



## Changing or frozen narratives? The Arctic in Russian media and expert commentary, 2021–2022

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## Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has brought Russia–West relations to its lowest point since the Cold War. Relations in the Arctic region are not excepted, evidenced not least by the other seven member states' pausing their participation in Russia's Arctic Council chairmanship (which concluded in May 2023). To the extent that "Arctic exceptionalism" – the notion that the Arctic has been characterised by a cooperative mode between Russia and the West which has remained relatively untouched by increasing tensions elsewhere – was ever an appropriate description, Western analysts have now declared it firmly dead.<sup>1</sup>

How does this situation look from within Russia? This research paper investigates how the Russian state media and the foreign policy expert community have portrayed the Arctic in 2021 and 2022. How much change has been seen since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine? By surveying "the story about the Arctic" as presented by mainstream narrators and experts, we gain insights into, among other things, how changes in Arctic cooperation, sanctions, the role of China in the Arctic, and the question of climate change are conveyed to Russian audiences.

The paper proceeds as follows. We start by briefly explaining the methods and data used. We then present a portrayal of the Arctic in Russia's government's newspaper *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, followed by the role of the Arctic in analyses published by the Russian International Affairs Council and the journal *Russia in Global Affairs*. Lastly, we conclude by discussing a general continuity in the way the Arctic is framed in the material, and foreground three core themes: climate change, security, and cooperation.

## Empirical sources and methods

In this research paper, we focus on two types of public discourse – official newspaper and foreign policy analysis – to trace how the Arctic has been framed in Russia in recent years and whether the views on the Arctic have changed since 24 February 2022.

New legislation and increasingly repressive practices since February 2022 have further restricted the already severely limited freedom of expression in Russia. The government controls all national news channels and allows no criticism of the president and his policies. Material in the Russian state media needs to be interpreted in this light. The official newspaper we have chosen for analysis does not represent the plurality of meanings that may exist in Russia; rather, it can be viewed as a means of policy legitimisation and implementation. Similarly, universities and academic institutions now operate in a more restrictive environment. Regardless, the expert analyses we present here are part of how two well-known Russian expert platforms in the current situation frame the Arctic to both domestic and international audiences.

### A deep dive into *Rossiiskaya gazeta*

In this paper, we discuss how *Rossiiskaya gazeta* has presented the Arctic to its readers. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* is the official daily newspaper of the government of the Russian Federation. It has a strong online presence and is ranked among the ten most-cited newspapers in Russia.<sup>2</sup> Here, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* serves as a way to access official views on the Arctic that are disseminated to Russian society.<sup>3</sup> That a topic is frequently discussed in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* does not necessarily mean that it is a policy priority in Russia. However, many in Russia view the newspaper as a serious and authoritative mainstream narrator and opinion leader. Thus, an analysis of texts printed in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* provides insights into how the Arctic is likely to be perceived in Russian society.

Our examination of *Rossiiskaya gazeta* consists of two elements.<sup>4</sup> First, we conducted a close reading of the Arctic coverage in this newspaper during the period 2021–2022. Second, to identify larger trends and document the development and variation in the use of important keywords over time, we conducted a quantitative keyword analysis of the material for the entire period of 2008–2022 to identify patterns in *Rossiiskaya gazeta's* Arctic coverage over a larger time period.

