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НЕДАВНИЕ АМЕРИКАНСКИЕ РАБОТЫ ПО РОССИЙСКОЙ АРКТИКЕ

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Этот доклад анализирует научный вклад двух недавно опубликованных книг, написанных американскими учеными. Монографии Пола Джонсона «Завоевание Российской Арктики» и Марлен Ларуэль «Российская стратегия в Арктике и на Дальнем Севере» были опубликованы в 2014 г. Работа Джонсона является исторической научной работой, посвященной попыткам России и Советского Союза освоить Арктику. Хотя эти попытки были инициированы еще в XIX веке, основная часть монографии посвящена XX и, в меньшей степени, XXI веку, когда советская и постсоветская власть подходили к региону, руководствуясь идеологией, а равным образом и стратегией, часто весьма отличающимися от тех, что практиковали соседние северные страны. В то время как монография Джонсона фокусировалась на освоении Русского Севера с конца XIX века, работа Ларуэль касается почти исключительно реалий и перспектив XXI столетия. Представленный доклад оценивает и изучает их контекст. Хотя эти книги не предлагают окончательные ответы, но обе они вносят значительный вклад в продолжающиеся научные дебаты.

АРКТИКА; ПРИРОДА; СЕВЕР; НАУЧНАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА;
АМЕРИКАНСКИЕ НАУЧНЫЕ ТРУДЫ; ИСТОРИЯ; СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ НАУКА;
НЕФТЬ И ГАЗ; СТРАТЕГИИ.

In this paper, I would like to discuss the implications of two recent English-language books. Paul R. Josephson's *Conquest of the Russian Arctic* [1] and Marlene Laruelle's *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North* [2], were both published the United States in 2014, and, as such, are books written by American scholars prior to Russia's annexation of the Crimea. That annexation, followed by the subsequent developments in Russian-American relations, has shifted realities and perceptions. The effects of this shift

are visible in Russia's north as well as the south. To state the obvious, the Russian government's priorities have been reordered and Russia's national budget is under strain. In regard to the Arctic, the ramifications of these changes have had consequences for both ambitions and possibilities. So, a question I would like to pose at the outset is: given these important shifts, what can Josephson's *Conquest* and Laruelle's *Strategies* offer to international and Russian audiences?

Josephson is a professor in the Department of History at Colby College, which is located in the state of Maine. He is a well-known historian of Russian and Soviet science and technology, with many books on his resume, including a history of Soviet physics, an account of technological utopianism, the story of Akademgorodok, and a biography of Zhores Alferov [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]. He has also co-written the first full-length English-language environmental history of Russia [9]. Much of Josephson's work deals with the intertwining relationships involving science, ideology, environment, and society.

In contrast, the French-born and -trained Laruelle comes from policy-oriented research background. Her present title is Research Professor at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies of The Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, located in Washington DC. Her other works include several co-edited volumes focused on strategic issues, policy papers (many co-edited) and a book on Eurasianism (focusing on its permutations in the post-Soviet period) [10]. Fittingly, whereas Josephson's contribution focuses on the assimilation [*osvoenie*] of Russia's north from the late nineteenth century on, Laruelle's deals almost exclusively with its realities and prospects in the twenty-first.

Josephson's book is a work of historical scholarship that details Russian and Soviet attempts to develop the Arctic. Although these efforts were initiated in the nineteenth century, the bulk of *Conquest* is devoted to the twentieth and, to a lesser extent, the twenty-first centuries, when Soviet and post-Soviet approaches to the region, informed by ideology as well as strategy, often diverged from those of other northern countries. These differences were most pronounced during Soviet times, but their legacies persist to this day. Of course, the Russian north is an immense region, and its breadth is a challenge to any historian. Josephson resolves this dilemma by focusing on its most populated,

urbanized, and industrialized section – the three provinces of Murmansk, Karelia, and Arkhangel'sk, aka “the Russian northwest.”

The chosen focus is also a significant compromise. Much of the Arctic is left out of the discussion. Another deficit is that the book has very little to say about the native population of the region. The only indigenous people who receive substantive, albeit sporadic, coverage are the Nentsy.

Conquest is organized thematically rather than chronologically. (Another compromise: The thematic organization sometimes makes it difficult to find specific information.) Josephson's research draws on local as well as central Russian archives. He begins with accounts of the exploration of the region and ends with its current precarious position as both an inspiration for future development (the Northern Sea Route, resource extraction, etc.) and a cautionary tale (severe environmental degradation).

