the goal to create a self-contained group of Russian troops in the Arctic [39].

The data analysis from the official website of the Ministry of Defence was carried out. We observed sufficient food provision for army, stable equipment and health care provision for the military staff in the Arctic. Russia was increasing the number of military exercises and trainings in the Arctic from year to year [40]. In 2015-2016, some exercises included the landing of Arctic moto-riffles on Novaya Zemlya and the training of the Northern Fleet on the protection of the coast of Russia's Arctic zone. Moreover, the military personnel took part in the ecological clean-up in the Arctic.

According to the report of the Ministry of Defence, in 2012-2017, 425 facilities with a total area of more than 700 000 m^2 were built [18]. One thousand military personnel were present there, and special weapons and

equipment were deployed on these territories. The construction of an innovative airfield on the archipelago Novaya Zemlya has been in progress. In 2012-2017, the Russian Armed Forces cleaned up around 100 740 m^2 in the Arctic [18]. They collected 16 000 tons of scrap metal, 10 000 tons of which have been removed by Ministry of Defence. The Armed Forces were actively involved in the rehabilitation of environmental damage [18]. To sum up, the report of the Minister of Defence shows that the development of military infrastructure in the Arctic was implemented successfully [18]. As a result, there has been a trend towards the militarisation of Russia's Arctic since 2012.

Russia's federal budget was in deficit in 2012-2017. However, there was no reduction in defence expenditure in this period. Moreover, despite the economic crisis in 2014-2016, Russia increased defence spending from RUB 2.3 trillion in 2014 to RUB 2.8 trillion in 2018 [41]. Russia maintained stable financial flows on military policy in the Arctic.

Most observations confirmed that military policy implementation in the Arctic was effective and consistent.

1.3. Environmental policy

In 2008–2017, Russia made efforts to secure environmental protection in the Arctic. The rehabilitation of accumulated environmental damage in the Arctic started in 2012 [42]. More than 35 000 tons of waste were removed in 2012–2015 from the islands of Franz Josef Land. More than 6 000 tons of waste were removed from the archipelago Novaya Zemlya that improved the water quality in this area [42]. 41.2 tons of waste were utilised in Chukotka. In Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 100 tons of water were cleaned in 2012 and 3 500 tons of waste were removed from the 'Nenetsky' reserve. 24 projects on the rehabilitation of environmental damage in the Arctic were implemented in 2012–2016, and 12 projects were in progress [42]. Besides, there was the involvement of Ministry of Defence in the environmental clean-up in the Arctic.

Another result of environmental activities in the Arctic was the creation of specially protected natural areas in 2012–2016 [23]. The national park 'New Siberian Islands' was created in the Arctic in 2018 [23; 42]. Several other national parks and protected areas such as Beringia National Park, Onezhskoye Pomorye National Park were created in 2012–2016 [23]. The territory of 'Russian Arctic National Park' was expanded in 2016.

In 2017, in the context of the Year of Ecology in Russia, the Russian Government dedicated a set of activities to the Arctic. As a result, the rehabilitation of environmental damage, oil response exercises in the ice and clean-up from scrap metal were implemented in the Arctic. Besides, private companies introduced the management system of greenhouse gas emission [42]. The creation of specially protected natural areas in the Arctic was executed in the frames of Year of Ecology in Russia. For example, the oil response exercise nearby to the Prirazlomnoye Platform was held and, as a result, the methodological guidelines in case of oil spillover were developed. Around 18.5 tons of waste were eliminated from the Arctic that improved the life of one million people [42]. These activities were implemented successfully since they were personally controlled by the President of Russia [43].

However, S. Donskoy, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, acknowledged that there are many cities with an extremely high level of air pollution in the Arctic [42]. Some factories still employ unclean technologies in their production processes. S. Donskoy added that there were difficulties with the allocation of financial resources from the federal budget for public programs of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Many secondary programs were reduced or even suspended [42]. The implementation terms of environmental programs were expanded from three to five years.

Russia implemented the environmental policy in the Arctic moderately as several public programs and plans were cancelled in 2012–2016.