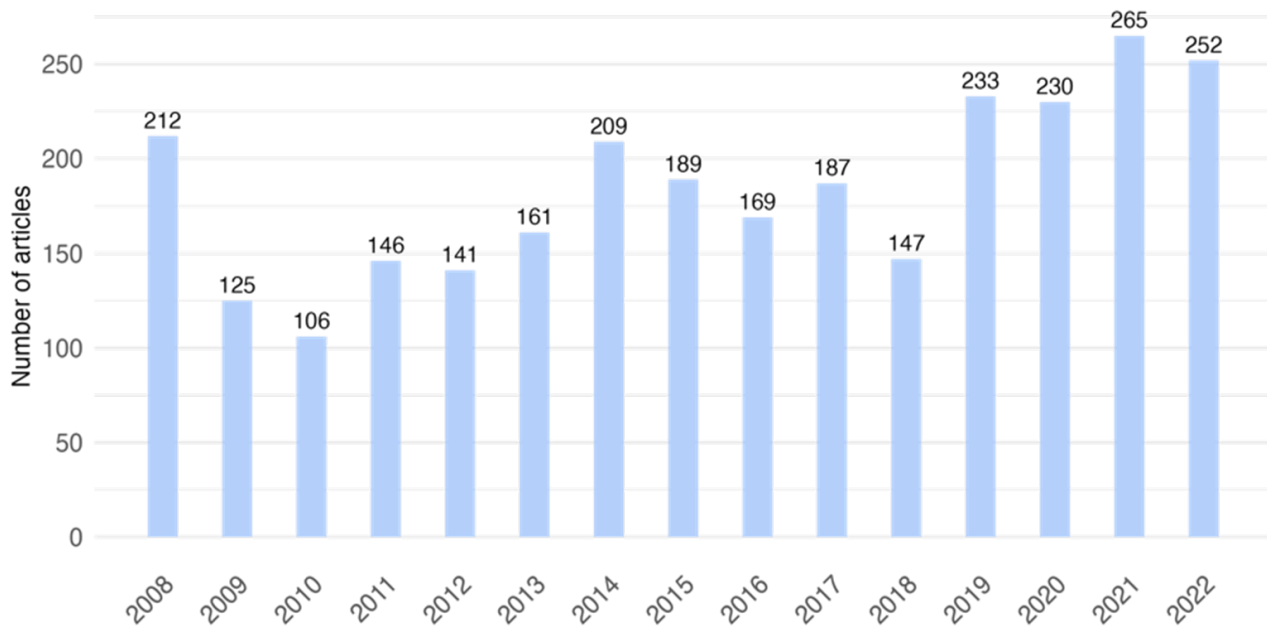


Figure 1. Number of articles mentioning “Arctic” in Rossiiskaya gazeta, 2008–2022

Figure 1 illustrates the number of articles in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* mentioning the Arctic between 2008 and 2022. The figure shows a slight increase of such articles after 2019. For close reading of the 2021–2022 texts, we selected the 192 articles which contained “Arctic” three or more times.

### Exploring expert analysis

To gain a fuller picture of how the international dimension of the Arctic is narrated in Russia, we combined the newspaper study with a reading of Russian expert analysis of the Arctic as a foreign policy region and a meeting place between states. The second part of the paper will thus focus on the views of the Arctic as presented by Russian foreign policy experts in two sources: the bimonthly journal *Rossiia v global’noi politike* (RVGP)<sup>5</sup> and the website of The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) [russiancouncil.ru](http://russiancouncil.ru).<sup>6</sup> For this reading of Russian expert analysis, we downloaded and read all articles mentioning the Arctic or being tagged as concerning the Arctic available on official websites of RVGP ([globalaffairs.ru](http://globalaffairs.ru)) and RIAC ([russiancouncil.ru](http://russiancouncil.ru)). In addition to the articles from 2021 and 2022, we also included six articles published between January and May 2023. Thus, our expert analysis dataset consists of 16 articles from RVGP and 18 articles from RIAC.

In what follows, we present our findings of how the Russian state media and foreign policy expert community have portrayed the Arctic before and after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and discuss changes in this portrayal.

## The Arctic in the news

Figure 2 displays the main topics identified in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*'s Arctic coverage. In the following section, we briefly present each topic.

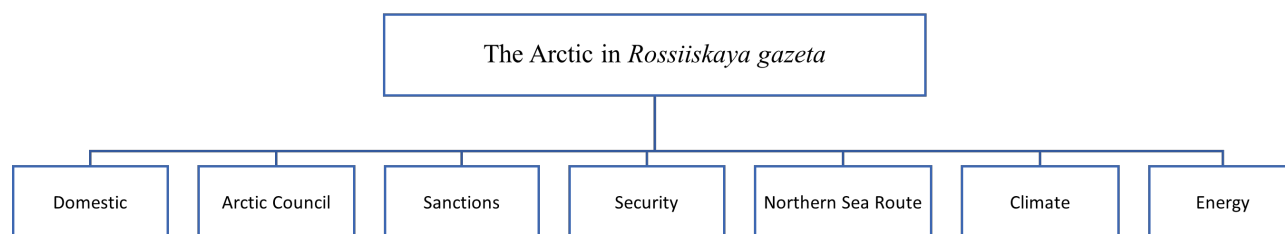


Figure 2. Categories in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*'s Arctic coverage

### Domestic themes predominate

More than half of the articles mentioning the Arctic in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* were concerned with domestic issues, such as regional development, culture, education, and emergency preparedness. One important topic addressed is the *socio-economic development of the Russian Arctic region*. For example, the “Arctic Hectare program”, according to which Russian citizens can claim one free hectare of land in the Arctic zone, receives regular attention.<sup>7</sup> Another recurring domestic theme in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* is *ecology*; a typical example is articles about Russian ecologists researching and cleaning up pollution, aiming to protect the environment and preserve the nature in the Arctic. A third theme concerns indigenous people, typically about the preservation and support of the traditions of *indigenous people* in the North, their culture and languages, and policies aiming to improve their level of life.

