

# Russian Coal Mining in Svalbard

## An Examination of Sovereignty and Arctic Cooperation



Group 25

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# 1. Introduction

While scientists view the climate crisis and the subsequent melting of glacial ice in the Arctic with trepidation, others see massive potential. National Geographic (2019) has exposed empirical predictions claiming that the first summer without Arctic sea ice will be in 2036 (Treat & Williams, 2019 p.45). There has, therefore, been a global desire to reap the emerging benefits, in terms of natural resources, strategic geopolitical placement and the resulting sea routes of this widely acclaimed area. The Arctic is typically characterized by stable cooperation between the five littoral Arctic nations: Denmark via Greenland, Russia, Canada, Norway, the U.S., but it has within the recent decade experienced an increase in global attention, political pressure and tension (Pezard et al., 2017 p.4). Russia, as the most “assertive” (European Parliament, 2017 p.1) example amongst many pursuing nations, expediently looks to the increasingly lucrative access throughout the Arctic ocean as a strategic opportunity to yield political and economic gain and influence (Pezard et al., 2017 p.9).

Norway, Russia and other Arctic nations have all had experts assemble a continental shelf claim report that produces supposed scientific evidence from submarine technology, showing that the continental shelf is a part of their nation’s continent (European Parliament, 2017 p.2). A legitimization of a nation's claim grants it the right to the territory and resources throughout the area of the continental shelf, which is why nations submit their shelf claim reports to the United Nations to be approved (ibid). However, there are significant territorial overlaps within these continental shelf claims (ibid). For this reason, the UN is yet to approve all except Norway’s claim, which illustrates how there is a fundamental clash of interests amongst nations in the region.

Leading literature concerning the Arctic displays paradoxical interpretations within academic debate. This is evident in the public media discourse which presents the Arctic as a conflict zone that poses global security threats, especially after 2007 when Russia planted their flag on the North Pole's seabed (Cohen et al., 2008; Borgerson, 2008; Dodds & Nuttall, 2016). On the other hand, many academics maintain that the Arctic is a stable region where collaboration prevails (Pezard et al., 2017; Knecht and Keil, 2013; Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014; English and Thvedt, 2018). However, we can identify a paradigm shift in the research on international relations in the Arctic. This shift is detected when comparing pre-climate change geopolitics, where the territorial geography was fixed and the relations in the Arctic seemed established, to a climate-driven change of geography ergo geopolitics. This geographical transformation

provokes increasing territorial disputes. Moreover, there appears to be a lack, and simultaneously a need, in the literature to analyze the changing political relations in the Arctic in a less fixed and more dynamic manner (Knecht & Keil, 2013 p.179). Hereunder, it has been said that geography has been studied with a very stringent framework in mind, with boundaries and territories being regarded as universal everlasting truths (ibid). But, climate change urges us to reconsider both the limits of physical geography and the political scope of areas, as they are ever-changing.

This project is, therefore, interested in researching how the changing climate conditions in the Arctic present a new geopolitical reality with more diplomatic debate and higher political tension. One place where this clash of interests is particularly imminent is on the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, where Russia has had a consistent coal-mining presence since 1932 (Gerlach & Kinossian, 2016 p.2). This is arguably a symbol for the Russian's persistent and intentional presence in the Arctic. In this context, Dodds and Nuttall (2019) claim that "Svalbard matters to Arctic geopolitics. [...] It is strategically located and acts as an entry point among the North Atlantic, Barents Sea, and Arctic Ocean. And Russia has ongoing disputes with the sovereign authority Norway over [...] tensions regarding the interpretation of the Svalbard Treaty." (ibid,p.213). The Russian presence in Svalbard is represented through the mining activities of the state-owned coal mining firm, Arktikugol.

We aim to discuss the extent to which Norway's sovereignty in Svalbard is absolute by analyzing Russia's economic and geopolitical conduct in the archipelago as a strategic outpost, as well as the international legal framework which Russia operates under. By sovereignty, we draw upon the definition set forward by social scientist scholar Torbjørn Pedersen (2017) stating that sovereignty is a socially constructed institution combined with a normative framework that requires resignation from the international society. Moreover, sovereignty is the practice of an indisputable, ultimate authority over people and land thereby excluding external actors (ibid, p.99).

This research will be carried out through the disciplines of international relations and international political economy. Subsequently, our problem area will be understood through the theoretical perspectives of realism and constructivism. Departing from these disciplines, we will examine the Svalbard Treaty from 1920, hereunder the Mining Code for Spitsbergen (1925) attached to the Svalbard Treaty and the UN Conventional Law of the Seas from 1982. Furthermore, we will analyze two articles; one from the Barents Observer and the other from

the Arctic Institute, additionally we analyze a Kremlin transcript and a Norwegian white paper on Svalbard. Methodologically, we will employ thematic coding and summarizing qualitative content analysis of our chosen documents. This content is analyzed to better understand the legal structure of the archipelago in order to inquire how sovereignty in Svalbard comes under question. Ultimately, as the atrophy and scarcity of non-renewable resources become more apparent, the Arctic region may well be seen as the last mercantilist battleground.

## **Research Question**

*How can Russia's conduct in Svalbard be understood from the perspectives of realism and constructivism, and why does Russia utilize coal mining to project influence?*

## **Supporting Questions**

- *How is Russia utilizing coal mining in Svalbard to project influence?*
- *In what ways has the Svalbard Treaty and the UNCLOS constructed norms and rules that have affected the contemporary jurisdiction of Svalbard?*
- *How can realism and constructivism offer insight to Russian and Norwegian behaviour in Svalbard?*

## **Research Design**

This project aims to answer the presented research question through three supporting questions. Each supporting question addresses a separate element of our research question: descriptive, analytical and argumentative. The first supporting question addresses the Russian mining industry in Svalbard and the underlying intentions for its existence as well as the contemporary developments of the Russian presence in Svalbard. The second supporting question discusses the norms and rules constructed by the legal documents that help us analyze how these norms and rules are contested, and thereby understand the conditions underpinning Russia's conduct. Finally, the third supporting question leads to a theoretical argumentation about how realism and constructivism can assist an explanation of Russia's and Norway's actions in Svalbard.

## 2. Background Information

The following chapter includes two sub-sections: A Brief History of Svalbard focusing on the actors and industries that have been present in the archipelago, as well as the political discussions leading up to the Svalbard Treaty. A section of Arctic geopolitical context is added, offering insight to Russia's military infrastructure and coal mining conduct, followed by an account of the Barents Sea dispute between Russia and Norway. These aim to aid the reader by providing relevant empirical information that works as a backdrop for our chosen research puzzle.

### 2.1 A Brief History of Svalbard

An understanding of the history of human settlements, economic activity and the international politics of the archipelago is relevant in anchoring context behind Svalbard's current situation. This chapter will, therefore, provide a succinct historical account of the archipelago, as a prerequisite for the analysis of the Svalbard Treaty, its interpretations and discussions of sovereignty that follows.

The archipelago of Svalbard has for a large part of history been both commonly and legally known as *terra nullius* (no man's land) up until 1907 (Singh, 1980 p.23; Berg, 2013 p.154). Dutch explorer, William Barents, was said to be the first to discover the islands in 1596 (Singh, 1980 p.7). Furthermore, with several interests present, "discussions occurred within and between foreign ministries of the interested powers as to the proper remedy for the lawless conditions on Spitsbergen" (Singh, 1980 p.23). The then joint Sweden-Norway presented a colonization plan of West Spitsbergen in 1871-1872, which was to Russia's great objection as they launched a counter-annexation plan that led Sweden to renounce its initial plan (ibid). The two bodies then came to an agreement in 1872 that Svalbard would be "*un domaine indecis*" (ibid, p.24), or an undecided territory belonging to no one specifically (ibid, p.25).

The easy access to Svalbard and the resources found therein, ranging from wildlife to underground minerals, explain its sporadic yet persistent human presence (ibid, p.9). Hunting and fishing were the initial activities on the islands, with mainly English and Dutch competitors using whaling as the "economic backbone" (Campopiano 2019) of Svalbard (ibid). However, it was the dawn of the age of mineral extraction in Svalbard starting in 1899, that attracted new



actors and led to the large-scale settlements in Svalbard (Singh, 1980 p.9). Hereunder, coal mining occupants would prove especially important as their influence, largely generated by their wealth gained through the high demand in coal for fueling railway locomotives and steamships, shaped the debates running up to the Svalbard treaty (Singh, 1980 p.10). The Svalbard Treaty, which would establish the judicial framework for Svalbard in 1920, granted Norway sovereignty over the archipelago, but setting distinct stipulations to this sovereignty.

