

**Barents Euro-Arctic Region and its management system**  
**Bronshtein Iu. (Russian Federation)**  
**Баренцев Евро-Арктический регион и система его управления**  
**Бронштейн Ю. М. (Российская Федерация)**

*Бронштейн Юрий Михайлович / Bronshtein Iurii Mikhailovich – студент,  
 Высшая школа экономики и управления,  
 Северный (Арктический) федеральный университет им. М. В. Ломоносова, г. Архангельск*

**Abstract:** *this article analyzes the motives of establishing Barents Euro-Arctic Region and its influence on economic well-being of member-countries. In addition, article examines the unique two-level management system of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.*

**Аннотация:** *статья изучает предпосылки к созданию Баренцева Евро-Арктического региона и его влияние на экономическое благосостояние стран-участниц. Также в статье анализируется уникальная двухуровневая система управления Баренцевым Евро-Арктическим регионом.*

**Keywords:** *Barents Euro-Arctic Region, BEAR, Scandinavian countries, international cooperation, management.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Баренцев Евро-Арктический регион, БЕАР, Скандинавия, международное сотрудничество, управление.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Historical sources and archaeological evidence suggests that Nordic countries had different types of cooperation since ancient times. Hunters and fishermen were making long seasonal expeditions to hunt, and functioned as a community of Vikings and fishermen. Fishermen sailed for centuries from the White Sea to northern Norway. Before revolution in 1917 Russia had commercial relations and contacts between people on both sides of the border. However, during the USSR period trade was very limited it was a period a period of confrontation.

Changes appeared in 1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev during his speech in Murmansk called for greater cooperation with neighboring Nordic countries [1, p. 290]. Soon situation on a Russian-Norwegian border changed in a positive way and people started traveling. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 meant the end of the Cold War; Soviet Union collapsed in December, 1991. Political confrontation began to disappear slowly. Russia has become an equal and strong partner in the new regional initiatives, launched in Kirkenes on 11 January 1993. Kirkenes Declaration was a new foreign policy, focused on the contacts between the people and which provided the direct involvement of local and regional authorities.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region involves area of 1.2 million square kilometers with a population of more than 5 million people. According to language, the region can be divided into three language zones - Russian, Finnish, Scandinavian (Norwegian and Swedish), which hampers interregional communication. Greater complexity creates socio-cultural differences that exist not only between Russian and Scandinavian countries, but also among the general population and the indigenous peoples.

However, awareness of all countries of the common cultural past was an important link in the development of cooperation, as well as the joint distribution of natural resources, in which are the BEAR is rich, and an awareness of the historical experience of successful trading.

In this paper I want to study the main motives for establishing the Barents Cooperation, its structure and the results of cooperation achieved in 22 years of work.

### **2.0 Motives for establishing the Barents Cooperation**

Political motives for the formation of Barents region began to take shape in the late 40s. Already in 1948, Sweden, Denmark and Norway have begun negotiations on the establishment of the Nordic defense alliance. However, due to internal disagreements, the negotiations ended without result. In 1949 Denmark and Norway joined NATO, and Sweden and Finland have declared their neutrality, which quite satisfied the Soviet Union. Thus, relative political stability in the northern region was achieved.

A new attempt to make effective Nordic cooperation came in the early 50s, as a result of the joint efforts of the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Party. They have developed a new ideology of the Nordic countries. Inter-parliamentary political forum of the concept of regional cooperation began in 1952 was called the Nordic Council. Formation of a new ideology of the Nordic countries allowed to unify social legislation to create a single labor market, and to introduce a visa-free regime between member countries. Visa-free regime has especially contrasted with «closed» Soviet border, which did not allow the Soviet Union to join the process of integration of the north, as it was «virtually impossible to cross the Soviet-Norwegian border at Kirkenes» [2, p. 32].