1.4. Transport policy

The Northern Sea Route (NSR) is expected to become an alternative route to the Suez Canal. If the route from Murmansk to Yokohama via the Suez Canal takes 24 000 km, the navigation via the NSR can take only 11 000 km [44]. Therefore, the NSR can become a potential and beneficial project in the nearest future. 16 Arctic maritime ports provide 7% of the total cargo of Russian ports [21]. Oil, coal, ores, containers, general cargo and petroleum products are transported via the Northern Sea Route. Russia developed hydrographical research for the NSR. 287 navigation objects were technically equipped; however, the overall technical equipment is only 40%, yet, the indicator continues to grow [21].

The icebreaker fleet is vital for the development of the Northern Sea Route. As a result, in 2015-2017, Russia built new diesel-electric icebreakers 'Murmansk', 'Vladivostok', 'Novorossijsk' and the icebreaker 'Viktor Chernomordyn' [23]. By April 2018, there were eight icebreakers, four of which were nuclear ('50 let Pobedy', 'Jamal', 'Tajmyr', 'Vajgach') and other four were diesel-electric ('Admiral Makarov', 'Krasin', 'Kapitan Hlebnikov' and 'Kapitan Dranicyn') [21, 23].

The development of port infrastructure is necessary to ensure maritime activities in the High North. In 2016, Russia completed the reconstruction of the biggest Murmansk port in the Arctic [36]. As a result, the total volume of cargo in Murmansk port was more than 38 million of tons in 2016 that showed a 40% growth in comparison with 2015 [21]. This was a result of newly launched projects on transportation of oil and increase of transhipment activities in Varandej port. The ports of Anadyr', Pevek and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskij were under reconstruction in 2017 [21]. The Russian Government created four Arctic base points in the Dikson, Tiksi, Pevek and Providenija ports [23].

Russia partly put the Sabetta port into operation in 2017. Russia planned to transport around 16.5 million tons of liquefied gas per year via this port in 2018 [23]. The Russian Government invested more than RUB 70 billion from the federal budget in the Sabetta port project and the overall investments were around RUB 108 billion [21]. The development of the port was highly dependent upon the development of mining operations in the Arctic.

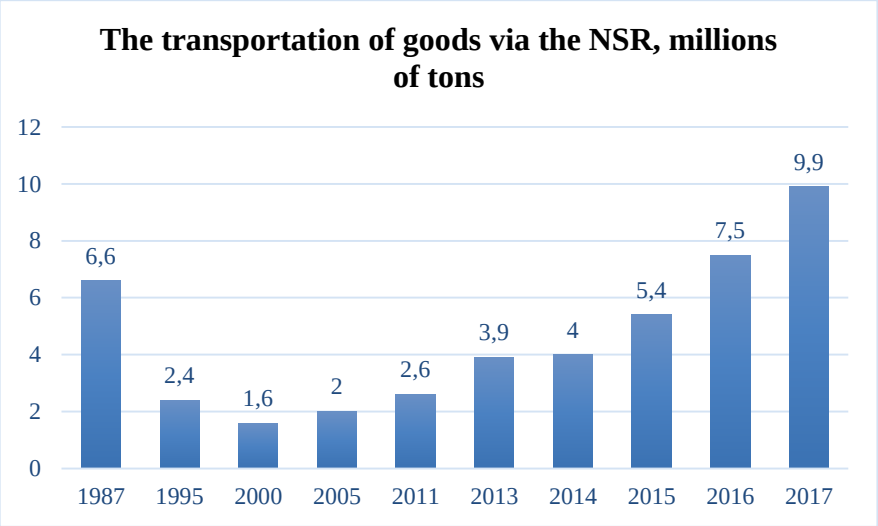

Fig. 1. The transportation of goods via the NSR. Adapted from the website of the Russian Government. *Source:* [23]

The development of the NSR resulted in a gradual increase in the total volume of the transport of goods in 2012–2017 [23]. Figure 1 shows that there was a dramatic growth in the transport of goods via the NSR from 2.6 million tons in 2011 to 9.9 million tons in 2017.

The NSR development is set to ensure the transportation of fossil fuels (e.g. oil, ores) to clients [42]. The possible breakdown or decline in mining operations in the Arctic will hurt the development of the NSR since there would be no goods to transport via the NSR and no point in building new icebreakers or ports to further advance the NSR. Transport policy in the Arctic is highly dependent on the overall progress in Russia's Arctic policy.

