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"Wrestling mat" or "zone of mutual cooperation"? Contexts, concepts, and representations related to Svalbard in Russian media

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1. Introduction

The Russian and Norwegian presence on the Svalbard archipelago, a Norwegian Arctic Archipelago with a unique legal status, is characterized by both constrained functional cooperation and diplomatic tension. The status of the archipelago is defined by the Svalbard Treaty of 1920,[1] which recognizes Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard while granting equal rights to more than 40 countries, including Russia, to conduct economic activities there. In practice, however, Norway and Russia are the only states with a sustained presence on the archipelago. Traditionally, coal mining has been the primary economic activity on Svalbard, but it has declined in recent years, while tourism and research have grown in importance (Wæhler and Ingebrigtsen 2022, 1). The administrative center of Svalbard is the Norwegian settlement Longyearbyen. Other Norwegian settlements on the archipelago are Ny-Ålesund and Sveagruva. Russia's economic function in Svalbard is carried out through its state-owned company Trust Arktikugol, which has three mining settlements on the archipelago: Barentsburg (with limited ongoing mining), and Grumant and Pyramiden, where mining has ceased (Kelman et. al 2020, 2).

On the one hand, Russia generally accepts Norwegian jurisdiction over Svalbard in accordance with the Svalbard Treaty (Todorov 2020, 1; Wither 2018, 31). Interaction between Norway and Russia on the archipelago is "subject to carefully crafted political dialogue and calculations" (Kelman et al. 2020, 2). On the other hand, several sources of disagreement persist in relation to the treaty. These include disputes over the status and use of maritime areas around Svalbard, as well as scientific, commercial, and military activities on the archipelago. Russia also frequently advances claims to a special status among other parties of the Svalbard Treaty, based on its long historical association with Svalbard (Wither 2018, 31). In Norway, such claims are widely perceived as attempts to challenge Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago (Myklebost and Bones 2025).[2]

This complex and dynamic geopolitical context provides a basis for examining how actors such as Norway and Russia portray the archipelago and their presence there. Media coverage of Svalbard offers a convenient resource for such an analysis, since mass media play a crucial role in the creation, reproduction, and dissemination of certain discourses.

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[1] The Svalbard Treaty is an informal designation for the Treaty of February 1920, which lacks an official name (Østhagen 2024, 3).

[2] For more details on the interaction between Norway and Russia regarding their presence on the archipelago, see, for example, Wither (2018), Todorov (2020), Østhagen (2024).

The present study contributes to clarifying Russian perceptions of Svalbard and examines how the archipelago is represented in Russian media.

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework, Section 3 describes the data, and Section 4 outlines the methodology. Sections 5.1 and 5.2 present the results, which are discussed in Section 6. Section 7 provides a conclusion.

2. A linguistic approach to media representation of Svalbard

This study adopts a linguistic approach to the media coverage of the archipelago, combining Critical Discourse Analysis, Cognitive Linguistics, and Corpus Linguistics. The study is grounded in the theoretical notion of event-construal – "the way in which a particular event in the 'real-world' is construed via textualization" (Bednarek 2005, 6). One of the operations involved in event-construal is Focus. Along with other construal operations, Focus relates to the scope of attention that shapes how an event is represented (Hart 2013, 405–407). Focus involves the selection of certain conceptual elements for linguistic presentation, bringing them into the foreground, while backgrounded elements remain "only weakly activated" (Langacker 2008, 57–58).

In this study, Focus is understood as the prominence or salience of certain linguistic units in comparison with other linguistic units within a certain paradigm (Fidler and Cvrček 2018). This analysis concentrates on prominence of lexical units (words), understood as keywords. A keyword is defined as a word that occurs with significantly higher frequency in one corpus compared to its frequency in another corpus (Scott 1998, 71). Keywords are therefore prominent words typical for a text, and they are regarded as indicators of the content and style of a text (Scott and Tribble 2006, 55).

To examine how textual content is represented through keywords, this study applies Market Basket Analysis (Cvrček and Fidler 2022). As an extension of Keyword Analysis, Market Basket Analysis uses extracted keywords to identify their broader contextual associations in the form of Associative Links. The keywords that constitute the Associative Links related to a given keyword can be interpreted as the contexts and concepts associated with that keyword (Cvrček and Fidler 2022). On this basis, the study investigates the contexts and concepts linked to the keyword *Špicbergen* 'Spitsbergen'. The word *Špicbergen*, derived from the historical Dutch name *Spitsbergen*, is used in Russian to refer to the archipelago. The study thus aims to examine the types of contexts and concepts with which Svalbard is associated in Russian media texts.

3. Data

The present study focuses on Russian national/federal mainstream media, based on the assumption that widely read mainstream media can be regarded as a stable agenda-setting tool used for general public consumption in Russia (Gritsenko 2016, 9). The media outlets were chosen according to the Russian media ratings provided by Medialogia (n.d.), a Russian company that specializes in the monitoring and analysis of the news media and social media. The ratings used in the study are The Most Cited Federal Newspapers and

The Most Cited Federal Internet Resources.[3] The list of the federal media selected for this study includes 15 media outlets: *Argumenty i Fakty* (https://aif.ru/), *Argumenty Nedeli* (https://argumenti.ru/), *Gazeta.Ru* (https://www.gazeta.ru/), *Izvestija* (https://iz.ru/), *Kommersant* (https://www.kommersant.ru/), *Komsomol'skaja Pravda* (https://www.kp.ru/), *Life.ru* (former Lifenews.ru) (https://life.ru/), *Lenta.ru* (https://lenta.ru/), *Moskovskij Komsomolec* (https://www.mk.ru/), *Parlamentskaja Gazeta* (https://www.pnp.ru/), *Pravda.Ru* (https://www.pravda.ru/), *Rossijskaja Gazeta* (https://rg.ru/), *RT na russkom* (https://russian.rt.com/), *Vesti.Ru* (https://www.vesti.ru/), and *Vzgljad.ru* (https://vz.ru/). Most of these media are newspapers and their online versions. However, *Gazeta.Ru*, *Life.ru*, *Lenta.ru*, *Pravda.Ru,* and *Vzgljad.ru* are news websites, *RT na russkom* is the Russian-language Internet website of the news television network *RT* (formerly *Russia Today*), *Vesti.Ru* is the Internet version of the channel *Russia-24*. A unifying feature of all the selected media outlets is that they, to a greater or lesser extent, are associated with Russian government structures and companies, and their coverage of events aligns with Russia's official political rhetoric. In other words, none of these media outlets have a reputation for being independent or oppositional (anti-Kremlin).

