

Review submitted by

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Bhagwat Jawahar Vishnu

on the topic

«State policy in the field of development of national maritime transport routes (on the example of the Northern Sea Route)»

submitted for the degree of candidate of political sciences in the scientific specialty **5.5.3. Public administration and sectoral policies**

The topic of Jawahar Vishnu Bhagwat's submitted thesis, "State Policy in the Development of National Maritime Transport Routes (on the example of the Northern Sea Route)", is important and relevant. The dissertation is devoted to a topic of interest to researchers as well as policymakers from many countries. An important reason for the interest in the Arctic is the realization that the Arctic has vast hydrocarbon as well as hard mineral resources. To exploit these riches transportation is key, but it also implies a need for socio-economic development in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation. Several political, international, legal, military, economic, scientific, technical, socio-economic and environmental factors may complicate the transport policy of states. Currently, Russia is trying to develop the NSR as a national transport corridor, also aiming for international competitiveness. In his dissertation, based on the conducted scientific analysis, the candidate analyses Russia's state transport policy, which has both theoretical and practical significance.

To solve this task, the candidate places his topic in the literature on transport policy, both international and Russian. He demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of current research, which comes to use in his specific analysis of NSR. A discussion on the rules of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is important, but the candidate might have mentioned that interpretation of the articles concerning ice infested areas (art 234) as well as the status of straits is contested also among legal scholars. The position of the US is to regard the provisions

of the convention as customary law. But overall, the discussion of the interest of other states in Arctic shipping is useful. Even though the general assumption is that NSR is important and useful for Russia, the candidate clearly explains limitations: draft limitations, need for icebreakers and improved infrastructure, environmental risks. NSR's main advantage remains shorter sailing distance between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

The review of the history of NSR is interesting in itself, but also very relevant in the modern context since present models for management of the NSR explicitly take lessons from earlier experience, even reinvigorating the name of the administration from the nineteen thirties – *Glavsevmorput*.

The analysis of geopolitical and geoeconomic significance wisely applies a definition of the concepts useful for analysis. He explains the role of NSR for Russia, but also how NSR is affected by international tension. The argument that NSR is important for many countries is well presented, but the fact is that transits through NSR have been quite few, this includes Chinese transits, and the candidate also presents reservations against the use of NSR from Asian countries. The discussion of pro and contras could have been more systematic. A problem here is that an analysis of economic factors is missing, beyond a few references to costs. This is clearly not what could be expected from a political science thesis, but it means that the analysis becomes undetermined. Geopolitical interest can only say so much about the prospects for Arctic shipping. In the final analysis companies will make commercial calculations.

The thesis provides a very comprehensive and interesting analysis of the organizational structure of Russia's NSR policy. It is shown that the formal structure is quite complex, even though recent reforms have aimed to clarify responsibilities. The picture relayed is of relative harmony in the relationship between state agencies, but the candidate could have mentioned the quite recent fierce bureaucratic battles between the Ministry of Transport and Rosatom.

A big plus is the discussion of regional interests and influence, a factor often forgotten in analyses of NSR. The discussion of the status of state corporations is important. The function of these corporations is given a positive assessment, but the state corporations (as well as big state dominated companies) complicate the decision-making process, and, one would think, reduce predictability. This more informal structure could be a serious concern for commercial actors. It would have been interesting to hear a discussion of these issues.

The candidate has done a big job reviewing Russian law and government planning documents. This is very useful for researchers who want to go deeper into various aspects of NSR.

The conclusion of the submitted thesis in a concise form contains the main findings and suggestions in the dissertation. In addition, it includes the factors the Russian Government needs to take into account in planning the development of the NSR. These practical recommendations are a strength of the dissertation.

The thesis provides a wealth of information. It might have been structured more clearly, e.g. using intermediate titles, and there is some overlap between chapters. But reading through the whole text convinces me of the candidate's grasp of the topic. The scientific novelty is mainly in the use of concepts from international and Russian political science literature on the empirical issues. The candidate has gone to a great length to identify relevant sources, both official documents and secondary literature.

I believe that Jawahar Vishnu Bhagwat's dissertation on: "State policy in the field of development of national maritime transport communications (on the example of the Northern Sea Route)" meets the requirements established by Order No. 11181/1 of 19.11.2021 "On the procedure for awarding academic degrees at St. Petersburg State University". The applicant Jawahar Vishnu Bhagwat deserves to be awarded the degree of Candidate of Political Sciences in the scientific specialty 5.5.3. Public administration and sectoral policies.

Violations of paragraphs 9 and 11 of this Order are not established in the dissertation.

Lysaker, Norway, 27 October 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arild Moe', with a stylized, cursive script.

Arild Moe