### **2.1.1 Mining as a Settlement Builder**

Later in historical progression, Norway made persistent attempts to gain control of as much of the archipelago as possible, by buying up mining rights from entrepreneurs who sold them off to avoid economic downfall (Stange, 2019). In the early 20th century American and British coal mining companies held dominance over the newly extensive industry of coal mining in Svalbard. However, in 1916, the American Coal Company had to sell its mining settlement to the Norwegian “Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani” (ibid). Stange (2019) concludes that mining was the most important economic undertaking on Svalbard, but that it was hardly ever profitable, subsisting mostly for the purpose of securing territorial claims (ibid). Many of the mining activities in Svalbard erected the main towns and settlements that we see on the islands today (ibid). One of these is the Russian state-owned mining company “Trust Arktikugol”, who established themselves in Svalbard in 1932 after acquiring land and a mine in Barentsburg from the Dutch company, “Nespico” (Arktikugol, 2019). Arktikugol has had active mines in the towns of Grumant, Pyramiden and Barentsburg, with the latter being the biggest and only active mine it has today (ibid).

Succeeding Norway’s declaration of independence from Sweden in 1905, it wanted to clarify the legalities of Svalbard’s territorial claims (Grydehøj, 2012 p.101). After 1906, the majority of the population of Svalbard was Norwegian, though the main economic forces were still propelled by the American Arctic Coal Company (ibid). In 1912, William Spiers Bruce, an Arctic explorer and his counterparts, tried to lobby the British government, convincing them to annex Svalbard to secure property rights (Campopiano, 2019). The Arctic Coal Company similarly attempted to entice US congress to pass a bill that would set an American claim of sovereignty and to prioritize it within American foreign policy (Singh, 1980 p.36). However, both persuasion attempts failed, since the British government wished to avoid over-politicization of the coal company (ibid), and the US denied further attention in Svalbard for fear of “international repercussions” (Campopiano, 2019).

Comparable attempts were made by the Dutch who advertised to their national government for their own sovereignty, and the Norwegian who both advocated for Norway's claim to the islands (Campopiano, 2019). These were known as "literature lobbyists" (Singh, 1980 p.94) who deployed their knowledge of the Arctic to produce historical accounts of Svalbard's original human settlements (ibid). These historical publications arguably did not directly impact the Svalbard treaty discussions but were "undeniably read" (Campopiano, 2019) by diplomats during the time, shaping their opinions. In 1916, the Arctic Coal Company finally sold its land claims and officially dropped the mining business investment and activity in Svalbard (Singh, 1980 p.36).

### **2.1.2. Russian and Norwegian interests in Svalbard**

It appeared that Norway and Russia were most interested in claiming Svalbard (ibid). Russia affirmed they had the right to Svalbard since walrus hunters from their Pomor region were the first to discover the islands (Grydehøj, 2012 p.101). There is still disputed evidence of whether the first settlers to Svalbard were the Pomors, of the Northern Russian region, or the Norsemen of North-Germanic Scandinavia (ibid). Nevertheless, between 1910 and 1914 several proposals were set forth for joint sovereignty over the island by Norway, Sweden and Russia, but these were unsuccessful due to the inability for the nations and other international actors to come to an agreement (ibid). It is at this point where it must be clearly stated that, aside from coal mining companies being significant in the debates leading up to the Svalbard Treaty, the allied forces who were the victors of the First World War, were instrumental to the discussions of the Svalbard Treaty. The Treaty was discussed as a part of the post-war Paris peace conference, of which the objective was to create a framework of jurisdiction that could help nations adhere to peaceful collaboration (Grydehøj, 2012 p.101).

The result was that the allied supreme council granted Norway sovereignty over Svalbard (Grydehøj, 2012 p.101). This outcome was highly contextual, as it was due to several underlying factors. One of these factors was the US's decreasing economic activity, which left space for Norway to take over many of the mining activities on the islands (ibid). Additionally, after the US's economic activity in Svalbard stopped, the American government favoured Norway's sovereignty, as it felt that this would result in the least amount of tension in the region (Campopiano, 2019). Subsequently, there was a wish amongst the allied forces to reward Norway for the aid that it had provided them throughout the war (ibid). Secondly, the allies did not want to recognize the legitimacy of the Socialist Bolsheviks that took over the

Russian government during the 1917 revolution (ibid). These are the main reasons why Russia was not more seriously considered as an actor during the Paris peace conferences, despite it always having had a historical presence and vested interest in Svalbard. The Svalbard Treaty's 14 original high contracting parties were: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, the US, the UK and thereunder its dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India, who signed in 1920 (Svalbard Treaty, 1920). Russia signed the treaty later, in 1924 (Grydehøj, 2012 p.101) when Great Britain and subsequently Norway recognized the Soviet regime which at that time ruled Russia (Østreng, 1977 p.21). Originally, the Soviet regime stated that the treaty did not apply to the regime because they were not included in the creation of the treaty (ibid, p.20). After the Svalbard Treaty, the islands were then renamed from Spitsbergen to the old Norse originating name of Svalbard, after Norway assumed sovereignty over the archipelago in August 1925 (Singh, 1980 p.8). This was, according to Berg (2013) an official "act of political and linguistic Norwegianization" (ibid, p.155). The treaty resulted in a binding framework that put structure on the activities in the historically lawless Svalbard.

## **2.2 Geopolitical Context in the Arctic**

Why is it important to understand the situation in Svalbard within a larger geopolitical frame? As quoted by scholar Edward Said "since no state is outside or beyond geography, no state is completely free from the struggle over geography" (Østreng, 2010). Hereunder, to fully understand the scope, scale and importance of our problem area, a section is needed to comprehend the dynamics at play in this region. In the following paragraph, we will list some of the most significant reasons that the Arctic is an acclaimed geopolitical matter.

Firstly, the Arctic's geographical location is between the three continents of America, Europe and Asia, which offers short trade distances and important sea routes (ibid). The Arctic has also been predicted to host an abundance of industrial resources in terms of mineral deposits, oil and gas, which can lead to massive economic potential as well as energy security (ibid). The changing climate leads to easier access to exploit the natural resources in the region. Lastly, the third Law of the Sea Convention of 1982 (UNCLOS III) alongside other international legal frameworks regarding global sea is used for governing the Arctic (ibid).

Russia and Norway have over recent decades produced and implemented strategies for their future conduct in the Arctic (Staalesen, 2014). In 2001 Russia submitted their first official continental shelf claim to the UN Commission (ibid). However, the UN commission responded in 2002 that ‘additional research is needed’ (ibid) before an official decision can be made.

### **2.2.1 Russian conduct in the Arctic**

According to the international centre for defence and security, Russian military doctrine treats the Arctic as a prioritized geographical area (Aliyev, 2019). The Russian government has been working to assert its military presence in the Arctic over the past decade, as new regulations are being implemented in the region alongside the upgrading of military capabilities (ibid). These are said to be steps in the process of maintaining Russia’s national security, accessibility resources, and mainly, control over the Northern Sea Route (ibid). Russia’s investments in the Arctic relate not only to the Northern Sea Route but to military capacity as well, as “Russia has a fleet of over twenty icebreakers 5 and plans to build three new icebreakers by 2020”, says Conley (2013, p.22). Following 2014 estimates, 81% of Russia’s sea-based weapons are attached to the northern fleet operating in the Arctic (Aliyev, 2019). Additionally, as of 2019, 59% of Russia’s modern weaponry is expected to be found in the Arctic (ibid).

Russia’s presence in the Arctic is of a unique character, leaning towards the development of financial resources rather than the preservation of the Arctic ecosystem (Conley, 2013 p.1). Presence is implemented through the attempt to gain control over territory by the economic development of the region and the population of those said territories (ibid). The incentives are strategic as well as economic (ibid, p.2-3). The Russian government, alongside private Russian companies, have shown immense interest in the parts of Russia which lie north of the Arctic circle, specifically in terms of coal mining and infrastructure surrounding the coal industry (Staalesen, 2019a).

