Russian perception of Chinese Arctic presence:

A study of strategic use of narratives between 2010 and 2021

Master's thesis

MSc Development and International relations: Arctic studies

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Abstract

This master's thesis seeks to establish an understanding of how Russia perceives the Chinese Arctic ambitions. Information and more importantly, the perception of information has become increasingly contested in the 21st century. Because of this, states often forge their narratives for strategic purposes. There can be various canals through which states send their message, but for this research, we have chosen to examine the Russian media. This is the reason why the research focuses on what pro-governmental Russian media outlets are publishing about China in the Arctic. Since it was intended to discover what these mediums are transmitting to the international audience, the articles examined were written in English.

This study considers both that the narratives identified in the pro-governmental media are socially constructed, and that they also might be strategically constructed. To successfully examine the narratives that the state-sponsored mediums attempt to highlight, the thesis compiles a database of 158 articles. Within these texts, a total of 17 different narrative frames were observed, which later were combined into narratives.

The research demonstrates that there is a notable correlation between global geopolitical events and how often the pro-Kremlin media outlets write about China in the Arctic. The sentiment in the articles becomes increasingly anti-western, if, for example, international sanctions are applied against Russia. Oftentimes it can be observed that the mediums emphasize the Sino-Russian cooperation if there is a significant economic event taking place, such as the Belt and Road Forum or the G20 summit. Based on the fact that international events seem to impact both the number of articles published in a short period and the general themes, it can be established that the narratives are consciously constructed. This implies that the Russian government is using the Anglophone pro-governmental media outlets to convey its message to the West in an attempt to sculpt the world view of the Western audience. This is done in an attempt to achieve future results and win the battle taking place in the minds of the readers.

Keywords: Strategic narratives; Russia; China; Arctic; media

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Introduction

As globalization transforms the world we are living in, states continue setting their sights further and further from their national borders. Territories that were once considered next to worthless are now attracting interest from actors across the globe (Bender & Kelley 2014). One such territory is the Arctic. It is not hard to highlight how little value the international community was attributing to the frozen region in the past. 155 years ago, Russia sold Alaska to the United States of America for just 7.2 million US Dollars, which is around 140 million adjusted to inflation in 2022 (Gershkovich 2017). The transaction is an excellent example of the valuation of the region back in the 19th century. Albeit that can be considered long ago, it is fair to state that global interest in the High North only started taking off in the middle of the 20th century, when nations involved in the Cold War militarized the area. Because of the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, around 70% of all Soviet submarines were stationed in the Arctic ready for confrontation (McCannon 2012, p. 240). At the same time, the US gained permission from Denmark to build the Thule military base in Greenland, which required a staff of upwards of 3000 men to maintain (ibid, p. 241). This signified that at least the states bordering the Arctic had acknowledged its strategic potential.

Not long after the end of the Cold War, the Arctic started attracting increased international attention. In 1998, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom were granted observer status to the recently founded Arctic Council, which can be considered the *de facto* leading intergovernmental forum in the Arctic (Byers 2017, p. 393). It is important to note that only states with territory within the Arctic Circle can achieve member status, while others interested in Arctic affairs can apply for observer status. 17 years after the creation of the Arctic Council, the first Asian states were granted observer status, China being one of them. Although it might not seem strange at first glance, it is important to highlight the pace at which China's interest in the Arctic evolved. Just 14 years prior to being granted the observer status, it commenced its first Arctic expedition in 1999 and opened its first permanent research station in the High North only in 2004 (Dams et al. 2020, p. 6). It stipulates how recently China started paying increased attention to the glacial region. This signaled that the Asian powerhouse considered it a priority to lay some groundwork for justifying its presence in the region. The argument was also strengthened in 2014 by the president of China, Xi Jinping when he stated that he intends to: "make China a polar great power" (Sørensen 2018, p. 3).

There are many reasons why a state would want to establish a presence in the High North. Not only is the region rich in natural resources, but it is also strategically important, because of its location. Due to global climate change making the region more accessible, states far from the Arctic have paid close attention to what takes place in the still-frozen territory. Yet, there are several problems with taking part in Arctic endeavors as of today. Firstly, the region is scarcely developed, meaning it lacks crucial infrastructure due to being neglected in the past. This means that any states that want to operate in the Arctic need to build their own infrastructure, to begin with. This leads us to the next problem – the region is rather *'closed,'* meaning that even if states not located in the Arctic would want to expand their presence, it is oftentimes troublesome to do so. Currently, states holding territory in the Arctic treat it with extreme caution. They do not want to make the same mistake Russia made back in the 19th century when it sold Alaska, nor do they want to lose their almost exclusive say about the region. This is the reason states like China who would want to invest in developing the region are often denied the chance to (Jackson & Hook 2011; Gronholt-Pedersen 2021). This does not indicate that the Arctic states do not see a future where China is involved, however. Before it was accepted as an observer state to the Arctic Council, many of the Arctic states vouched for China, welcoming the investments it had planned for the region (Martina 2011; Ford 2013). It does mean, however, that the Arctic states are getting more vary, seeing how ambitiously China is trying to invest in the region.

One state that has steadily upped its collaboration with China in the region is Russia. The cooperation between the two global superpowers has seen both fruitful and complicated times, however, it is fair to point out that the relationship has been mostly positive in the 21st century. In 2001, both states signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation, which was renewed in 2021 (Isachenkov 2021). This indicates that the good relations between the two states have grown stronger, or at least, have not deteriorated.

In the Arctic, Russia has always had a different approach to cooperation than in the general paradigm. It is a member of the Arctic Council, discussing regional development and solving problems together with states that are either part of NATO, the EU, or both. These alliances have been described as 'unfriendly' (Herszenhorn 2021), yet in the Arctic, they have found ways to collaborate for almost the entirety of the 21st century so far. This implies that even though it has an established friendship agreement with China, it could have a different stance towards cooperation when it comes to Russia's 'backyard' - the Arctic. It is worth reminding that Russian land makes up 53% of the total Arctic

coastline, while the two million Russian citizens living in the Arctic are roughly half of the total inhabitants (Ellyat 2019). Kremlin has shown uncharacteristic behavior in the Arctic dimension before, which could mean that it has different plans for China within and outside of the Arctic.

With Russia straining its relations with the West increasingly more with the recent invasion of Ukraine (Borger 2022), it perhaps more than ever needs states that will back it up and assist it with its global ambitions. This indicates that not only does Russia need China's support economically, but it also needs to create an image that Russia and China are closer than ever. If Russia would use the pro-governmental media to send its international readers a message that the two states are closely collaborating in developing the Arctic, perhaps it can strengthen this narrative that Russia and China are close allies outside of the Arctic as well. By creating and highlighting such a strategic image, Kremlin might imply that it does not need the West, as it has gained a valuable friend in China. This might deter or at least slow down actions taken against Russia's interests. Since Vladimir Putin became the leader of the Russian Federation, it has been viewed as a military superpower. Yet, with most Western states applying sanctions and cutting ties with the Eurasian giant, it might need to diversify its ties. It can certainly do so by 'teaming up' with China. Perhaps Putin thinks that when Russia is alone the West can afford to *push it around*, but with the help of China, it might think twice. For that to happen, he needs to tell the rest of the world and make them understand what is and has been happening for years. As written in Miskimmon et al (2021):

> "But shared understandings do not just happen. They are forged, by political leaders, skillful in the use of strategic narratives about the past, present and future of their political community and the wider world in which they will sink or prosper. We recognise the importance of material power, but in a shifting international order with growing numbers of powerful voices wishing to exert the influence of agendas and policies, communication and social power demand analysis" (p. 6).

We could approach the research in several ways to create a broader understanding of how Moscow perceives Beijing's Arctic ambitions. Yet, by executing a narrative analysis of the English language Russian pro-governmental media, we can not only understand how Russia portrays its cooperation with China in the Arctic but also establish what kind of message is being sent to the West and how this message has changed over time. This can be achieved by commencing a narrative analysis and trying to pinpoint the strategic narratives that are being highlighted for the reader. The thesis will focus

on articles published in Russian pro-governmental media from January 1st, 2010, to December 31st, 2013, January 1st, 2014, to December 31st, 2017, and from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2021. This is done to compare how and if changes have occurred regarding how Russian media writes about China in the Arctic before and after its accession to the Arctic Council as an observer state. Analyzing the three 4-year periods will also let us focus on publications that have been written before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This will possibly allow the database to avoid excessive spillover with the information where the Arctic is not the focal point. Thus, with the help of this study, we will attempt to answer the following research question:

Whether or why the Russian narratives on China in the Arctic have changed between the three periods?

The thesis will also attempt to identify which are the actors Russia is sending these messages to through its friendly media outlets. By relying on a strategic narrative outline, the research will try to create a broader understanding of how Russia sees China in the Arctic and how it wants others to see their relationship in the highly contested region, and outside of it. This study will help fill the void in the literature about non-Arctic states and their Arctic ambitions. It will also attempt to highlight the importance of strategic narratives in a constantly changing world of international relations. Citing Miskimmon et al. (2021): "Leaders must harness global media, the voices and activities of their diaspora, and call upon the positive associations of their community held by other peoples around the world" (p. 7).

Although the research question might seem somewhat closed, it permits the thesis to assess how the messages the Russian media have been sending have changed. **This study hypothesizes that between the three periods analyzed, the narratives identified in the pro-governmental Russian media about China in the Arctic have gotten more positive.** This assumption is based on knowledge about the geopolitical situation in the 21st century. Although it certainly would not be in Kremlin's best interests to share power in the Arctic with China in a vacuum, it understands that Russia has gotten weaker (or stagnated), while the West has gotten stronger. This can be observed by both the economic development of the West, as well as the expansion of the biggest Western military alliance – NATO. This puts Russia in a position where it needs to signal to the West that it too has gained a new ally in China. Because Russia sees itself as an Arctic leader, the thesis will rely on a 'least likely' scenario, that Russia wants to bolster the Chinese image in the Arctic, thus, highlighting to the

West, that China and Russia are increasingly interconnected. If the analysis can prove that Russia is using strategic narratives to create a story that Moscow and Beijing are allies, the case can be generalized in other contexts as well.

Literature review

The following chapter assesses the research previously conducted regarding topics close to that of this thesis. The three pillars that this thesis relies on are China, Russia, and the Arctic. The combination of the three occurs in numerous studies. What makes this thesis different is the strategic narrative dimension. Russian strategic narratives have been well studied, there have also been studies about Russian strategic narratives regarding the Arctic. While China is an emerging power in the region, academic resources about how other states portray it in an Arctic context are less common. There is much more written about how China sees itself in the Arctic. This poses the opportunity to attempt to fill the gap in academic literature.

Narrowing down from the broadest, the first group of literature that closely relates to this thesis is about China in the Arctic. It is no secret that the Asian state has set the emerging region as one of its priorities, calling itself a 'Near-Arctic state' (People's Republic of China 2018). This has attracted a hefty amount of attention from academics. For instance, some scholars believe that it is only a matter of time until China becomes a prominent player in the Arctic, defining policies that shape the region (Amatulli 2017, p. 107). This is not a controversial opinion, as, with the help of its Belt and Road initiative, China is strengthening its position all around the world. Others have also expressed more temperate opinions, stating that while China is a significant actor in the High North, we also must not forget that its future in the region depends on the future geopolitical climate. Wegge (2014) expressed the belief that with the current situation in the South China Sea, other states might be reluctant to allow China further entry into the Arctic (p. 92). There are even some who believe that because China has no territory in the Arctic, the states that do, can restrain it from increasing its presence. For example, Rudbeck (2020) emphasizes the times when China has been denied investment opportunities in the region because states have raised security concerns (p. 38). Despite the seeming disagreements, in most of the studies about China's role in the Arctic, the scholars believe that there is a future with China in the region, it just depends on whether the geopolitical circumstances are met.

Another key part of the literature that should be assessed is how Russia views the Arctic. As some have even referred to the High North as 'Russia's backyard' (Gatopolous 2022), it is evident that they hold an important stake when deciding about regional actualities. Russia's Arctic policy has been somewhat different than how it treats the rest of the world and experts are still unsure whether Russia views the Arctic as a place for cooperation or not. Despite what Russia has said about wanting to cooperate in the region, steep militarization has been observed in the Russian Arctic (Baev 2019, p. 6). Scholars believe that Russia is looking at the Arctic through a lens of political realism. Lackenbauer (2020) highlights that the Kremlin has recently invested heavily in refurbishing old military bases and opening new ones in the Russian Arctic (p. 2). These scholars emphasize Russian military capabilities, emphasizing that Russia wants to be seen as a regional leader, thus it is using the High North to demonstrate its military capacity. There seems to be an agreement in the academic world that despite what Russia has implied about maintaining and developing Arctic cooperation, it acts assertively and unpredictably, which complicates possible cooperation. "Russia frames itself as a rational and non-aggressive actor, explaining its build-up as a pragmatic measure to protect its interests and critical infrastructure in the region" (Allan 2018 p. 5).

So, if Russia positions itself as a regional leader, it makes sense for them to collaborate with states who do not claim to be regional leaders. It is no secret that Russian economic capabilities are vast, with a large amount of those capabilities stemming from the resources found in the Russian Arctic. Being one of the biggest exporters of fossil energy, it makes sense for them to cooperate with states that import substantial amounts of such resources. Sørensen & Klimenko (2017) explains that Russian and Chinese cooperation in the energy field has been growing steadily, yet, since 2014, Beijing has been increasingly cautious. The scholars point to the reason behind this: "they do not simply jump into any suggested deal, because they have a very strong bargaining position at the present time" (p. 27). The same authors go even further than that, stating that despite public declarations of friendship and cooperation, China might not see Russia as a real partner, just a resource appendage. "Rather than jumping to help its strategic partner, China is exploiting its competitive advantage and Russia's strategic weakness" (p. 29). If these academics might seem reserved in predicting further cooperation between Beijing and Moscow, others emphasize China's growing need for liquified natural gas, which, coincidentally, Russia has an abundance of. Spivak and Gabuev (2021) express the belief that China is and will remain Russia's biggest foreign partner in developing Far North megaprojects. They argue that despite Putin's desire to diversify partnerships involved in developing the region, it might become

increasingly difficult to attract investments, because of the current geopolitical climate (p. 5). Other researchers suggest that despite what China is publicly stating, the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine might be where China draws the line.

> "China's state-owned Sinopec's decision on March 25 to suspend projects in Russia suggests that Beijing is heeding Washington's warning despite the foreign ministry's insistence that China has the "right to carry out normal economic and trade exchanges" with other countries" (Greenwood & Luo 2022).

Economic partnership between Russia and China is an aspect that seems to remain a mystery for the foreseeable future, yet as a large portion of this paper focuses on China, it is important to also introduce China's vision for the High North. The Belt and Road initiative is visible in many parts of the world, the Arctic is no exception. China has invested heavily in the (still) mostly frozen region. Researchers emphasize that just like the outside of the Arctic, China has a particular focus on the smaller states (Bowman & Xu 2020, p. 9). For example, China has an ongoing free trade agreement with Iceland, which has led to better relations with the small state. The experts point out that gaining the favor of smaller states is often easier, as they have less access to resources. This makes sense, regarding the Chinese interest in Iceland and Greenland.