On 14 April 2022, Vladimir Putin spoke about the Arctic in the context of new sanctions against Russia at a meeting on the development of the Arctic zone. Stressing that the Arctic is not a field for “geopolitical intrigues”, Putin demanded not to postpone investment projects and not disrupt existing plans. Regarding newspaper content, at least, Putin’s request has been heeded: apart from occasional mentions of the need for self-reliance in a new situation, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*'s coverage of domestic Arctic issues did not change significantly after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

### Silence about the Arctic Council “pause”

Russia took over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021, and several of the articles in our material before February 2022 are about the chairmanship and the Arctic Council as an arena for cooperation between Arctic states. The council is presented as an exclusive club that is of crucial importance for discussion and cooperation in the Arctic.

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the other seven member states suspended their participation in Russia’s Arctic Council chairmanship, which concluded in May 2023. Not much has been written about the Arctic Council in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* after February 2022. Moreover, only in one of the articles we selected for close reading is the suspension of the work of the Arctic Council directly addressed. Here, the author emphasises that the “anti-Russian sanctions have spread to the Arctic” (without mentioning Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine as the reason behind this development).<sup>8</sup> In fact, articles mentioning the council after February 2022 generally seem to portray Russia as carrying out its chairmanship as planned, one example being an article about an international festival in Chukotka, where participants received video greetings from the Consul Generals of India and China.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in newspaper articles, the Western states’ suspension of the work in the Arctic Council is largely silenced.

To illustrate attention towards the Arctic Council in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, Figure 3 (red panel) displays the number of articles mentioning “Arctic Council” published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* between 2008 and 2022.

## Reporting on the limited effect of Western sanctions

One significant change in the newspaper's coverage of the Arctic concerns Western sanctions. After 24 February 2022, attention to sanctions and how they would affect Russia's Arctic increased. The new "squall" of sanctions is referred to as "hysteria" and "actions of unfriendly countries". In particular, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* has discussed the potential effect of the sanctions on the Arctic oil and gas projects and the Northern Sea Route (see below), often claiming that the sanctions would have a limited effect.<sup>10</sup> Still, the newspaper presumes that the sanctions will be in force for the unforeseen future and that Russia needs to (and will) adapt to this new reality.

Figure 3 (orange panel) displays the number of articles mentioning "sanctions" and "Arctic" published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* between 2008 and 2022. The number of such articles surged in 2014 after Russia's annexation of Crimea, and surged a second time after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

## Security and NATO not the main focus

In *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, there has not been an increased focus on security in the Arctic since February 2022. The general theme is that any increased tension in the Arctic is caused by Western ambitions. The US is claimed to seek "to challenge the legal rights of Russia, to gain unhindered access to the resources of the region and to the Northern Sea Route".<sup>11</sup> The texts underline Russia's strengthening of security in the Arctic as a *reaction* to steps taken by other countries. For example, according to one article, NATO's (and USA) increased attention to the Arctic is triggering Russia to "strengthen the defence of its northern territories, including in the area of combat aviation".<sup>12</sup> Because Western countries are "stirring up the military situation in the Arctic",<sup>13</sup> "one cannot underestimate the risk of an arms race in the region".<sup>14</sup> The key point conveyed to readers of *Rossiiskaya gazeta* is that while in principle there are no problems in the Arctic that require military means to be solved, the Russian military does react to foreign military activity near Russia's borders.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3 (green panel) illustrates the number of articles in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* mentioning "Arctic" and "NATO" published between 2008 and 2022. The figure shows a generally low number of such articles. For example, in 2022, out of the 252 articles that mentioned the Arctic in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (see Figure 1), only 10 articles also mentioned NATO. This indicates that NATO has not been a core part of the discourse about the Arctic, as presented in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* since 2008.

## NSR: Growing geopolitical significance

One issue associated with the Arctic that regularly, and with increasing frequency, appears in the newspaper is the Northern Sea Route (NSR). In general, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* depicts the development of the NSR as an important strategic goal for Russia. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in the condition of a new Western sanctions regime, the geopolitical significance of this route has been underlined. Several articles argue for more shipping and energy relations with Asian countries in the context of the deterioration of Russia–West relations, with the NSR presented as important for these ambitions, including liquefied natural gas export to the Asia-Pacific region. Often, texts about the NSR are future oriented and prognose how it will be developed – predicting potential year-round access and very high ambitions for increased traffic – and are not focused on its present-day functioning.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 3 (pink panel) illustrates the number of articles that mentioned "Northern Sea Route" and "Arctic" in the period between 2008 and 2022, a period which also has seen an increase in traffic along the NSR.<sup>17</sup> Approximately one in five articles that mentioned the Arctic in 2022 also mentioned the NSR, in contrast to 2008, where one in ten articles mentioning the Arctic also mentioned the NSR (see Figure 1).

