



# **BIG OIL PLAYGROUND, RUSSIAN BEAR PRESERVE OR EUROPEAN PERIPHERY?**

**The Russian Barents Sea Region towards 2015**

Bjørn Brunstad  
Eivind Magnus  
Philip Swanson  
Geir Hønneland  
Indra Øverland

Short summary of a  
presentation by

Bjørn Brunstad, ECON  
analysis ([bbr@econ.no](mailto:bbr@econ.no)),

Tromsø, Nov 24th, 2004

[pics](#)

[rios](#)

[ations](#)

[ker](#)

[rwegian\)](#)

[nts Russia](#)

[Project](#)

[ct info](#)

[ct partners](#)

[ts Region](#)

[ts Russia](#)

# Barents Russia 2015

## Barents Russia 2015

Barents Russia is the far north-western corner of the Russian Federation, bordering on the Barents Sea and on the Nordic countries. It consists of five federal units which are all part of the so-called Barents Euro-Arctic Region – together with the northernmost counties of Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Barents Russia is full of natural resources – energy, fish, minerals, etc. It is heavily influenced by the Cold War and 70 years of Soviet central planning, and it houses some serious potential threats to the environment – locally and globally. It has the highest concentration of nuclear reactors in the world, and possibilities of large oil and gas production. Murmansk is European Russia's only ice-free harbour, due to the tail end of the Gulf Stream.

The region's development in the next 10-15 years seems highly unpredictable, and has important implications not only for the region itself and the neighbouring countries, but for the world. That is why we have initiated a scenario project aimed at analysing the driving forces for change in Barents Russia towards 2015.

Go to  
web

# Barents Russia



# Scenario building blocks

Population decline

Infrastructure limitations

Natural resource dependence

Oil and gas boom ?

Continued centralisation ?

The fate of reforms ?

Region's role in geopolitics?

## Different scenarios for Barents Russia's future

Scenario 1:

### Big Oil Playground

- Russian-US partnership
- Rapid oil and gas development offshore with foreign participation
- Regional politics in the north captured by oil interests
- Unequal distribution of wealth
- Fly-in/fly-out labour

Scenario 2:

### Russian Bear Preserve

- Tighter Control by Moscow
- Oil and gas projects monopolised by Russian firms
- Strengthened military presence
- Managed democracy
- A politicized economy

Scenario 3:

### European Periphery

- Large oil and gas projects postponed
- Sharply reduced population
- Diminished strategic importance
- Ties with neighbours important
- Moderate revival of traditional indigenous livelihoods



Scenario 1:

# Big Oil Playground

- Russian-US partnership
- Rapid oil and gas development offshore with foreign participation
- Regional politics in the north captured by oil interests
- Unequal distribution of wealth
  - Fly-in/fly-out labour



Barents Russia  
Big Oil Playground

Big Oil Playground 2015



Scenario 2:

# Russian Bear Preserve

- Tighter Control by Moscow
- Oil and gas projects monopolised by Russian firms
- Strengthened military presence
  - Managed democracy
  - A politicized economy



**Russian Bear Preserve 2015**



Scenario 3:

# European Periphery

- Large oil and gas projects postponed
- Sharply reduced population
- Diminished strategic importance
- Ties with neighbours important
- Moderate revival of traditional indigenous livelihoods

