

JUNE 2022 ANALYSIS –
RUSSIAN PRESS AGENCIES
AND THE ARCTIC

OBSERVATOIRE DE LA POLITIQUE ET LA SÉCURITÉ DE L'ARCTIQUE (OPSA) and
OBSERVATOIRE DES ADMINISTRATIONS PUBLIQUES AUTOCHTONES (OAPA)



OBSERVATOIRE DE LA POLITIQUE
ET LA SÉCURITÉ DE L'ARCTIQUE



OAPA
Observatoire des administrations
publiques autochtones

RUSSIAN PRESS AGENCIES AND THE ARCTIC – JUNE 2022

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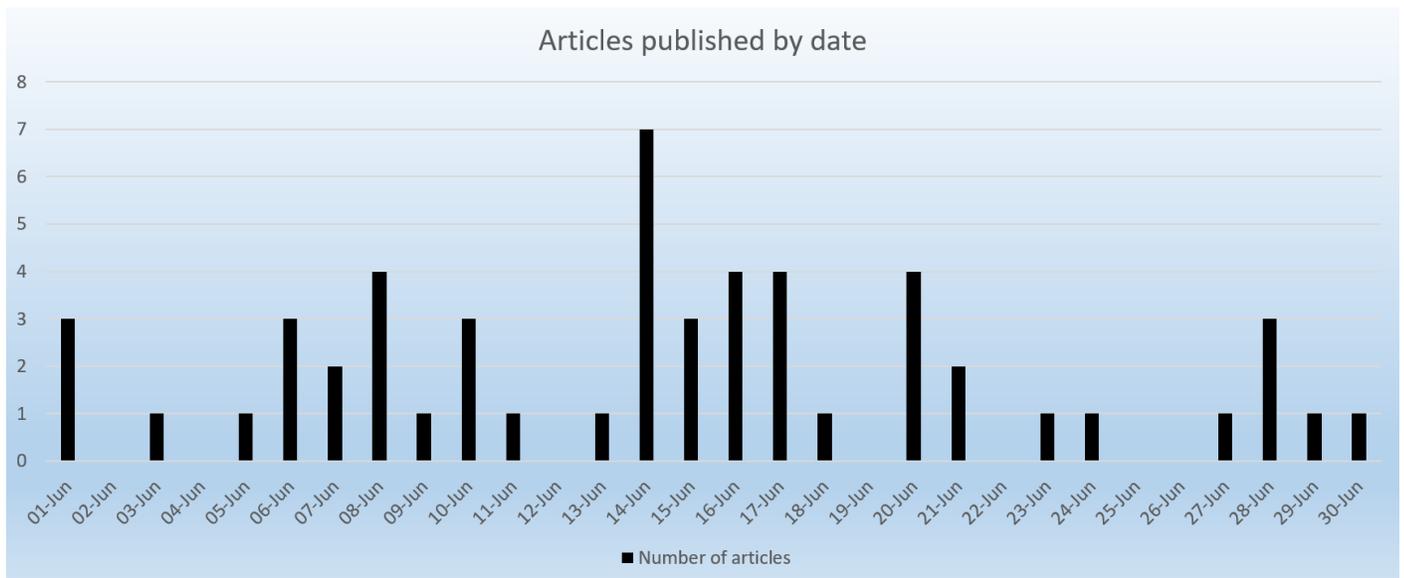
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This analysis studied how Russian press agencies Sputnik and TASS covered Arctic issues during the month of June 2022. The intensity and nature of coverage will be put in perspective to capture trends since January 2020.

NUMBER OF ARCTIC MENTIONS: media attention was concentrated mid-month when the Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, and the Director of the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, Alexander Makarov, held press conferences. The former warned Western states, especially European ones, that sanctions would end up hurting themselves more than impacting Russia. As for the latter, the tone was more optimistic as he focused on detailing future scientific endeavours by Russian scientists in the Arctic.

The organisation of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (June 15-18) was also used as an occasion to present opportunities present in the Russian Arctic. Oil and gas extraction and the development of the Northern Sea Route were front and center when talking about the Arctic at the forum.



THEMES: Economic and political stories have been the most recurring theme in June, followed by environment-related stories. From a political standpoint, an important number of articles covered news linked to the Russia's relationship with Western countries and the impact of Russia's international relations linked to the management of the Arctic. Linked to economic news, information related to Arctic development and the different announcement made at the St-Petersburg International Economic Forum were relayed by TASS. Finally, many reports linked to cleaning operations from volunteer organizations and general ecological initiatives were reported in the press releases for the month of June.