## Steady attention to climate change

The topic of climate change appears frequently in articles about the Arctic, with a 2021 article illustrating the typical framing:

Here [in the Arctic], the climate changes of the whole planet are more clearly visible. No one can predict the consequences of climate change 100 percent. In Russia, there are cities beyond the Arctic Circle. "People live there. If the permafrost continues to thaw, we need to understand what we should do about it," the president said.<sup>18</sup>

The dominant position on climate change in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* is as a threat to the Arctic and the rest of the world: “Global warming is attacking the Arctic”,<sup>19</sup> and the changes in temperature in the Arctic influence “general climatic processes and natural anomalies that occur in different parts of the planet”.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, “Arctic climate change causes polar bears to starve”.<sup>21</sup>

Potential benefits of climate change in the Arctic are also highlighted. For example, the melting permafrost “will facilitate the extraction of gold, coal, and polymetals”<sup>22</sup> and warmer temperatures increase the potential of a longer period of use of the NSR. Still, climate change is to a large extent presented as a challenge and a burden for the Russian economy,<sup>23</sup> for example by increasing the risk of industrial accidents and damages to infrastructure in some Arctic regions.<sup>24</sup> In other words, apart from a few articles where *climate change deniers* voice their views, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*’s coverage as a whole is not one of *climate scepticism* – the impact of climate change on the Arctic appears well known and accepted.

Figure 3 (blue panel) reveals a slight increase in the number of articles mentioning “climate” and “Arctic” published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* between 2008 and 2022. (However, this pattern follows approximately the same lines as the variation of the number of articles mentioning the Arctic each year, as illustrated in Figure 1. 25% of articles mentioning the Arctic in 2009 also mentioned climate change, 24% in 2015 and 22% in 2022.)

### Oil and gas extraction as a responsible Russian policy

Lastly, in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* coverage of the Arctic, oil, gas, and other natural resources have occupied a central role, even increasingly so. The energy sector is an important industry that influences the development of the entire Arctic region. The challenge presented by climate change is effectively decoupled from questions about fossil fuel extraction. Indeed, in the context of “an aggressively promoted environmental agenda in the world” and large Russian oil and gas reserves, it is presented as both responsible and advantageous that Russia continues to search for new deposits of fossil raw materials.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to Russia’s rational approach, one article criticised the EU’s Arctic strategy, which “will leave Europe without gas and oil”:

Among a wide range of initiatives, [the strategy] contains a ban on the exploration and production of oil, gas and coal in the Arctic – a region that is the area of activity of both some non-EU European countries and such oil and gas giants as Russia, the USA, and Canada. This initiative looks even more surprising against the backdrop of the unfolding European energy crisis.<sup>26</sup>

In short, in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* coverage, there is no place for arguments about limiting oil and gas extraction to counteract climate change.

Since 24 February 2022, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* has written about the energy sector in the context of sanctions, with a key emphasis being that sanctions will not impact the work and implementation of new oil and gas projects in the Arctic.<sup>27</sup> The newspaper also discusses how the energy crisis in Europe in 2022 illustrates that oil and gas will be in demand for a long time and “therefore all the arguments that tomorrow a ‘barrel of black gold’ will cost nothing (...) are not more than fairy tales”.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* again argues that Russia should continue investing in the energy sector.

Figure 3 (purple panel) illustrates that approximately 50% of the articles that mentioned the Arctic in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* between 2008 and 2021 also mentioned “oil and/or gas”, indicating the importance of oil and gas extraction in the Arctic for Russia. The figure also illustrates a slight increase in 2022 when approximately 60% of articles mentioning “Arctic” also mentioned “oil/gas”.



Figure 3. Themes in Rossiiskaya gazeta’s Arctic coverage

Summing up the different attention given to sanctions, NATO, Arctic council, the NSR, climate, and oil and gas in the articles about the Arctic published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* between 2008 and 2022, Figure 3 illustrates how oil and gas (purple) stand out as the consistently most frequent topic, with climate (blue) in second place. Attention to sanctions (orange) emerged in 2014 and reached new heights in 2022. Furthermore, talks about the NSR (pink) have seen a steady increase throughout this period. The figure also illustrates a low number of references to NATO (green) and the Arctic Council (red).