In terms of coal, it is predicted to continue benefiting the Russian national market in terms of national supply as well as export. Unlike other European nations, Russia has been scaling up its coal mining. Whilst international investment in coal capacity is decreasing (Carbon Brief, 2019). Russia has been increasing investments in coal and opening new coal mines. This seems counterintuitive when compared to the general consensus amongst the international community is to move away from coal, as a part of the plan to strive toward sustainable development. Russia has increased its coal mining production by more than 30% to over 440 million tons,

becoming the third biggest coal producer in the world (Staalesen, 2019b). Alongside this increase, governmental investments in the coal mining industry have grown by 150% and production is predicted to increase to over 670 million tons over the next 15 years (ibid). Thus, this growth is meant to answer not only to national coal consumption but also adheres to increasing international demand for coal supply, due to the simultaneous trend of population growth, combined with the decrease of global coal production (Moscow Kremlin, 2019). Consequently, Russia's share of the world coal trade has grown from 9% to 14% during the last decade and will most likely continue to do so (Ibid).

### **2.2.2 Barents Sea Dispute**

The Barents Sea is a 175,000 km<sup>2</sup> wide area of water located above the Norwegian-Russian border with Svalbard limiting its north-western front, the Russian Salisbury island to its northern end and the Russian Severny Island to its eastern end (Moe et al. 2011, p.145). This portion of the sea is regarded as an economically strategic area that offers one of Europe's most profitable fishing placements, resources of oil and natural gas, gives access to vital shipping routes such as the Northern Sea route and gives access to Murmansk port, Russia's only year-round ice-free port (ibid). A dispute between Norway and Russia over the location of national boundaries of this sea subsided for over 40 years (ibid). The disagreement was sparked in the 1970s over the lack of legal boundaries that prevailed in the area, resulting in a competition for the fish and the later discovered oil and gas that persisted in the sea. However, the dispute was settled after Russia offered to compromise by dropping their idea of the Barents Sea being a cooperation zone without a boundary and instead accepted the need for a formal maritime border (ibid, p.148). Consequently, a treaty was signed on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010, dividing the Barents Sea in half between the two nations (ibid, p.146). Conduct for the procedures of oil and gas drilling was also set out through the treaty, as well as a consensus to continue the joint fishing activities in the area (ibid).

Moe et al. (2011) emphasize that Russia's compromise can be explained by their wish to be seen as a "rule-abiding player on the international arena" and to diminish the risk of conflict (ibid, p.145.) Furthermore, the Barents Sea agreement signifies that the two nations intend to cooperate in the Arctic. Within the wider context in the Arctic, the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration potentially influenced the agreement in the Barents Sea. The five littoral Arctic states agreed that maritime issues in the Arctic would be handled peacefully and with regard to international law (Clemmensen & Thomasen, 2018 p.1). In regards to the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration, "this

motivation should not be seen as unique to the Russian Federation, but to some extent, part of a concerted effort of the Arctic littoral states to dispel the myth of a “geopolitical scramble for the Arctic” (Moe et al. 2011 p.158).

### **3. Literature Review**

The literature concerning the Arctic as a geopolitical region is extensive, spanning from the old fairytales of northern passages of the Arctic to environmental planning issues, Arctic indigenous rights issues, to contemporary Arctic geopolitics. This literature review is concerned with the international relations debates behind the Arctic disputes, collaboration and the state behaviours determining the situation in Svalbard. The overview of the existing literature will be organized in subsections to create a clear narrative starting from the relevance of broader academic discussions on the whole Arctic, down to the current discussions of Svalbard.

#### **3.1 An overview of the Arctic conflict**

The literature on the Arctic consistently displays the area as greatly sought-after. Marshall (2015), in his contemporary discussion on geopolitics, uncovers old “mythical” (ibid, p.269) tales of the Northwest passage that could magically connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, whilst highlighting that the first-ever cargo ship that completed the passage without an icebreaker escort was in 2014, travelling from Canada to China (ibid, p.273). This illustrates how these Arctic fairytales are only recently becoming a reality, due to climate change and technological developments, thereby displaying the paralleled historical and modern relevance of the Arctic.

Withal, the academic discourse on the Arctic is extensive but can adhere to clear trends. Pezard et al. (2017) highlight that the Arctic’s role was no longer to be a military strategic position after the end of the Cold War (ibid, p.1). The international literature had an idealist tone as peace persisted, with Pezard et al. (2017) insisting that collaboration is more beneficial due to the “unforgivable operating conditions” (ibid, p.4) in the Arctic. Moreover, Pezard et al. (2017) and Knecht and Keil (2013) have emphasized the stable cooperation that has existed in the Arctic, with the sturdiness of the Arctic Council being praised. Hereunder, Knecht and Keil (2013) have stressed the increase in neoliberal institutionalist nature of the political relations in the area, but claim that the regional society of the Arctic still exudes a very “state-centric” (ibid,p.179) view with the Arctic council remaining intergovernmental and not independent (ibid). Nevertheless, they argue that this resurgence of neoliberal institutionalism has been due

to the focus of the “pan-Arctic cooperation” (ibid,p.184) which has gone from conflict to collaboration (ibid).

However, after Russia planted its flag on the bottom of the North Pole seabed in 2007, the conversation evidently changed. An urgent verve prevailed amongst scholars who declared a “New Cold War” (Cohen et al., 2008) and “Arctic Meltdown” (Borgerson, 2008), whilst others established the concept of the “Scramble to the Poles” (Dodds & Nuttall, 2016) and a “New Great Game in the North” (ibid).

Though this flag planting by the Russian side has no legal repercussions under international law (Knecht & Keil, 2013 p.183), it has sparked a resurgence in realist analysis amongst scholars, such as Borgerson (2008) who has suggested a need to reconsider traditional power politics (ibid). Similarly, Knecht & Keil (2013) have painted a threatening picture of Russia, who is an “unpredictable partner” (ibid,p.183) and whose act was characterized as one of the “greatest land grabs in history” (ibid), which might to some neorealists indicate the start of a nightmarish resource war (ibid).

Njord Wegge (2010) uses both liberal and realist theoretical approaches when studying the contemporary political order in the Arctic. He concludes that the region is multipolar regarding the balance of power since not a single or two states seem to dominate (Wegge, 2010 p.165). Wegge (2010) states that the US could be a potential hegemonic power in the Arctic but is unable and unwilling to establish itself as one (ibid,p.172). Consequently, the 5 littoral Arctic states; consisting of Denmark through Greenland, Norway, Russia, Canada and the US, all dominate the region in a multipolar system (Wegge, 2010). Whilst Russia and the US possess the greatest overall military capabilities, Denmark, Canada and Norway all hold several other power capabilities, such as a high GDP per capita, administrative efficiency and technological competitiveness, which makes the Arctic a relatively balanced multipolar system (ibid, p.173). The stability in the Arctic is therefore dependent on the balance of power and can be challenged by power shifts within the littoral states and thereby, Wegge argues that the multipolar balance of power might actually be an inherently destabilizing factor (ibid).

However, the reason for decades of peaceful interaction in the region might be due to the significant international legal framework, which to a great extent has been influencing the behaviour of Arctic states (ibid). Moreover, the smaller states of Denmark and Norway have



benefitted from the compliance to international law instead of a reliance on traditional power capabilities such as state budget and military strength, Wegge claims (ibid).

Dodds and Nuttall (2016) along with Cohen et al. (2008) express how the US does not regard the Arctic as a priority of national security. Tim Marshall (2015) echoes this by highlighting that the Arctic is a priority for Russia in an unparalleled way compared to the US (ibid, p.278). That being said, the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea has, according to Pezard et al. (2017), resulted in an ongoing source of anxiety amongst other Arctic nations about what Russia is capable of (ibid,p.2).

