

Arctic Passion News

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Dear Reader,

At Aker Arctic, we work with icebreaking ships. Our mission is to provide high-quality icebreaking ship designs and various services to streamline the construction projects of these ships.

Therefore, we follow with high interest the development of global environmental conditions, especially in respect of ice circumstances. It is well known that climate change is affecting ice conditions, mostly making shipping and sea operations easier in such areas where waters freeze.

This winter has been unusually warm

in Scandinavia and all of Europe. In southern Finland, we feel that winter has actually not arrived at all. Ice cover in the Baltic Sea may reach its lowest since records began. Daily ice charts become uninteresting to read; the only ice is located in the northernmost part of the Bothnian Bay.

According to meteorologists, this winter has been exceptional and can be explained as natural variation. Nevertheless, the long-term trend is clear, and we can expect milder winters more often in the future than previously.

A similar trend

has also been observed on the Arctic shipping routes. However, it is intriguing to observe that the Arctic ice cover is actually larger this winter than in previous years at the same time. This is due to large-scale, polar-weather patterns. While large low-pressure areas are travelling in the Northern Atlantic, the Arctic region is holding the colder air in the north. This results in warmer weather in the subarctic regions, such as the Baltic Sea, and colder conditions in the high Arctic.

Having said that, the increased shipping traffic, mainly on the Northern Sea Route (NSR), continues to experience high ice requirements. Ships have to be able to survive in heavy Arctic ice while trying to maintain good speed in order to make transportation economically viable.

The recently-started shipping activities

from the Gulf of Ob have proven that independent icebreaking vessel designs are working. Future expectations are that shipping will increase, requiring a higher number of nuclear-powered icebreakers as well as ice-capable transportation vessels.

This development is now ongoing. The Russian government has a clear strategy for it, and recent decisions to build more icebreaker capacity are an implication of that. I hope you will find our article explaining these developments and the new organization of NSR governance useful.

Last year, two new icebreakers

were delivered from the shipyards and we can take credit for designing both. The Chinese *Xue Long 2* was delivered in June 2019 and, for the time being, the world's newest icebreaker *Ob* was delivered from Vyborg shipyard in October 2019.

Both icebreakers are showcases of modern, state-of-the-art ships with unique technical capabilities, beginning their long service time in their respective duties.

Sincerely yours,
Reko-Antti Suojanen
Managing Director