The data was extracted from the data base Integrum (n.d.). The texts were extracted with the help of a query containing the following seed words: *Špicbergen OR Sval'bard OR Sval'bord OR Spitsbergen OR Grumant OR Svalbard OR Barencburg*. The seed words included various Russian-language variants of the names Svalbard and Spitsbergen, including a commonly used form *Špicbergen*. *Grumant*, a historical and poetic name for the archipelago (and the name of one of the Russian settlements on Svalbard), and *Barencburg* 'Barentsburg', the name of the functioning Russian settlement, were also included in the list of seed words. Thus, the approach to data collection was inclusive. As shown in Table 1, the corpus is segmented into four periods (2010–2025), each anchored in a major geopolitical event likely to influence media coverage. The 2010 event listed in Table 1 refers to the Agreement Concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean (hereafter the Barents Sea Border Agreement of 2010).

Period	Key events
2010–2013	2010: Barents Sea Border Agreement signed by Norway and Russia
2014–2017	2014: Start of Ukrainian crisis (Crimea + Donbass conflict)
2018–2021	2018: NATO military exercise Trident Juncture 2018 in Norway's High North
2022–2025	2022: Escalation of Russia–Ukraine conflict; data extends to the end of March 2025

Table 1. Periodization of the corpus based on key political events

[3] More details on Medialogia's ratings, the criteria for selecting media outlets in this study as well as a brief description of these outlets are provided in Obukhova (2024b, 46–48). Obukhova's (2024b) study includes both federal and regional media outlets.

The initial sizes of the subcorpora are presented in Table 2.

Subcorpus	Number of texts	Number of tokens	Number of words
2010–2013	376	685,959	420,335
2014–2017	1,204	562,570	452,068
2018–2021	844	567,233	452,070
2022–2025	1,257	667,778	547,089

Table 2. The subcorpora and their size

4. Method

As mentioned in Section 2, the method used in this study is Market Basket Analysis (Cvrček and Fidler 2022). In online marketing, Market Basket Analysis is used to determine customer purchasing behavior by identifying products that are frequently purchased together and to suggest this combination to a new customer. For linguistic purposes, Market Basket Analysis is used to identify "product combinations", i.e. particular Associative Links occurring among two or more keywords in a given text. An Associative Link occurs in a specific text, and the same Associative Link can exist in one or more texts. Here is an example of an Associative Link from this study: *Špicbergen 'Spitsbergen' -> Norvegija 'Norway'*. The existence of this Associative Link implies that both keywords *Špicbergen* and *Norvegija* occur in the same text and the number of such texts can be one or more. *Špicbergen*, the left-hand side of the Associative Link, is the antecedent while *Norvegija*, the right-hand side, is the consequent. The number of antecedents can be more than one depending on the size of a corpus and how parameters are set (Cvrček and Fidler 2022). Another Associative Link *Špicbergen 'Spitsbergen', Rossija 'Russia' -> Norvegija 'Norway'* includes two antecedents: *Špicbergen* and *Rossija*. The same keywords that form an Associative Link can occur in various combinations thus creating more Associative Links.

To avoid analyzing a very large number of Associative Links one can focus on Associative Arrays. An Associative Array is a group of keywords that form the Associative Links for a specific keyword, and it is useful for identifying the "entire pool of associations" (Fidler and Cvrček 2023, 67). In the examples from the previous paragraph, the words *Norvegija* and *Rossija* form the Associative Array for the word *Špicbergen*. Analysis of Associative Arrays was adopted in this study.

The first stage of this analysis consisted of Keyword Analysis. To obtain a list of keywords for texts in each subcorpora (target texts) they were compared to a reference corpus, namely a subcorpus of the Araneum Russicum Russicum Minus (Russia-only Russian) with almost 39,900,000 words (52,241,600 tokens) compiled in 2015 from text downloaded from the web (Benko 2014). Although this corpus arguably has issues with the "language quality" of web texts and representativeness (Benko and Zakharov 2016, 79), it was chosen for the present study due to the availability of its word list which can be downloaded from the open-source project NoSketch Engine.[4]

[4] http://aranea.juls.savba.sk/aranea/index.html

As in the study conducted by Cvrček and Fidler (2022), the obtained keywords were selected according to the following parameters: the statistical significance measured by the p-value of the log-likelihood test, the effect size measured by Difference Index (DIN), and the minimum frequency of a keyword in the target text. DIN, an effect size metric, is a ratio, multiplied by 100, of the difference between relative frequencies of an item in the target text and the reference corpus and of the sum of the same frequencies. To calculate DIN, one must first calculate relative frequencies using the following formula:

RelFq(Ttxt) = AbsFq(Ttxt) / N(Ttxt)

and

RelFq(RefC) = AbsFq(RefC) / N(RefC)[5]

DIN is calculated according to the following formula:

DIN = 100 x [RelFq(Ttxt) - RelFq(RefC)] / [RelFq(Ttxt) + RelFq(RefC)]

DIN is represented by values between -100 and 100. The extreme values mean that the keyword in question is missing from the target text (DIN = -100) or from the reference corpus (DIN = 100). If DIN = 0, it means that relative frequency of the given keyword is the same in the target text and in the reference corpus (Cvrček and Fidler 2022).

The obtained keywords were selected in accordance with the following parameters: the minimum frequency of a keyword in a target text > 1, log-likelihood test (p-value < 0.05), DIN (Difference Index) > 75. The high DIN values helped to target focus on the keywords that are typical for the texts in the target subcorpora. On the other hand, a low threshold for the minimal frequency of a keyword in a target text helped to sort out a sufficient number of keywords to be processed by Market Basket Analysis.

The next stage of the analysis involved applying Market Basket Analysis directly to obtain a list of Associative Links and an Associative Array for the keywords naming Svalbard. Market Basket Analysis has several parameters and the ones relevant to this study are length, support, and confidence. Length is the number of keywords involved in the establishment of an Associative Link. Support means the proportion (or probability) of texts containing the keyword A and the keyword B that form an Associative Link in relation to the total number of texts in the corpus. Support for the Associative Link consisting of A and B is calculated according to the following formula:

support(A -> B) = texts(A, B) / N[6]

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[5] RelFq = relative frequency, AbsFq = absolute frequency (a count of a keyword in a text or a corpus), Ttxt = target text, RefC = reference corpus, N = total number of tokens in a corpus.

[6] Texts(A, B) = the number of texts that contain both keywords A and B. N = the total number of texts in the corpus.

Confidence is a conditional probability representing how often B appears in texts that also contain A. Confidence is calculated according to the following formula:

confidence(A->B) = texts(A, B) / texts(A)[7]

In this study the following parameters of Market Basket Analysis were set: lengths = 4, support = 0.02, confidence = 0.2. Parameter 4 for length means that an Associative Link should include a maximum of four keywords (and a minimum of two). Parameter 0.02 for support means that the keywords that comprise an Associative Link should occur in at least 2% of the texts in a subcorpus. Parameter 0.2 for confidence means that keyword B should occur in at least 20% of the texts where keyword A occurs. These parameters were set experimentally, after several tries. The goal was to achieve optimal parameters which would result in a manageable number of Associative Links.