The focus on the northwest plays to Josephson's expertise. In a book written by a prominent historian of science and technology, one expects a nuanced consideration of Arctic science, technology, and industrial exploitation. Josephson delivers on this front; readers who are interested in how the Soviet state went about studying and “modernizing” this forbidding terrain will find a wealth of information and insightful analysis. The Russian northwest was home to such mega-projects as the White Sea-Baltic canal and closed cities such as Molotovsk, Russia's nuclear shipbuilding center, and the nickel-smelting town of Monchegorsk. The book covers these elements. Josephson also has much to say about the development of increasingly sophisticated icebreakers, the growth of increasingly specialized scientific research and development (as manifested by, among other elements, specialized institutes and research stations), and the advent of massive construction and mining projects.

The challenges of building even the most basic infrastructure, such as passable roads and functioning railroads, also receive coverage. The uneasy tension between the imperatives of industrial development and its immense costs in human health and environmental degradation is a thematic thread throughout. All in all, Josephson's *Conquest* provides sophisticated and nuanced coverage of the ups and downs of what the author calls Arctic assimilation, particularly from the 1930s on.

Josephson also analyzes the place of penal labor in “assimilating” the region and garnering its mineral and industrial potential. Much of this is covered in the compelling third chapter, “The Role of the Gulag in Arctic Conquest,” which highlights the prominent and instrumental role of the Stalin-era slave labor system in developing the Soviet north. Here Josephson relates how the cajoled efforts of the relatively privileged *sharashka* engineers and the run-of-the-mill hungry, emaciated, and eminently expendable Gulag prisoners functioned as an essential complement to the heroics of Soviet pilots and explorers that were so widely trumpeted by the regime.

Although in the main a synthetic text seeking to provide a general historical introduction to the region, Josephson’s *Conquest* provides many insights that reward attentive readers of all levels of expertise. That said, this is mainly a book on the post-nineteenth century history of Russia’s northwest, rather than the entire north. The history of the Russian north *as a whole* (much less the more ambiguous Russian Arctic) is a daunting task, of which this is but a component.

The stated aim of Laruelle’s *Strategies* is to present “a comprehensive assessment of Russia’s strategy in the Arctic” [2, p.xxiii]. Although with some caveats, the book delivers fairly well on this ambition: its eight brisk chapters provide a multi-sided brief on Russia’s recent approaches to the far north. The source base for *Strategies* is heavily derived from (primarily English-language) policy literature. This genre can be dry reading, but thankfully, like Josephson Laruelle arranges this material thematically, resulting in a largely readable narrative – except when she yields to the temptation of getting bogged down in policy detail. Of course, this literature has its biases and predispositions, and Laruelle’s book echoes many of them.

In a work that is considerably shorter and breezier than Josephson’s *Conquest*, Laruelle strives to give proper due to the various contexts in which contemporary Russian visions have been formed. Recognizing and emphasizing the connection between the Arctic agendas of Russia’s political class with its overarching geopolitical ideas, economic goals, and domestic politics, she devotes much attention to conditions in the Russia Federation as a whole. (The recent depopulation of Russia’s north, for example, is placed in the context of Russia’s larger demographic crisis.) The presentation of this

wider context displays the author's familiarity with much of the relevant literature on contemporary Russia; in this respect, her treatment of the Russian scene is superior to the second-hand analyses provided by international scholars who lack Russian language skills and engagement with the appropriate area studies context. For this reason, *Russia's Arctic Strategies* provides more than merely another "Western" viewpoint on Russia in the theoretically-oriented global Arctic "debate"; rather it props open a wider window on Russia's north-oriented policies and prospects in the early 2010s. It is also particularly helpful that the plans and agendas vis-à-vis the Arctic of the actors and decision makers of post-Soviet Russia are contextualized in this work alongside the strategies of the leaders and lobby groups of other northern countries, with emphasis on Canada, the United States, and Scandinavia. These two parallel contextualizations – one (for depth) *within* contemporary Russia and the other (for international breadth) *outside*, among international Arctic actors (countries as well as organizations) – constitute a particular strength of this book.

In contrast, Laruelle's *Strategies* is weaker on the historical context: her brief forays into Russian imperial and Soviet past of the Russia's north are superficial to the point of being misleading [2, p.24-28). That said, such superficiality is perhaps symptomatic of the policy literature genre. Many policy works do not even attempt to delve into history; Laruelle at least deserves credit for making the effort.

