

JULY 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 – JULY 2022

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# JULY 2022 ANALYSIS – RUSSIAN PRESS AGENCIES AND THE ARCTIC

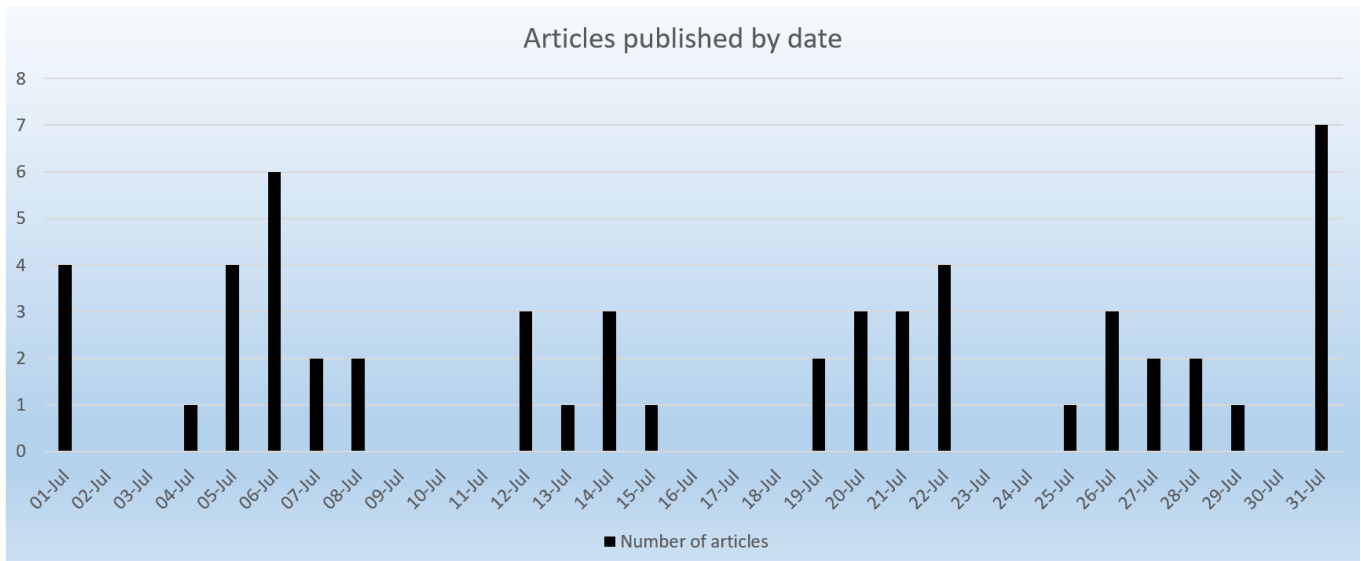
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This analysis studied how Russian press agencies Sputnik and TASS covered Arctic issues during the month of July 2022. The intensity and nature of coverage will be put in perspective to capture trends since January 2020.

**NUMBER OF ARCTIC MENTIONS:** media coverage occurred in cycles in July 2022. On July 5 and 6, significant attention was devoted at criticizing Sweden and Finland possible accession to NATO, highlighting that there would be consequences on their bilateral relations with Russia. Russian officials also raised questions about a delimitation treaty signed with Norway in relations to the Barents Sea.

While the July 19-22 cluster focused on different environmental-related stories, the peak of July 31 can be solely attributed to the unveiling of the new Maritime Doctrine by the Russian president. Multiple frames were deployed to account for this one event, including Russian ship-building capabilities, NATO-Russia confrontation, natural resources extraction and Arctic-specific dynamics.



**THEMES:** Environmental-themed news was the most recurring theme for the month of July. Many stories linked to cleaning initiatives and scientific expeditions with environmental purposes were published. Economic and political articles were then the most recurring themes. From a political perspective, many news related to NATO activities, the Norwegian/Russian maritime borders and the new Maritime Doctrine were published. From an economical perspective, articles covering business developments and new infrastructures were reported. Military-themed stories are not in the top 3, unlike in July 2021 and 2020: the decline in military exercises and weapon deployment in the Russian Arctic due to the war in Ukraine explains this change.