Ultimately, only the keyword *Špicbergen* was used as a "trigger" for Associative Links and Associative Arrays. Other names for Svalbard from the list of seed words (see Section 3) did not appear as keywords simultaneously in all four subcorpora and, therefore, did not yield consistent results for the Market Basket Analysis. The numbers for the retrieved Associative Arrays are shown in Table 3.[8]

Subcorpus	Number of texts with keyword *Špicbergen*	Number of keywords *Špicbergen*	Number of keywords within Associative Arrays for keyword *Špicbergen*
2010–2013	135	526	128
2014–2017	664	2,120	100
2018–2021	316	1,232	79
2022–2025	514	2,059	76

Table 3. Numbers related to *Špicbergen* as a keyword and its Associative Arrays

While Cvrček and Fidler (2022) suggest that Associative Links and Arrays reflect concepts and contexts related to a given keyword, they do not explicitly operationalize how these should be identified or distinguished in analysis. To address this, the keywords in the Associative Arrays in this study were categorized according to the discourse functions proposed by Baker et al. (2013, 55, 57–59), namely topic (concept) indicators, context indicators, and co-text words.

Topic indicators are the words that indicate topics. These indicators point to a particular subject area or sphere of discourse. For example, the topic indicators *charged*, *conviction*, and *crime* point to the topic of law. Since topics can be regarded as abstract fields, they are referred to as concepts in this study, in accordance with the postulates of Cognitive Linguistics. *Context indicators* are the words that indicate contextual elements:

[7] Texts(A) = the total number of texts which contain A as a keyword.

[8] R codes for Keyword Analysis and Market Basket Analysis, as well as lists of keywords, are available from Obukhova (2024a) (for the subcorpora 2010–2013, 2014–2017, and 2018–2021) and Obukhova (2026) (for the subcorpus 2022–2025).

participants, place, time, and quantity, that is, these words provide answers to the questions 'Who?', 'Where?', 'When?', and 'How much?'. Context indicators anchor discourse in a situation, that is, they inform us about the circumstances surrounding a topic or concept. For example, context indicators such as *governor* (who?), *cabinet* (who/where?), and *congress* (who/where?) all refer to the context of power. Co-text words are the words with general meaning. These words are essential for discussing topics, but are not, in themselves, clear thematic indicators, as are the words *bring* and *circumstances*. However, the classification of such words will likely depend on the specific discourse being analyzed.

Section 5 presents only the most salient results consisting of some subcategories formed by concept indicators and by context indicators.[9] The subcategories of concept indicators are addressed in Section 5.1, whereas the subcategories of context indicators are addressed in Section 5.2.

5. Results

5.1 Concept indicators

The subcategories of concept indicators discussed in this paper are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 includes concept indicators and the domains formed by them that recur across the periods, while Table 5 presents concept indicators and the domains formed by them that occur only in certain periods, such as the conceptual domain 'fishery', which appears only in 2010–2013. The keywords in these tables are color-coded: keywords unique to a single period (e.g., 2010–2013) are shown in red; keywords occurring in two periods are shown in green; and keywords appearing in at least three periods are shown in black.

As presented in Table 4, the discourse on Svalbard is consistently structured around several conceptual domains: 'law', 'international relations/cooperation', 'transport/travel/logistics', 'tourism', and 'science'. Each of these domains is shaped by some keywords that recur across all periods. These keywords point to stable elements of the discourse. For example, the recurring keywords *dogovor* 'agreement' and *pravo* 'law, right' from the conceptual domain 'law' contribute to a consistent representation of Svalbard as a legal entity with an emphasis on specific agreements and rights. Svalbard is also constructed as an internationally embedded space and a site of relations through the consistent use of the keywords *meždunarodnyj* 'international' and *otnošenie* 'relation' from the domain 'international relations/cooperation'.

The other keywords that appear only in specific periods point to dynamic elements of the discourse shaped by particular events. For example, the use of such keywords related to the conceptual domains 'law' and 'international relations/cooperation' in 2010–2013 (*soglašenie* 'agreement', *podpisat'* 'sign', *sotrudničestvo* 'cooperation', *rossijsko-norvežskij* 'Russian-Norwegian') is consistent with the signing of the Barents Sea Border Agreement of 2010. This agreement is considered "a culmination of the Russian-Norwegian steady relation" (Lipunov 2021) that officially terminated the almost 40-year border dispute between Russia and Norway in the Barents Sea. In addition, this document provided for

[9] A complete description of the results of Market Basket Analysis for the subcorpora 2010–2013, 2014–2017, and 2018–2021 is provided in Obukhova (2024b, 57–82).

potential cooperation in oil and gas extraction in the region. The keywords from the domains 'law' and 'international relations/cooperation' relating to 2010–2013 thus contribute to a temporary representation of Svalbard as a site of active bilateral cooperation and negotiation between Russia and Norway. The subsequent disappearance of these keywords and the emergence of the keyword *sankcija* 'sanction' in the subcategory 'law' after 2013 suggest a shift in discourse which follows the deterioration of Russian-Norwegian and broader Russian-Western relations after the Crimean events of 2014. In this period, Svalbard is represented as a site of potential legal pressure and sanctioning. From 2021 onwards, references to sanctions reappear, as indicated by the keyword *sankcija*. This is consistent with the intensification of sanctions following the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022. The keyword *denonsacija* 'denunciation, termination', which is unique to the 2022–2025 period within the conceptual domain 'law', is associated with the dispute over cargo deliveries to Russian settlements on Svalbard in 2022. This dispute, sparked by sanctions and the following restrictions on Russian cargo bound for Svalbard, worsened when the Russian side signaled its intention to denounce the Barents Sea Border Agreement of 2010.[10] During that time Svalbard is thus constructed as a site of legal pressure and logistical tension.

The consistent use of the keywords *sudno* 'vessel' and *bort* 'board' from the conceptual domain 'transport/travel/logistics' suggests that Svalbard is depicted as a maritime space characterized by regular shipping activity. Other keywords in this subcategory vary across periods. The presence of *kapitan* 'captain', *rejs* 'journey', and *port* 'port', specific to 2010–2013, reflects media attention to clashes between the Norwegian Coast Guard and Russian fishermen, triggered by Norway's efforts to protect declining fish stocks in Svalbard waters (Wither 2018, 31). This period can therefore be characterized by a discourse on legal control in maritime space in which Svalbard is constructed as a site of regulated maritime activity, where there is misunderstanding and even conflict regarding the application of regulations. Example (1) illustrates a description of the detention of the Russian trawler "Sapphire-2" near the archipelago:

(1) […] **kapitan**[11] "Sapfira-2" otkazalsja soglasno prikazaniju sledovat' k zemle. Vmesto ètogo on vyključil motor – i trauler prišlos' vesti v **port** na buksire (RT na russkom 2011).
'[…] **the captain** of the Sapphire-2 refused to follow orders to head toward land. Instead, he turned off the engine, and the trawler had to be towed to **port**' (RT na russkom 2011).