China has stated that it respects the current order in the Arctic and that it will act per international law (Lim 2018, p. 3). Despite this, several scholars believe that China is not trusted in the Arctic, and it is met with vigilance. Hong (2018) suggests that China seeks cooperation in the Arctic as it has expressed in its 'white paper' (pp. 17-18). This mindset is an interpretation that many researchers do not agree with. Because of China's foreign policy and how it has dealt with the situation in the South China Sea, some scholars believe that the Arctic states have a solid reason not to trust China. Conley emphasizes that the United States does not trust China in general, not only in the Arctic dimension, but these two entities also have different interpretations of the term 'freedom of navigation'. "China prefers to restrict freedom of navigation to commercial vessels, while the United States would like to include naval warships" (Conley 2017, p. 18). Dean and Lackenbauer (2020) state that Canadian scholars have identified several narratives that "reflect deep-seated mistrust of the communist political system and Beijing's geopolitical ambitions" (p. 4). Although there is uncertainty about the reasoning why Arctic states do not trust China, there is general agreement that it is factual, and that they treat the PRC with caution. Su and Mayer (2018) pinpoint that China recognizes the fact that it is not trusted, thus it

needs to engage in trust-building activities. These scholars focus on science and how it can help China gain trust. They do admit that the power of this tool should not be overestimated (p. 27).

If a state requires to consciously impact the worldview of another, perhaps, to gain trust or to strengthen an argument, it can use strategic narratives. Russia has been known to create strategic narratives that help it achieve its geopolitical ambitions. Usually, they create stories that negatively depict some other entity or highlight Russia in one way or another (Claessen 2021, p.6; Schmitt 2018 p. 494). This is the reason why literature is scarce about the Kremlin creating positive strategic narratives about others. Whether that is because Russia does not construct positive strategic narratives about other states or if the field has not been developed thoroughly enough, this research will attempt to supplement the gap in the scholarly literature.

Methodology

Within this section, the framework of the thesis will be demonstrated. To understand how the study will commence, applied methods will be introduced and explained. Since identifying and analyzing narratives, let alone strategic narratives is not an easy task, careful and conscious methodological decisions need to be made.

Qualitative outline

There are several ways the research could be done, but because the focus is on strategic narratives, the study is qualitative and not quantitative. Even though some quantitative tools like data collection have been used, because of the nature of narratives, it would bear better results to use a qualitative approach. The main goal of this paper is not to find answers to questions like "how many", but "if" and "why". Questions like these cannot be answered by a quantitative approach. Even though quantitative research can answer many questions, it often lacks interpretation and does not look at factors that are nonquantifiable. (Flick 2007, p. 7). For instance, as previously in the research I pinpointed that it is extremely difficult to measure happiness using figures and statistics, it is also equally problematic to measure a narrative using statistical data. Qualitative design, however, allows for phenomena like narratives to be analyzed. Without interpretation and looking at the bigger picture, the thesis cannot argue that a narrative is strategic. This is the reason why qualitative research fits this study, as it permits

us to analyze what strategic narratives are observed in the selected texts (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 257).

When doing qualitative research, one must remember that the study cannot be fully objective. Because of the preexisting bias researchers have, as well as their values, and personal background, qualitative studies are never truly neutral (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 260). For the sake of clarity, I wish to clarify that I come from a Western background, having studied in a country that is part of the EU and NATO. Thus, there will be preexisting bias regarding objectively analyzing Russian state-sponsored media and the narratives that they create. This is also the biggest criticism of qualitative studies – they rely on the interpretations of the researcher, which are socially constructed by his surrounding environment (Merriam & Grenier 2019, p. 3).

Case study

One of the most common research designs for qualitative studies is a case study. Although it has its flaws, it allows the thesis to focus on a narrow topic (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 52). Nothing is truly secluded and isolated in an increasingly interconnected world, yet, by using a case study approach, we get the chance to somewhat isolate the issue (ibid., p. 109). To define what a case is, we cite Bryman (2012): "the most common use of the term 'case' associates the case study with a location, such as a community or organization" (p. 67). Within this thesis, the main focal point will be the change in the Russian media landscape between January 1st, 2010, and December 31st, 2021, focusing on three periods between these dates. As Bryman's interpretation of a case requires us to have a 'location' or a 'community', the 'community' of this thesis will be the Russian media. Analyzing the content published by the pro-kremlin mediums will allow us to witness how their attitude has changed towards Chinese presence in the Arctic and whether it has gotten more positive.

Since this thesis will attempt to distinguish whether and why the Russian media outlets have changed the tone in which they write about China in the Arctic, the most fitting design would be the illustrative case study. This type of case study is used to describe a situation, as well as what is happening to it, and why it is taking place (Hayes et al. 2015, p. 8). This particular design is also fruitful when dealing with cases that are unfamiliar to a wider audience, ones that are peculiar and scarcely researched. While the Russian media landscape has been researched thoroughly, the focus on what narratives they create about the Chinese presence in the Arctic is a field that has not been widely studied.

Because of the unlikely scenario that Russia wants to share power in the Arctic, this case study will be a 'least likely' one. According to Rapport (2015): "a case is least likely if the researcher can identify a set of variables that strongly countervail against the outcome the theory of interest expects to occur" (p. 8). Because Russia was against Chinese presence in the Arctic Council initially (Macalister 2011), it would be unusual for the Kremlin to construct positive narratives about China in the Arctic. Another reason why it would be least likely for Russia to bolster the Chinese image in the Arctic is that both states have hegemonic ambitions in Asia (Jiang 2020). The case displays the out-of-the-ordinary approach of Russia attempting to highlight the good aspects of the Chinese Arctic presence.

As our case focuses on the Russian pro-governmental media and how they portray China in an Arctic context, it is crucial to isolate the issue as much as possible. For instance, the thesis studies three periods, one ranging from January 1st, 2010, to December 31st, 2013, January 1st, 2014, to December 31st, 2017, and from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2021. This allows the study to look both at the period when China was not a part of the Arctic Council (pre-2013) and the period when Russia had not attacked Ukraine yet (pre-2014). During the study, it will be possible to witness how the case of Russian media portrayal of China has evolved and changed over the years.

The most notable problem with case studies is that they are sometimes misinterpreted, thus generalized incorrectly (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 276). This might be particularly true for our case, as it has been observed that Russian foreign policy regarding the Arctic is rather different from their foreign policy in the general paradigm of international relations (Pay & Calvo 2020, p. 122). This does not indicate that our case will not apply to the general paradigm, however. States are known to act differently in the Arctic, by acknowledging this, we will still be able to conclude their actions.

Although there are weaknesses in the case study design, it also has notable strengths that arguably outweigh them. Not only do case studies grant the possibility to conduct in-depth analysis, but they also are good for answering the 'how' and 'why' questions often found in qualitative studies. Many studies are conducted qualitatively since it allows to include context. Case studies are excellent for keeping the general context in mind while focusing on a particular issue. Another strength of case studies is that they can be continued afterward, as one can propose new hypotheses just by focusing on one case study (Flyvbjerg 2011, p. 314).

Data selection

To successfully analyze the Russian media landscape, and what narratives they are creating when writing about China in the Arctic, the research needs to select sources that will as precisely as possible express the opinions of the Kremlin. This means that the study will rely on Russian state-sponsored media that has been known to mirror official Russian foreign policies. The selected media outlets for this thesis will be **Russia Today, TASS,** and **Sputnik News.** Even though these mediums often write about different topics, they are all tied to the state (Fisher 2020, p. 286; Baade 2022; Law 2022). Thus, analyzing material published by them should yield sufficient results, permitting us to understand what kind of messages are being sent. These media outlets have been chosen not only because they are tied to the government, but also because they are considered the biggest Russian media outlets writing in English. This indicates that they are not writing for internal consumption, they are producing material that is expected to reach people outside of Russia. The state is well-known to have close ties with Russian expats living abroad (Tishkov 2008, p. 36). Thus, it is not expected that this material is intended for them, as they would most likely consume Russophone media.

To create a better understanding of how the Russian media portrayal of Chinese Arctic presence has developed, data has been gathered about three four-year-long periods – January 1st, 2010, to December 31st, 2013, January 1st, 2014, to December 31st, 2017, and from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2021. The first period will permit the research to assess the material written before China was accepted as an observer state to the Arctic Council. The second period will allow the study to see in what direction has the situation evolved – are the media creating different images of China than before, and whether the overall quantity of articles has increased. Whereas the third period will yield insight into the progression – it will be possible to determine whether there is an upward trajectory in positive frames. To successfully create a dataset, the thesis will look for articles that mention China, and the Arctic. If an article will only have a China dimension and it will not mention the Arctic, it will not be added to the dataset.

When a database is created, the research will attempt to group the articles regarding the dimension on which they focus. This will create a clearer vision of what kind of topics the media is focusing on. It is crucial to separate articles that have different focal points from each other. For example, an article

where the focus would be on the military would not be grouped with an article about economic collaboration.

Narrative analysis

The primary form of analyzing the dataset created is narrative analysis. As the study focuses on narratives, identity, and social constructs, it is a fruitful way to work. Pierce (2008) offers a framework that allows us to address the main aspects of analyzing narratives. The scholar emphasizes that there are 5 questions one needs to answer during narrative analysis:

- Who is 'writing' the story?
- Who is telling the story? How?
- Who is the 'target audience'?
- What is the story trying to achieve?
- What are its effects? (p. 299).

In the first question, Pierce refers to the creator of the narrative. For example, if RT writes about the war in Ukraine, it will call it a 'special military operation', but it would not be RT who had coined this term, it would be the Kremlin.

The answer to the second question is already tied to what was written previously. Using the same example, we can identify that RT is telling the story through articles it publishes.

The third question is rather straightforward, as it requires us to identify who the target audience is. Albeit it is easy to understand, it is harder to answer the question. In our case, we will almost certainly not get a factual answer to this question, only an assumption. This is because RT or Sputnik will not highlight who the intended recipient is. Although this is the case, we have attempted to narrow down the possible target audience by relying on articles written in English, meaning, that they are likely not meant for Russophones.

The fourth question might help us understand whether the narrative is strategic or not, as it requires a goal. When a large enough dataset is created, reoccurring patterns can be identified, meaning that it is possible to assume what the narrative is trying to achieve.

The last question is the hardest to answer because our dataset focuses on articles published in the last 11 years. Thus, if an article in our dataset is published in 2021, it is harder to pinpoint any instant effects. In the case of Russian media writing about the Chinese presence in the Arctic, likely, the results are not expected to be instantaneous. This is the case because this thesis focuses on identity, and it is a phenomenon that is being shaped and changed continuously both consciously and unconsciously.

As the thesis will be trying to analyze the themes and meaning behind the articles, it will rely on a thematic analysis framework. This tool allows the researcher to focus on the context behind the words written (Kohler 2005, p. 2). This means that we will focus on the article as a whole, instead of focusing on sentences, trying to gather keywords, and creating an understanding of what the implied message is. From this, the research will gain frames that will allow us to determine the thought behind the article.

As our research does not simply look for narratives, but strategic narratives, a rationalist approach will be used. The rationalist approach, as described in Miskimmon et al (2017).: "Observable outcomes can be explained through analysis of observable interactions between actors with given preferences within a given structure of anarchy" (p. 27). Because of the 'very thin' nature of the rationalist approach, we can analyze narratives that appear in Russian pro-governmental media outlets. While examining an article, a narrative frame is sought that helps illustrate the general goal of the text. Within the rationalist approach, "actors perceive narratives as information" (ibid, p. 43).

Limitations

The limitation of this study lies in the banning of the media outlets used by various states around the world, as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Kayali & Goujard 2022). This ban was implemented to counter the Russian attempts to disinform the world about what is happening in Ukraine by spreading its narrative of 'denazifying Ukraine' by using a 'special military operation' (Waxman 2022). Despite its intended goal, it also created a burden for researchers who no longer have access to the websites of these outlets. There are several ways one could go about this issue. The most obvious direction would be to abandon the idea of gathering data from these mediums. This would limit the accuracy with which the thesis could answer the proposed questions. To ensure that the

dataset is created by gathering data from the biggest Russian language pro-kremlin media, a different path needs to be pursued. This leaves us with two options – whether to write this thesis from a place where Russian media is not banned or use a virtual private network, which would hide the location. Of these options, I have chosen to use the latter one, due to how easy it is nowadays to use a VPN.

Theory

This section represents the introduction to the theory used throughout the analysis. As the thesis aims to identify constructivist presumptions, at the beginning of this section, constructivism will be introduced. After demonstrating the key elements of constructivism, the study will attempt to give brief examples of how constructivism can explain real-life phenomena. To strengthen the theory, we will look at how narratives can be and are both constructed and interpreted across the globe. This will serve as a foreword to strategic narratives, where the thesis discusses how narratives can be intentionally shifted and constructed for international actors to achieve intended results. As strategic narratives are supported by constructivist ideas, the two theories work together well, yet are not the same. Constructivism believes that narratives can be socially constructed naturally, while strategic narratives imply that narratives are intentionally created to serve a purpose. Due to the scope of this study, we will highlight the parts of the strategic narrative theory that will be used when conducting the analysis. In the case of Russia's portrayal of China in the Arctic, the identity narrative plays a key role.

Constructivism

Just at the beginning of the 21st century, the study of 'constructivism' was only starting to gain traction. Yet nowadays it has not only solidified its role in the field but it can be confidently called one of the mainstream theories of international relations alongside realism and liberalism (Adler 2013, p. 112). The term 'constructivism' was coined by Nicholas Onuf in 1989, while Alexander Wendt was the one who brought it to wider audiences in 1992 by publishing an article in a prominent international relations journal (Wendt 1992). One of the reasons why constructivism gained popularity at the end of the 20th century was because it challenged the traditional international relations theories. Early

constructivist scholars emphasize that realism and liberalism are focusing on the materialistic reality too heavily. This criticism of the mainstream theories brought constructivism the attention it deserved. Constructivists criticized the perception of anarchy that mainstream theories are supporting. Citing Copeland (2006):" According to Wendt, whether a system is conflictual or peaceful is a function not of anarchy and power but of the shared culture created through discursive social practices" (p. 1). This implies that constructivism was built on the idea that perceptions can differ because of preexisting bias. For example, if we look at the American military, everyone will be able to agree that it is impressive. Yet, when it comes to identifying whether that is a positive or a negative, answers might differ drastically. Fellow NATO states will undoubtedly view the vast American military with a different connotation than Russia or China. This highlights the agenda that the early constructivist scholars were trying to magnify - phenomena can seem different if inspected from varying angles.

As time went on, and the theory gained more and more traction, scholars were trying to advance the theory. Nothing stands still in the world of international relations. Thus, later constructivist thinkers had to evolve Wendt's ideas as well. According to Adler (2013): "constructivism sees the world as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being. Constructivism accepts that not all statements have the same epistemic value and consequently there is some foundation for knowledge" (p. 113). Albeit not radically different from what Wendt wrote, later scholars were able to add to the theory by highlighting the role of knowledge in international relations.

Perhaps the biggest focal point in constructivism is identity and how entities are perceived. We already acknowledged that different people could perceive the same event differently, yet it is important to also emphasize why this can happen. People living in different places have different experiences, values, and cultural biases. This means that not only will we perceive things differently, but it also affects the way we act and make decisions. What we are, what we have experienced, and what we have been told –all affect the way we interact with the world both on a day-to-day basis, and when dealing with international affairs (Green 2015, p. 33).

