

Russians Want Neutral Zone in Arctic, Poll Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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As Russia limbers up for its upcoming resource extraction drive in the Arctic, a poll showed that 69 percent of Russians favor making the region a neutral zone outside of the purview of sovereign states.

Forty two percent of 1,500 poll respondents in various towns said the extraction of natural resources in the Arctic was inadmissible, only slightly less than the 45 percent who favored resource exploitation, RIA Novosti reported.

Seventeen percent of respondents to the survey, conducted by the Kremlin-backed Public Opinion Foundation on Oct. 13, said the Arctic region ought to be divided between states.

Sergei Medvedev, an academic at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, advocated the handing over of the region to an international body at the beginning of October. When the plan was brought to the attention of Vladimir Putin in a closed meeting, the president

reportedly called him a "fool."

While environmentalist organizations may be gladdened by the high proportion of Russians opposed to Arctic resource exploitation — and especially exploitation by a particular country — only 1 percent of respondents mentioned Greenpeace's Prirazlomnaya oil drilling platform protest Sep. 18, which resulted in the arrest and ongoing detention of 30 people and has kept Russia, Gazprom and the Arctic in the global spotlight.

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