After 2011, arrests of Russian trawlers in Svalbard waters received little coverage in Russian media due to a new regulatory framework for resolving such disputes (Østhagen et al. 2020, 193–194). This pattern is reflected in the absence of keywords related to the subcategory 'transport/travel/logistics' in later periods.

A new discourse emerging within the conceptual domain 'transport/travel/logistics' in 2014–2017 is accident discourse. The keywords *vertolet* 'helicopter' and *Mi-* 'Mi-helicopter',

[10] The dispute over cargo deliveries to Russian settlements on Svalbard arose in late June 2022. In July 2022, a technical compromise was reached, enabling cargo deliveries to resume.
[11] The words in bold in examples 1–7 are keywords related to the domain under discussion.

specific to this period, relate to the Russian helicopter crash near Svalbard in 2017, which resulted in the deaths of all eight people on board. The keyword *samolet* 'plane', as in *samolet so spasateljami* 'plane with rescuers', indicates that, in this context, the media actively covered the joint Norwegian-Russian rescue operation.

The keywords specific to 2022–2025 within the conceptual domain 'transport/travel/logistics', such as *dostavka* 'delivery' and *gruz* 'cargo', introduce a pure logistics discourse that constructs Svalbard as a node within logistics and supply chains. The use of these keywords corresponds to media attention to the dispute over cargo deliveries to Russian settlements on Svalbard in 2022. This period is thus characterized by the interweaving of legal and regulatory discourse with the logistics-related discourse.

The conceptual domains of 'tourism' and 'science' do not show variation among their indicators and therefore demonstrate discursive stability. A presence of the keyword *turist* 'tourist' in the conceptual domain 'tourism' indicates that Svalbard is consistently represented as a tourist destination, with the discussion focused primarily on tourists as the main actors. Example (2) quotes Ildar Neverov, CEO of the Arktikugol Trust. In his statement, Svalbard is presented as accessible and connected to Russia through legitimate civil means, namely tourism:

(2) Očen' rassčityvaju, čto uže v 2025 godu ljuboj rossijanin smožet priplyt' na Špicbergen na korable kak **turist** (Gazeta.Ru 2024).
'I very much hope that as early as 2025, any Russian citizen will be able to travel to Svalbard by ship as **a tourist**' (Gazeta.Ru 2024).

Svalbard is also consistently portrayed as a site of scientific research and exploration. Within this discourse, the archipelago is discussed in terms of actors (*učenyj* 'scientist', *issledovatel'* 'researcher'), as well as scientific activities (*issledovanie* 'research') and research practices (*èkspedicija* 'expedition'). This discourse is consistent with Russia's permanent and structured scientific presence on Svalbard, where Barentsburg serves as a hub for Russian research (Svalbard Research Office, 2026).

Conceptual domain	2010–2013 Keywords	2014–2017 Keywords	2018–2021 Keywords	2022–2025 Keywords
Law	*dogovor* 'agreement', *pravo* 'law, right', *soglašenie* 'agreement', *document* 'document', *status* 'status', *podpisat'* 'sign'	*dogovor* 'agreement', *pravo* 'law, right', *sankcija* 'sanction'	*dogovor* 'agreement', *pravo* 'law, right'	*dogovor* 'agreement', *pravo* 'law, right', *sankcija* 'sanction', *denonsacija* 'denunciation, termination'
International relations/cooperation	*meždunarodnyj* 'international', *otnošenie*	*meždunarodnyj* 'international',	*meždunarodnyj* 'international',	*meždunarodnyj* 'international'

	'relation', *sotrudničestvo* 'cooperation', *sovmestnyj* 'joint', *peregovory* 'negotiation', *rossijsko-norvežskij* 'Russian-Norwegian'	*otnošenie* 'relation'	*otnošenie* 'relation'	
Transport/travel/ logistics	*sudno* 'vessel', *bort* 'board', *èkipaž* 'crew', *korabl'* 'ship', *kapitan* 'captain', *rejs* 'journey', *port* 'port'	*sudno* 'vessel', *bort* 'board', *èkipaž* 'crew', *passažir* 'passenger', *samolet* 'plane', *vertolet* 'helicopter', *Mi-*[12]	*sudno* 'vessel', *bort* 'board', *korabl'* 'ship', *putešestvennik* 'traveller'	*sudno* 'vessel', *kontejner* 'container', *dostavka* 'delivery', *tovar* 'goods', *gruza* 'cargo', *gruz* 'cargo'
Tourism	*turist* 'tourist'	*turist* 'tourist'	*turist* 'tourist', *turizm* 'tourism'	*turist* 'tourist'
Science	*učenyj* 'scientist', *naučnyj* 'scientific', *èkspedicija* 'expedition'	*učenyj* 'scientist', *naučnyj* 'scientific', *èkspedicija* 'expedition'	*učenyj* 'scientist', *èkspedicija* 'expedition', *issledovatel'* 'researcher'	*učenyj* 'scientist', *naučnyj* 'scientific', *èkspedicija* 'expedition', *issledovanie* 'research'

Table 4. Conceptual domains associated with the keyword 'Spitsbergen' that recur across the periods[13]

The conceptual domains shown in Table 5 are formed by the keywords that occur only in certain periods which can be interpreted as their connection to unstable, event-driven discourses. These discourses partly overlap with those discussed earlier in this section. The keywords within the conceptual domains 'fishery' and 'breach of law' in 2010–2013 are linked to detentions of Russian trawlers by the Norwegian Coast Guard and thus evoke a discourse on legal control in maritime space. Svalbard waters are thus presented as a regulated fishing zone that is subject to dispute. The keywords forming the conceptual domain 'dispute/conflict' relate to the signing of the Barents Sea Border Agreement in 2010, which aimed to settle the maritime border dispute. Thus, this domain contributes to the representation of the Barents Sea as a disputed maritime zone. The conceptual domain 'mineral resources', related to potential Norwegian-Russian cooperation in

[12] Mi- is a family of Soviet and Russian helicopters.

[13] Keywords unique to a single period (e.g., 2010–2013) are shown in red; keywords occurring in two periods are shown in green; and keywords appearing in at least three periods are shown in black.

resource development, together with the domain 'fishery' present Svalbard as a source of economically valuable and potentially exploitable resources.