Even though the theory of constructivism has established itself as one of the leading IR theories in the 21st century, there are still plenty of critics that see flaws in the way that constructivists perceive the world. One criticism is that state interests are hard to predict. They can be estimated, but the real interests that influence decision-making are usually hidden. This means that there are always numerous variables that may not be socially constructed, but because they are unknown to the public, they cannot

be assumed (Jackson & Nexon 2015, p. 84). Another classic criticism of constructivism states that although identity could impact decision-making, it does not change as much as constructivists believe it does (Adler p. 127). This indicates that interests could also be fixed, which is the opposite of what constructivist scholars believe. Albeit certainly feasible, in the current geopolitical climate, it is fair to state that actors can change their national interests as fast as the current needs require. We have seen that historically some states have shifted alliances quickly if needed, while some are still loyal to historic ties. Nowadays, the current geopolitical climate is a good indicator that state interests can change quickly. We can take Turkey as an example – albeit it has had complicated relations with Russia, and it is a part of NATO, it has implied that it will not join the sanctions against Russia regarding the invasion of Ukraine (Ghantous et al 2022). This is a seemingly swift change of interest if we compare it to just 7 years prior when a Russian military plane was downed by the Turkish military (McLoughlin et al 2015). Realists would counter by emphasizing that states just follow their best interest, yet, that also does not imply that their best interest cannot change.

Narratives

"Let me tell you a story" is a combination of words we all have used throughout our lives. We all have told stories, both fictional and non-fictional. We are not straying off topic, however, as both individuals and organized entities can tell stories. Sometimes when a story is told repetitively, it gets called differently – a narrative. Repeating the same thing numerously will not make it a narrative though, it needs to make sense and let the reader know what kind of a story you are trying to tell.

According to the definition agreed upon by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, a narrative can be understood as "morals drawn from stories" (Bolt & Haiden 2019, p. 30). Jelena Subotic (2013) offers a lengthier description of what a narrative is: "It is a story about an event or series of events in the past, about people who participated in or made decisions about these events and about the impact these past events have on those who tell the story in the present" (p. 1). Albeit two different takes at the term, it solidifies the foundation of what this study understands with the term "narrative".

The next step is to understand why narratives are important to actors, more so, international ones. If there is an event taking place, it will be interpreted differently, based on the bias the parties involved have towards it. If it aligns with their ideals, they will likely support it, while if it is something that

interferes with their worldview, they will oppose it. Joseph Nye (1990) has stated that: "a state that can incentivize states to believe its ideas will have an easier journey to achieving its desired outcome" (p. 166). This means that it is extremely beneficial for a state if other states believe the stories they tell, or their interpretations of events align. Yet, the focal point in the idea expressed by Nye is incentivizing. While it is undoubtedly ideal if state perceptions of events align, that is not always the case. Sometimes states have differing goals, sometimes their bias is different, and sometimes other factors must be taken into consideration, causing the worldview not to align. Yet these events when the worldview does not align can be minimized by constantly having similar opinions, values, and ideas as other states. Thus, an entity needs to ensure that other entities agree with their perspective – narratives are more effective if they appeal to the values and prejudices of an audience (Davidson 2017, p. 3).

Narratives have always been used by actors across the world to tell their stories, yet in recent years states have started to recognize how influential and powerful storytelling can be (Hagström & Gustafsson p. 389). China has even officially announced that it intends to "tell their story well" (Jones 2022). Albeit this statement is rather vague, it is implying that it needs to strengthen its position and build shared narratives with other states to boost China's image as a cooperative actor. China is not the only entity that is aggressively trying to tell stories that it wants others to believe. If in the case of the aforementioned superpower its goal is to bolster its image, other states often attempt to create narratives that portray them as the victim. For example, Russia is well-known to accuse other states of being Russophobic. By creating this image, it can argue that the Russian people are being mistreated and that the West is "anti-Russian" (Gorenburg 2019). This does not indicate that there are only two types of narratives that states use to tell their story. It only highlights how storytelling has been put in the spotlight in the 21st century. The fact that such players like China and Russia are focusing so much on their narratives being heard implies that information and how it is being presented is continuing to become crucial.

Strategic narratives

Now that we have established that states value narratives, we can address the strategic nature of them. One might wonder, what makes narratives strategic. Miskimmon, et al (2013) explains:

> "Strategic narratives are a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations and change the discursive environment in which they operate. They are narratives about both states and the system itself, both about who we are and what kind of order we want" (2013, p. 2).

This indicates that when states tell their stories with the purpose to influence and even deceive - their narratives become strategic and deliberate. This is done with either a short-term or a long-term goal in mind, yet public opinion rarely tends to change swiftly, so it is easier for a state to sculpt a narrative slowly (Miskimmon et al. 2017, p. 9). When focusing on long-term goals, states can use several tools to project the message they want to send. For example, one of the most traditionally used tools is public diplomacy, as it allows states to set their agenda for others to see. When a state publishes or updates its foreign policy regarding an issue, it expects others to notice it. This might be the first visible pillar of strategic narrative-building. This does not indicate that states do not have a hidden agenda and that they intend to reveal all their cards with their foreign policy agenda, yet it does imply that they are sending some kind of a message. While we have already established that a story needs to be told, we have not touched enough on the receiving end of the message. Usually, actors know who exactly they are directing their messages at. This is the reason why public diplomacy might be directed at other states or intergovernmental institutions, while platforms like social media and traditional media might be used to reach wider audiences and shape public opinion.

Thus far we have established that there are some who receive and those who transmit stories. Miskimmon et al. (2013) distinguish between several types of actors who have varying amounts of power in international relations. Firstly the authors distinguish between individual and collective actors (p. 34). As we live in an interconnected multi-polar world, the majority of states are connected through common treaties of some sort. This can range from bilateral trade treaties to multilateral defensive alliances. Sometimes these collective entities are insignificant on an international platform and do not create narratives of their own. Others, like the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, have foreign policies of their own, meaning that if a state is a member of one of these organizations, it can both have an individual message to the world, and a collective one, as it is part of the bigger group. It is important to note that actors who are part of an intergovernmental organization will likely share values and opinions with it, thus their individual messaging should align with those of

the alliance. This does not mean, however, that all of their narratives are the same. This can be well observed within the EU, where the western states advocate different values than the eastern ones do.

The next actor introduced by Miskimmon et al. (2013) is the hegemon (p. 35). While for most of history there has not been a global hegemon, there are some scholars who believe that there is a global hegemon present currently – the United States of America (Trujillo 2019, p. 18; MacFarlane 2020). Albeit it is out of the scope of this study to prove that there currently is no global hegemon that pulls the strings behind the curtain, we can agree that this is a widely disputed claim, with many scholars arguing against a unipolar world (Scotland 2022; Chausovsky 2022; Von Hein 2022). Nevertheless, whether or not there is a global hegemon present, even it has narratives that it wishes to project.

Those who do not agree with the idea of a unipolar world mostly do not dispute the claim that several great powers can impact and influence global affairs more than others. Although there certainly is the appeal to being considered a 'great power', there is also a price that comes along with it. "Status shapes the behavior of states, with great powers expected to act differently from other states and, especially, to be involved in more alliances, more conflicts, and more conflicts further from their home territories" (Lake 2009, as cited in Miskimmon et al 2013, pp. 35-36). These states are expected to be leaders and decision-makers not only at a domestic level but also on an international one. Great powers often can mask their failures by strategically positioning the narrative in such a light that it seems that they did not fail. Some historic examples of this include the military operation the Soviet Union was conducting in Afghanistan in the 1980s or the American war in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Roselle 2006, p. 4). It is probable that the recent American withdrawal from Afghanistan will be portrayed in a similar light moving forward, as some opinions are already starting to circulate (Felbab-Brown 2021; Van Green & Doherty 2021). This is a fitting example of how over time, great powers can shape public opinion not only about success but failure as well. Albeit indirectly, this signifies how elastic the application of strategic narratives can be.

The next group of actors Miskimmon et al. (2013) introduces is called 'normal powers' (p. 37). These are the states that do not pose a direct threat to the current global order, they are influential, but they are not great powers that the international system relies on. When looking at a lengthier timeframe, states often fluctuate between being considered great powers and normal powers. For example, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union was considered a great power, while when it collapsed in the 1990s, its predecessor – the Russian Federation – was largely seen as a normal power (Roselle 2006, p. 131).

Sometimes being a normal power is temporary for states, as their objectives are greater – they want to lead. For example, an argument can be made, that currently, Russia is a great power again, while recently other states like China and India have also possibly transitioned from being normal powers to great powers (Miskimmon et al. 2021, p. 5; Pröbsting 2020, p. 36). Normal powers should not be disregarded as powerless, however. They still play an important role when narratives are being created. Oftentimes these powers do not have to be considered global great powers, because the strategic narrative they want to highlight has more of a regional identity. In Miskimmon et al. (2013), Germany is called a normal power, because of its ambitions of European integration (p. 38), meaning that it does not need to be a global leader to achieve its current goals.

Rising powers are another tier of important actors within international relations. These are usually states that have been attracting a lot of international attention. In 2013, Miskimmon et al. Called India and China 'rising powers' (p. 39). Almost 10 years later, that statement can be disputed and is disputed by the author himself (Miskimmon et al. 2021, p. 5). Nevertheless, rising powers often are seen as threats by other actors, as they might gain enough power to influence decision-making and even alter the existing system. China has long been seen as possibly the biggest threat to the current global order (Doshi 2021). Its aggressive investment in infrastructure across the world is creating a strategic narrative of its own – China is demonstrating that it is both a 'reliable partner' and a 'desirable partner' (Allan 2018, pp. 18-20).

The last tier of actors introduced by Miskimmon et al. (2013) is weak states and rogue states (p. 39). This tier is noticeably less dominant than all the other ones, as these actors are usually not the ones able to make changes in how the international system functions. Frequently these actors are part of someone else's story, for example, the US's 'war on terror' (Nünning & Nünning 2017, p. 2).

Now that we have introduced the actors that can create strategic narratives, it is important to also establish what kind of strategic narratives can be projected. Miskimmon et al. (2013) highlight three types of strategic narratives – issue narratives, system narratives, and identity narratives (p. 7). While all three of these are used by actors to tell their stories, they are very different from each other. The first of the three are narratives that are most closely connected to policies. They explain why certain policies are needed or the opposite. These narratives are very important within international relations, because they can pinpoint a conflict, who is responsible for it and how to resolve it (Miskimmon et al. 2017, p. 8). These narratives offer a context for an issue, explaining the issue from a chosen point

of view. To give an example of what an issue narrative is, we can look at the current war in Ukraine, and how different it is portrayed by Russia and the West – while one side is advocating for a military operation that is intended to save Russians from oppression, the other side is depicting the story as a forceful and unnecessary invasion of an independent state(Klimentiev 2022; Kirby 2022).

The second type of strategic narrative is system narrative. These are intended to illustrate how the world is structured, who is in charge, and what intergovernmental institutions are legitimate. Oftentimes these narratives are about the interpretation of international law, as it is one of the most notable pillars that structures international relations. A good example of a system narrative is the Cold War – it explains that during the period, there was a bipolar system in place, where democratic values were competing against socialist ones (Miskimmon et al. 2017, p. 8).

The last of the three types of strategic narratives are identity narratives. While the previous two focus more on the international system and what is happening within it, this set of narratives attempts to highlight 'the self' in a positive way. Usually, these narratives are created based on some sort of cherry-picked values, history, and prejudices (Schmitt 2018, p. 490).

Identity

As the question about one's image and how it is seen and portrayed by others is such a quintessential part of this thesis, we need to expand on the identity aspect to strengthen the foundations of this study. In the previous section we already introduced the strategic narrative of identity, yet the thesis did not highlight how crucial this narrative is. For example, most people around the world have seen Hollywood movies or read North American books, where American exceptionalism is being spotlighted. Whether it is intentional or not, this is how this positive image of the US is formed through the lens of 'the American dream' or 'the birthplace of democracy' (Izaguirre 2014, p. 4). While the focus of this thesis is certainly not the United States, this example that most are familiar with does allow us to emphasize, how the perceived identity of an entity can be socially constructed through various tools in the long term.

Another way identity narratives differ from the other two, is that they are much more prone to change. While an international system is usually socially accepted by the majority of the population, and issue narratives are judged according to preexisting bias and values, the identity of an entity is always

fluctuating and developing. Whether we are talking about a state, an intergovernmental organization, or a particular region of the world, we have a preexisting feeling about it and its identity. For example, a narrative that Scandinavia has adopted is well known by many people – that the Scandinavians are the happiest people in the world. Of course, measuring happiness is rather subjective, as everyone understands the term differently, yet, there are reputable organizations that repeatedly rank the Northern European states at the very top of the list. Albeit happiness is subjective, the fact that Denmark or Finland is the happiest country in the world is constantly being reiterated by the media (Pinsker 2021; Hunter 2022; Helwig-Larsen 2018). Although it might be perceived as a rather innocent publicity stunt by the respective states, this is state branding at its finest, they are being constantly talked about, highlighted, and generally considered a good place to live. Not only does this create this positive image about the region, but it also attracts people who are looking to emigrate from their respective states. To demonstrate why this is such a controversial, yet popular belief, other sources state that the capital of Denmark is the 4th worst place to live for expats, yet this narrative is not nearly as popular (Roberts 2020). This does not say anything about the overall happiness in Denmark, but it does illustrate how radically different the perceived reality can be. Identity crafting is nothing new, as states and intergovernmental organizations have been cherry-picking what they want others to see as long as diplomacy has been around.

Leaders often have the extremely hard task of figuring out which identity narrative to broadcast for the world to see. Many factors depend on how they project themselves to others. For instance, if a state depicts itself as a military leader, it might frighten possible economic partners, while if a state highlights its religious roots, it might attract possible partners who share similar values.

> "For instance, when states intersubjectively hold knowledge of self-other as hostile, they acquire a collective reference point of enmity. In contrast, when states develop intersubjective self-other knowledge of each other as friends who trust each other and share values, they develop we-ness" (Mattern 2005, p. 37).

Identity is such a contested phenomenon because states shape both their own identity and that of others. The states who share common values, beliefs, and history will create more favorable imagery of similar states. This is the reason why it is key for states to highlight the common values they share. "Indeed, given how important narratives are to actors' identity and action, it would be foolhardy for political leaders not to try to use narratives to influence others" (Miskimmon et al. 2013, p. 21).

This brings us to a point where we acknowledge that identity can both be socially constructed and strategically shaped as well. Although the identity aspect occurs both in the works of scholars who write about strategic narratives and in constructivist studies, it is not interpreted in the same way (Van Noort & Colley 2020, p. 40). Both of those approaches have similarities, yet there are meaningful differences. According to a researcher: "Constructivists argue that states can have multiple identities that are socially constructed through interaction with other actors" (Theys 2018). On the other hand, the scholars who study strategic narratives believe that identity narratives are "projected by a political actor to influence international affairs" (Miskimmon et al. 2021, p. 29) Thus, we can concur that the identity of an entity can be shaped both consciously and unconsciously. When it comes to this thesis, it needs to be able to identify whether the identity narratives Russian media is proposing about China in the Arctic have been created gradually, without conscious interference, or, if they have been strategically constructed with a set goal in mind.