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

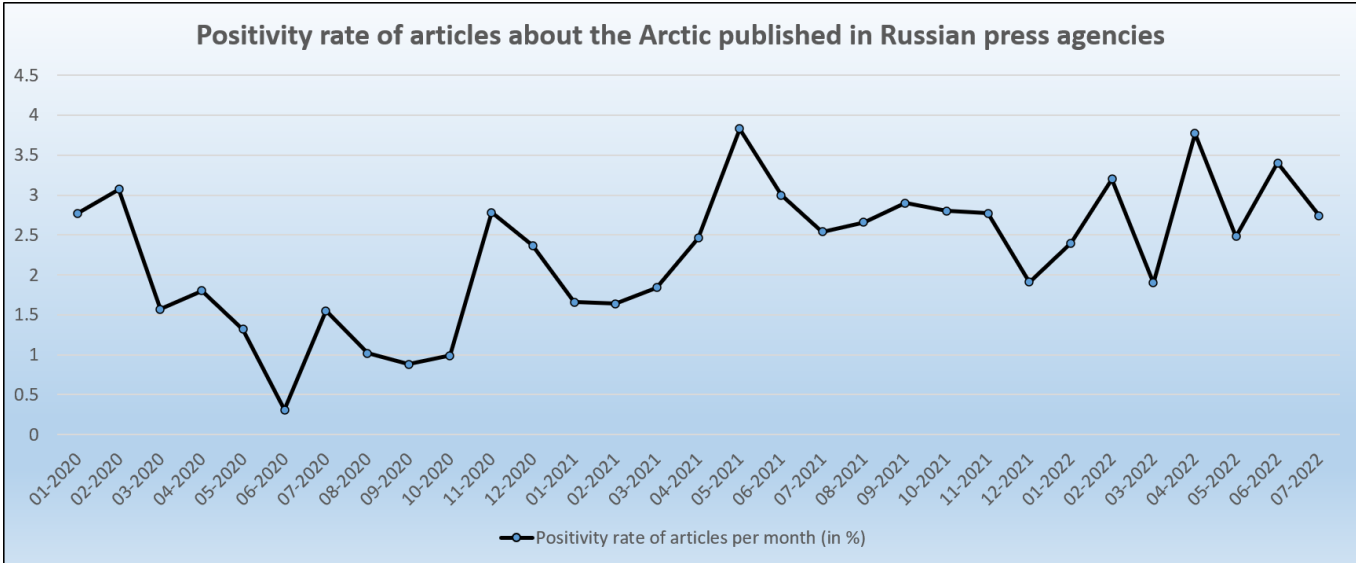
Table 1: most popular themes per month (number of mentions is in parenthesis).

COUNTRIES: Norway was the most mentioned country during the month of July. News linked to the maritime border with Russia in the Barents Sea was the most recurring theme. The United States were mentioned 6 times with reference linked to the Arctic Council and the current economic sanctions. Finally, Sweden and Finland are mentioned 4 times. All articles concerning the Scandinavian countries were about their possible integration into NATO.

<b>JULY 2022</b> 1- NORWAY (7) 2- UNITED STATES (6)		
<b>JUNE 2022</b> 1- UNITED STATES (5) 2- CANADA, CHINA (4)	<b>MAY 2022</b> 1- FINLAND, SWEDEN (9) 2- UNITED STATES (7)	<b>APRIL 2022</b> 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- FINLAND, SWEDEN (8)
<b>MARCH 2022</b> 1- UNITED STATES, UKRAINE (6) 2- FRANCE, CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, SWEDEN (3)	<b>FEBRUARY 2022</b> 1- CHINA (6) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (5)	<b>JANUARY 2022</b> 1- UNITED STATES, CHINA (3) 2- NORWAY (2)
<b>DECEMBER 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (11) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (4)	<b>NOVEMBER 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (14) 2- CHINA (7)	<b>OCTOBER 2021</b> 1- NORWAY (8) 2- UNITED STATES (4)
<b>SEPTEMBER 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- FINLAND (5)	<b>AUGUST 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (8) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (5)	<b>JULY 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (22) 2- UNITED KINGDOM, NORWAY, GERMANY (2)
<b>JUNE 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (57) 2- CHINA (14)	<b>MAY 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (50) 2- CHINA (9)	<b>APRIL 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (24) 2- CHINA, FINLAND (7)
<b>MARCH 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (16) 2- CHINA (9)	<b>FEBRUARY 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (24) 2- NORWAY (8)	<b>JANUARY 2021</b> 1- UNITED STATES (8) 2- CHINA, SWEDEN (3)
<b>DECEMBER 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (21) 2- CHINA (4)	<b>NOVEMBER 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (18) 2- NORWAY (6)	<b>OCTOBER 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (16) 2- NORWAY (6)
<b>SEPTEMBER 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (11) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (6)	<b>AUGUST 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (17) 2- CHINA (4)	<b>JULY 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (14) 2- CHINA (6)
<b>JUNE 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (10) 2- CHINA (5)	<b>MAY 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (15) 2- UNITED KINGDOM (11)	<b>APRIL 2020</b> 1- DENMARK (6) 2- NORWAY (5)
<b>MARCH 2020</b> 1- UNITED STATES (9) 2- JAPAN (3)	<b>FEBRUARY 2020</b> 1- NORWAY (11) 2- UNITED STATES (10)	<b>JANUARY 2020</b> 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 stayed on a high plateau in July 2022. While several articles were of a more negative nature covering confrontational dynamics between Russian and Northern neighbors, they were balanced by more articles focusing on environmental protection and scientific initiatives. For example, the Clean Arctic initiative is a staple in Russian press agencies during the summer months. The unveiling of the Maritime Doctrine also pushed the representation of an assertive and powerful Russia, centering on positive elements and celebrating Russian strength.



## 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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