## The Arctic as a foreign policy field

So far, we have explored how the Arctic is portrayed in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*. In general, texts published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* are aimed at a relatively wide Russian audience. Other outlets address more specialised audiences of policy experts in Russia and beyond. In this section, we present a reading of the analysis of the Arctic as a space for international relations. Such analysis is primarily targeted at experts and policy practitioners. More specifically, we look into how two prominent Russian foreign policy analysis hubs, RIAC and RVGP (presented earlier), have framed Arctic issues before and after the start of the full-scale war.

Unsurprisingly, the Arctic is not the primary interest of these analytical outlets. For example, RIAC has, between 2011 and early 2023, tagged 102 analytical articles as being concerned with the Arctic region, while Europe and North America both have more than 1,000 articles tagged (see Figure 4). Similarly, out of the more than 2,000 articles in RVGP, only 137 contain a mention of “Arctic”. Nonetheless, a review of their analyses of the Arctic provides us with insights into how the Arctic and the region’s role in international politics more broadly is presented by Russian experts.



Figure 4. Frequency of region tags over time in RIAC



In RIAC Arctic analysis before 24 February 2022, much of the attention was on Arctic security, and on how Scandinavian and NATO countries increasingly use “anti-Russian rhetoric” and view Russia as an antagonist. For example, in an April 2021 article summarising the “European Security Seminar” co-organised by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and RIAC, the authors conclude that “the vision of the Arctic as a territory of peace and cooperation no longer corresponds to reality” and that NATO’s Arctic states are beginning to see a bigger role for NATO in the region. According to the article, both the UK and Russia, however, recognised “the need to maintain a dialogue without illusions in order to at least better understand each other’s points of view and positions”.<sup>29</sup>

In the analysis after 24 February 2022, the war in Ukraine is, when mentioned, mostly referred to as “the conflict in Ukraine” and serves as context for the situation in the Arctic. Several RIAC analyses are about individual states’ policy development and the relations between countries in this situation. For example, in an April 2022 analysis of UK interests in the Arctic, the author argues that the UK will take advantage of the current confrontational environment with Russia “to secure its position as a key European NATO power and the leader of its north-eastern flank”.<sup>30</sup> A February 2023 article argues that the new US Arctic strategy confirms the growing trend towards competition rather than cooperation in the Arctic. The author asserts that the US – along the “logics of current developments” – intends to continue cooperation in the Arctic Council and in the Arctic without Russia, which contradicts the principles of international Arctic cooperation.<sup>31</sup> In an article stressing the importance the Arctic region plays in Russia’s security (including the hosting of strategic nuclear weapons), the author argues that while China displays serious attention to the Arctic, their interests do not contradict Russia’s interests.<sup>32</sup>

RIAC analyses have also afforded considerable attention to the Nordic countries. One analysis argues that “despite the fact that the five Nordic countries that are members of the Arctic Council traditionally promote the idea of Arctic cooperation, sometimes the bilateral relations between them show signs of mistrust”, with relations between Iceland and Denmark the main example.<sup>33</sup> A November 2022 article examines the relationship between China and Scandinavian countries. Arguing that the Scandinavian outlook has evolved from cooperation to threat perception, the author notes that Norway today “shows the least degree of criticism regarding the human rights situation in China among all Northern European countries”.<sup>34</sup>

Still, the most salient issue in the Nordic context has been the perspective of Finnish and Swedish NATO memberships. In May 2022, Andrey Kortunov, at that time still RIAC’s director general, argued that the result would be decreased security for Russia not only in the Baltic Sea (which would turn into a “NATO lake”) but also in the Arctic, where Russia henceforth would be the sole counterweight to the “Collective West”.<sup>35</sup> A December 2022 article with the telling title “On the question of the militarisation of the Arctic” argued that with Finland joining NATO, both the US and Finland will focus more on their military interests at the expense of international cooperation aimed at promoting biodiversity and combating climate change.<sup>36</sup>

NATO enlargement, with Sweden and Finland seeking to join the alliance, has also spurred further discussions about the future role of the Arctic Council. A recurrent point is the contradiction between the tendency to consolidate cooperation without Russia and the belief that key challenges cannot be adequately addressed without Russian participation.<sup>37</sup> A more optimistic point is made in an April 2023 analysis, which argues that under Norway’s chairship in the Arctic Council, continued Russian–Western cooperation regarding climate and environmental issues is both possible and highly desirable.<sup>38</sup>

Both in absolute and relative terms (RVGP publishes fewer articles than RIAC), RVGP focuses less attention on the Arctic than RIAC, with articles in 2021, 2022, and 2023 typically merely mentioning the Arctic without much further discussion. Nevertheless, it is presented as a strategically important region, as in an article from November 2021:

For Russia, this is a natural extension of its territory, an important transport route, a source of resources and, of course, the location of the most powerful part of its Navy – the Northern Fleet. But the region is extremely vulnerable, and its defence against possible NATO attacks aimed, for example, at Russian strategic missile submarines, consumes a lot of resources.<sup>39</sup>