Context

As the thesis compares and analyzes three periods, it is of utmost importance to highlight how the general situation surrounding the Arctic has changed. Another topic that needs to be touched upon is how Russia sees the Arctic. Not only might this strengthen the hypothesis, but it might also explain why certain narratives appear in the database. Talking about the context is crucial in a thesis that relies on interpretation because the narrative analysis will always be somewhat subjective. The reoccurring images that appear in the analysis require to be introduced and talked about. This section serves that exact purpose – to talk about the possible reasons why Russia is creating certain narratives about the Chinese presence in the Arctic. The change in the official Sino-Russian relationship is also pivotal, as it allows us to understand the reasoning behind some narratives. For example, if the relationship has been overwhelmingly negative, it would be expected that the narratives created by Russian media would also have a similar connotation. While, if they were positive, it would be more probable that the pro-Kremlin media would position them in a better light.

Moscow's backyard – how Russia perceives the Arctic

It is no secret that Russia has control over more Arctic landmass than any other state in the world. It is also estimated that approximately half of the population in the Arctic inhabits the Russian Arctic

(Roedenbeck & Bremen 2021). This gives reasonable ground for Russia to call the Arctic its own backyard. Despite other states also identifying themselves as possible Arctic hegemons, Russia has one of the strongest arguments to call itself a hegemon in the region. It has territory, it has people, and it has a significant military presence. The only thing that Russia arguably lacks in the region is a developed infrastructure. With the popularity the high north has seen recently, it is important to establish what Kremlin has planned for the contested region.

Historically the Russian Arctic has been a region that has not attracted a lot of attention. Both from Russia and other states. This has created an environment where more money has flown out of the region than in it, as development has stagnated (Salonen 2021, p. 1). Despite being rich with natural resources, the climate in the Russian Arctic has been extremely rough. Yet, with the climate changing all around the world, there are increasing talks about developing the region further.

With many states wanting to cut shipping time and expenditure, there are talks about a Northern Sea route, which would be a much more efficient way of shipping for various actors. It is not like the NSR is not being used currently, it is just frozen over for most of the year (Gunnarsson 2021, p. 3). In a world with less ice coverage, the Northern Sea Route could become a competing shipping route for the main routes connecting Southeast Asia and Europe. States like China and Japan are some of the states that might benefit most from an accessible NSR (Hataya & Huang 2021, p. 6). Yet, one state that sometimes gets left out of these discussions about the biggest beneficiaries is the most obvious one – Russia.

Because the Northern Sea route is currently still scarcely used, it does not require it to be as developed. Yet, with the warming of the seas, it is anticipated that more and more shipping will go through this part of the world (Vasiliev 2021). This, however, would require increasingly more infrastructure. As the Russian coastline covers a large portion of the NSR, this is the region that might need to be developed the most. This indicates that Russia is the one with the leverage. If states that want to use the NSR in the future want to use Russian ports, they need not only Russian permission but favor as well. There are still disputes about whether the coastal waters along the Russian Arctic will be available for transit (Moe 2020, p. 221). Meaning that states that intend to use the NSR need to be careful with how they treat Moscow, as not many alternatives to Russian ports exist or even are possible.

Although the Northern Sea route is a powerful tool for Russia, it does not alone defy how the Russians perceive and treat its 'backyard'. One major factor why Russia is cautious about the Far North is because of its neighbors. Despite having Arctic land borders with only a couple of states, on the other side of the Arctic Ocean, there are more. Every single one of the states that have territory in the Arctic except Russia is a member of the EU, NATO, or both. It is no secret that Putin's regime has long classified these entities as hostile (Adomeit 2007, p. 3). This indicates that even though Moscow has implied that it perceives the Arctic as a region for peace, it must be cautious, as the Arctic is full of hostile states, according to Russia's point of view. This has led to a situation where both Russia and the West highlight that they want peace in the region, yet both sides build up military capabilities in the High North. There is a belief that this might lead to an arms race, similar to that of the Cold War era (Wilhelmsen & Hjermann 2022 p. 114). Russia feels required to conduct reoccurring military drills, and test its naval and aerial capacity. Oftentimes these tests are conducted near the borders of neighboring states, for example, Norway (Zysk 2011, p. 89). Although it is not expressed directly, these demonstrations imply that Russia considers itself the one in charge of the Arctic. With these regular military drills, it warns the West that 'the bear' does not want to be 'poked' and everything taking place in the Arctic needs to be approved by Russia.

Military presence and future economic development in the shipping sector are undoubtedly key to how Putin envisions his presence in the Arctic. Yet, it is a well-known fact that approximately 90% of Russian natural gas and diamonds are extracted from under the permafrost in the Arctic. Also, around 30% of the Russian oil comes from the Far North (Blakkisrud 2021, p. 80). These are only a few of the resources that derive from the Russian Arctic, yet they should signify how economically noteworthy the region is for the Eurasian state. These are recognized channels for income, yet there are several opportunities to massively increase the profit that the Russian Arctic yields.

As Russia is currently experiencing a period of deteriorating relations with the West, it needs to rely more heavily on investment opportunities that it had not explored historically. Asian states that are Russia's neighbors, and even some that are not, are involved in investing to develop infrastructure in the Arctic. Not only are external actors interested in developing the Northern Sea route, but also megaprojects like the Yamal LNG venture. The latter has attracted attention from both India and China who are interested in eventually importing more liquefied natural gas from Russia (Henderson & Yermakov 2019, p. 4). These two have a massive capacity to import Russian LNG, thus they are

increasingly supportive of developing Arctic infrastructure. For example, the Yamal LNG project is estimated to be worth around 27.6 billion US dollars with various international actors holding a stake. The whole venture drastically increases the LNG exporting capacities of Russia, while there are several other projects on the way, for example, the Arctic LNG project. (ibid., p. 15)

New strategic frontiers – how China perceives the Arctic

The High North has historically been a region where borders rarely shift. While the rest of the world has seen several highly destructive conflicts, the Arctic has remained somewhat intact. This might be because in certain areas it is bordering being uninhabitable. Only around 4 million people currently live within the Arctic Circle (Gibbens 2019). With global powers sometimes forgetting about the region, it has been underdeveloped for most of history. This tendency of disregarding the High North has created the opportunity for China to perceive the region as ungoverned or undergoverned (Kaskanis 2022).

While the states with territories in the Arctic would most definitely not agree with the fact that the region is ungoverned, China equates the region to the seabed, the outer space, and the Antarctic (Sørensen & Hsiung 2021, p. 4). Beijing considers all these territories 'new strategic frontiers', thus, the Chinese Communist Party has implied that "China's share of these resources should be equal to its share of the global population" (Doshi, Dale-Huang & Zhang 2021). This kind of mindset might be the reason why certain Arctic states perceive China as a threat, because, if the Arctic realm is described as belonging to everyone equally, it creates a corridor for China to establish its presence. It is significant to note that these statements have mostly been communicated within the internal information space (Banjernee 2021). When it comes to what China is trying to tell the international audience, the message changes drastically. In official documents, the CCP express that they are rule-abiding and respect the current status quo of the High North (Allan 2018 p. 5). These extremely differing messages can confuse global actors.

Even though China is portraying itself as respectful and rule-abiding, it does not hide its intentions about the want to develop the Arctic. China has implied on numerous occasions that what happens in the Arctic impacts not only the region but the entire world, especially the regions close to the Arctic. This is also China's main argument for why it calls itself a 'near Arctic state'. As China is positioning itself as an actor that belongs in the Arctic, it also believes that it should be allowed to invest in the

region freely. The Asian state has sought investment opportunities in the High North, but in the current geopolitical climate, many of these opportunities are not accessible to China. In the 21st century so far, several Chinese investments have been blocked by Arctic states, arguing that allowing China to increase its presence is a security threat. For example, in 2011 a Chinese entrepreneur expressed his interest to buy a large patch of land in Iceland, but due to possible ties with the CCP, the transaction was not permitted by the Icelandic government (Dams et al. 2020, p. 21). Examples like these imply that even though China would like to have a bigger part in what is happening in the region, it can only increase its presence with the permission of Arctic states. To gain this permission, it needs to continue appeasing the Arctic states, showing that it means no threat to their sovereignty.

The Chinese government likely realizes that it cannot enter the Arctic swiftly. Because of this, China treats the Arctic states as individual actors and not as a group. It has policies that are carefully sculpted to gain the best possible results for itself. For example, the free trade agreement with Iceland established in 2013 signified that not all Arctic states are strictly against Chinese presence in the region. This FTA was the first of its kind, as no other European states had an FTA established with China before Iceland. Despite the agreement benefiting both sides, by establishing the FTA, China can later argue that its ties with the Arctic states are developing. By becoming increasingly interconnected, China aims to gain more arguments why its presence in the Arctic is justifiable.

The unusual Sino-Russian partnership

One might expect that two ex-communist states like Russia and China would have many things in common. Although that might be true to an extent, these two actors have as many differences as similarities. One thing they have in common though – they both want to change the current international system and become the global hegemon. Both have different reasons why they see themselves as a global leader, but the key similarity is that they believe that they have been historically mistreated (Metcalf 2020, p. 45; Nougayrède 2015). While the common trend of being treated as the villain certainly ties the two together, several factors make the possible Sino-Russian alliance complicated.

Russia and China have a long existing relationship. After the Soviet Union collapsed, the current version of their relationship started to shape.

> "With the collapse of the Soviet Union, that de facto US-China alliance ended, and a China–Russia rapprochement began. In 1992, the two countries declared that they were pursuing a "constructive partnership"; in 1996, they progressed toward a "strategic partnership"; and in 2001, they signed a treaty of "friendship and cooperation" (Nye 2015).

The Sino-Russian partnership has since developed further since Nye made the quote with a renewal of the friendship agreement in 2021 (Isachenkov 2021). Despite both states having their personal interests in mind, it can be pinpointed that at least on paper they attempt to send a message to the world that they are partners. While the fact that both have hegemonic aspirations might cause trouble ahead, currently they have a common enemy – the United States. Both China and Russia have had heated relations with the Western state in recent years. Both have experienced Western sanctions, and both would prefer a weaker US rather than a stronger one. This common enemy narrative might be the main reason why the Sino-Russian relationship has been so stable in the general paradigm.

It is harder to establish what goes on behind the curtains when talking about the two states, as well as what their end goal might be. It can be argued that Russia needs China more than vice-versa because Beijing is not as internationally sanctioned as Moscow. China has not yet condoned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, meaning that it values this partnership (Wong 2022). It is, however, not outspokenly supporting Russia as well, because it relies on Western markets heavily, and it cannot risk cutting ties with the West in favor of Russia. As the world has grown increasingly interconnected, it is extremely difficult for the West to pressure China to condone the Russian aggression in Ukraine without 'pushing it towards Russia' with new sanctions. Meaning that China will likely attempt to balance on two chairs for the foreseeable future. The simple fact that Beijing has thus far evaded explicitly picking a side in the conflict might indicate that they see Russia as a temporary ally. Many believe it is highly unlikely that two states with global hegemonic aspirations can remain allies in the long run (Wilson 2018, p. 791; Liik 2021). Especially because both states are neighbors, thus their regional goals could clash. Yet, currently, they pose a great danger to the West and the global order in general.

In 2018, Russia and China conducted joint military exercises, which signaled that the two states are developing their military ties (Forrest, Simmons & Deng 2022). Since then, both have increased military cooperation in several fields. This is not a completely new occurrence, as China has been long importing Russian weaponry, but it does indicate that there is development (Hamilton 2022).

One dimension where Sino-Russian relations can be observed developing is the Arctic. Before China was granted observer status in the Arctic Council, Russia was not openly supporting Chinese accession it was against it (Wishnick 2017, p. 42). Although not explicitly stated, by opposing the Chinese Arctic presence, Russia likely wanted to keep the current status quo in the region. Yet, as years have passed, there is a completely different relationship between Moscow and Beijing in the High North. There is cooperation in the energy sector, and both states have expressed the readiness to cooperate in developing the Northern Sea Route. The fact that Russia has permitted China to invest such great amounts in its energy sector signifies that the partnership has evolved. If just 11 years ago Russia was not supportive of a Chinese Arctic presence, currently they are cooperation in developing the Russian Arctic. Despite Russia wanting to keep control over its Arctic territories, the development of the NSR will benefit the Russian state economically. As China could be the most frequent user of the NSR, the Kremlin needs to balance keeping China close, but far enough, so that it does not endanger its authority in the region.

> "In 2019, for example, Russia announced new rules for the passage of foreign ships through the Northern Sea Route, including requiring ships to register requests to transit, contrary to international law" (Townsend & Kendall-Taylor 2021, p. 7).

This indicates that Russia is seeking measures to remain in control of the region. With time we could see further cooperation between the two states regarding the NSR but currently, it is still not available for shipping year-round. Once the infrastructure in the region has been developed sufficiently enough and global climate change has made the route more shippable, we might see new joint ventures between the two states. Especially if China is ready to allow Russia to be the one making rules in the Arctic.

Although it is still uncertain whether both states perceive each other as temporary allies or not, their economic, military, and political ties have all seen growth in the 21st century. If both states can figure out a way to co-exist without getting in each other's way, they can drastically affect the current geopolitical order. Whether that happens or not is yet to be seen, but one thing is certain – both want the rest of the world to think they are interested in enhancing their ties.

Analysis

In this section, the thesis will analyze how, why, and in what direction have the stories changed that the Russian pro-governmental media is publishing about China in the Arctic. As the dataset has compiled articles from three different periods, it is important to understand whether there has been a distinct change in direction. Further in the analysis, the research attempts to identify and pinpoint the factors that have caused this change. It is beneficial to recognize global events that have occurred and might have correlations with the narratives that appear in the dataset.

The narrative frames

After compiling the dataset for this thesis, it was found that throughout the three periods studied, a total of 158 articles were deemed valid for the dataset. Meaning, that these articles had both a 'China' and an 'Arctic' dimension. Within these articles, 17 unique narrative frames were observed. As qualitative research relies on interpretation, some of the frames could be grouped or called differently. The list is not fully objective, rather it reflects my perception of the articles.

Table 1: Attitude of the frames

Frame	Attitude	Keywords
China and Russia might cooperate	Positive	Partners; possible; future; circumstances; promising
China can't afford Russian energy	Negative	Subsidies; fixed-price; poor
China is a friend	Positive	Friend; friendship; history; ties;
China is a military partner	Positive	Military; partner; drills
China is innovative	Positive	Future; innovation; technology; first
China is welcome	Positive	Waiting; welcome; positive; invite
China seeks Arctic presence	Neutral	Benefit; develop; gain; prospects
China develops Arctic infrastructure	Positive	Develop; technology; infrastructure; future
China spies on Russia	Negative	Spy; captured; treason
China wants research	Positive	Technology; future; research; climate
China wants Russian help	Positive	Assistance; help; ties
China wants the PSR	Neutral	Polar; Silk; NSR; PSR; shipping
Russia and China are partners	Positive	Trade; partners; profit; economy
Russia doesn't want to be overdependent on China	Negative	Overdependent
The West fears China	Positive	China; threat; military
The West fears Russia and China	Positive	China; Russia; threat; military
The West is pushing Russia towards China	Positive	Sanctions; China

In table 1 it is possible to see all 17 frames identified. In the process of gathering and grouping the articles, the research relied on an interpretation of the texts and reoccurring keywords. This means that by reading the text, I attempted to isolate a story that this article might be trying to focus on. To

increase the objectivity of the selection, certain keywords that were observed within the articles were added to the dataset in an attempt to highlight their similarities.

