

Saga Helgason

Affiliation: Stanford University, MA in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies

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Media Coverage of the Russian Arctic

**Abstract**

The changing conditions in the Arctic have sparked interest for stakeholders across the globe. The melting ice sheets create both opportunities and challenges. New transport routes are opening up that would shorten delivery times to Europe and Asia significantly. Oil and gas exploration interests many. Warmer temperatures threaten biodiversity and the communities dependent thereupon. Geopolitical and security issues are of concern and actors such as China and the EU are vying for position. With the largest Arctic coastline of all the Arctic states, Russia has by far the most dominating presence in the region. And yet, how is Russia's presence portrayed by media in states with interests in the Arctic?

For decades, Russia's motivations, both generally and in the Arctic, have been an enigma for Western audiences to decipher, which leaves room for various interpretations and the potential for misunderstandings to be made. Editors and staff of news outlets are constantly faced with the question of how to frame a story, what to include and what to emphasise. Thus, serving as an intermediary between the public and government, the media can offer insights because of the choices made by its editorship. What are these insights? Whether the media outlet is aligned with government policy or not, it can shed light on national interests in the Arctic as well as influence public perception of Russia's activities in the Arctic.

As part of a larger study, this paper will explore media coverage by the United States, Germany and Norway of Russian activities in the Arctic to see what insights can be drawn in regard to the relationship with Russia and its Western counterparts. Despite a shared stake in the Arctic, each of these countries has a unique relationship with Russia, thereby making media analysis critical to understand national nuances. Articles from US, German and Norwegian media outlets will be analysed in order to uncover common themes and depictions of Russia's activities in the Arctic. Differences in narratives will also be evaluated to see where depictions of Russia differ and what these differences signify in the international context. A conclusion will then be drawn as to whether the national media narrative aligns with government strategy in the region.