RIAC analyses mention the Arctic as an area of interest for both China and the US and as an area of future cooperation with “friendly” states, as well as an area where international cooperation has been disrupted. After February 2022, RIAC articles portray the break between Russia and the West as more or less permanent.<sup>40</sup> One exception is a September 2022 article that takes an unusually positive approach and draws a picture of the Arctic as a region of hope and future cooperation.<sup>41</sup> Of interest are two articles that discuss Russia’s new foreign policy concept. In this concept, the list of regions of priority for Russia’s foreign policy has been revised. “Western-centric” priorities in the previous concept have been replaced with the near abroad, the Arctic and Eurasia, China and India, while the USA is placed at the bottom of the list only above the Antarctic.<sup>42</sup>

## Concluding remarks

This research paper has explored Russian newspaper coverage and expert analysis of the Arctic, with a particular focus on the period after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The questions of what journalists are allowed to write about and the level of self-censorship of both journalists and experts cannot be answered by analysing their articles. What these articles can tell us is how certain issues are presented to general and specialised audiences at a certain time. Our focus here has been to see whether and how Russian coverage of the Arctic has changed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The majority of the coverage of the Arctic in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* is dedicated to domestic issues, such as regional development and ecology. A reading of this coverage in 2021 and 2022 does not reveal any increased attention to questions of security and foreign threats. Yet, the changing international situation does seep into the discussions, in particular the challenges – and alleged opportunities – presented by Western sanctions. The sanctions are presented as hostile actions by unfriendly countries, with the reasons for the sanctions unmentioned. Other issues, however, such as the Arctic Council “pause” as a reaction to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, are largely silenced. Considering the position of *Rossiiskaya gazeta* in the Russian state apparatus, this coverage can be read as more than simply reporting on developments in the Arctic; the newspaper's framing is part and parcel of the Russian state's implementation of its Arctic policies.

The two channels for expert analysis reviewed, RIAC and RVGP, focus on foreign policy and international relations. The Arctic is not their main topic of interest. Yet, when they do write about the Arctic, the analyses present the region as increasingly becoming a “security region”, where security concerns increasingly dictate countries' behaviour.

Four trends deserve to be highlighted:

- Continuity. Apart from more attention to sanctions, we have not seen a drastic change after 24 February 2022 in the framing of the Arctic in the Russian texts analysed.
- Climate change is accepted as an important issue. However, this does not determine policy. For example, newspaper coverage indicates that continuation of the development of the oil and gas sector is a more important priority.
- Security. To the extent that it draws attention to the Arctic, the foreign policy expert community primarily frames the region in the context of security. By contrast, the newspaper analysed has rather downplayed Arctic security as a topic. The February 2022 invasion does not appear to have changed these trends.
- Cooperation. We find a difference in the way cooperation with Western and non-Western countries is addressed. Regarding the West, before February 2022, both the experts and the newspaper mentioned the Arctic Council as an arena for cooperation with the West, and the Arctic as an area of cooperation more generally. After the full-scale invasion, neither the Arctic Council nor other arenas for Russia–West cooperation received much attention. Non-Western countries, particularly China, are consistently categorized as partners, both before and after February 2022. In addition, after the invasion they are rebranded as “friendly” countries, as opposed to the “unfriendly” Western ones.<sup>43</sup>

Although this research paper unpacks important parts of Russia's evolving Arctic discourse, it does not capture the discourse in its entirety. It has surveyed segments of Russian public discourse – mass media articles and analytical texts – aimed at mainstream newspaper readers and the foreign policy community, broadly speaking. The underlying message is that Russia will have to, and is able to, manage on its own, and, when interests align, in cooperation with “friendly” countries such as China.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/auslandsinformationen/artikel/detail/-/content/neuer-blick-nach-norden>. Or, in an optimist phrasing, “disrupted”. [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/dgap-report-2023-02-EN.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/dgap-report-2023-02-EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mlg.ru/ratings/>

<sup>3</sup> The texts are mostly written by journalists, but they also include interviews with, and opinion pieces written by, experts, politicians, representatives of the government and cultural elite. Thus, the newspaper represents a variety of officially approved voices. The style of the writing is sober. This sets this newspaper apart from other more tabloid Russian media outlets where the use of antagonistic language to spread propaganda and to create enemy images is more widespread.