The conceptual domain 'breach of law', which reappears in 2018–2021, consists of three indicators: *ograblenie* 'robbery', *bank* 'bank', and *sud* '*court*'. Although the keyword 'bank' is not inherently associated with breach of law, it was placed within this conceptual domain. All three keywords occur in the context of media reports on a bank robbery in Longyearbyen committed by a Russian citizen in 2018. Thus, the conceptual domain of 'breach of law' evokes a temporary criminal discourse, presenting Svalbard as a location where isolated criminal incidents occur and are processed legally.

The conceptual domain of 'military forces', although represented by a limited number of indicators, appears after 2013 and persists over time. The following examples show that the keywords from this domain are used in the context of concerns expressed by both the Norwegian and Russian sides regarding the potential military use of the archipelago. In 2017, the keyword *voennyj* 'military' is often associated with media reports on the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' negative reaction to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Longyearbyen, described as "unprecedented military preparations at the state borders" of Russia and "a provocation" (Argumenty Nedeli 2017). The keyword *specnaz* 'special forces' in 2018–2021 is related to the discussion of a Norwegian media report accusing Russia of sending its special forces to Svalbard in 2019. This report was described as "aggressive "disinformation" by the Russian Foreign Ministry (Gazeta.Ru 2019a). In 2022–2025, the keyword 'military' appears in texts reflecting the Russian Foreign Ministry's concerns about "the Norwegian side's ongoing attempts to increase its military presence on the Svalbard archipelago" (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2022) and "Oslo and its allies' effective dragging the archipelago into the Ukrainian conflict" (Komsomol'skaja Pravda 2024). These examples show that Svalbard is associated less with actual military activity than with the risk of such activity. Within this securitization discourse, which stabilizes over time, Svalbard is represented as a sensitive area exposed to geopolitical tensions and potential military conflicts.

Conceptual domain	2010–2013 Keywords	2014–2017 Keywords	2018–2021 Keywords	2022–2025 Keywords
Fishery	*rybooxrannyj* 'fishery (adj)[14]', *ryboloveckij* 'fishery (adj)', *rybolovnyj* 'fishing, piscatorial', *rybnyj* 'fishy, piscine', *trauler*	-	-	-

[14] Adj stands for adjective.

	‘trawler’, *ryba* ‘fish’, *rybak* ‘fisherman’, *rybolovstvo* ‘fishery, fishing’			
Breach of law	*narušenije* ‘breach’, *zaderžanije* ‘detention’, *zaderžat’* ‘detain’	-	*ograblenie* ‘robbery’, *sud* ‘court’, *bank* ‘bank’	-
Dispute/conflict	*spor* ‘dispute’, *spornyj* ‘disputable’	-	-	-
Mineral resources	*dobyča* ‘production (of mineral resources)’, *neft’* ‘oil’, *mestorožd*enie ‘occurrence (of minerals)’, *razrabotka* ‘mining’, *zapas* ‘reserve’	-	-	-
Military forces	-	*voennyj* ‘military’	*voennyj* ‘military’, *specnaz* ‘special forces’	*voennyj* ‘military’

Table 5. Conceptual domains associated with the keyword ‘Spitsbergen’ that occur only at certain periods[15]

The concept indicators discussed in this section suggest that Svalbard is embedded in two types of discourse layers: stable and dynamic. The stable layer is formed by the discourses of law and international relations, transport infrastructure, tourism and science. These discourses consistently represent Svalbard as a legal governed space, with an emphasis on specific agreements and rights; as an internationally embedded space and a site of relations; as a maritime space characterized by regular shipping activity; a tourist destination; and a site of scientific research. The dynamic discourse layer varies across periods and reflects specific political and other events. It is formed by discourses of legal control and regulation, as well as economic, criminal, accident, logistics, and securitization discourses. Through these discourses, Svalbard is initially constructed as a site of political cooperation and negotiation between Russia and Norway, as well as a source of

[15] Keywords unique to a single period (e.g., 2010–2013) are shown in red, and keywords appearing in at least three periods are shown in black.

economically valuable resources and a site of disputes over fishing regulations. Later, it becomes temporarily associated with accidents and criminal incidents, and more persistently with legal pressure (including, at one point, temporary logistic tension) and potential military activity.

5.2 Context indicators

This section discusses context indicators, allowing for a more detailed examination of how the discourse layers and representations identified in Section 5.1 are embedded in and shaped by specific spatial, political, and institutional contexts. Context indicators form several domains: 'geography', 'governance/politics', 'regions/countries', 'city/town/locality', and 'territories and their division', as shown in Table 6. The keywords in the table are color-coded: those unique to a single period (e.g., 2010–2013) are shown in red; those occurring in two periods are shown in green; and those appearing in at least three periods are shown in black. Overall, the contextual domains comprise indicators from two layers – stable and dynamic – similar to the discourse layers described in Section 5.1.

The 'geography' contextual domain is characterized by an abundance of keywords that are used consistently across all four periods. These keywords point to a stable geographic-spatial dimension within which Svalbard is embedded. The archipelago is construed as an Arctic space (e.g., *poljarnyj* 'polar', *arktika* 'Arctic') and as a maritime space (e.g., *more* 'sea', *morskoj* 'marine/sea-'). In addition, Svalbard is represented as a fragmented and remote territory that is strategically connected to other Arctic regions (e.g., *arxipelag* 'archipelago', *ostrov* 'island', *severnyj* 'northern', *poljus* 'pole'). The keywords occurring only in 2010–2013, such as the forms *Barencev* 'Barents' and *Ledovityj* 'Arctic (lit. 'icy')', are associated with media coverage of the signing of the Barents Sea Border Agreement in 2010. They temporarily situate Svalbard within a broader spatial and geopolitical context tied to maritime delimitation.

The contextual domain 'governance/politics' demonstrates that Svalbard is consistently framed within state-level governance and official political structures. The abbreviation *MID* 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)', which recurs across periods, places the archipelago within a stable context of foreign policy and diplomatic relations. The keyword *vlast'* 'power, authority', which stabilizes in use after 2013, indicates that Svalbard is discussed in terms of administrative governance. Other keywords from this domain, specific to particular periods, link the archipelago to changing individual actors and institutional roles. The keyword *Medvedev* in 2010–2013 highlights the role of the Russian president at that time in signing the Barents Sea Border Agreement of 2010.[16] The keywords *vice-prem'er* 'deputy prime minister' and *Rogozin* in 2014–2017 point to media attention to the diplomatic dispute between Norway and Russia following Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin's visit to Svalbard in 2015, despite EU sanctions imposed on him, as illustrated in Example (3):

[16] This agreement was signed by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg.