The 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea also inevitably changed the cooperation of Western states and Russia within the Arctic (Byers, 2017 p.375). Overall, military and economic cooperation were suspended, and the number of military exercises increased along with a strengthening of military capabilities in many Arctic states (ibid, p.385-386). However, in regards to the following issues; fishery, search and rescue, development of continental shelf claims and the functions of the Arctic Council, the cooperation between Western states and Russia continued (ibid, p.386-388). Moreover, Clemmensen and Thomasen (2018) emphasize that post-Crimea collaboration with Russia prevails due to Russia's economically driven interest to maintain cooperation in the area, which can work as a nexus for Western and Russian diplomacy (ibid, p.5). Herewith they state that "Arctic institutions also have an impact that extends beyond the polar region, as they give Russia and Western diplomats an arena for communicating about broader non-Arctic questions, even as general East-West relations have grown strained since the Ukraine Crisis" (ibid).

### **3.2 Theoretical Considerations within the literature**

Geopolitics has been seen as a buzzword when spoken of in relation to the Arctic region, says Knecht and Keil (2013, p.178). Dahlman (2009) provides a two-fold definition of geopolitics stating that on one side it pertains to the geological features that a state is exposed to which impact its behaviour, whilst on the other hand geopolitics is defined as a "pseudo-science" (ibid, p.87) backing up imperialist territorial pursuits (ibid, p.176). Hereunder, territorial expansion through geopolitics was used as a 'scientific' justification to ensure state survival and to make up for the losses of the First World War (Dahlman, 2009 p.87). This, as stated by Heininen (2018), "ruined the realm of geopolitics for decades" (ibid).

Herewith, the newer approach known as critical geopolitics is being discussed in the mainstream literature of Arctic geopolitics. However, when critical geopolitics was introduced in the 1990s during the constructivist wave, geopolitics was “revitalized” with a different focus, particularly on language and discourse holding more weight in the reproductions of political meanings (ibid, p.172-177). This is reiterated by Wegge and Keil (2018) who stress the importance of how critical geopolitics questions the “static conception of space” (ibid, p.87). This critical approach believes that space is socially constructed and narrated by the people in power (ibid). Wegge and Keil (2018) note this to be of particular relevance in the contemporary context of the climate change-fueled international relations debates of whether the Arctic is a conflict breeding ground or a stable cooperative success (ibid, p.87-88). Additionally, climate change creates an unusual situation whereby the geography of the Arctic is changing much faster than usual, enabling the study of the changing political dynamics of state behaviour and power, which further enforces the relevance of critical geopolitics (ibid).

### **3.3 Russia in the Arctic**

A great deal of the literature dealing with Russia in the Arctic addresses the nation’s behaviour post-Cold War because it is marked by a high level of cooperation among all littoral states in the region (Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014 p.68). Scholars studying Russia mainly deal with national interests and policy actions of Russia in the Arctic, and how they are perceived and acted upon by Western states in the region (Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014; Pezard et al., 2017; English and Thvedt, 2018). Furthermore, the discourse created by Russian media have been examined (Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014; Pezard et al., 2017). Nevertheless, when dealing with this issue, scholars cannot disregard the importance embedded in this region and the national identity which is connected to it by Russia. Hereunder, the former Russian deputy prime minister, Demitri Rogozin, declared that “the Arctic is a Russian Mecca” (Øberg, 2015).

Moreover, preconceptions of Russia and its behaviour in the Arctic, have been addressed in several academic articles (Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014; English and Thvedt, 2018). Rowe and Blakkisrud (2014) believe that the presentation of Russia as the “bad guys” might be linked to remaining Cold War narratives and uncertainty about the intentions of Moscow. Furthermore, English and Thvedt (2018) assert that since 2014 the popular discourse concerning Russia's Arctic policy has been focused on military capabilities and the strengthening thereof. However, the Russian military build-up has been in alignment with the other Arctic countries and does

not necessarily call for a nearby conflict in the region (Pezard et al., 2017 p.59; English and Thvedt, 2018 p.342). Besides, Arctic experts overall define Russia's Arctic policy as "constructive and cooperative" according to English and Thvedt (2018, p.341), and furthermore Russia "has not deviated from the policy of consensus decision-making and negotiated resolution of regional disputes" (ibid, p.347).

The Russian discourse regarding the Arctic emphasises several different issues such as security, domestic concerns, shipping, climate, conflict, cooperation etc. (Rowe and Blakkisrud, 2014 p.72-75). However, Rowe and Blakkisrud (2014) conclude that the link to domestic Russian concerns dominates the media discourse. For instance "the economic importance of the Arctic to the Russian economy" (ibid, p.75) and the needed development of the Arctic for its Russian residents are set forth by Russian politicians (ibid). When investigating whether the Russian media coverage focuses on conflict or cooperation, Rowe and Blakkisrud (2014) found that the coverage addressed both conflict and cooperation, however, there was a tendency to favour the cooperation narrative (ibid, p.73).

### **3.4 Svalbard and the Russian Presence**

The literature on Svalbard is politicized. The "jurisdictional wrangling" (Grydehøj, 2012 p.99) and the "diplomatic manoeuvring" (Berg, 2013 p.154) that Svalbard has been exposed to up until the Svalbard Treaty, have naturally coloured the academic discourse. Questions mostly circulate the subject of Svalbard's sovereignty, the legal rights and historical settlements of the Archipelago. The long-standing "*terra nullius*" (Berg, 2013 p.154) status of the islands, as highlighted by Berg (2013), has framed the perception of it as a territory that is up for grabs. On this note, Grydehøj (2012) remarks that Svalbard's "geographic otherness has led to its simultaneously belonging to everyone and to no one" (ibid, p.100).

The archipelago of Svalbard holds a strategic position in the Arctic since it is located between the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean (Dodds and Nuttall, 2019 p.213). The group of islands consisting of 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 2,600 residents is Norwegian territory but is mainly governed by the Svalbard Treaty (ibid, p.212-213). Most notably, the treaty allows non-Norwegian people to form communities and extract resources within the archipelago, which has led to disputes over how exactly the treaty ought to be interpreted (ibid). Russia is connected to Svalbard in several ways; firstly it is the only state other than Norway to have an air route to Svalbard, and

secondly, Russian state-owned coal mines are operating in Svalbard (ibid,p.213). Several disputes between Russia and Norway have occurred throughout history regarding issues such as fisheries management, travel restrictions and most of all differentiating interpretations of the Svalbard Treaty (ibid). Therefore, Dodds and Nuttall (2019) argue that the archipelago is significant in the matter of Arctic geopolitics (ibid, p.213).

Grydehøj (2012) expresses that “Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago is not as absolute as the Norwegian government claims” (ibid, p.100). Although the Svalbard Treaty attempted to solve the Svalbard question, Grydehøj (2012) claims that this has, in fact, remained unresolved, as the area is still subject to territorial challenges from Russia (ibid, p.113). Gerlach and Kinossian (2016) uncover how Russia’s Soviet imagery is particularly prevalent in the architecture of Barentsburg, Svalbard (ibid, p.15). They conclude that this is part of the “place-branding strategies” (ibid) developed by the Russian mining company, Arktikugol, to embody Russia’s dominant occupancy. Grydehøj (2012) echo this by declaring that “Russia is set on reinforcing uncertainty over Svalbard’s jurisdiction” (ibid, p.100) because of the uncertain yield and frequently unprofitable mining practice, which indicates that they operate due to a “political need to maintain settlements in the archipelago” (ibid, p.104).

### **3.5 Concluding Considerations**

To conclude, a paradoxical nature in interpretations becomes apparent in the literature. When thinking of the Arctic, one thinks of the region as it is popularly discussed; as a conflict hub potentially leading to a new Cold War. But, as exposed by Pezard et al. (2017), the Arctic is actually reasonably stable and peaceful (ibid, p.4). Hereunder, they express how Arctic conditions lead states to cooperate, as the costs of acting in self-interest outweigh the benefits of stability and what Heininen (2018) refers to as a post-Cold War “Arctic consensus” (ibid, p.174). Clemmensen and Thomasen (2018) give mixed reflections on the Arctic situation and call for the maintenance of active diplomacy in the Arctic as the region is “currently characterized by an unstable and moving equilibrium based mainly on a consensus between the regional states” (ibid, p.36).