<sup>4</sup> From the Integrum database, we initially downloaded 2912 articles from *Rossiiskaya gazeta* containing the word “Arctic” (noun or adjective, all grammatical forms) covering the years 2008–2022. After removing duplicates, legislative texts, etc., we retained 2773 articles. This design makes it possible to trace the development of the use of the word “Arctic” in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* over time and delimits our data to a manageable number of texts selected for close reading and in-depth analysis. However, our data selection includes only texts that have used the word “Arctic” and not, for example, sever (North) or Siberia, other Russian words for areas located in the Arctic. It is reasonable to assume that a broader selection of search words would have given us a more diverse dataset.

<sup>5</sup> The English-language sister publication *Russia in Global Affairs*, published quarterly, presents itself as more strictly academic than the Russian-language journal. <https://globalaffairs.ru/about/readers-experts/>

<sup>6</sup> The first source, RVGP – with Fyodor Lukyanov as editor and Sergei Karaganov as chairman of the editorial board – has been published since 2002. The second source, RIAC, was established by presidential decree in 2010 and with the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Russian Academy of Sciences among its co-founders (<https://russiancouncil.ru/en/about/>). Former foreign minister Igor Ivanov has been the president of RIAC since its inception. While the groups of authors publishing in RVGP and through RIAC are partly overlapping, the profiles of the two are nonetheless rather distinct. In particular, RIAC has a rather moderate reputation, while the figureheads of RVGP, Lukyanov and Karaganov, have attained an increasingly hawkish reputation. The readers of analysis published in RVGP and on RIAC website are presumably the expert milieu, foreign policy practitioners, and other interested audiences.

<sup>7</sup> About the program, see Hodgson, Kara Kathleen, and Marc Lanteigne. “Homesteading in the Arctic: The Logic Behind, and Prospects for, Russia’s ‘Hectare in the Arctic’ Program”. *Arctic Yearbook*, 2022. <https://munin.uit.no/handle/10037/27976>.

<sup>8</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (4.5.2022) Spasenie vo l’dakh.

<sup>9</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (4.8.2022) Chukotka sobrala gostei so vsego mira.

<sup>10</sup> For example, “A massive attack by European and US sanctions on Russia should not affect the work of existing and the implementation of new oil and gas projects in the Arctic” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [5.3.2022] Sever dlya svoikh). “More than 90% of nuclear icebreakers are built from Russian components (...) Thus, sanctions on the supply of technologies and components imposed by the West will not stop the navigation of Russian tankers in the Arctic” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [6.4.2022] Rossiya gotovitsya k kruglogodichnoi navigatsii v Arktike). “The Western companies participating in [oil and gas projects] were forced to leave (...) and to refuse further investments. But this should not have a strong impact on the traffic along the NSR (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [6.4.2022] Perevozki probivayut led).

<sup>11</sup> Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council Mikhail Popov in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (17.2.2022) Prinuzhdenie k dialogu.

<sup>12</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (11.3.2021) Perekhvat v Arktike.

<sup>13</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (23.3.2021) Arktika pod okhranoi.

<sup>14</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (14.5.2021) Vo l’dakh i na polyakh.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (23.3.2021) Arktika pod okhranoi. Other topics discussed were Activities of the Ministry of Defence in the Arctic region and the Northern fleet (e.g. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [27.8.2021] Lodki vsplyvut v Arktike, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [8.10.2021] Flot dlya Arktiki), Large-scale Rosgvardiya exercise in

Krasnoyarsk krai (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [5.4.2021] L'dy osobogo naznacheniya), and a construction of a new military base in the Arctic, the appearance of which “caused quite a stir (nemalyj perepolokh) in the United States and NATO” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [21.5.2021] Aerodrom na Zemle Frantsa-Iosifa smozhet prinimat' lyubye tipy samoletov).

<sup>16</sup> For example, “By 2024, the cargo flow along the Northern Sea Route should be increased to 80 million tons per year. It is possible to solve this task by increasing the period of Arctic navigation” (Yuriy Trutnev, deputy prime minister, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [17.2.2021] Kruglogodichnyuyu navigatsiyu po Sevmorputi planiruyut nachat' v 2024 godu). “It is predicted that up to 80 million tons of cargo (...) will be transported by the Northern Sea Route by 2024” (Alexander Uss, governor of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [22.3.2021] Krasnoyarskii krai nameren soedinit' ne tolko sosedei, no i Evropu s Aziei). “The president also said that traffic along the Northern Sea Route in the coming years could become year-round (...) and he reminded that Russia is building the most powerful icebreaker fleet in the world” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [15.4.2021] Vladimir Putin na zasedanii RGO prizval vaksinirovat'sya ot koronavirusa).

<sup>17</sup> About the increased usage of the NSR in this period, see <https://arctic-lio.com/nsr-2022-short-report/>

<sup>18</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (15.4.2021) Vladimir Putin na zasedanii RGO prizval vaksinirovat'sya ot koronavirusa.