(3) V MID Rossii nazvali absurdnoj reakciju Oslo na priezd **Rogozina** na Špicbergen (Lenta.ru 2015).
'The Russian Foreign Ministry called Oslo's reaction to **Rogozin's** visit to Svalbard absurd' (Lenta.ru 2015).

The keywords *posol'stvo* 'embassy' and *Lavrov* in 2018–2021 are often used in the context of the centenary of the Svalbard Treaty. This event was marked by a letter from the Russian Foreign Minister to his Norwegian counterpart Ine Eriksen Søreide expressing dissatisfaction with Norway's restrictions on Russa's activities on the archipelago and calling for "compliance with the spirit and letter of the 1920 treaty" (Vzgljad.ru 2020). In 2022–2025, the keywords *genkonsul* 'Consul General' and *Guščin* are associated with references to the Russian Consul General in Svalbard and his reaction to restrictions on cargo deliveries to Russian settlements imposed by Norwegian authorities in 2022, as shown in Example (4):

(4) **Genkonsul** RF **Guščin** nazval zapret Norvegii na perevozku gruzov na Špicbergen neprodumannym (Gazeta.Ru 2022).
'Russian **Consul General Gushchin** called Norway's ban on cargo transportation to Svalbard ill-considered' (Gazeta.Ru 2022).

The keywords specific to different periods within the 'governance/politics' domain thus point to a shift in representation of Svalbard: from a site of political cooperation before 2014, it becomes a space of geopolitical tension after 2014. This latter context suggests that Svalbard is viewed as a legal and economic space in which the rights of actors can be interpreted differently. The presence of the names of Russian politicians alongside the absence of Norwegian ones indicates the signs of Russia-centered discourse that personalizes the Russian side and contributes to constructing an image of legitimacy and authority for Russia on Svalbard.

The 'regions/countries' contextual domain is largely formed by recurring indicators, such as *strana* 'country', *Norvegija* 'Norway', and *Rossija* 'Russia', across all periods. These keywords point to a highly stable geopolitical framing, in which Svalbard is consistently construed as embedded in a Russian-Norwegian geopolitical relationship. Keywords that appear only in specific periods within this domain enlarge the contextualization of the archipelago to additional spatial and temporal dimensions. The keywords *sovetskij* 'Soviet' and *SSSR* 'USSR' contextualize Svalbard within a temporal (historical) dimension and link this dimension to the political and economic situation of the periods in which these keywords appear. In 2010–2013, media coverage of the signing of the 2010 Barents Sea Border Agreement frequently draws on its historical background, namely the failed negotiations between the USSR and Norway on maritime delimitation in the 1970s (Vzgljad.ru 2011). During the same period, the media also often express concern about the decline of Russian settlements on Svalbard, comparing this situation with the Soviet past, in which "the Soviet part of Svalbard was like paradise" (Moskovskij Komsomolec 2011). Reappearing in 2022–2025, the keyword *SSSR* 'USSR' is often used in reports on the 2022 dispute over cargo deliveries to Russian settlements. In this context, the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, signed by multiple countries, including the USSR, of which Russia is the legal successor, is invoked. The treaty is presented as an argument to guarantee Russia the right to unimpeded delivery of goods to its citizens on the archipelago (Izvestija 2022b).

Taken together, the examples with the keywords *sovetskij* 'Soviet' and *SSSR* 'USSR' show that historical references contribute to construing Russia's presence on Svalbard as long-standing, grounded, and implicitly legitimized.

The appearance of the keyword SŠA 'USA' points to the construction of Svalbard within a broader geopolitical dimension extending beyond Russian-Norwegian relations. The United States become introduced as an additional actor connected to the archipelago. In 2019, references to the USA occur in the context of a Norwegian media report harshly criticized by the Russian Foreign Ministry (see Section 5.1). In this report, the USA is mentioned as the source of military aircrafts which identified the presence of Russian special forces on Svalbard (Gazeta.Ru 2019b). In 2022, several articles discuss the US "presence" in Norwegian foreign policy, referring to American influence, particularly in the context of the dispute over the delivery of goods to Russian settlements on Svalbard. Norway's ban on these supplies is described as "following in the wake of a Russophobic policy pursued under the leadership of the United States" (Izvestija 2022a). In later texts of 2025, further concerns, attributed to both Russian and Norwegian sides, are expressed. These concerns relate to the "expansionist plans" of the United States including claims about potential territorial ambitions involving Greenland and Svalbard (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2025). Taken together, these examples construe the United States as a guiding geopolitical actor that is represented as influencing Norway's decision-making and associated with security concerns in the Arctic region.

The keywords forming the 'city/town/locality' contextual dimension show that Svalbard is constructed not merely as a remote isolated Arctic territory, but as an inhabited space (*poselok* 'settlement', *Barencburg* 'Barentsburg'), connected to mainland logistical (*Arxangel'sk* 'Arkhangelsk', *murmanskij* 'Murmansk (adjective)') and political centers (*Oslo* 'Oslo', *Moskva* 'Moscow'). The spatial dimension that Svalbard is contextualized in is mostly Russia-centered – the archipelago is connected to Russian political, administrative and logistical centers. The keywords *murmanskij* 'Murmansk (adjective)' and *Arxangel'sk* 'Arkhangelsk', specific to 2010–2013, frequently occur in the context of detentions of Russian fishing trawlers by the Norwegian Coast Guard near Svalbard. These trawlers are reported as registered in the ports of Murmansk or Arkhangelsk. This context can be interpreted as an indication of the connection between Russia and Svalbard through stable directional relations "Murmansk/Arkhangelsk – Svalbard".

The keywords *Oslo* 'Oslo' and *Moskva* 'Moscow', appearing and stabilizing after 2013, are often used as metonyms, that is to refer to political actors, such as government officials and diplomats, and governing institutions in the context of formal official statements. These statements frequently articulate criticism of Norwegian policy towards Russia's presence on Svalbard. For example, in 2015, such usage reflects the diplomatic dispute between Norway and Russia following Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin's visit to Svalbard (see Example (3)). In 2018–2021, 'Oslo' and 'Moscow' frequently occur in the context of official Russian statements expressing dissatisfaction with Norwegian policy towards Svalbard, particularly in connection with the centenary of the 1920 Svalbard Treaty:

(5) Po mneniju **Moskvy**, **Oslo** ograničivaet prava rossijskix kompanij na dostup k mineral'nym resursam, a takže na razrabotku uglevodorodnyx mestoroždenij (Gazeta.Ru 2020).
'According to **Moscow**, **Oslo** limits the rights of Russian companies to access mineral resources, as well as to develop hydrocarbon deposits' (Gazeta.Ru 2020).