The behaviour of Arctic states is divided but clearly changing due to increased political and economic gain resulting from melting sea ice. Therefore, Knecht and Keil (2013) identify a gap in the literature concerning “national spatial thinking in the wake of climate-induced political challenges and opportunities” (ibid, p.179). Similarly, Wegge and Keil (2018) point out the

need for further research within the social power of geopolitics (ibid, p.102). This is something which we recognize as common themes throughout the dominant literature. Finally, a paradigm shift occurs from the traditional state power thinking with geography being fixed to a critical view on the changing physical landscape and in turn the changing political relations. The literature has reflected that similar dynamics are at play in Svalbard in that Norwegian sovereignty has consistently been challenged, even after the Svalbard treaty was established.

## **4. Theoretical Framework**

The chosen theories originate from the discipline of International Relations. Our choice of theories divides into two; realism and constructivism. Theories can help shape reality but never fully determine or explain the future. The use of realism as our theory will include parts of classical realism, neoclassical (hereunder, strategic realism) and neo-realism. Both constructivism and realism will be complemented with additional related perspectives; realism, with an economic angle drawn from the discipline of political economy focusing on economic nationalism, and constructivism, with the concept of securitization. The contribution of this project is the combination of realism and constructivism, aiming to use realism to provide an explanation of the structure within international relations. Constructivism provides a theoretical explanation of process, which will allow for an examination of interests, actions and identity. Combining the notion of structure and process from each respective theory, a more holistic understanding of the behaviour of states can be obtained. Our understanding of theories is based on the works of scholars, we have deliberately decided to pick the relevant and important aspects of each theory in order to provide a clearer focus.

### **4.1 Realism**

Classical Realism is one of the most referenced and recognized theories in international relations. The main pillars of classical realism deal with the international system, the national interest of states, the balance of power and the security dilemma. Classical realists argue that the international system is an anarchic system since there is no centralized power, in which zero-sum competition of power prevails. Notably, the concept of power is crucial since states are believed to be defined through power (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016, p.34-49).

Classical realists perceive the international system to be a 'principle of order' which enables the system to shape the identities, discourses - a tool used to frame interests (ibid, p.36). The notion of power is ever-present within the realist mindset. The main pursuit of nation-states is to ensure and maximize power in three steps: Acquiring it, increasing it and projecting it (ibid). What exerts political power according to realist theory? Geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, population, military amplitude and preparedness, national identity and character (Morgenthau, 1961 p.110-133). Actions taken by any state are with the sole purpose of protecting national interest in the international political system and thereby to optimize

political influence (ibid). The balance of power refers to a tactic assumption by nations trying to secure their survival by preventing other states from gaining more power (often referred to as military power) to dominate all others. Balance of power can be accomplished through both policies and actions. This can be done by increasing their own power such as the acquisition of territory or increasing military capabilities (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016, p.37 - 40).

The main scholar behind neorealism is Kenneth Waltz, best known for his work of *Theory of International Relations* (1979). Waltz did not find the 'simple' justification of 'human nature' sufficient to explain international politics. Waltz argues that a core concern of states according to the neorealist world view, is the concern of survival - this is an ever-present factor in every decision made. States ultimate wish is to secure their survival in the international system. This results in altered behaviour, carefully calculated by states in order to either maintain or optimise their position in the international hierarchy. States satisfied with the status quo are risk-averse for gains, while dissatisfied states are risk-acceptant in that respect (Dunne, Kurki, Smith, 2016, p.53).

When analysing international cooperation, Waltz argues a distinction should be made between relative and absolute gains. Waltz elaborates that due to insecurity states are more interested in relative gains than absolute. This is because of an underlying insecurity, that makes nations choose to cooperate for the goal of mutual gain (O'Brien & Williams, 2016, p.12). However, states will question the premise of the cooperation and feel compelled to ask; who will gain most from this cooperation? Later, the neorealist school divided into different approaches; "defensive" and "offensive" camps. Defensive realists, following Waltz, argued that "because states tend to seek security, a stable international equilibrium is possible via balancing. Offensive realists argued that states seek to maximize power rather than security, making equilibrium harder to achieve" (Bell, 2019).

To enable a deeper understanding of how realist theory will be used as a tool for analysing our problem area, it is important to understand how realism perceives the international system and behaviour. Herewith, scholar, Thomas Schelling, introduces a new school of thought: Strategic Realism, which focuses mainly on foreign policy decision-making (Jakobson & Sørensen, 2007, p.71-74). Furthermore, it stresses the importance of strategizing in conflict situations. In any situation when state leaders are confronted or forced to deal with either diplomatic or military issues, they are obliged to apply strategic considerations into the matter, if they wish

to obtain the greatest strategic position. Schelling argues for perceiving foreign policy and diplomacy, especially from the great power nations, as a “rational-instrument” (ibid).

Schelling analyses diplomacy as a tool to achieve goals: “the bargaining can be polite or rude, entail threats as well as offers, assume a status quo or ignore all rights and privileges, and assume mistrust rather than trust [...]” (ibid, p.72). He further argues that the only way to avoid mutual damage is to make the opponent accept an outcome that is beneficial to you. Strategic thinking is paramount. Hereby, “military strategy can no longer be thought of as the science of military victory. It is not equally, if not more, the art of coercion, of intimidation and deterrence military strategy, has become the diplomacy of violence” (Schelling 1996, cited Jackson & Sørensen 2007, p.73). This leads us to consider the numerous examples of military rehearsals by the Arctic borders.

Furthermore, to give us a better understanding of the situation on Svalbard, we have chosen to complement our focus on realism with economic nationalism. This will help us analyze Russia's behaviour and the nature of potential economic interests.

#### **4.1.1 Economic Nationalism**

Economic nationalism is the economic parallel of the realist theory in international relations, in correlation with the expansion of the nation-state (O'Brien & Williams, 2016 p. 8). Scholar Takeshi Nakano's theory of economic nationalism will be used to grasp the relationship between politics and the economy within the nation-state.

According to *Theorising Economic Nationalism* (Nakano, 2004), economic nationalism is often seen as a series of attitudes rather than a coherent theory. Hereunder, policies such as protectionism, industrial policies and Keynesian policies strengthen the economy as well as the nationalistic sentiments (ibid, p.211). In terms of economic policies, economic nationalism is likely to prescribe tariffs, subsidies and market regulation (ibid), thus explaining the role of nationalism in political economy.

New approaches of the theory of economic nationalism have drawn clearer boundaries to the term: By offering a new limitation to the term nationalism, referring more specifically to the nation, and not the state. Additionally, by focusing on nationalism as an ideology rather than



policy implications (ibid, p.212). This, according to Nakano (ibid), means that in order to understand and theorize economic nationalism, we must, first of all, understand nationalism and incorporate it with political economy.

Nakano's theory of economic nationalism draws upon sociologist Emile Durkheim. Following Durkheim's political sociology, and in particular *Professional Ethics and Civil Morals*, Nakano describes the state as an organ which is in touch with its people, yet defines a gap between the "state and the governed", meaning that states act in the name of the people but does not always reflect the will of the masses (ibid, p.213). Following Durkheim, Nakano suggests that a political society is a society which obeys a sovereign authority within a given territory. Patriotism is the acceptance of the authority of the state. In terms of political theory, policies and institutions are only as successful as the people believe and trust the state, says Nakano (ibid, p.217).

When a state can derive power from its nation, political power is created. Following Durkheim, "the political power of the nation-state is maximised when it embodies civil society" (ibid, p.222). This political power is necessary for a nation-state to build a national market, promote economic development and industrialisation. This development, in turn, becomes a part of the national sentiment, and therefore strengthens the power of the state, as long as it does not weaken civil society. Durkheim concluded that economic power and national power blossom under the same conditions. This combination is named by Nakano - National Power, as he claims that Durkheim's model of national power theorizes economic nationalism.

The central concept of economic nationalism is the enhancement of national power (ibid). Economic nationalists will choose the mobilisation of national resources, with benefits spread beyond class limits to promote national unity. This, according to Nakano is a major element separating economic nationalism from Marxism and economic liberalism. Nakano refers to Peter Gourevitch (Gourevitch, 1986 p.42–53 cited in Nakano, 2004 p.223) who claimed that Protectionism, Keynesian macroeconomic policy and Mercantilist industrial policy can all be seen under the umbrella of economic nationalism, as they see the economy as a "zero-sum-game" between classes (unlike Marxism and economic liberalism) but on a national level, especially in times of crisis.