Laruelle paints a picture at once complex and simple. On the one hand, as is well known, Moscow's Putin-era Arctic policy is pointedly "centralized" and dominated by the president personally (and through the apparatus of the Presidential Administration and the Security Council). Yet, on the other, it is "plural" in a sense that rival military and economic agendas vie for supremacy, albeit often behind closed doors. Laruelle's argument is that, in spite of the media attention lavished on the military, economic interests have had precedence. Yet preoccupation with economic gains hardly guarantees coherence and competence in carrying out policy. To take one important example: In the economy of the Russian North (as with the country as a whole), the oil and gas industry is of course the dominant sector. And yet, Laruelle's account presents the economic strategy of pre-2014 Russia as appallingly short-

sighted: essentially, the country's decision makers simply "assumed" that oil and dry natural gas "will continue to be in high demand in the decades to come" and over the course of many years – when they had the funds and the opportunities – made little tangible investment to search for new resources or make technological improvements [2, p.146]. This approach *seemed* good enough when the world prices for oil and gas were high. Wasteful use of energy could be ignored. But all the while the infrastructures of the oil and gas industries, developed back in Soviet times and inherited by the Russian Federation, were steadily eroding. Thus, even before the financial crisis that commenced in 2008, expert forecasts for Russia's future oil production were pessimistic. In those times, the forecasts for natural gas were not as dire as for oil. But, in retrospect, we can see that the natural gas industry was also in trouble: Russia's natural gas production stagnated throughout the 2000s and Gazprom, the country's flagship conglomerate, while it was highly profitable due to its sheer size and near monopolistic position and the sustained high price for natural gas on the world market was, according to Laruelle's data, actually able to increase production "solely by buying the shares of some of its privately owned competitors" [2, p.141]. If true, this is indeed a poor record. The Kremlin's oil and gas policies vacillated between conditional overtures to foreign investors aimed at attracting foreign firms and therefore vital technology transfer to Russia and (the sometimes unpredictable) bouts of "resource nationalism" that scared off foreign investors and intimidated some of the country's domestic producers. All this is to say that, Laruelle argues that even in this most crucial sector – the bedrock of Russia's economy – and well before the crucible of 2014, and even 2008, Moscow's policy-makers failed to prepare for the future.

These and other miscalculations notwithstanding, Russia's policy makers still view the Arctic as their potential salvation. They tend to put a hopeful gloss on Russia's prospects in the conditions of climate change, anticipating, among other benefits, a windfall from the opening up of the Northeast Passage and advantages for the country's agriculture and hydroelectric production. Such prognostications are, of course, widely contested. Here again the international framing of Laruelle's book offers additional context. Laruelle repeatedly draws attention to the parallels between Russia and Canada: the two countries share an

interest in claiming sovereignty over the Arctic Ocean's sea bed – and the potentially lucrative sea lanes north of Eurasia and North America. While examining the prospects of these sea lanes, Laruelle draws our attention to the reality that that these routes look far more feasible on a map in a planning room than they do out in real ocean conditions: no matter the rate of ice melt, actual sailing conditions in the Arctic will remain daunting for years to come and international shipping companies will likely maintain scepticism. For this reason, as for many others, deriving riches from the Arctic will likely be difficult. This is so even without taking account of the significant, yet still poorly understood, downsides and risks of the changes associated with climate change. Russia's policy planners seem to hope that the ample natural resources of Russia's north will somehow compensate for other factors and trends, however dire, and obviate the need to adjust strategic thinking to pressing ecological realities, much less economic, demographic, and geopolitical ones. An important accomplishment of *Russia's Arctic Strategies* is that it patiently demonstrates not only that such reasoning is overoptimistic, but how and why this is so. For this reason, this book is essential reading for those in search of a guide to the context in which Russia's Arctic strategy was shaped in the early 2010s and continues to be shaped today.

As noted at the outset of this paper, much has changed in the last two years. Yet, regardless of these important shifts, I hope that I have shown that both Josephson's *Conquest of the Russian Arctic* and Marlene Laruelle's *Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North*, contain much that is valuable for scholars of the Arctic, regardless of what country's passport we may hold. Neither of these books offers definitive answers, but they both make important contributions to our ongoing debates.

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RECENT AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP ON RUSSIA'S ARCTIC.

This paper analyzes the scholarly contributions of two recent books on the Russian Arctic produced by American scholars. The monograph Paul Josephson's Conquest of the Russian Arctic and Marlene Laruelle's Russia's Arctic Strategies and the Future of the Far North, were both published in 2014. Josephson's book is a work of historical scholarship that details Russian and Soviet attempts to develop the Arctic. Although these efforts were initiated in the nineteenth century, the bulk of Conquest is devoted to the twentieth and, to a lesser extent, the twenty-first centuries, when Soviet and post-Soviet approaches to the region, informed by ideology as well as strategy, often diverged from those of other northern countries. Whereas Josephson's monograph focuses on the assimilation of Russia's north from the late nineteenth century on, Laruelle's deals almost exclusively with its realities and prospects in the twenty-first. The paper assesses and contextualizes them. Neither of these books offers definitive answers, but they both make important contributions to our ongoing debates.

ARCTIC; ENVIRONMENT; NORTH; LITERATURE; AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP; HISTORY; SOCIAL SCIENCE; POLICY; OIL AND GAS; STRATEGIES.