In 2022–2025, the keywords 'Oslo' and 'Moscow' frequently occur in the context of the 2022 dispute over the delivery of goods to Russian settlements on Svalbard. Example (6) relates to the management of this dispute through practical logistical arrangements, namely allowing Norwegian carriers to transport Russian cargo to the archipelago. However, in Example (6) the situation is framed not as the outcome of diplomatic negotiations, but as Russia's "victory" in a confrontation:

(6) Kak **Moskva** zastavila **Oslo** snjat' blokadu s rossijan na Špicbergene (Vzgljad.ru 2022).
'How **Moscow** forced **Oslo** to lift the blockade of Russians on Svalbard' (Vzgljad.ru 2022).

Taken together, the contexts in which the keywords *Oslo* 'Oslo' and *Moskva* 'Moscow' are used indicate that Svalbard is framed as a political and an economic space with valuable resources. Within this space, Russia is constructed as a legitimate actor whose rights are being restricted, while Norway is represented as imposing limitations on Russia's activities and thereby overstepping its authority. On the one hand, Russia is framed as a disadvantaged actor, or even a victim, expressing disapproval of Norway's actions and implicitly calling for justice. On the other hand, Russia is also constructed as a strong and effective actor capable of influencing or shaping Norway's decisions.

Barencburg 'Barentsburg' is another indicator from the contextual domain 'city/town/locality' that emerges and stabilizes in use after 2013. The following examples show that contexts involving this keyword are associated with various events and aspects of life, through which Russia's presence on the archipelago is normalized. In 2017, this keyword appears in the context of the crash of the Russian helicopter Mi-8 near Barentsburg thus presenting this settlement and Svalbard overall as sites of emergency. The title shown in Example (7) also frames Barentsburg as a location capable of providing medical assistance thereby reinforcing an image of Russian presence as organized and responsive:

(7) **V Barencburge** dlja èkipaža propavšego Mi-8 razvernuli gospital' (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2017).
'A hospital has been set up **in Barentsburg** for the crew of the missing Mi-8' (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2017).

In 2018–2021, the keyword *Barencburg* is often associated with narratives about the legendary cat Kesha, who lived on the archipelago and died in 2021. One text describes the cat as "the Svalbard mascot" and recounts his twelve-year life in Barentsburg with successive caring families. Kesha is also portrayed as "a world-class star" who attracted tourists from all over the word. The text further refers to and debunks the myth that the cat had an Arctic fox passport, a story linked to the authorities' ban on importing animals to the archipelago after his arrival (Moskovskij Komsomolec 2021). These narratives contribute to framing Svalbard as an inhabited place characterized by everyday life. In

addition, the archipelago is humanized, romanticized, and partly mythologized. Barentsburg is represented as a local tourist center, while Russian presence there is naturalized through everyday practices and emotional attachments rather than through legal or political frameworks.

In 2022, the keyword *Barencburg* frequently occurs in the context of the dispute over cargo deliveries. Barentsburg is represented as a Russian settlement to which the delivery of goods is restricted by Norwegian authorities. This context portrays Svalbard as a logistical space, while Barentsburg is represented as a key logistical node and a center of Russia's presence on the archipelago.

The keywords within the contextual domain 'territories and their division' indicate that Svalbard is consistently framed as an object of spatial division. The archipelago is represented as a measurable and manageable space (e.g., *territorija* 'territory', *zona* 'zone', *granica* 'border'), implying that the archipelago is subject to regulation and governance. The keywords specific to 2010–2013 (e.g., *kilometr* 'kilometer' and *razgraničenie* 'demarcation') point to an intensified process of boundary-making. Their use is consistent with media coverage of the 2010 Barents Sea Border Agreement. Taken together, the indicators within the contextual domain 'territories and their division' suggest a shift from active politically embedded boundary making before 2014 to a more stabilized and taken-for-granted territorial framing after 2014.

	2010–2013	2014–2017	2018–2021	2022–2025
Contextual domain	Keywords	Keywords	Keywords	Keywords
Geography	*poljus* 'pole', *poljarnyj* 'polar', *arxipelag* 'archipelago', *severnyj* 'northern', *ostrov* 'island', *zemlja* 'Earth / land', *arktika* 'Arctic (noun)', *arktičeskij* 'Arctic (adj)[17]', *more* 'sea', *morskoj* 'sea-(adj)', *sever* 'north', *okean* 'ocean', *Barencevyj* 'Barents',	*poljus* 'pole', *poljarnyj* 'polar', *arxipelag* 'archipelago', *severnyj* 'northern', *ostrov* 'island', *zemlja* 'Earth / land', *arktika* 'Arctic (noun)', *arktičeskij* 'Arctic (adj)', *more* 'sea', *morskoj* 'sea-(adj)'	*poljus* 'pole', *poljarnyj* 'polar', *arxipelag* 'archipelago', *severnyj* 'northern', *ostrov* 'island', *zemlja* 'Earth / land', *arktika* 'Arctic (noun)', *arktičeskij* 'Arctic (adj)', *more* 'sea', *morskoj* 'sea-(adj)', *sever* 'north'	*poljarnyj* 'polar', *arxipelag* 'archipelago', *severnyj* 'northern', *ostrov* 'island', *zemlja* 'Earth / land', *arktika* 'Arctic (noun)', *arktičeskij* 'Arctic (adj)', *more* 'sea', *morskoj* 'sea-(adj)', *okean* 'ocean', *arxipelago* 'archipelago'

[17] Adj stands for adjective.

	Barencev 'Barents', *Ledovityj* 'Arctic (lit. 'icy')', *continental'nyj* 'continental'			
Governance/politics	*MID* 'MFA'[18], *gosudarstvo* 'state', *president* 'president', *Medvedev*[19]	*MID* 'MFA', *vlast'* 'power, authority', *vedomstvo* 'department, agency', *vice-prem'er* 'deputy prime minister', *Rogozin*[20]	*MID* 'MFA', *vlast'* 'power, authority', *posol'stvo* 'embassy', *ministr* 'minister', *Lavrov*[21]	*MID* 'MFA', *vlast'* 'power, authority', *gosudarstvo* 'state', *glava* 'head', *genkonsul* 'Consul General', *Guščin*[22]
Regions/countries	*strana* 'country', *Norvegija* 'Norway', *norvežskij* 'Norwegian (adj)', *Rossija* 'Russia', *rossijskij* 'Russian (adj)', *RF*[23], *SSSR* 'USSR', *sovetskij* 'Soviet', *Troms* 'Tromsø'[24]	*strana* 'country', *Norvegija* 'Norway', *norvežskij* 'Norwegian (adj)', *Rossija* 'Russia', *rossijskij* 'Russian (adj)', *RF*, *region* 'region'	*strana* 'country', *Norvegija* 'Norway', *norvežskij* 'Norwegian (adj)', *Rossija* 'Russia', *rossijskij* 'Russian (adj)', *russkij* 'Russian (adj)', *RF*, *SŠA* 'USA'	*strana* 'country', *Norvegija* 'Norway', *norvežskij* 'Norwegian (adj)', *Rossija* 'Russia', *rossijskij* 'Russian (adj)', *RF*, *SSSR* 'USSR', *SŠA* 'USA'
City/town/locality	*poselok* 'settlement', *murmanskij* 'Murmansk (adj)',	*poselok* 'settlement', *Oslo* 'Oslo', *Moskva* 'Moscow',	*poselok* 'settlement', *Oslo* 'Oslo', *Moskva* 'Moscow',	*poselok* 'settlement', *Oslo* 'Oslo', *Moskva* 'Moscow',