<sup>19</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (4.6.2022) Global'noe poteplenie atakuet Arktiku.

<sup>20</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (4.8.2021) Akademikov priglasili v TUR.

<sup>21</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (1.2.2022) Iz-za izmeneniya klimata v Arktike belye medvedi golodayut.

<sup>22</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (13.1.2022) Ministr po razvitiyu Dalnego Vostoka i Arktiki Aleksei Chekunkov – o turizme, vechnoi merzlotе i Severnom morskом puti.

<sup>23</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (8.11.2021) Kak dorogo oboidetsya ekonomike povyshenie temperatur i tyanie l'dov v Arktike.

<sup>24</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (26.10.2022) Mezhdu nami taet led.

<sup>25</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (13.5.2021) Zabyt'sya vo l'du.

<sup>26</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (17.11.2021) Kholodnye raschety.

<sup>27</sup> For example, “All possible painful restrictions related to the exploration and production of hydrocarbons in relation to our country were adopted a few years ago. Moreover, their influence by today has actually exhausted itself” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [5.3.2022] Sever dlya svoikh). “Vostok Oil, the oil production project of Rosneft, is supposed to provide the largest volume of loading for the NSR. Despite the announcement of withdrawal of foreign investors from this project, this should not affect the timing of its implementation” (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* [9.8.2022] Sudokhodnost' byudzheta).

<sup>28</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta* (2.8.2022) Den' za dnom.

<sup>29</sup> Chalmers M. and A. Kortunov (28.4.2021) Rossiya – Velikobritaniya: dialog po bezopasnosti. Evropeiskaya bezopasnost'. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/rossiya-velikobritaniya-dialog-po-bezopasnosti-evropeyskaya-bezopasnost/>

<sup>30</sup> Lipunov N. (15.4.2022) Kraine severnaya oborona: kak London planiruet zashchishchat' svoi interesy v Arktike. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/krayne-severnaya-oborona-kak-london-planiruet-zashchishchat-svoi-interesy-v-arktike/>

<sup>31</sup> Vakhireva N. (21.2.2023) Novaya arkticheskaya strategiya SShA. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/novaya-arkticheskaya-strategiya-ssha/>

<sup>32</sup> Gubin A. (20.9.2022) Voennye aspekty pozitsii Rossii v Arktike. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/voennye-aspekty-pozitsii-rossii-v-arktike/>

<sup>33</sup> Belukhin N. (4.10.2022) Datskoe Sodruzhestvo v pritsele velikikh derzhav. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/datskoe-sodruzhestvo-v-pritsele-velikikh-derzhav/>

<sup>34</sup> Belukhin N. (25.11.2022) Kholodnaya diplomatiya Severnoi Evropy i Kitaya. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/kholodnaya-diplomatiya-severnoy-evropy-i-kitaya/>

<sup>35</sup> Kortunov A. (18.5.2022) Dve modeli NATO. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/dve-modeli-nato/>

<sup>36</sup> Oreshina M. (22.12.2022) K voprosu o militarizatsii Arktiki. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/k-voprosu-o-militarizatsii-arktiki/>

<sup>37</sup> Vyakhireva N. (22.12.2022) Novaya arkticheskaya strategiya SShA. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/novaya-arkticheskaya-strategiya-ssha/>

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<sup>38</sup> Belukhin N. (24.4.2023) Norvegiya gotovitsya k predsedatel'stvu v Arkticheskom sovete. <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/norvegiya-gotovitsya-k-predsedatelstvu-v-arkticheskom-sovete/>

<sup>39</sup> Stefanovich D. (2021) Vечно segodnyashnie. Rossiya v global'noi politike 19 (6): 61–74. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/vechno-segodnyashnie/>

<sup>40</sup> Trenin D.V. (2022) “Pereizdanie” Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Rossiya v global'noi politike 20 (2): 27–33. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/pereizdanie-rossijskoj-federaczii/>

<sup>41</sup> Potashev N.A. (2022). Gde nachinaetsya Rodina? Arktika i Dal'nii Vostok. Rossiya v global'noi politike 20 (5): 110–120. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/arktika-i-dalnij-vostok/>

<sup>42</sup> For example, Kon'kov A.E (2023) Pravila dlya igry bez pravil. Rossiya v global'noi politike 21 (3): 54–67. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/pravila-dlya-igry-bez-pravil/>; Telin K.O. Ne blizhnii pritsel. Rossiya v global'noi politike. 21 (3): 68–76. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/ne-blizhnij-priczel/>

<sup>43</sup> Druzhestvennye and nedruzhestvennye, respectively.

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