During postwar period world has undergone a radical transformation – bipolar structure of international relations was changed to multipolar. Military confrontations were replaced with other treats and dangers, which

required extraordinary actions. In 1991, when Soviet Union collapsed the neutrality policy of some Nordic countries lost its significance, and gave them opportunity to join EU. In the sequential process of integration of the Nordic countries to European community only Norway stood apart. Firstly, Norway is the only country in the Barents region, to join NATO. Secondly, a significant part of the population has consistently opposed its entry into the EU. Emerging in the early 90s geopolitical changes, allowed Norway to significantly raise its status. This was facilitated by a significant weakening of the Swedish role as a regional leader, and new focus of Finland focus on the countries of the Baltic Sea. In these circumstances, Norway was the only Nordic country that got an opportunity to initiate the creation of a new regional union in Northern Europe – Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR).

At the same time, with the formation of the idea of the Barents region, researchers started studying the origins of cooperation, traditions and historical background of its formation. Researchers have studied the Pomor trade between northern Norway and the north of Russia, thus reviving the historical memory of the peoples. As Ola Tunander notes: «The major part of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry report on the Barents Region (RNMFA, 1993) deals not with the present political and economic activities but with history. It describes one thousand years of trade and cultural ties along the coast of Arctic Europe, and its general importance for trade, not for military battles» [2, p. 31]. Economic Cooperation has become the basis for mutual penetration of cultural elements in the Russian and Norwegian society. That cooperation between the peoples of the Far North contributed to the formation of the Barents Region and the resumption of human relationships within the region. Researchers used different similarities in cultural and everyday life of BEAR-member countries to form their common identity. For example, Geir Hønneland claims that «people in the area all live in a region characterized by a harsh climate, a vulnerable nature, long distances to national centers, and a sparse population, which allegedly gives them some kind of common world view and a mutual understanding of each other's situation, notwithstanding the state borders in the area» [3, p. 8]. Even Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg paid much attention in his speech on common heritage: «We know there has been long-standing contacts between groups in the region. In many ways the Barents Region was a common cultural-historical region before the European nation-states drew borders across the area. The Sami culture is an important common denominator in the region. The historical ties between Finns and Karelians are well-known and there are accounts of close contacts between North-Norway and the White Sea, that are over thousand years old. When we now establish the Barents Region we are doing nothing more than normalizing the situation in the north» [4, p. 231].

On April 24, 1992 Stoltenberg first introduced the concept in the of the Barents region, also he initiated meeting of leaders of the three northeast provinces of Norway: Finnmark, Troms and Nordland; and Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions. Formed at this meeting working group was in coordination with the central authorities to promote cooperation in economy, science, environment and human contacts. Later this work was joined by representatives of the Swedish province of Norrbotten and Finnish Lapland.

That is how work began on the establishment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and with this new level of political, economic and cultural contacts between the people of the northern regions of Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland was achieved.

Establishment of the Barents region was confirmed the signing of the Declaration on the cooperation in the region in 1993, which was called Kirkenes Declaration. It emphasized that in order to promote constructive cooperation and good neighbor relations, members should expand contacts between people and cultural cooperation in the region. Much attention was paid to cooperation in science and technology, tourism, education and cultural exchange, as well as projects specifically aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples of the North. Thus, humanitarian cooperation was officially proclaimed as an important part of the BEAR, and the main purpose of the Barents cooperation from the very beginning was the solution of problems in the northern regions and the improvement of people's living conditions.

### **3.0 Management system of BEAR**

A feature of the Barents region is its two-level character: Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) acts at governmental level and the Barents Regional Council (BRC) operates at the level of local authorities. BEAC meets annually at the level of Foreign Ministers. On the 2nd session, held on 14-15 September 1994 in Tromsø, the priority areas of cooperation were identified as cultural relations and human contacts, rights of indigenous people, educational and scientific cooperation and tourism. The Council emphasized the fundamental importance of human contacts, sports and cultural exchanges for the full development of cooperation in the region. These areas are particularly important in the creation of a regional identity.

On the 4th and 5th sessions of the BEAC, the focus has been given to the economy and trade in the region, but since its 6th session, held on 4-5 March 1999 in Bodø according to Norwegian initiative the policy of raising the priority of the Barents cooperation in the direction of humanitarian measure was adopted, so Council has become more focused on projects in the field of science and education, culture and tourism. For the first time it emphasized the importance of youth cooperation for the expansion of human contacts and the need for Barents Regional Council to pay more attention to youth policy.