JUNE 2022 1- ECONOMIC (19) 2- POLITICAL (19) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL (14)		
MAY 2022 1- ECONOMIC (19) 2- POLITICAL (16) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL (15)	APRIL 2022 1- ECONOMIC (33) 2- POLITICAL (17) 3- MILITARY (16)	MARCH 2022 1- ECONOMIC (21) 2- ENVIRONMENTAL (12) 3- POLITICAL (11)
FEBRUARY 2022 1- ECONOMIC (24) 2- MILITARY (20) 3- POLITICAL (17)	JANUARY 2022 1- MILITARY (34) 2- ECONOMIC (23) 3- SOCIAL (7)	DECEMBER 2021 1- MILITARY (42) 2- ECONOMIC (39) 3- POLITICAL (13)
NOVEMBER 2021 1- ECONOMIC (26) 2- POLITICAL (18) 3- MILITARY (17)	OCTOBER 2021 1- MILITARY/POLITICAL (28) 2- ECONOMIC (26) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL (21)	SEPTEMBER 2021 1- MILITARY (31) 2- ENVIRONMENTAL (25) 3- ECONOMIC (24)
AUGUST 2021 1- MILITARY (37) 2- ENVIRONMENTAL (29) 3- ECONOMIC (16)	JULY 2021 1- ENVIRONMENTAL (30) 2- MILITARY (19) 3- POL/SCIENT (11)	JUNE 2021 1- POLITICAL (58) 2- MILITARY (56) 3- ECONOMIC (39)
MAY 2021 1- POLITICAL (54) 2- MILITARY (41) 3- ECONOMIC (27)	APRIL 2021 1- MILITARY (52) 2- ECONOMIC (45) 3- POLITICAL (16)	MARCH 2021 1- MILITARY (46) 2- ECONOMIC (40) 3- SCIENTIFIC (14)
FEBRUARY 2021 1- MILITARY (44) 2- ECONOMIC (20) 3- ENV/POL/SCIENT (17)	JANUARY 2021 1- MILITARY (23) 2- ECONOMIC (22) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL/POL (7)	DECEMBER 2020 1- MILITARY (38) 2- ECONOMIC (37) 3- SOCIAL (12)
NOVEMBER 2020 1- ECONOMIC (37) 2- MILITARY (36) 3- POLITICAL (19)	OCTOBER 2020 1- MILITARY (44) 2- ECONOMIC (29) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL (15)	SEPTEMBER 2020 1- MILITARY (58) 2- ECONOMIC (25) 3- SCIENTIFIC (13)
AUGUST 2020 1- MILITARY (52) 2- ECONOMIC (17) 3- SOCIAL (16)	JULY 2020 1- ECONOMIC (43) 2- MILITARY (36) 3- ENVIRONMENTAL (14)	JUNE 2020 1- MILITARY (46) 2- ENVIRONMENTAL (35) 3- ECONOMIC (28)
MAY 2020 1- MILITARY (43) 2- ECONOMIC (26) 3- POLITICAL (11)	APRIL 2020 1- MILITARY (37) 2- ECONOMIC (22) 3- SOCIAL (13)	MARCH 2020 1- MILITARY (37) 2- ECONOMIC (21) 3- SOCIAL (15)

Table 1: most popular themes per month (number of mentions is in parenthesis).

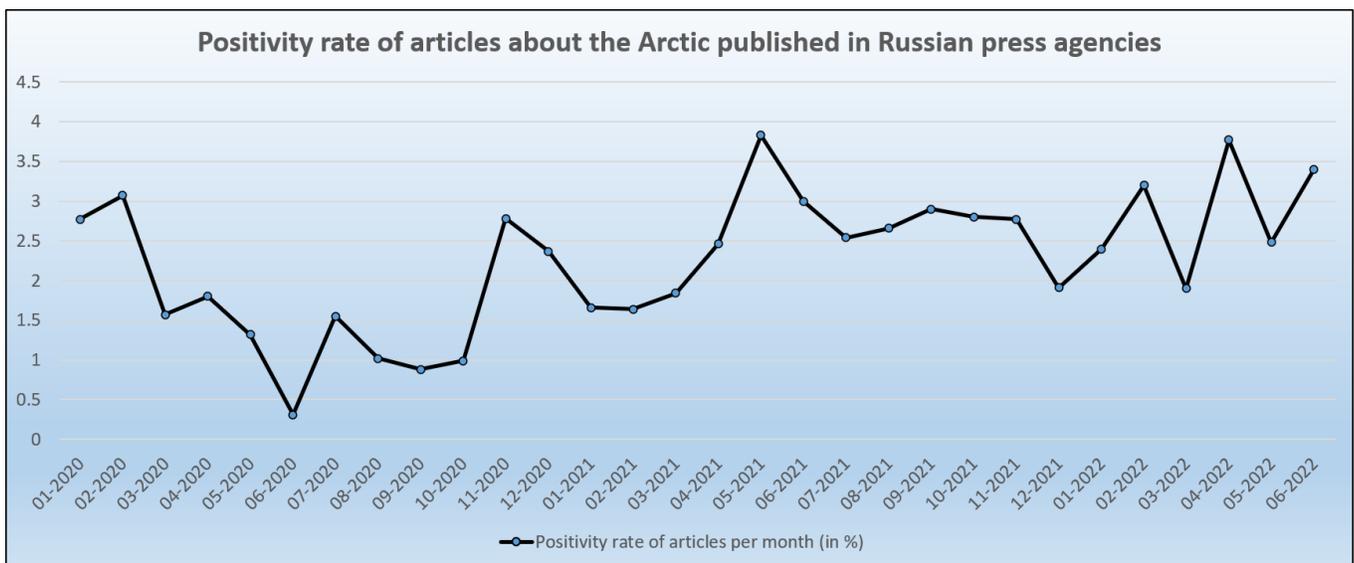
COUNTRIES: USA was the most mentioned country with 5 occurrences. Canada is mentioned 4 times. The United States are mentioned for issues related to Arctic Council activities and for NATO-related news. Canada is mentioned for subjects similar to the United States except for a specific comment from a Russian diplomat that condemned a Canadian diplomat's behavior. China is also mentioned four times. Articles linked to China are oriented towards the economic orientation change of Russia from the West to the East and linked to scientific cooperation.