Nakano concludes that “the ultimate end is the augmentation of national power for national unity and autonomy rather than the maximisation of economic welfare or military power” (Nakano, 2004 p.226). Therefore, economic nationalists are likely to conduct policies that promote economic development without threatening national cohesion, where costs and benefits are shared by the whole nation-state (ibid, p.227).

This project claims that it is simply not sufficient to focus solely on the realist notion of survival and power in relation to Russian conduct and economic incentives in Svalbard. We have therefore chosen to provide an alternative perspective of theoretical understanding by adding constructivism into the equation, which will allow us to examine the situation in Svalbard thoroughly.

## **4.2 Constructivism**

As previously mentioned, the political situation in Svalbard and the Arctic as a whole is relatively peaceful with no indicators of a sudden conflict. However, by adopting a constructivist approach this enables us to examine our argument that Russia’s recent attempts to develop in the Arctic region are not solely driven by material gains, but involve a higher level of incentives. Such as gaining legitimacy within the international system by obeying conventions and treaties thereby enforcing a status-seeking behaviour which additionally draws on Russia’s historic and national identity as the ruling Arctic power.

We will introduce Constructivist theory through the writings of Alexander Wendt who claims that “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics” (Wendt, 1992). When debating international relations and the actions of states, one can distinguish structure from process as two possibly influential factors. Structure refers to power distribution and the state of anarchy within the international system, whilst process refers to the interaction between states and the state as a learning organism (Wendt, 1992 p.391). When discussing structure, questions revolve around the lack of international political authority and how it influences the behaviour of states. Process refers to the interaction between states and the influence these interactions have on the character and conduct of each state. In regards to our problem area, this distinction is crucial for the understanding of how the conduct of each state respectively shapes the norms and character of the system in which they operate.

According to Wendt (1992) neorealists have the point of departure that states are self-interested actors operating in an anarchic international system in which self-help is the only way, lacking central authority and security. Instead, he believes that power politics and self-help are not the causal or logical consequences of an anarchic system. Instead, self-help and power politics are seen as institutions within anarchy, not as its essential features (ibid, p.394). In his view, the self-help world in which we find ourselves is due to process, not structure (ibid). Following Wendt, the character of the international system is constructed due to the conduct of the actors within it. The conduct of one actor leads to a suitable response from another, and so forth, eventually shaping the conduct in the same manner. Wendt identifies the character of the international system as a self-help, predatory, competitive system (ibid, p.392).

If our world of power politics is a process, then the identities and interests of states can change and adapt in three ways: “by the institution of sovereignty, by an evolution of cooperation, and by intentional efforts to transform egoistic identities into collective identities” (ibid, p.395). As its first principle, constructivist theory argues that people act toward other objects or other actors based upon the meanings that objects have in their view. This behaviour is based on what Wendt calls the “distribution of knowledge” (ibid, p.397), the conceptions of self and others. The distribution of knowledge occurs through the behaviour of actors, consequently forming an identity. This said identity is later reinforced in the perception of others of the acting party, establishing collective meanings (ibid). Here, Wendt argues that it is through participation in collective meanings, actors acquire themselves identities. Those are constructed by the theories and expectations about oneself and others and are built in relation to the socially constructed world (Peter Berger cited in Wendt, 1992 p.397-398). When discussing institutions, Wendt refers to stable sets or structures of interests and identities. Self-help is an example of such an institution. In the identity building process within an anarchic system, actors are first interested in securing their position (Wendt, 1992 p.399).

The second principle of constructivism is that meanings which lead to actions are based upon interaction (ibid, p.403). The notion of self and interest are built upon socialization and interaction with other actors. Decisions are based on likelihood and probability, which is gathered through interaction and by the actions of actors (ibid). Meanings are created following social acts (signalling, interpreting and respondings.) Social acts create expectations for both sides about future behaviour, and each act reinforces or disputes the beliefs actors hold about one another. If repeated enough, concepts of self and others will build up (ibid, p.405).

Through reciprocal interaction we build social structures and define our interests and identities. The structure of self-help is built by cycles of social acts in which actors behave in ways that threaten the other, causing insecurity, competitive or egoistic identities (ibid, p.406). A “competitive system of interaction is prone to security dilemmas” (ibid, p.407). Wendt shows how this process takes place, but questions why does it happen to begin with. To answer this, he suggests the cause of predation alongside “anarchy as a permissive cause generating a self-help system” (ibid).

The predator argument shows how some states are predisposed towards aggressive behaviour, which in turn forces other states to participate in aggressive power politics, competing for superiority. When a predator appears, Wendt argues, its appearance does not mean immediate war, but rather, a formation of identities and interests, as other actors must react in a manner which “define its security[...]or pay the price” (ibid, p.408). This exemplifies the process notion discussed earlier, by showing how the behaviour of one actor dictates the whole system into self-help, defensive mode.

Finally, an important concept within the constructivist premise is securitization, originating in the mid-1990s from the work of Ole Wæver of the Copenhagen school. Wæver defines securitization as “the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have political effects” (Åtland and Pedersen, 2008 p.230). In this way, securitization employs language to highlight something as a security threat, hereby utilizing the differing perceptions of individuals to emphasize the emergency of the securitized phenomenon. Consequently, securitization occurs through speech acts, in which a statement is expressed as an action or as something that demands response (ibid). This affirms the importance constructivism attaches to intersubjective meanings and the significance of interpretations and the resulting reactions that can have substantial political repercussions.

### **4.3 Main theoretical deductions**

In culmination of the theoretical considerations presented in this chapter, we have chosen to dissect the main theoretical ideas and translate these into reduced themes. These themes will, in turn, be compatible with the main issues of our problem area and will be used to analyze our chosen documents and ultimately answer our research questions with the theories in mind.

The first chosen theme is 'sovereignty', which is derived from realism's notion of political power politics based on geography and military capabilities among others. Constructivism also deploys sovereignty as a main aspect of international relations that gets constructed by states' legitimizing and actively reproducing it through norms and values. Under sovereignty, we have chosen to make 'exclusive rights' and 'collective access' sub-themes, where the former addresses when eg. Norway's exclusive authority is enforced, and where the latter ascribes when the equal rights of other actors eg. in Svalbard are imposed on an equivalent level as Norway.

The theme 'perception' encompasses states' perception of each other and the important component of realism security dilemma. Furthermore, constructivism's notion of collective meanings being socially constructed based on conceptions of self and others is also relevant here, as well as the main ideas seen within securitization. Hereunder, we have chosen 'reactions' and 'identity' to be sub-themes, where the former conforms to how actions have been taken as a reaction to a statement or action that another state has done. The latter would then apply to discourses that associate with national identity building.

Our third theme 'strategic thinking' is derived from strategic realism and is a central element that addresses how states are obliged to consider strategic gains with every decision they make. We created the following three sub-themes; 'profit', 'risk/threat' and 'plan', which can be seen as components of strategic thinking. Herewith, all types of realism discuss gains, with relative and absolute gains being prioritized differently under the objectives of states. Constructivism also addresses how threats can be perceived differently by different states, under securitization and thus how different actions that follow can be shaped and shifted. Moreover, constructivism discusses how power politics is a process that changes within socialization.

'Territorial interests' is another theme we have synthesized with the sub-themes 'Norwegian interests' and 'Russian interests'. This will aid in clarifying whether something is under the interest of Norway or Russia thereby creating a clear dichotomy. This theme has been adopted more for functional purposes that allow for easier identification, which stems from a classical realist notion of a zero-sum game.

Our final theme is ‘International legal framework’ which will help us analyze the extent of legal power there is in the judicial foundation in Svalbard. This is a theme that goes under the central foci of both constructivism and realism, because the former sees anarchy as subjective and conditional, whereas the latter sees anarchy as a fixed condition. Furthermore, we have employed the theme ‘imperative terms’ to help us code for command words that make the judicial documents more binding. We also established ‘collaboration’ as a sub-theme, which will help us identify how much emphasis is put on collaboration and how it is being facilitated.

