

Concept Note

Title of the Seminar: International Expert Seminar “The American Factor in Indo–Russian Relations in the Arctic”

Date: September 23-26, 2025

Venue: Moscow, Russia

Organised by:

The Arctic Century – Arctic Research Centre (Convenor)

An independent analytical centre conducting interdisciplinary research on Arctic affairs, focusing on geopolitics, regional cooperation, infrastructure development, and security (read more at <https://arcticcentury.org/about/>).

The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund (Co-convenor)

A foundation established to support international dialogue and trust-building through academic and expert cooperation, with a focus on Russia’s foreign policy and public diplomacy (read more at <https://en.gorchakovfund.ru/>).

Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ICCA RAS) (Co-convenor)

A leading research institution focusing on contemporary processes in Asia, including strategic developments and international relations in the Eurasian and Arctic contexts (read more at <https://www.iccaras.ru/>).

Background

Recent efforts by the United States and Canada to advance Arctic cooperation frameworks that exclude Russia have met with scepticism from a number of non-Arctic actors. Among these, Indian policymakers and analysts are frequently cited by Russian experts as adopting a more inclusive and multipolar perspective.

Following the Moscow summit in July 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed a joint vision of the Arctic as an integral part of Greater Eurasia. This vision promotes the development of a unified trade, investment, transportation, digital, energy and financial space—linking Russia and its partners across Central, Northeast and Southeast Asia. In this context, both governments have underscored the strategic relevance of new transport corridors, Arctic Sea routes, and the resilience of supply chains and financial systems.

However, recent initiatives by the Trump administration risk undermining these ambitions. Notably, the trilateral agreement between the United States, Canada and Finland on the construction of multifunctional icebreakers has moved from planning to implementation, with financial backing secured. The lack of timely analysis of this development may result in a shift in the balance of power in Arctic shipping, potentially jeopardising Russia's competitive edge in icebreaker capacity. Furthermore, the United States appears intent on disrupting Russia–India cooperation in Arctic shipbuilding, including plans to construct non-nuclear icebreakers at Indian shipyards.

Seminar Rationale

The proposed seminar aims to clarify India's evolving expert perspectives on Arctic cooperation with Russia in light of growing geopolitical pressure from the United States. The central idea is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the American factor in the Russia–India Arctic partnership, with attention to perceived and actual risks in the following areas:

- Energy trade and logistics;
- Shipbuilding cooperation, including the production of commercial vessels and icebreakers at Indian shipyards;
- Joint research, innovation and technology development (R&D);
- Strategic foresight regarding scenarios for bilateral cooperation through 2029;
- Policy proposals and initiatives to be included in a bilateral roadmap.

This initiative builds on a series of successful Gorchakov Fund–supported projects in 2023–2024, including “Arctic Dialogue”, “Asian Dialogue”, and an expert mission involving North-Western universities (NEOSEC) to leading Indian think tanks in New Delhi.

Project Overview

The seminar will be held in person in Moscow over a two-day period. The first day will feature three panel discussions (each lasting 120 minutes) with experts from Russia, India and the U.S. The second day will be dedicated to a foresight session with the participation of master's and doctoral students, as well as early-career researchers. This session will provide an opportunity for direct dialogue with senior experts specialising in foreign policy, security, and economic strategy in the North Atlantic and the Arctic.

The selection of foreign participants is being conducted in collaboration with Indian partners. Key contacts were established during the February 2024 NEOSEC mission to New Delhi, which included visits to India's leading analytical institutions. Subject to prior agreement, experts from NatStrat and the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) have expressed interest in joining the initiative and providing informational support.

On the Russian side, academic and institutional support will be provided by faculty members of Saint Petersburg State University, Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Institute for US and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the NEOSEC consortium of North-Western universities.

Expected Outcomes

The seminar is intended to serve as the foundation for the establishment of a long-term expert platform, which will operate in the form of an annual Russia–India scientific and policy dialogue on Arctic affairs, hosted alternately in each country. This first iteration will mark the launch of preparations for *a comprehensive analytical report entitled “The Arctic in the Context of Russia–India–US Relations.”*

Qualitative outcomes include:

- Establishment of a bilateral expert platform that brings together leading Russian and Indian specialists in foreign policy, security, and international economic relations, with a specific focus on the North Atlantic and Arctic regions. The platform will take the form of an annual expert seminar, alternating between Russia and India. Each participant will have the opportunity to present their own vision of the key challenges and to propose discussion topics aligned with the broader theme of the seminar.
- Development of policy recommendations aimed at enhancing international confidence in cooperation with Russian academic institutions and non-governmental organisations conducting foreign policy and economic analysis in the Arctic. These recommendations will focus on fostering openness, scientific integrity, and transparent collaboration with international partners.
- Production of a joint expert report titled “The Arctic in the Context of Russia–India–US Relations,” which will synthesise the seminar’s findings and form the basis for future discussions and policy engagement.

Long-term impact:

- The project will provide a clearer understanding of how Indian experts perceive Arctic cooperation with Russia amid ongoing US pressure. It will consolidate the existing network of external experts from Russia and the Asia–Pacific region already engaged in Arctic studies. From 2025 to 2027, the organisers intend to establish a virtual centre to support Russia–India–China cooperation in the High North, with a focus on capacity-building and project-based training programmes. This initiative will further institutionalise trilateral dialogue in the Arctic and promote the sustainable integration of regional expertise.