As seen in Table 1, most narrative frames identified have been constructed in a positive light. To determine whether an article paints China in a positive, negative, or neutral picture, the research has attempted to assess the context. It was established that the focal point of this thesis will be the identity of China and how Russian pro-governmental media portrays it. Thus, it is possible to understand what the underlying story is that an outlet is trying to tell with articles.

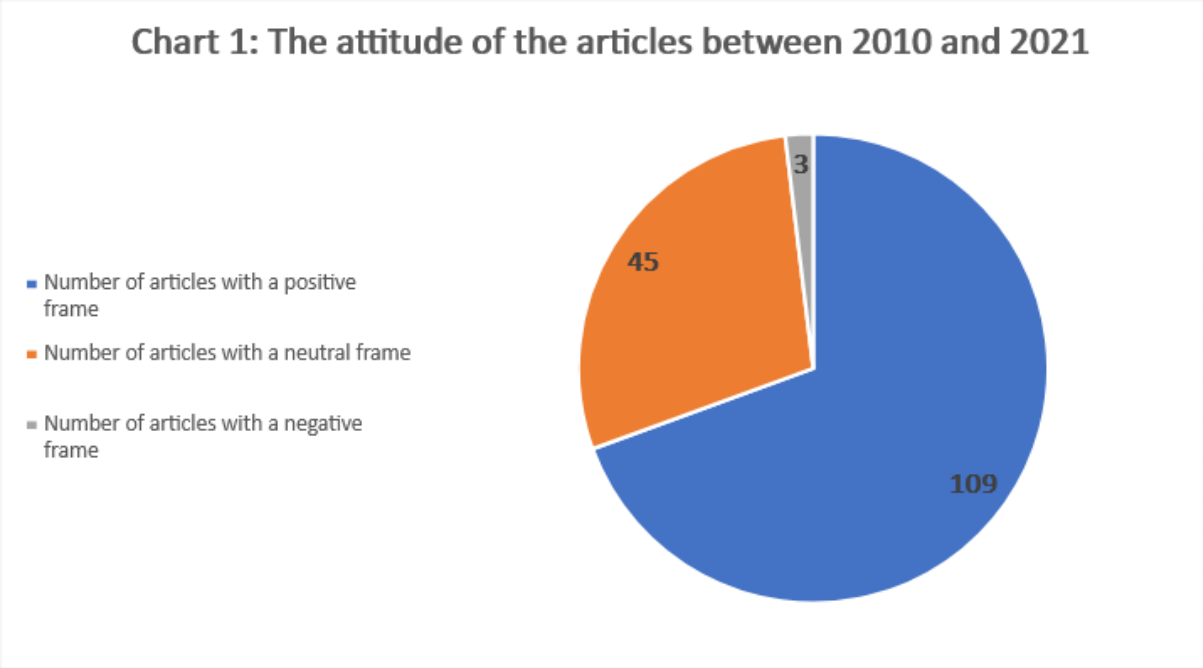
To further explain when a frame is positive, when it is neutral, and when negative, it might be fruitful to introduce examples. For instance, the frame 'Russia and China are partners' is labeled as a positive frame, because the articles that this frame has been identified in highlighted the economic partnership between the two states. By using this frame, the pro-governmental media is emphasizing common interests, goals, and economic developments. To further strengthen the argument that this frame is positive, we can introduce a quote from an article that was added to the dataset: "The countries are jointly building the Power of Siberia gas pipeline and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility on the Yamal Peninsula in the Russian Arctic" (RT 1, 2017). Within this example, it is possible to observe that the author is emphasizing that the construction is taking place jointly, thus they are cooperating, justifying that the frame sheds a positive light on China.

Stating that a frame is neutral might be more subjective, as possibly there is a hidden message that the research is missing because of its bias. Yet, several articles are harder to call positive or negative, because they do not focus on the Sino-Russian relationship. For example, the frame 'China seeks Arctic presence' is neither positive nor negative from a Russian point of view, because we do not know how the Kremlin perceives this. The statement that China seeks a greater Arctic presence has become a fact in recent years, based on various attempted investments by the Southeast Asian state. There is an argument, however, that this frame could also be described as 'supportive' rather than neutral, however. This is the reason because if China seeks Arctic presence, it means it must cooperate with Arctic states, including Russia, to achieve such a feat. While it is not directly positive, it could lead to positive outcomes for Russia. This, however, is just a prediction, China could also use coercive force to establish itself in the Arctic, but, as this is an unlikely scenario, the frame is neutral.

The last group of frames is the negative ones. These are easy to pinpoint because they focus on something that Russia might not be in favor of. For example, the frame 'China spies on Russia' carries

a connotation that is hard to miss. No state wants to be spied on, let alone, know that they are being spied on. "Despite Moscow and Beijing's cultivation of friendship in recent years, there's still competition between the two powers. The arrest of the president of Russia's Arctic Academy of Sciences on treason charges serves as a reminder" (RT 2, 2020). This quote illustrates that despite the positive trajectory of the relations between the two states, there is still some mistrust and coercion occurring.

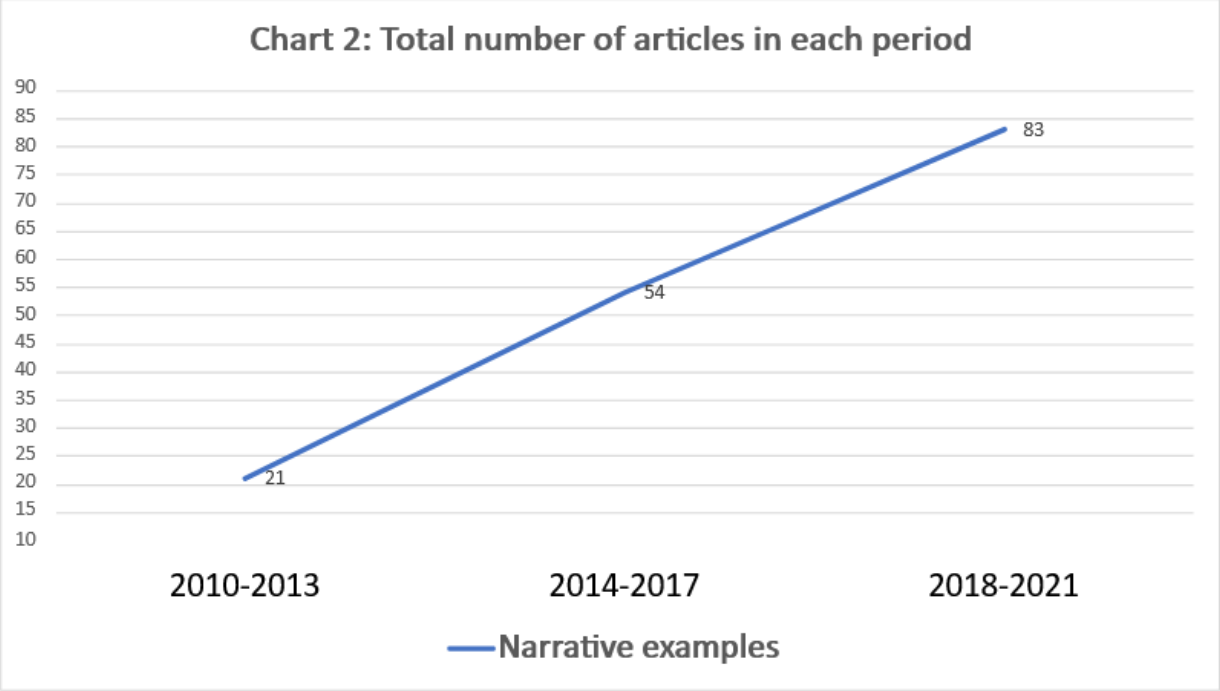
When it comes to the overall dataset, it was observed that it contained an overwhelming number of articles that attempted to improve China's image to the reader. If we look at chart 1, it is possible to see the drastic difference in the count of positive, neutral, and negative frames identified within the texts.



Between 2010 and 2021, from the 158 articles written by the Russian pro-governmental media containing both a 'China' and an 'Arctic' dimension, 109, or 69% contained a positive connotation. Articles with neutral framing were observed 45 times or in 29% of the cases. This indicates that within the 12-year long period when data was compiled, the pro-Kremlinist media only wrote 3 articles in English where the main message was negative. If positive frames were observed 69% of the time, and neutral framing occurred 29% of the time, it leaves us with only 2% for the negative ones. This underlines that in the three 4-year long periods which the research focused on, the media outlets seldom attempted to worsen how the reader perceived China in the Arctic. Although the overall

picture currently seems to be painted very positively, it is important to note that the 3 periods analyzed are rather different from each other.

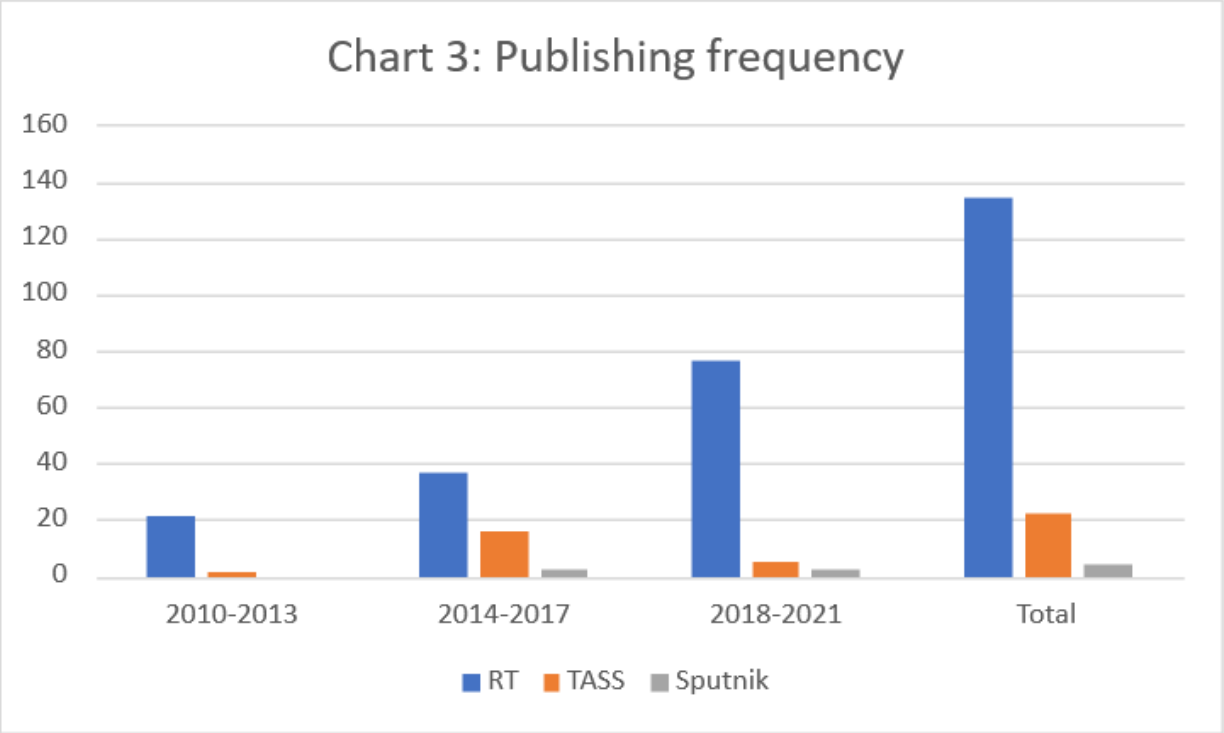
To further emphasize how the 3 periods have differed in content published, we can look at chart 2.



Here we can observe that the number of articles published each year has been noticeably different. Of the total 158 articles published in the 12 years compiled, only 13% of the overall number were published in the 2010-2013 period, while more than 52% were published in the latter period. As the chart illustrates, we can observe that there is an upward trajectory, with the media outlets publishing more articles as time goes on. This can indicate that the terms 'China' and 'Arctic' have gotten increasingly important for the Russian pro-governmental media. As the Russian mediums analyzed were all state-sponsored, it is thus also possible to assume that China's interest in the Arctic has gotten progressively important to the Kremlin as well. Another factor that we must not disregard is the language of the texts. All articles were in English. This can also signify that the Kremlin wants to send a message to the international audience. As these articles are likely not meant for the Russian internal readers, the intended goal of this increase might be to show the West that Moscow sees Beijing's increased presence in the Arctic. If we quickly glance back to chart 1 and remember that most articles had a positive frame, we can also further assume that the mediums want to send a message that Russia not only knows about China's polar ambitions but also supports them.

Another metric that deserves to be noted is the division of articles not only by year but by media outlet. Out of the three mediums the study has chosen, RT and TASS can be considered the most influential of all to deliver Russia's messages (Hanley & Kuzichkin 2021, p. 25). While Sputnik does not have the coverage the aforementioned ones possess, it is still prominent and frequently quoted. All three can be considered Kremlin's messengers, but Sputnik is the most aggressive one (Watanabe 2018).

In chart 3 we can see how often each medium has published articles with both a 'China' and an 'Arctic' focus. If in chart 2 we observed that articles with our chosen focus get published increasingly more often, chart 3 demonstrates how often each medium has published articles containing the necessary keywords.



Sputnik did not publish anything in the first period, while in the second and third, they published 2 articles. That means this media outlet publishes English language articles about China in the Arctic less than once a year. TASS and RT are different, as they are present in all three periods. TASS has a rather illogical publishing frequency, as they published 1 article in the 2010 – 2013 period, 16 in the 2014 – 2017 period, and then 5 in the 2018 – 2021 period. This signifies that there has been a change in direction with how often TASS publishes about the topic in question. All three outlets are state-sponsored, thus the decrease in articles published by TASS might be because RT more than doubled

its output. This is not an isolated phenomenon, since we can observe it taking place in every period examined. If in the first one RT published only 21 articles in English about China and the Arctic, in the next, they already published 37, which is a 57% increase. The biggest activity has been observed in the third period, as RT published 76 articles. RT can be perceived as the most prominent and internationally read Russian media outlet (Sharibzhanov 2017, p. 3). This means we can assume that both dimensions - 'China' and 'Arctic' have gotten more important for Moscow. More so, these findings indicate that it has gotten more important for the Kremlin to tell their story about China in the Arctic to the West, which is the likely target audience.