Additionally, we have to explain the concepts; hard and soft power, since they are not dealt with explicitly in our theoretical framework, but are still largely applicable concepts in our problem area. Garner et al. (2016) define soft power from the ideas of Joseph Nye as “the ability to achieve one’s end without the use of force or coercion, effectively by winning ‘hearts and minds’” (ibid, p.409). This is relevant to underlying assumptions from constructivism associated with the importance of social meanings that are ever-changing and influential. Alternatively, hard power can be understood as the material form of power, including a state’s territorial size, population, military capabilities and its access to natural resources (ibid). This applies more to realism’s understanding of power as an objective hegemonic condition.

## 5. Methodology

In this chapter, we present and discuss our methodological considerations and process. Hereunder, we will consider the philosophy of science behind our chosen theories, namely realism conforming to a realist ontology with a positivist epistemology. Comparably constructivism adheres to a social ontology along with an epistemology that includes differing practices, both positivist and post-positivist (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016 p.167). In this context, we acknowledge the inherent differences between the international relations theories we employ and the philosophies of science. This chapter will also include descriptions of our research strategy with the methods we apply, our data collection as well as our empirical findings.

### 5.1 Philosophy of Science

We have chosen to analyse our research puzzle utilising two grand theories; realism and constructivism stemming from the discipline of International Relations (IR). We acknowledge that the respective theories entail different assumptions and views on the nature of reality. However, we believe that these two theories will complement each other and thereby facilitate a comprehensive analysis of our research question. We will address the distinct assumptions within both theories in the following subsections. In addition, we underline that we solely will present the assumptions within constructivism as an IR theory and not the more general philosophy of science theory, social constructivism.

#### 5.1.1 Realism

The theory of classical realism, which originates from the main works of Hans Morgenthau, is mainly based on the six principles referred to in *Politics Among Nations* (Morgenthau, 1961 p.4). However, Morgenthau maintains that there is not one systematic way of thinking about the philosophy of political realism, but the principles are regarded as fundamental (ibid). The first principle sets forth that politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature (ibid). Therefore, one can develop a rational theory to analyse politics and distinguish between truth and opinion, where the former is supported by evidence and the latter by subjective judgment (ibid). This principle addresses ontological assumptions within realism since there is an underlying assumption of a 'reality' governed by objective laws and 'a truth' i.e. a realist ontology.

Secondly, politics ought to be an autonomous sphere in academia, wherein the main concept is interest (ibid, p.5). Thirdly, Thucydides' and Max Weber's notions of interest are utilised to emphasise the importance of interest (ibid, p.8-9). Thucydides described interest to be "the surest of bonds [...] between states or individuals" (ibid, p.8) and Weber sets forth that "interests, not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men" (ibid, p.9). Morgenthau also stresses that interest should be understood in terms of power (ibid, p.5). Fourthly, moral principles in their abstract and universal form cannot be applied to political actions without considering the political consequences of the respective principles (ibid, p.10). Fifthly, the moral aspirations of one nation can never be made universal (ibid, p.11). Morgenthau argues that if we look at all nations as political entities pursuing interests, we can judge all nations including our own and do them justice (ibid). Lastly, he argues that different facets of human nature co-exist, however, to understand the human nature of politics one should investigate it isolated from e.g. the moral or religious human nature (ibid, p.14). Before setting forth these six principles Morgenthau stresses that the theory he presents should be judged empirically and logically i.e. by examining to what extent the theory is consistent with historical and contemporary facts and within itself (ibid, p.3). The emphasis on empirical data and the separation of truth and opinion within Morgenthau's first principle align with a positivist epistemology wherein research ought to be conducted in a value-free manner.

As mentioned in the section regarding 'Neorealism', the neo version of realism rejects the idea that human nature is the reason for states' fighting for power and instead emphasises the anarchic international system. The anarchic international system is the condition which affects the fight for power (and security) between states. This would be the main difference between the two respective types of realism, and generally when examining Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, one finds that it does not break with the tradition of Morgenthau (Zodian, 2013 p.61). Both theories aspire to explain and understand "the realities of international politics from an objective, scientific standpoint" (Lawson, 2015 p.52-53). Nevertheless, at the time of neorealism's development, there was a general methodological tendency within political studies towards applying a scientific method. This resulted in a greater emphasis on testing hypotheses and doing quantitative analysis within a positivist methodology than in classical realism (ibid, p.62). Hence, the neorealists employed numerical data to a greater extent (ibid, p.65).



### 5.1.2 Constructivism

This theory started as a critical movement which questioned established theories and scientific methods within the discipline IR (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016 p.162). Subsequently, those who came to be known as constructivists criticized the static assumptions within traditional IR theory and highlighted the fact that IR emerged “in historically and culturally specific circumstances” (ibid, p.162). Constructivists argue that international relations are a social construct (ibid, p.162-163). Furthermore, constructivists reject there to be a single objective reality and instead emphasise difference across context because all international relations are processes of interaction which cannot exist independently of human meaning and action (ibid). Thus, social phenomena such as states, alliances or international organisations are a product of human interaction and embedded with social values and norms (ibid, p.163). Therefore, one ought to analyse the social dimension ie. norms, values and language within international relations (ibid). The theory has generally critiqued rationalist theories such as realism and neorealism, which have focused on analysing the individual (state or human) (ibid, p.163-164). Instead, constructivists argue for a social ontology analysing the socialization in IR as mentioned above (ibid, p.164). For instance, the concept of sovereignty is social since there first and foremost must be “a shared understanding and acceptance of the concept” before a state can be recognized to be sovereign according to constructivists (ibid). Constructivism assumes subjects to be guided by the ‘logic of appropriateness’ (ibid).

Constructivism (or conventional constructivism) is often perceived as a middle ground between rationalist theories and poststructuralist approaches (ibid, p.167). Since conventional constructivists do not reject scientific assumptions within positivism and to a large extent accept an epistemology originating from positivism (ibid). They thereby underline that “no great epistemological or methodological differences divide” rationalists and constructivists (ibid). Wendt, who is a conventional constructivist, utilises scientific methodology and a positivist framework to some extent (ibid, p.168). Dunne, Kurki & Smith (2016: 168-169) argue that constructivism cannot be handled in the same manner as realism since the latter theory presents tangible assumptions of how actors operate. Therefore, they reason that “the theoretical assumptions of realism could, arguably, be rethought from a constructivist angle” (ibid, p.169). Several IR scholars have already created a dialogue between classical realism and constructivism (ibid).