The objectives of the Barents Regional Council were identified as following: to ensure a peaceful and stable development in the region; to strengthen and develop cultural relations between the peoples in the region; encourage the formation of new and to develop existing bilateral and multilateral relations in the region; laying the foundations for sustainable and social development in the region; to promote the development, which takes into account the interests of indigenous peoples, to give indigenous people opportunity to participate in council's work. In 1993, at the regional level, there were established different working groups in such areas as culture; higher education, science and student exchanges; secondary education and exchanges of students; indigenous issues; women's issues. Since the 1990s, the number of working groups increased significantly – now there are 15 groups. Combining national and regional working groups became a clear tendency.

The Barents Regional Council approved the new Barents Program for 2014-2018 at its meeting on June 3, 2013 in Kirkenes. It particularly provides:

1. Promotion of entrepreneurship and the accelerated development of the region.
2. The expansion of cross-border cooperation in order to achieve accelerated economic growth and quality of life.
3. Support for the joint management of resources, and preservation of natural resources.
4. A joint climate change adaptation.
5. Enhancing cooperation in innovation and research activities.
6. Concentration of efforts on the completion of missing links in transport infrastructure.
7. Facilitation of border crossing for workers, entrepreneurs, tourists and students.
8. The expansion of cultural cooperation with the aim of deepening understanding and Regional Development [6].

At October 18, 1993 the Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes started its work. It supports the work of both national and regional levels. From January, 1994 the most important task of the Secretariat is working on the Barents program and related projects. The first program had first concretization of the beginning of cooperation in the Barents Region. Its main task was to promote regional cooperation in priority areas for the positive economic and social development.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

To sum up: creation of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, stated in the declaration signed by the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries in Kirkenes, was due to complex reasons. There was the collapse of the bipolar world, the processes of globalization and integration that took place in Europe, to a large extent determined by the development of regionalism and regionalization. The development of regionalization in Northern Europe contributed to centuries-old traditions of cooperation across the borders of the population of the northern territories in the Scandinavian countries, Russia and Finland. The experience of cooperation in the Nordic council in the postwar period, also contributed to the creation of BEAR. Gorbachev's initiatives in Murmansk weakened military confrontation and helped to build trust between Russia and European North. There was a need together to solve common problems accumulated in the north. Creating a common identity contributed to the creation of the region.

The two-level organization of the Barents region is of particular value for the further development of cooperation, it allows to do important work on the development of the region without the involvement of the central government. I find it particularly important for Russia, where federal authorities can be against such a partnership, but population of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Karelia regions can get an opportunity to take part in BEAR cooperation. Decisions taken by the central government, often based on the priorities and findings at the regional level. Thorvald Stoltenberg ideas pointed to the fundamentally important factor - the initiative and support from below: He said that cooperation between the countries of the Barents region is determined by people living in this region, but not by the state authorities.

#### **References**

1. *Åtland Kristian* Mikhail Gorbachev, the Murmansk Initiative, and the Desecuritization of Interstate Relations in the Arctic. Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association. Vol. 43 (3), 2008) Pp 289-311 (23 p.).
2. *Tunanader Ola* Inventing the Barents region: Overcoming the East-West divide in Olav Schram Stokke & Ola Tunander (eds.) The Barents region. Co-operation in Arctic Europe, 1994, pp. 31-44 (14 p.).
3. *Hønneland Geir* Identity Formation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. Paper to the International Conference on the Barents Euro-Arctic Region at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo, 27-28 April 1998.
4. *Nielsen Jens Petter* The Barents Euro-Arctic Region - The Return of History? In Maria Uihtrmmaki (ed.) The Flexible Frontier - Change and Continuity in Finnish-Russian Relations. Aleksanteri Series 5/2007. University of Helsinki. Pp. 231-244 (14 p.).

5. *Nielsen Jens Petter* Russian Norwegian Relations in Arctic Europe: The History of the «Barents Euro-Arctic Region», *East European Quarterly* XXXV, No. 2, 2001, pp 163-181 (18 p.).
6. The Barents Programme 2014–2018 [интернет ресурс] URL: [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Barents\\_Programme\\_2014\\_2018\\_adopted\\_2\\_June\\_2013.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Barents_Programme_2014_2018_adopted_2_June_2013.pdf) (Дата обращения к документу: 20.04.16).