Since 2016, the NSR has become a key policy field in the Arctic for the Russian authority [22, 23]. The Russian authority considers the development of the NSR as the beneficial and dynamic project that can give additional revenues to the federal budget. By 2024, Russia has set an ambitious goal to achieve 80 million tons of the goods to be transported via the Northern Sea Route [17].

Despite the salience and relative successes in 2014–2017, Russia could not implement all projects regarding the development of the Northern Sea Route. The Russian authority repeatedly acknowledged that much more NSR projects could be implemented in 2012–2017 [21; 22; 23]. Some projects were cancelled or, what is more common, postponed until further funding is secured [22].

We listed the main causes that slowed down transport policy implementation in the Arctic:

- Scarce federal budget resources and lack of foreign investments
- absence of public-private partnership mechanism
- high dependence of the NSR project on mining operations projects in the Arctic
- poor and depleted port infrastructure makes the NSR unattractive for shipping and further private and foreign investments
- lack of icebreakers does not meet the growing demand from companies to use the NSR.

The ongoing rapid growth of the total volume of transportation of goods via the NSR promises economic profits for the Russian Government. However, the analysis showed that there was a set of constraints to develop the NSR at a higher rate and Russia implemented transport policy in the Arctic moderately.

Discussion

The empirical analysis showed that mining operations in the Arctic were the most unsuccessful policy field in Russia's Arctic policy implementation in 2008–2017. The Russian Government performed at a moderate level when it comes to environmental and transport policy (the NSR). The degree of military policy implementation, however, was quite high, and we can consider this policy field as salient and well-implemented.

The analysis of four policy fields showed that they are not similar in scope and relevance. The key policy field in Russia's Arctic policy has been mining operations. However, it has become the most unsuccessful one since different internal and external factors negatively impacted its policy implementation. As a result, mining operations in the Arctic has become, on the one hand, the most ambitious and salient, and, on the other hand, the worst implemented policy field.

Russia implemented environmental and transport policy in the Arctic to support the attainment of the primary objective of the Russian Government – to make the Arctic a 'strategic resource base of Russia' [14]. Environmental standards have been crucial for mining operations in the Arctic and the NSR is to operate the transportation of mineral resources. We observed that the development of the NSR has been gaining more and more significance for Russia's Arctic policy since 2016 [17].

Military policy in the Arctic can be outlined as an independent and special policy field in Russia's public policy in general. We assume that the military policy successes in the Arctic can be better understood if they are considered as an integral part of Russia's military policy.

The analysis of key Russia's policy fields in the Arctic showed that overall policy implementation was not sufficient. The government actions were not always consistent with its plans and intentions and it caused a lack of policy implementation in the Arctic. The degree of policy implementation and success rate depends on the policy field. While Russia achieved the goals of military security in the Arctic successfully, mining operations in the High North were implemented poorly. Environmental protection and the development of the NSR were carried out moderately with some programs and projects being reduced or even postponed by the Russian Government.

Conclusion

During the research, we encountered several limitations. Firstly, the analysis of government documents as a method posed the limitation in the sense that we used the data only from open sources. It could limit the study in terms of the diversity of the data.

Secondly, considering that a vast number of documents was available in the public domain and the data collection was completed manually, it was time-consuming for us to choose which data is specifically relevant for further interpretation. We recognise that some data could be misinterpreted during the data collection stage.

Future research on Russia's Arctic policy implementation can address theoretically-driven questions through the application of rationalism, elite theory, new public management, institutionalist or constructivist approaches. It might be interesting to find out which theory explains the best policy implementation in the Russian Arctic. Moreover, the application of computational text analysis methods makes it feasible to work with the massive amount of data.

The cross-country comparative analysis of Arctic policy implementation (especially among Arctic states) through the lens of the public policy perspective can potentially open up new routes in Arctic studies. Finally, researchers will be able to conduct the quantitative analysis of Russia's Arctic policy soon as the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation has recently been recognised as a special statistical object by the Russian Government. To date, the data is limited to 2016-2019 years and, in a few years, the timeline will be valid to undertake the quantitative study.

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