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Russia and China to form Arctic liner

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Gary Waters / Marine Traffic

Russia is pressing ahead in a project with the Chinese to make all-year container shipping voyages along the Northern Sea Route (NSR) possible.

Rosatom, which oversees the NSR, and China's NewNew Shipping are forming a joint venture to develop a fleet of five ice-classed boxships which will work all year round.

NewNew has already completed a number of Arctic transits over the past couple of years.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has been calling for far greater traffic along the NSR for a number of years, something that has been given greater impetus since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, and the subsequent shift in exports to focus far more on an Asian clientele.

The standard Suez Canal route between Europe and Asia is 21,000 km long while the NSR is 13,000 km long and can potentially reduce shipping time by more than half. With no risk of conflict like in the Black Sea, a shorter travel time than via the Suez, and no fear of pirate activity like at Bab el-Mandeb, it is clear why Russia wants to make the NSR happen.