JUNE 2022 1- UNITED STATES (5) 2- CANADA, CHINA (4)		
MAY 2022 1- FINLAND, SWEDEN (9) 2- UNITED STATES (7)	APRIL 2022 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- FINLAND, SWEDEN (8)	MARCH 2022 1- UNITED STATES, UKRAINE (6) 2- FRANCE, CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, SWEDEN (3)
FEBRUARY 2022 1- CHINA (6) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (5)	JANUARY 2022 1- UNITED STATES, CHINA (3) 2- NORWAY (2)	DECEMBER 2021 1- UNITED STATES (11) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (4)
NOVEMBER 2021 1- UNITED STATES (14) 2- CHINA (7)	OCTOBER 2021 1- NORWAY (8) 2- UNITED STATES (4)	SEPTEMBER 2021 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- FINLAND (5)
AUGUST 2021 1- UNITED STATES (8) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (5)	JULY 2021 1- UNITED STATES (22) 2- UNITED KINGDOM, NORWAY, GERMANY (2)	JUNE 2021 1- UNITED STATES (57) 2- CHINA (14)
MAY 2021 1- UNITED STATES (50) 2- CHINA (9)	APRIL 2021 1- UNITED STATES (24) 2- CHINA, FINLAND (7)	MARCH 2021 1- UNITED STATES (16) 2- CHINA (9)
FEBRUARY 2021 1- UNITED STATES (24) 2- NORWAY (8)	JANUARY 2021 1- UNITED STATES (8) 2- CHINA, SWEDEN (3)	DECEMBER 2020 1- UNITED STATES (21) 2- CHINA (4)
NOVEMBER 2020 1- UNITED STATES (18) 2- NORWAY (6)	OCTOBER 2020 1- UNITED STATES (16) 2- NORWAY (6)	SEPTEMBER 2020 1- UNITED STATES (11) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (6)
AUGUST 2020 1- UNITED STATES (17) 2- CHINA (4)	JULY 2020 1- UNITED STATES (14) 2- CHINA (6)	JUNE 2020 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- CHINA (5)
MAY 2020 1- UNITED STATES (15) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (11)	APRIL 2020 1- DENMARK (6) 2- NORWAY (5)	MARCH 2020 1- UNITED STATES (9) 2- JAPAN (3)
FEBRUARY 2020 1- NORWAY (11) 2- UNITED STATES (10)	JANUARY 2020 1- UNITED STATES (12) 2- INDIA (9)	

Table 2: foreign countries mentioned per month in Russian press agencies (number of mentions is in parenthesis).

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS: the positivity rate remained relatively high in June 2022, strengthening a pattern we also observed in April and May. The introduction of Western sanctions in March 2022 made the positivity rate dip that month but it rebounded since. Just like in April and May, Russian press agencies were keen on either focusing on initiatives that are uncontroversial, such as scientific projects or environmental protection.

Energy development and the Northern Sea Route are typically presented in favorable terms, highlighting partnerships and future opportunities for cooperation. For example, the Northern Sea Route is framed as a great opportunity for foreign investors and for domestic corporations specializing in ship-building and ship-repair.



METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Sputnik and TASS articles were retrieved using the Factiva database from January 2020 to March 2022. Due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sputnik articles were no longer accessible: only TASS articles were gathered from April 2022 onwards. All articles containing the keyword “Arctic” were included in the sample. We manually removed articles that were duplicates from the same outlet as well as stories included in “news digest” articles that were not related to our keyword.

Themes present in these articles were manually coded. We looked for dominant themes in each article: more than one theme could be detected per article. For example, an article about a scientific study on the evolution of climate change was coded as both environmental and scientific. The six themes that emerged were: military, economic, political, social, environmental and scientific.

As for foreign countries mentioned, we only focus on sovereign states and did not include regional ensembles or international organisations. Hence, references to NATO, the EU, the Barents Euro-Arctic Region or the Nordic Council were not accounted for.

The sentiment analysis was conducted using the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary, as discussed by Stuart Soroka (see the following link for details: <http://www.snsoroka.com/data-lexicoder/>). The R package Quanteda was used to generate the analysis. On a month-to month basis, the number of positive words was subtracted to the number of negative words and then divided by the number of words in total; the output is referred to as the positivity rate. For example, the positivity rate for the month of June 2021 was 3% while it was 0.31% for June 2020. Hence, the closer you are to 0, the more negative the articles in a given month were.



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