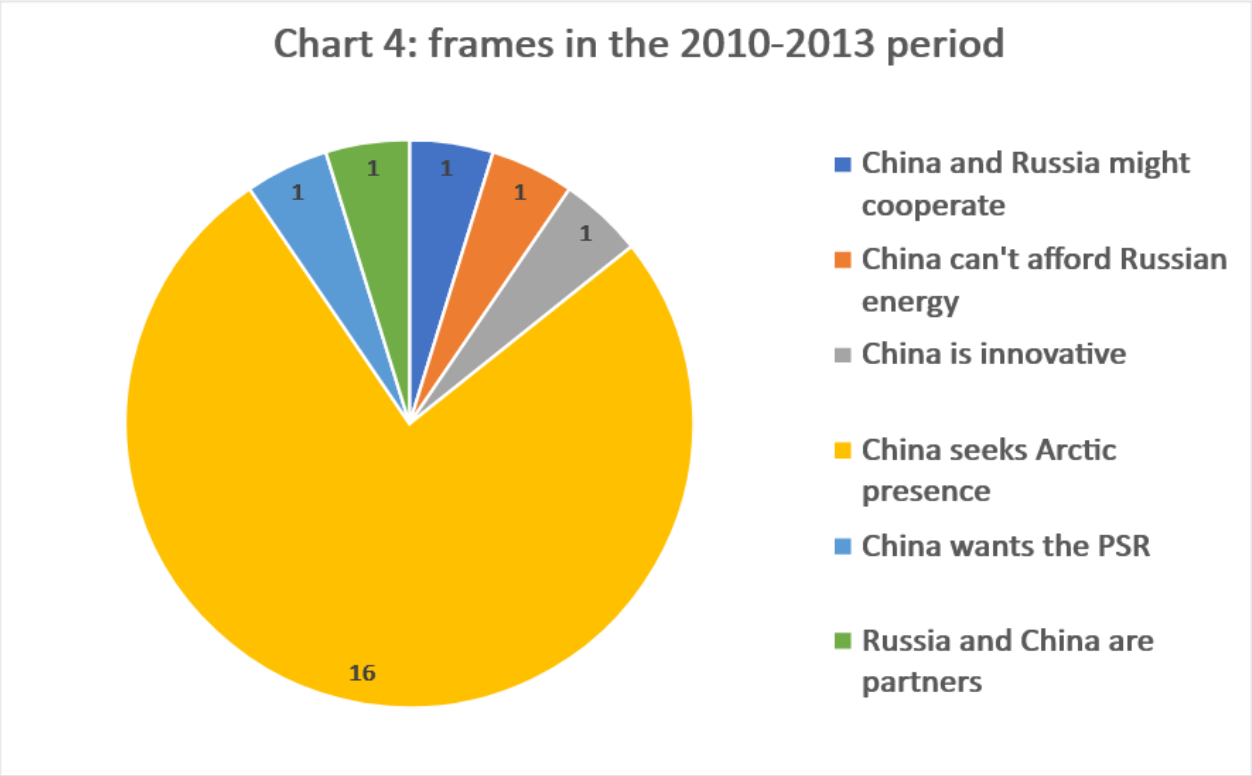
Comparison of periods

As demonstrated in the section above, there are notable differences between the three periods. This stipulates that each needs to be examined individually, so they can be understood better. The reason why it is difficult to just compare the periods based on the data already gathered is that the 158 articles in our dataset have been divided into 17 categories, as we have 17 narrative frames. Out of these frames, only 3 have been observed in all 3 periods and 2 more in 2 periods. Only 5 frames in total are reoccurring, meaning that 12 have only been identified in one period. These conditions make it preferable to analyze the change in Russian portrayal of China in the Arctic period by period.

2010 – 2013: Presence

The 2010 – 2013 period is the first one we have looked at. This period was chosen as the starting point because in May of 2013 China was accepted as a permanent observer state of the Arctic Council. As this was deemed a significant milestone, starting the narrative analysis before this event took place seemed appealing. Before examining the findings, it is important to note that this period was expected to be the most negative one. This is not the case because China and Russia had some falling out, but rather because Kremlin was not certain Beijing would recognize Russian sovereignty over their Arctic waters (Wishnick 2017, p. 33). This created the illusion that Russia might perceive Chinese Arctic ambitions with a grain of salt.

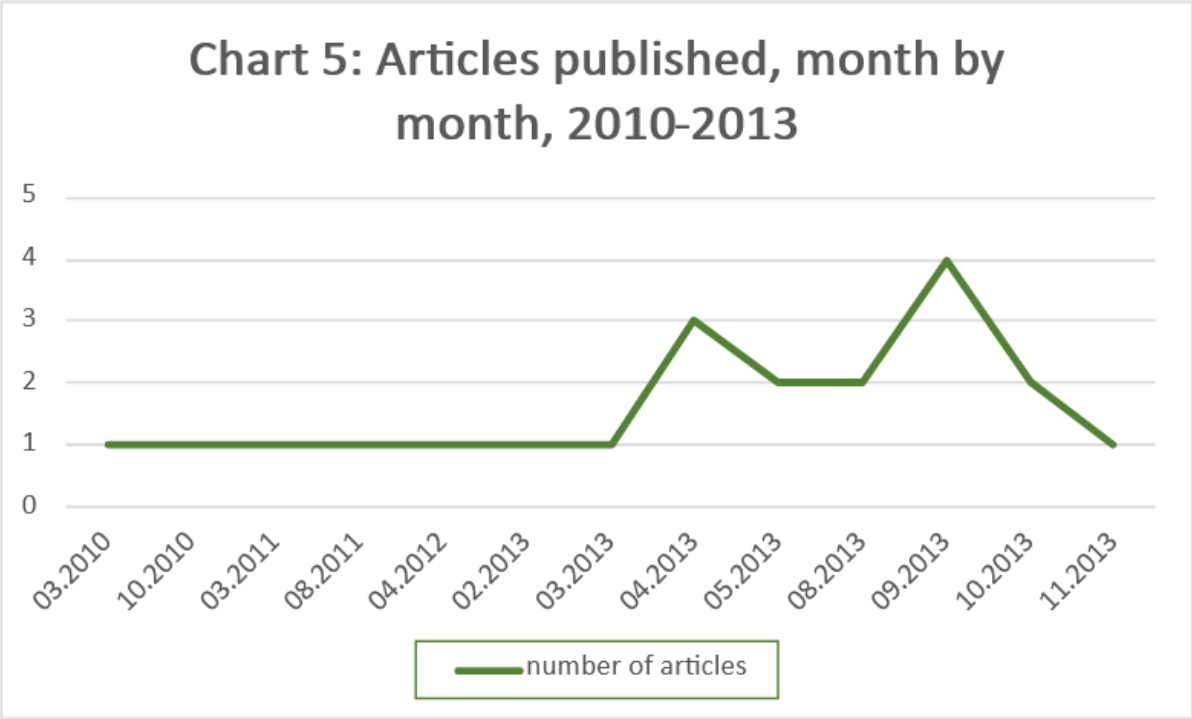
Looking at chart 4, we can see that there is a dominant frame - 'China seeks Arctic presence'. Despite Russia not being fully in favor of Chinese accession to the Arctic Council at some point, this frame should not be labeled as a negative one, because of the context of the articles.



This frame was observed in more than 75% of the articles published between 2010 and 2013. This indicates that Russian media outlets were interested in China's Arctic ambitions, and they wanted to make sure that their interpretation of it is being heard. The 5 other frames observed each account for 5%, as they were observed only once. To more distinctly analyze the most prominent frame, we need to introduce the context of these articles. Most texts in the 2010 – 2013 period were creating this image about upcoming events, existing ambitions, and possible turning points. As China was not yet a member of the Arctic Council before May 2013, the Russian pro-governmental media were highlighting Beijing's attempts to become a member of the intergovernmental body. For example, one article states: "In exchange for advantageous trade tariffs, Iceland may be able to give China the Arctic influence it's been seeking" (RT 3, 2013). This was not the only article that highlighted Chinese attempts to increase presence with the help of the Nordics. Another article states: "Chinese Arctic activities seem to bear fruit as the Nordic countries finally supported China's membership of the AC" (RT 4, 2013) This illustrates that even though frames like 'Russia and China are partners' and 'China and Russia might cooperate' do appear, the Russian mediums did not want to create an image that they and China are especially close in the Arctic. This finding will be key when comparing how the media portrayed China's Arctic ambitions throughout the periods.

It is crucial to emphasize that if we 'China seeks Arctic presence', which is a neutral frame, we get left with 3 positive frames, 1 neutral frame, and 1 negative frame. This means that 17 out of 21 frames were neutral. Then we are left with 3 positive and 1 negative frame. Meaning that there is not an overwhelming dominance of positive framing. If we recall chart 1, it was established that 69% of all frames in all periods were positive. In the 2010 – 2013 period, less than 15% of the articles were framed positively. While we are not diving into the next section just yet, we can see that there is a significant difference.

To further strengthen the argument that as time goes on, Russian pro-governmental media outlets write more about China in the Arctic, we can look at chart 5 to observe which month of which year bared the most material. It is possible to see that in 2010, 2011, and 2012 only 5 articles were published in total.

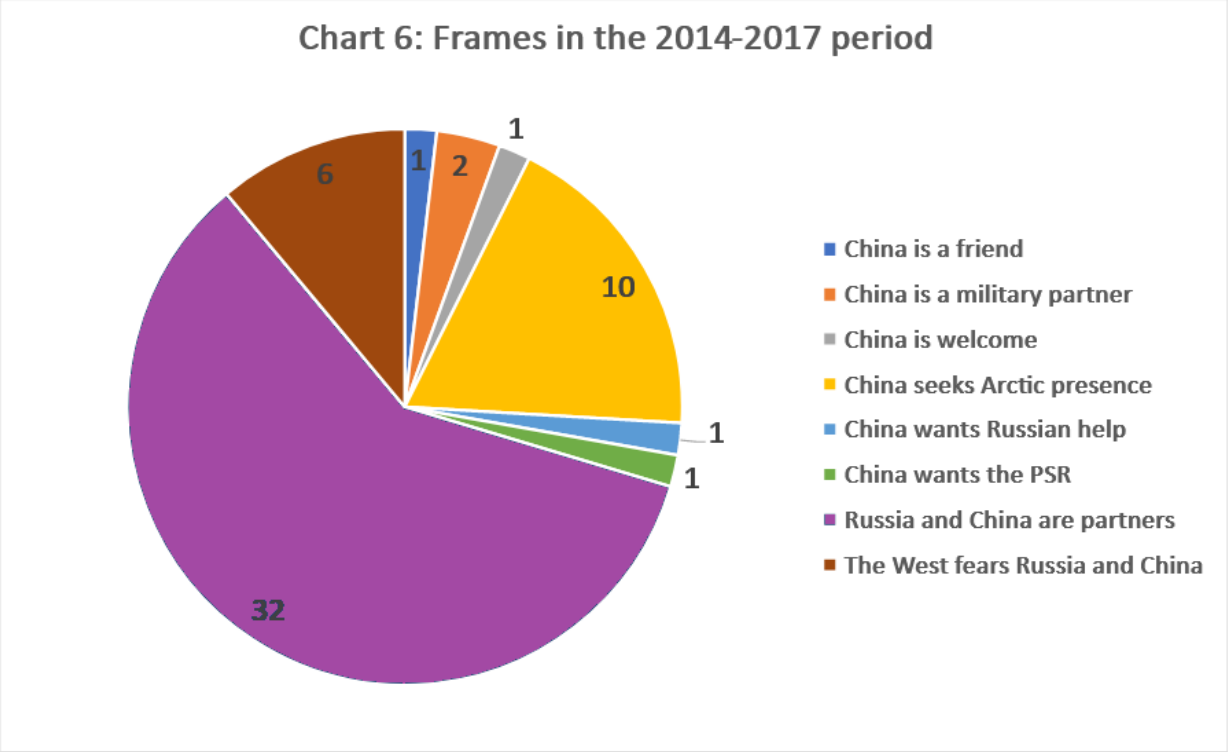


From the start of 2013, until the 15th of May, when China was accepted as an observer state to the Arctic Council, 7 articles were published. This signifies that the period right before China was admitted to the AC was important for the Russian media. Perhaps they foresaw that the Asian state will be granted observer status, thus they wanted to share their view of the situation. Out of all articles published in the period, 15 were published in 2013. September was the most fruitful month of 2013 for the topics 'China' and 'Arctic', as 4 articles in total were published. September 2013 is a significant

milestone in the research, as the frame 'Russia and China are partners' appears for the first time. The article where this frame was observed was published by TASS. It was also the only article in the period which TASS published with both 'China' and 'Arctic' dimensions. As there is only one article bearing this frame, it might not be causal, but it is worth emphasizing that the article was published on the 6th of September 2013. On the 5th of September, China and Russia took part in the G20 summit, where China joined Russia in opposing military strikes on Syria (Wintour 2013). While one article is most likely not enough to prove correlation, it is worth keeping in mind that this statement where China sides with Russia could have triggered some advancements in their relationship.

2014 – 2017: Partnership

The period following the 2010 – 2013 one has provided different findings. Looking at chart 6, not only can we see that there have been more articles written, but also a new dominant frame - 'Russia and China are partners'. This is a massive increase, as in the last period only 1 such frame was observed.



This could indicate that there has been a shift in strategy. This is the first time in the analysis section where we can hypothesize that there might be strategic implications for this growth. For this to be true, we need to find reasons why such an increase could have occurred and explain the Kremlin's motivation behind such an action.

The frame 'Russia and China are partners' was identified in more than half of the articles, in 59% to be exact. Most of the articles that fit this frame focused on new economic deals, as well as possible economic growth for both parties. Topics like the Northern Sea route, Liquified Natural Gas, and Sino-Russian transport corridors were considered in these articles. It is easy to say that when writing about China in the Arctic between 2014 and 2017, the focus of the Russian media outlets was to emphasize the already existing and still-growing economic co-dependence of China and Russia. The partnership narrative makes sense, as the period examined has aligned with the time when Russia was struck by international economic sanctions. By publishing articles in the English language Russian media about how China and Russia are developing their ties, the Kremlin sends a clear message to the West – you do not have to invest in the Russian Arctic, because China will gladly do so. The real goal of this sentiment might not be attracting Chinese investment, but rather scaring the West. Chinese language Russian media outlets were not examined; thus, we can only assume that the mediums are directing the message at the Western audience, and not the Southeastern Asian readers.

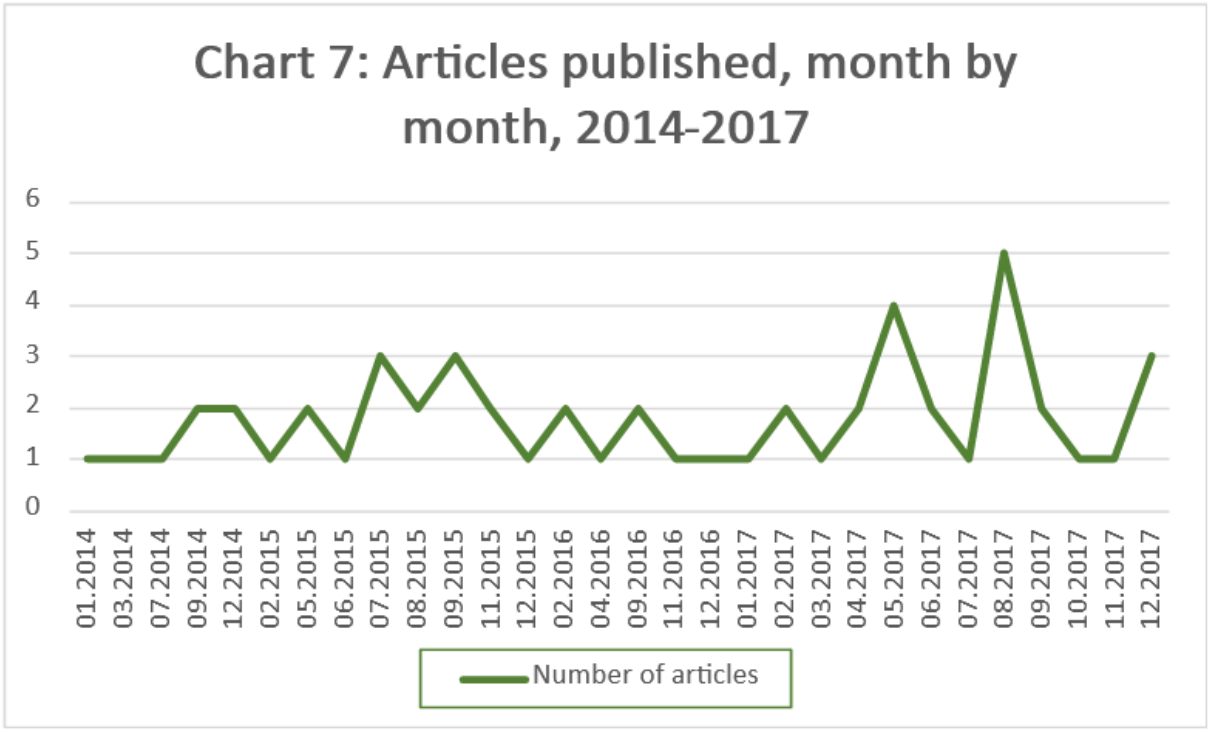
The dominant frame in the last period, 'China seeks Arctic presence' is still prominent, yet it has lost some momentum, as in the last period, it was spotted in 76% of the articles, while in the 2014 – 2017 period, it is only present in 18% of the materials. It is the second most identified frame, yet it is seen more than 3 times less than the most common one.