[18] MID stands for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.
[19] Dmitry Medvedev is a Russian politician who was the President of Russia in 2008–2012.
[20] Dmitry Rogozin is a Russian politician who was Deputy Prime Minister of Russia for Defense and Space Industry in 2011–2018.
[21] Sergey Lavrov is a Russian politician who has been the Foreign Minister of Russia since 2004.
[22] Sergey Gushchin is a Russian diplomat who served as Russia's Consul General in Svalbard in 2018–2022.
[23] RF stands for the Russian Federation.
[24] *Troms* is the form to which the foreign name *Tromsë* has been lemmatized in the target corpus. In this study, it is treated as a corpus-specific artefact resulting from differences in lemmatization between the target and reference corpora and is therefore excluded from the analysis.

	Arxangel'sk 'Arkhangelsk'	*Barencburg* 'Barentsburg'	*Barencburg* 'Barentsburg', *mestnyj* 'local'	*Barencburg* 'Barentsburg', *poselenie* 'settlement'
Territories and their division	*territorija* 'territory', *zona* 'zone', *granica* 'border', *linija* 'line', *rajon* 'area', *pronstranstvo* 'area', *territorial'nyj* 'territorial', *kilometr* 'kilometer', *razgraničenie* 'demarcation'	*territorija* 'territory', *zona* 'zone', *linija* 'line', *rajon* 'area'	*territorija* 'territory', *zona* 'zone'	territorija 'territory', granica 'border', region 'region'

Table 6. Contextual domains associated with the keyword 'Spitsbergen'[25]

Taken together, the context indicators discussed in this section reveal two contextual layers – one stable and one dynamic – which extend and elaborate the discourse layers identified in Section 5.1. The analysis shows that Svalbard is embedded in a stable geographic-spatial dimension and construed as an Arctic territory and maritime space, against which both stable and dynamic discourses and representations unfold. Despite its remote location, the archipelago is consistently represented as an inhabited space connected to the mainland and as a governed space subject to state-level regulation and administrative control. The former representation also includes a non-politicized framing of the archipelago through everyday day life, both past and present.

In addition, the context indicators point to a stable political discourse that construes Svalbard as an object of foreign policy, particularly within Norwegian-Russian relations. This discourse overall demonstrates a temporal shift from representations of cooperation in the context of maritime delimitation to post-2014 representations of diplomatic tension linked to differing interpretations of the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, especially with regard to Russia's economic presence on the archipelago. Thus, over time, the analysis indicates an intensification of discourses of legal disputes and of diplomatic tensions. Within this framework of tension, Russia is construed either as a disadvantaged but legitimate actor calling for fairness or legal compliance, or as a strong actor capable of influencing Norway's decisions.

[25] Keywords unique to a single period (e.g., 2010–2013) are shown in red; keywords occurring in two periods are shown in green; and keywords appearing in at least three periods are shown in black.

The analysis also points to the emergence of a still limited post-2014 security discourse, previously identified through concept indicators, in which the United States is construed as a geopolitical actor associated with security concerns in the Svalbard region and the broader Arctic region.

6. Discussion

This analysis shows that the construal of Svalbard in Russian media is largely tied to representations of Russia's presence on the archipelago. This presence is articulated across two discourse layers. The stable discourse layer foregrounds continuous and established activities, such as science, tourism, transport infrastructure, and politics that legitimize and naturalize Russia's presence on the archipelago and implying routine, "peaceful" interaction with Norway. The dynamic discourse layer, through event-driven representations, both reinforces and complicates this stable image. This image is reinforced by highlighting cooperation on maritime delimitation, and it is challenged and complicated by foregrounding legal dispute over the interpretation of the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, manifested in conflicts concerning fishing rights, visits to the archipelago, and the delivery of goods. At the same time, a security discourse, although not extensively developed, shows signs of consistent activation over time.

Overall, the findings suggest that Russian media construe Svalbard from a Russia-centered perspective. On the one hand, it is expected that national media prioritize nation-related events. On the other hand, the analysis indicates that this focus takes the form of a systematic discursive pattern that foregrounds Russia's role in the archipelago and presents it as a legitimate, authoritative, and, at times, leading actor. This pattern becomes particularly visible and intensified in the dynamic discourse layer, where event-driven contexts foreground Russian actors. At the same time, it is also present in the stable discourse layer, when Russia's presence on the archipelago is normalized through references to the Soviet past and contemporary narratives of everyday life in Russian settlements.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the coverage of Svalbard by Russian federal media between 2010 and 2025. The study adopted a linguistic approach to data analysis, exploring the concepts and contexts associated with the keyword 'Spitsbergen' in the textual data. This analysis made it possible to identify the discourses in which Svalbard is both stably and dynamically embedded over the period under study.

The findings suggest that Svalbard is construed simultaneously as a natural Arctic environment and as a geopolitically and economically significant territory. These representations are produced through a range of stable discourses, including tourism, scientific research, transport infrastructure, and law and regulation as well as through dynamic, event-driven discourses, such as securitization, legal pressure, legal disputes, and diplomatic tensions. These dynamic discourses frequently represent the archipelago as a contested space and a site of tension, primarily in the context of Russian-Norwegian relations.

One of the most notable trends identified in this study is a shift in media representations starting from 2014: earlier attention to cooperation and resource

development – though already accompanied by concerns over the Russian-Norwegian fishing disputes – gives way to continuous dissatisfaction with restrictions on physical access to the archipelago, linked to sanctions and Norway's broader Svalbard policy. This shift is accompanied by the emergence and a gradual consolidation of a security discourse.

This study is based on a large body of textual data published over a long period of time. While this broad approach allows for the identification of dominant patterns, it foregrounds the most frequent contexts. Future research could therefore focus on smaller datasets, for example including one to three media outlets over a shorter period of time. It would also be valuable to examine in greater detail how specific events are construed within individual discourses, for example, Russian scientific activity on the archipelago. Finally, this study is limited to the Russian media perspective on Svalbard. In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct a comparative analysis of coverage in other national media, such as Norwegian media, to understand how the archipelago is discursively construed across different geopolitical contexts.

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