Several frames occur for the first time. From those, the most notable is the 'The West fears Russia and China'. Not only does this frame imply that there is some kind of grouping of China and Russia, but it also acknowledges the common threat – the West. The other frame appearing more than once - 'China is a military partner' is similar to the previously mentioned frame, yet it is even more positive, as it signifies the military cooperation that the two states have. While China and Russia cannot be called a military alliance by any metric, it is interesting that such a frame has been found, as it creates the basis for possible future military collaboration. One of the two frames appears in nearly 15% of all articles published in the 2014 – 2017 period, which is a significant margin. What is more interesting,75% of these two frames appear between March 2014 and November 2015. It is worth noting that in late February 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine, and not long after annexed Crimea (Myers & Barry 2014). It is meaningful because the invasion of Ukraine started a chain of sanctions against Russia, thus, it needed to show that they do not need the West – they have an ally in China. The military dimension of these frames also might be intended to warn the West about doing anything rash, as Russia is signaling that Moscow and Beijing are also close in this dimension. It is especially

important that China does not have any Arctic territories, yet Russian media was still trying to create this image that the West fear both Russia and China in the region. The fact that 75% of these articles took place at a strategically significant time gives value to the argument that these narratives might be strategic.

If we observed a single negative frame in the last period, in this one there were none. While it does not offer much to analyze, we can at least state that no worsening of relations has been identified in the Arctic dimension. It is worth briefly noting that roughly 20% of all articles in this period are neutral. Of those, the most prominent is the 'China seeks Arctic presence' one, yet 'China wants the PSR' must not be disregarded as well, as it has thus far appeared in both periods examined. This is very different from the last period when 81% were neutral. This illustrates that there has been a significant change in attitude towards China in the Arctic.

To further understand how and when the Russian pro-governmental media outlets post about China, we can look at chart 7 to see a clearer division.



In the 48 months examined, there was at least one article published in 30 of them. Considering there were 54 total articles, an extraordinary spike in publishing cannot be observed, yet there still are some spikes worth investigating. The first 2 small spikes occurred in July 2015 and September 2015. When the July spikes occurred, 2 articles were written before the annual BRICS meeting, and one right after.

(Graham-Harrison et al. 2015). One of the articles published before the summit was focusing on the West worrying about a possible China-Russia alliance, and the other on China's goal to create a Polar Silk Road. The article after the summit was again focusing on the West fearing Russia and China. The fact that two similar articles get published around the time when such an important geopolitical event occurred could mean that the mediums were sending the West a message that China and Russia are getting closer.

The periods between 2014 and 2015, and 2016-2017 were both relatively quiet. Meanwhile, both 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 were receiving significantly more attention, with 15 and 25 articles respectively. On May 8th, 2015, China and Russia reiterated their friendship, by signing two cooperation pacts (Roth 2015). This might be the reason why China in the Arctic got more attention the following year, as this might have persuaded Russia to create a more favorable image of its cooperation with China. Between May 2017 and December 2017, a total of 19 articles were published about China and the Arctic by the pro-governmental media. This indicates that according to our theory, something significant must have happened if almost 2.5 articles per month were launched. The biggest spikes were observed in May and August when 4 and 5 articles were published respectively. May 2017 was an interesting month for Sino-Russian relations, as Vladimir Putin met with both the president of China, Xi Jinping, and later the foreign minister of China – Wang Yi (Kremlin 2017; Griffiths 2017). The first meeting was especially significant, as the two presidents met at the Belt and Road Forum, China's response to the G20 summit. The frames published in May also match the expected atmosphere. The frame 'China is a friend' occurred once, and 'China is a partner' was identified on three occasions. As the Belt and Road is a Chinese economic initiative, it is no surprise that the 'China is a partner' frame was observed, as it talks about Chinese investments in the Arctic. Thus, the mediums mostly have wanted to send a message to the Western states that China and Russia are increasing their economic ties. In 2017, Western actors were still increasingly imposing economic sanctions against Russia, so it makes sense for it to send such a message.

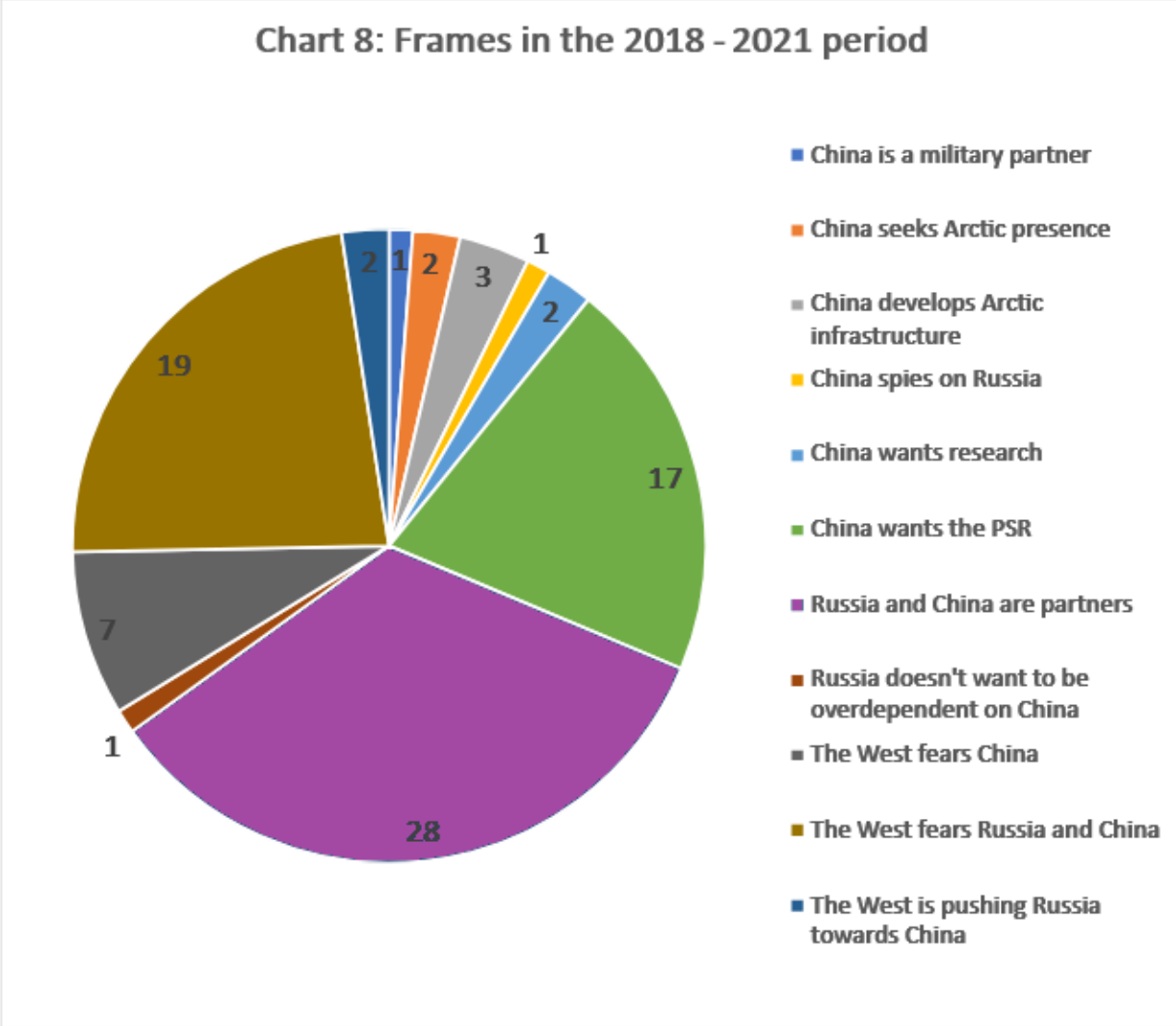
August 2017 was the month where the most activity was observed throughout the 4 years. 2 articles were posted on the 23rd of August, and two more on the 25th of August, while the last one on the 30th of August, totaling 5 articles about China in the Arctic. The first two were focusing on the record-breaking journey a Russian tanker made, shipping the Northern Sea route in 6.5 days. These articles might have been written to intimidate the West by emphasizing that China will use the NSR in the future, in favor of the Suez Canal route. The other three articles in August focused on tourism, energy

cooperation, and the Polar Silk Road. All three topics are key to the West, as they currently benefit from cooperation with China, yet, if these ventures materialize, they will lose part of their income stream. This is what Russia wants to tell the international readers, that China and Russia are cooperating increasingly more.

2018 – 2021: Reciprocity

2018 was a significant year for Chinese presence in the Arctic, as it was this year when the term 'Polar Silk Road' first officially surfaced on the Chinese Arctic Policy White Paper (Dams et al. 2020, p. 7).

As for our dataset, the period also bore increasingly meaningful results. It is visible on chart 8 that there have been noticeable changes compared to chart 6, which reflected the previous period.



This is the period with the most unique narrative frames observed so far. in the 2018 - 2021 period,

the research pinpointed 11 different frames occurring. Although this is a significant finding, the explanation for this might be simple - this is also the period with the most articles published. In these 4 years, a total of 83 articles were compiled with a 'China' and an 'Arctic' dimension. From the first glance, it is visible that there is a dominant frame and 2 other consequential frames.

Just like the period before, 'Russia and China are partners' has been the most used narrative frame throughout the articles. This frame occurred 4 times less than in the 2014 – 2017 period. Yet, it still was observed in 34% of the articles. Although this is a significantly lower margin than the 59% seen in the previous period, it does not mean that Russia wants to stop displaying the 'partnership with China' narrative to the West. It does, however, mean that the frames have gotten more divided – there are increasingly more dimensions through which China and Russia cooperate, so, this might be the message the Kremlin is trying to send. In the articles with this frame present, the mediums do not shy away from telling the West that they are losing influence over China as well:

> "Moreover, Russia left the US behind in deliveries to the leading LNG importing region, Asia, as China and South Korea continue to drive global demand. The LNG shipments from Russia amounted to 12.86 million tons last year, while American imports stood at 10.73 million tons" (RT 7, 2019).

These kinds of sentiments are very crucial to note, as it reassures the study that the intended audience of these articles is Western actors. Not only would Russia benefit from a weaker West, but it knows that China also would prefer that. This permits them to send these subtle messages about how their interdependence with China is increasing. This observation can be further fortified by other quotes from the dataset:

> "Russia-China trade cooperation is booming – believed to be at its highest-ever. Have tensions with Washington pushed both Moscow and Beijing into each other's arms and will it help to fully sideline the effects of US sanctions? We talked about all that and more with China's ambassador to Russia Li Hui" (RT 5, 2019).

Both quotes that we have highlighted emphasize the argument, that the intended recipient of these messages is the Western reader.

Straying away from the most dominant frame, we see that the second most prominent frame appears for the second time - 'The West fears Russia and China'. If in the 2014 – 2017 period this frame was

spotted on 6 occasions, in the 2018 – 2021 period it was identified 19 times. This is an increase that should not be disregarded as normal to occur. Even though in this period, Russia was still supporting the ongoing War in Ukraine, the initial invasion took place in 2014, which was several years ago. Meaning that the Kremlin wanted to further reinforce the narrative about being 'mistreated by the West'. It is of utmost importance that the mediums group China and Russia together as it increases the sentiment that Russia is not alone. To delve deeper into this frame, it might be useful to see an exemplary quote from an article:

> "US lawmakers want its military to challenge Russia and China on the high seas by finding one or more locations for a port that would help feed Washington's growing appetite for Arctic oil and other natural riches" (RT 6, 2019).

Not only does this statement imply that the US is careful about China and Russia in the Arctic, it talks about military challenging China in the Arctic, while, China does not have any permanent military presence in the region. It is no surprise that the outlets want to group Russia with China to seem like they are closer together. While the narrative about being mistreated and perceived as a threat is important to further reassure the West that Beijing and Moscow have common interests.

Before we examine the third most prominent narrative frame, it would make sense to look at the fourth. 'The West fears China' is a frame that has been identified where China is portrayed as a threat in the Arctic, without mentioning Russia in the article. This is an interesting correlation, as this might be used to get Western attention away from Russia. The pro-governmental media outlets are magnifying the Western narrative about China being a threat in the Arctic. It is not very ally-like to compromise China like this, thus, this observation is significant. This might imply that Russia only perceives China as a temporary partner, and it would throw it under the bus if given the chance. This is a speculation that we cannot base on much evidence, yet it would make sense, as both China and Russia have similar geopolitical ambitions. Nevertheless, the frame occurs in 7 articles or more than 8% of the articles, thus it can be deemed relatively important.

The frame that we have not considered in the context of the 2018 – 2021 period yet is the 'China wants the PSR'. While this frame has been identified in each period we have examined, within this one, it has been observed 17 times, while in the previous two it had only appeared one time each. Before we jump to drastic conclusions that this is an extraordinary finding, it must be noted, that some articles with the 'Russia and China are partners' frame also had some parts about China's Polar Silk

Road ambitions. Yet, in those cases, it was not the main course of the story. Thus, we cannot say that the PSR is something unheard of before. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Chinese Arctic Policy Paper first mentioned the PSR in 2018. This makes it easier to understand why so many articles centered around this endeavor have been published by the Russian pro-governmental media. If China manages to complete its plan to establish a Polar Silk Road, it almost certainly must have good relations with Russia. By highlighting that the Chinese government has made it a key goal to establish the PSR, the mediums are further trying to enhance the narrative about the Chinese and Russian partnership. This is also why the thesis mentioned at the beginning of the analysis that the 'neutral' frames can mostly be also used as 'supportive' of the 'positive' ones.

To understand the publishing patterns better, we can observe chart 9. As this period had the most articles published, it is also logical that the chart has the most entries.

Both chart 5 and chart 7 had two spikes, yet chart 9 has 2 large ones, and 5 lesser ones. This indicates that there have been several events that have triggered articles to get published more often than usual. The period between December 2018 and June 2019 has been especially notable, as an average of almost 3.9 articles per month were recorded. This is the biggest continuous spike we have observed within our dataset, with the culmination taking place in June 2019, when 7 articles were published by the pro-governmental outlets. To understand what caused these sudden outbursts of activity, we need to introduce what kind of frames these articles contained.

Out of the total 27 articles published between December 2018 and June 2019, 8 were 'The West fears Russia and China', and 2 were 'The West is pushing Russia towards China'. This signifies that around 37% of the articles published focused on Western hostility. To help illustrate the situation, a quote

from one of the articles might help: "Here, it is all about challenging the adversaries once again, as the US sees Russia and China as its major competitors in the region" (RT 8, 2019). This article highlights the Western fear of a Sino-Russian alliance. A fear that the Russian media gladly popularizes. By repeating the Western concerns, Russian media create an illusion that the alliance is already there. Despite there being no real evidence that Russia and China are in a military alliance. This narrative, that the West wants to portray China and Russia as a threat to Arctic stability is used often. The reason why this frame appears so frequently between December 2018 and June 2019 might be because as a response to increasing international sanctions and the US withdrawing from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Moscow decided to do the same (Goncharenko 2018). To clarify, this treaty was introduced in the Cold War era, as a safety mechanism against nuclear attacks. This can be considered a significant escalation in the relations between Russia and the West.

Another important reason why the media outlets chose this time to publish the articles was that China was targeted by the US, which started a trade war with the Southeastern Asian state. The US more than doubled tariffs on 200 billion dollars worth of Chinese imports (Cheng 2019). It is important to state that the trade war started in May, just before the 7-article spike in Russian pro-governmental media in June. Such an open attack by the US on China probably was received warmly by Russia, who likely ordered the state-sponsored media outlets to take advantage of this situation.

After the 7 months of increased activity, followed an 11-month long period with less than 1.1 articles per month. This sudden decrease after such an outburst might help strengthen the argument that the Arctic can be considered a case study of international relations between the US, China, and Russia. When the relationship between the West and Russia is stable, fewer articles are being posted regarding China and the Arctic, while when the relations get heated, the number of articles posted can more than triple.

The next spike took place around a year after the first one, when 8 articles were posted in June and July 2020. 6 out of 8 articles had unique frames. One of these frames - 'China spies on Russia' is also a negative frame. This, however, likely does not raise the alarm about tensions between China and Russia, as it was just one article. It is more probable to be an isolated incident of China getting caught red-handed. Russia arrested a professor who was accused of selling China Russian Arctic technology. Despite, perhaps, not raising alarms, it could mean that by writing about this in the English media outlets, Moscow is signaling that it will not be disrespected, even by its 'partners'. Something that might explain the June-July spike is the American sanctions against Russian pipelines Nordstream 2,

and Turkstream (Foy 2020). After the news of these sanctions started circulating, several articles that could be interpreted as a display of good Sino-Russian ties were published. To quote one of these articles: "Some 396,000 tons of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) were exported to China in June, according to a Bloomberg report citing data from China's General Administration of Customs". The Kremlin knows that the Western reader is the one likely to read these posts, thus, they use the chance to attempt to influence how the Western reader perceives Russia. By stating that it exports increasing amounts of LNG to China, it reinforces the idea of a Sino-Russian partnership.

2010 – 2021: The (strategic) narratives

After examining all three periods, we can confidently state that there has been a change in the direction the Russian pro-governmental mediums are going. Table 2 can help illustrate the frequency of articles published and how it has changed over the years.

Table 2: Total number of articles, year by year

Year	Number of articles
2010	2
2011	2
2012	1
2013	16
2014	7
2015	15
2016	7
2017	25
2018	16
2019	29
2020	17
2021	21

If in 2010 and 2011 only 2 articles were published, and in 2012, even only 1, in 2019 there were 29 total articles published, and a similar number of articles both before and after as well. This helps the argument that Russia has changed its direction regarding China in the Arctic. If in the first few years examined not much material was published, it gradually picked up momentum. 2013 and 2015 were outlier years for the early periods, yet we can observe that in 2017 the momentum increased.

The study was supposed to identify whether Russia has been using strategic narratives to somehow influence how the West perceives its relations with China in the Arctic. Analyzing the three 4-year long periods, we have found several arguments that could support our claim.

The fact that in the first period analyzed, such a low number of articles were published signifies that before Chinese accession to the Arctic Council, it was not in Russia's best interest to create stories about China in the Arctic. While, after the accession took place, Kremlin's attitude also changed. As Beijing had ensured Moscow that it respects its sovereignty in the Arctic, Moscow had no reason not to cooperate with China. Or at least bolster the image of the two cooperating. The narrative frame that was dominating the first period was 'China seeks Arctic presence'. This goes together well with China's global **'Tianxia'** narrative, or, that it is a successful civilization with 5000 years of history (Šebok & Turcsányi 2021, p. 9). At first glance it might seem redundant, yet, this narrative advocate for China's presence, meaning that the frame of seeking Arctic presence can work well together with the 'Tianxia' narrative. Of course, we must acknowledge that it is Russia, not China, who is writing these narratives. As we have deemed that the frame is neutral, we do not state that Russia favors or dislikes the 'Tinxia' narrative, they just recognize that China is trying to increase its say in the Arctic, as it believes it is its right.

The second period gets slightly more complicated, as the number of articles drastically increases. The fact that the publishing gets more frequent can be considered a story of its own – that Russia cares about China's Arctic endeavors. The dominant frame in the 2014 – 2017 period was 'Russia and China are partners', followed by the aforementioned 'China seeks Arctic presence'. Here, as opposed to the previous period, the narrative Russian media is trying to create is **'partnership'.** State-sponsored media outlets wrote 32 articles with the frame 'Russia and China are partners' in this period. This indicates that, whether it is true or not, Russia wants the reader to think that there is existing and increasing cooperation present between the states. This argument is supported by the 6 articles with the 'the West fears Russia and China' frame. By grouping Moscow and Beijing when talking about Western threats, the media outlets enhance the image of an existing partnership. The frame 'the West fears Russia and China' might also introduce another narrative, that is more prominent in the next period. By using this frame, the mediums reinforce the narrative that **'Russia and China have been mistreated and abused by the West'**. While this narrative has been prominent regarding Russian foreign policies, it is also impactful on China's foreign policy. Both states believe that the West is

purposefully creating a negative image for them, thus, it is useful for the Kremlin to create an image not only about itself but also about China.

The third period magnifies what was already observed in the 2014 – 2017 period. While this period had the most articles, there are most likely no new narratives introduced in this period. With 19 articles having the frame 'The West fears Russia and China', and 7 more having 'The West fears China' frame, it is evident that Russia is playing the **'mistreated-ness'** card again. As mentioned previously, this narrative can help Russian media tie China and Russia together. The common narrative creates this illusion that both actors have common values, as they both have been mistreated and abused by the West.

The **'partnership'** narrative is evident here as well, as it was observed in most of the articles published in the third period. This indicates that Russia does not intend to change the course it started in 2014 when the 'Russia and China are partners' frames started appearing 'en masse'. While it does not reveal Russia's plans about how it perceives China in the long run, it does indicate that it wants the West to think they are getting increasingly close. This is likely done as a defense mechanism, to fight back against Western means that the Kremlin does not agree with.

The one frame that we have not considered in this section is the 'China wants the PSR'. Indeed, this frame is present in every single period, yet most prominent in the last one. It envisions the **'Tianxia'** narrative, as it shows that China thinks it is entitled for creating a Polar Silk Road, as a 5000-year-old, successful civilization should be. Whether international actors believe this Chinese narrative or not is not important, because, at least in the Arctic context, the fact that Russian media is writing about Chinese ambitions and plans in the region, might imply that Russia respects the narrative (or at least wants the West to think that). Despite not knowing the reality, just by creating the image that it respects 'Tianxia', Kremlin is improving its relations with the CCP.

Table 3: Total amount of articles between Jaunary 1st, 2010 and December 31st, 2021

	2010-2013	2014-2017	2018-2021	Total
Number of articles with a positive frame	3	43	64	110
Number of articles with a neutral frame	17	11	17	45
Number of articles with a negative frame	1	0	2	3

One thing remains – to examine how the positivity of the articles has changed throughout the periods. To better illustrate the change, we can have a look at table 3. In the 2010 – 2013 period, there were

21 total articles, 3 positive, 17 neutral, and 1 negative. This indicates that in the first period, slightly more than 14% of the articles were positive, while the majority were neutral – 81% and less than 5% were negative. The neutral frames consisted mostly of the 'China seeks Arctic presence', which indicates that the Russian media might have been trying to create a base for future narrativization. Although there were more positive frames than negative ones, in this period, the articles published in English by the Russian pro-governmental media were mostly neutral. This indicates that based on the research conducted, the Russian mediums had a neutral perception of China in the Arctic in the first period.

The 2014 – 2017 period saw a more positive outlook than the previous one. Out of 54 articles compiled, 43 had a positive framing. This implies that 79% of the total articles had a positive frame, while 21 had a neutral one. This is a massive increase, meaning, that the Russian pro-governmental media drastically improved their messaging about China's Arctic presence. Based on the examples given previously in the analysis, this increase can be considered strategic. Improving how China is portrayed in the Arctic was purposefully done, as suddenly articles about cooperation, common values, and interests started flooding the media space. During this period, the Russian mediums had a very positive perception of China in the Arctic.

During the 2018 – 2021 period, a similar trend was observed as during the last period. A total of 77% of the articles published about the 'China' and 'Arctic' dimensions were positive. Despite the seemingly identical percentage, during this period 2.4% of the articles had a negative connotation. Less than the first period, but more than the second. A neutral attitude was observed in 20.5% of the texts. Although there was a 2% decrease in the positivity of the frames, there was also a 35% increase in the total number of articles posted. This means that while the percent value might not have increased, the overall attitude also did not experience a significant decrease. The fact that most articles were published in the third period signifies the growing importance the media outlets examined are giving to both the 'China' and 'Arctic' dimensions.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to analyze how the Russian pro-governmental media has changed their messaging regarding China in the Arctic between 2010 and 2021 and identify whether it has been strategic. It was attempted to use the 5-pillar narrative analysis framework proposed by Pierce (2008).

It was straightforward to identify who was writing the story and who was telling the story, yet the other pillars were harder to establish. While we can assume that the research successfully found that the target audience was the Western public, the study does not have any statistics backing the claim. The proof that the West is the intended recipient is quoted from articles published by the state-sponsored mediums. Oftentimes the articles focused on 'China' and 'the Arctic' as was intended, but Western actors were briefly mentioned. This supports the belief that the West was the intended recipient of these texts. It is, however, needed to highlight that this finding is subjective, as it relies on my interpretation. The fourth pillar required us to understand what the story is trying to achieve. The study explained the main narrative frames and later the narratives themselves. As nobody apart from the Kremlin can adamantly know what the intended goal of these articles was, we can only speculate that the explanation might have been correct. By comparing the frequency of articles published, it was possible to perceive how important a certain message is to Moscow, as writing more indicates more interest.

The last pillar, however, cannot be considered for all three periods. It is not possible to estimate the effects of the narratives in the 2018 - 2021 period, because it is the last of the three periods we examined. Because the thesis analyzed 12 years, divided into 3 4-year periods, we can examine how they compare to each other. While we can see what happened after the first and second periods, we do not have information about what took place after the third period, as the final year in our dataset was 2021. It can be argued that after the first period, which we deemed to possess mostly neutral or supportive narratives, came 2 periods with a significantly more positive outlook. It is possible that because of the base created for narrativization, the two periods following the first yielded positive results. The thesis cannot answer how the narrative frames impacted the intended audience, as no statistics about the Western readership of RT, TASS, and Sputnik were found. This means we can assume that the narratives created by the pro-Kremlin outlets impacted the perception of Western readers, but it is impossible to predict the extent.

To understand whether the narratives identified in the communication of Russian media outlets were strategic, one must again rely on interpretation. The research does consider the narratives strategically made, and not socially constructed, as, between the first period and the latter two, a steep change in direction was observed. The change coincided with the Russian invasion of Crimea, which resulted in gradually increasing sanctions from the West. As these sanctions rolled out, it was possible to observe a correlation between new sanctions being imposed and articles published that were 'China friendly'.

In most cases, it was emphasized that China and Russia are partners in the Arctic paradigm, or, that the two are the biggest threat to the West in the High North. If the spikes in publishing were not random, it implies that there was a reason for these outbursts. In all cases when 'anti-western' sentiment was observed in several articles in a short time span, it coincided with the West using some means that the Kremlin would not approve of, for example, sanctions.

Usually, when several articles with the 'partnership' narrative were published, an economic event took place, for example, the Belt and Road Forum. This signifies that Moscow is not only using strategic narratives to respond to Western provocations but to demonstrate to the West how their relations with China are improving.

The thesis intended to answer the research question and understand **whether or why the Russian narratives on China in the Arctic have changed between the three periods.** Throughout the analysis, we considered several dimensions. Firstly, it was established that narratives the pro-governmental media were displaying have changed, thus answering the first part of the question. The second part focused on the 'why' aspect. There are 2 reasons why the narratives could have changed. It was identified that the first period mostly had neutral frames, while the other two were dominated by positive ones. **This highlights that either Russia wanted to strengthen its ties with China, or it wanted the West to think that the ties have been and still are improving**. Both answers are viable, as Moscow truly has been increasing its cooperation with Beijing. The grain of salt that this argument might possess is the fact that both Russia and China have similar geopolitical goals. If both aspire to be the global or at least the regional hegemon in the same region, they can't maintain a long-lasting alliance. Thus, if it is true that both cannot be allies in the long term, it is not in Russia's interest to increase the interdependence with China. In this case, it would be more fitting to create an illusion of cooperation instead.

While we cannot objectively answer whether Russia and China are consciously increasing their interdependence or it is just an illusion, both probabilities can weaken Western relative power. If Russia and China are allies and act simultaneously, the West is obliged to respond to this threat. While, if Russia and China can convince the West that they are symbiotic, while still operating with different motives in mind, it can provoke the West to be more careful when dealing with the two.

If the first argument turns out to be correct and Russia truly perceives China as a permanent ally, and not only a temporary tool to weaken the West, both states can significantly disturb the current world order. While it is unlikely that Russia and China become 'forever-partners', it is possible, and if a scenario is possible, it must be taken seriously.

Future research

As the thesis researched a topic that was not thoroughly studied before, it was established that there are still many empty gaps one could fill in the Russian strategic narrative research.

At one point in the analysis, a statement was made, arguing that analyzing the Russian media narratives about China in the Arctic can reveal great amounts of information regarding the current geopolitical relationship between Russia and the West. There was a correlation between when articles were published and when Russian relations with the West experienced a downturn. This phenomenon was spotted on several occasions. This might indicate that there is room for future research with the keyword 'Arctic'. As the main focal point of this thesis was how Russia tries to position China in the Arctic, the dataset might have missed other points of correlation. Thus, in the future, it might be proficient to study how the articles published by the Russian pro-governmental media with an 'Arctic' dimension correlate with international events. It might be the case that the 'Arctic' can be a case study, because of the increasing prominence of the region.

Another direction in which future research is possible is how China portrays Russia in the Arctic. China is in a much more unfortunate geographical location compared to Russia when it comes to Arctic presence. This indicates that it is in its best interest to establish friendly relations with Arctic states to increase its chances of having an Arctic presence. By studying how Beijing portrays Moscow in the region, we might improve our understanding of the unorthodox Sino-Russian cooperation.

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