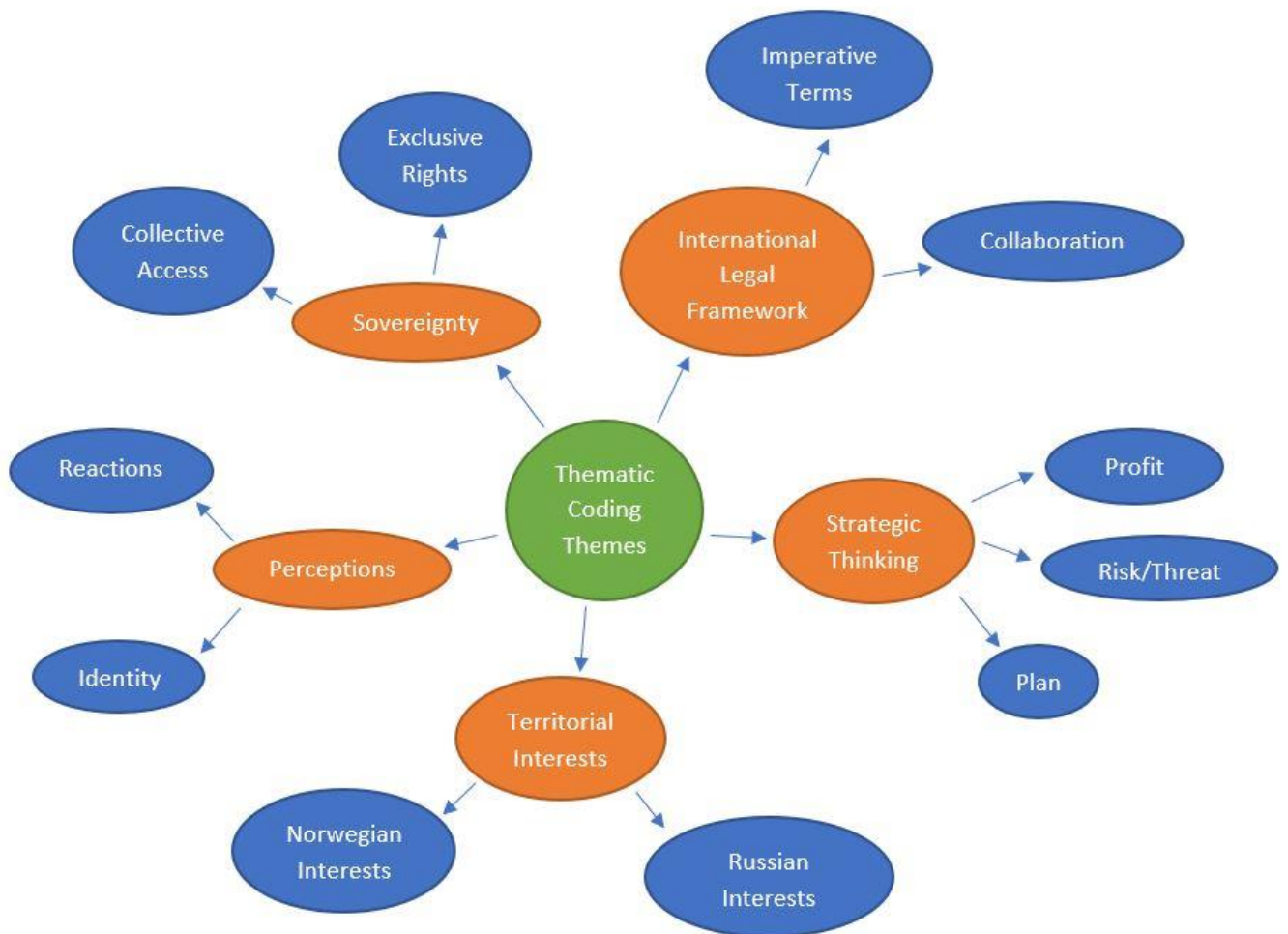
## **5.2 Methods**

### **5.2.1 Content analysis**

To analyze our data in the form of documents, we have chosen to carry out two types of content analyses: thematic coding analysis and a summarizing qualitative content analysis. Bryman (2016) highlights that advantages of conducting a content analysis are the flexibility of the method and the “unobtrusive” (ibid, p.303) nature of this method, as it does not intrude into the research context. Additionally, Flick (2016) express that content analyses can be a simple way to provide clarity and unambiguity to a larger set of data (ibid, p.487). This appears beneficial to us seeing as we have chosen to process several documents of respectable length. On this note, Flick (2016) discloses how content analyses can facilitate the comparison of dissimilar types of text, to which the same analyses can be consistently applied (ibid).

In this regard, we have brainstormed the most important concepts derived from the theories that are relevant to our project which are systematically applied to all our documents throughout both the thematic coding analysis and the summarizing content analysis. This is done to maintain the focus on foundational assumptions, theoretical attributes and to ensure the implementation of the theories methodologically to our empirical findings. These main theoretical concepts have worked as the themes with which we have sorted our data, through the content analyses. These themes and sub-themes are visually displayed in diagram 1.0 below.

**Diagram 1.0** - Concepts from theories turned into themes and sub-themes for thematic content analysis.



Withal, the thematic coding we have conducted has been done to extract passages, phrases or words from the content of the documents that fit into the aforementioned themes. This grouping of data has worked to show what themes are most commonly represented in each document, giving us insight into the basic underlying message of each document at a level of abstraction and generalization that is easier to extract meaning from. We have utilized thematic coding on the judicial documents, as listed in table 1.0 in the following section. This has been done to these specific documents, rather than the others listed in table 2.0 because our interest was in uncovering the main norms and values that the documents convey. We find can best be done through utilizing a coding scheme that simplifies the intentions within each document. Furthermore, Flick (2014) notes that thematic coding can be useful since it allows assumptions and perspectives to be analyzed in a structured and pragmatic way (ibid, p.423).

We used *Nvivo 12*, which is a computer software that can work as a tool that enables a better systematic overview of qualitative data. It offers many beneficial features, the main one being the “node” function of categorizing sentences, phrases and small portions of text into groups and sub-groups. This is particularly applicable to our distinction of themes and sub-themes, as it is useful when wanting to associate certain sections of text with each other to identify distinct ideas within a document. This massively aids our thematic coding process, as it makes the process more structured, systematic and transparent. Another key function within *Nvivo 12* is the word frequency function which allows for the visualization of the most frequently used words in a certain document. This aids us in our understanding of the discourse and the language being used to create certain norms and values within the documents’ message. Correspondingly, Bryman (2016) notes that computer-assisted qualitative data analyses can be a prime mode of manoeuvring otherwise manually-intensive data, making the researcher pay larger attention to detail, enhancing transparency and offering further clarity (ibid, p.602-603).

The summarizing content analysis, on the other hand, is meant to systematically paraphrase and reduce a text to a sufficient level of abstraction (Flick, 2016 p.484-85). This type of qualitative content analysis has been named a concrete and explicative technique that is situated as a branch under the umbrella term of content analysis (ibid). It encompasses several steps that Flick (2016 p.484-85) has presented, which we have employed in our own manner. These include deleting segments of the document that have little or no relevance to our research topic, paraphrasing key segments by transforming them grammatically to be shorter, reducing and generalizing sentences, summarizing the already paraphrased text into more concise phrases and employing theoretical assumptions to the key texts (ibid). These steps were repeated for higher evaluation depth. This has been done on the documents listed in table 2.0 in the following section rather than the previously mentioned documents in table 1.0 because these documents represent the more opinionated nature of Russia and Norway. We have, therefore, tried to capture and highlight the contesting perspectives from these documents by summarizing them to an essential form. After reaching a sufficiently summarized piece of content, the themes as presented in diagram 1.0 above, have been applied and considered in relation to the reduced content.

The intent behind this strategy was to apply the same themes to all types of documents, but in different ways that cater to the nature of the document types. Herewith, judicial documents are seen as more objective and universal and therefore coding appears as more conducive to finding

numerical results that indicate the frequency and relative amount that the norms and values are mentioned. This adheres to from the projection of their supposedly unquestionable judicial power. Alternatively, the government documents and articles being more opinionated and subjective, call for the content to be summarized rather than categorized to understand the main perspective qualitatively.

### **5.2.2 Documents as data**

Considering that our empirical data consists of documents, we must understand their importance and character in research. Documents are produced to transform relations socially and materially, and they have the power to structure short and long term decisions (Flick, 2018: 377). This is evident in Svalbard wherein the Svalbard Treaty is a document that, to a great extent, structures most decisions in Svalbard. Both the UNCLOS and the mining code of Spitsbergen have also had a prominent influence on *de facto* behaviour with the archipelago. In our project, we will use legal documents and official state documents, which are open to access and not produced for a private purpose but rather for states to employ in political and administrative contexts. Moreover, we found it to be necessary to include two news articles to answer our research questions. This is because these articles cover relevant disputes between Russia and Norway regarding Svalbard and thereby represent a third-party explanation, which eases assessment contextually.

Notably, documents are “means of communication” (ibid, p.378), therefore we will have the following in mind; who produced the document, for which purpose and who it was produced for when analysing the documents in our analysis. Four criteria might be used to evaluate the documents used for research, these are the following; authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning as presented by Flick (ibid). In this study, we must consider that news articles are to some extent shaped by the respective journalist who wrote the article. However, we have decided to utilize the articles because they originate from an institute and a newspaper which both are specialized in the Arctic. Thus, the credibility and authenticity of the document are enhanced. Below are tables laying out chosen documents, along with information about the characteristics of each document.

**Table 1.0 – Legal documents used for thematic coding**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of Publication</i>	<i>Type of Document</i>	<i>Source</i>
The Mining Code for Spitsbergen	07-08-1925	Juridical document	an appendix to the Svalbard Treaty
Svalbard Treaty	09-02-1920	Juridical document	The Versailles peace treaties
UNCLOS	10-12-1982	Juridical document	The UN General Assembly

**Table 2.0 – Governmental documents and news articles used for a summarized content analysis**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of Publication</i>	<i>Type of Document</i>	<i>Source</i>
Transcript of “Meeting with leaders of coal mining regions”	22-08-2019	Meeting transcript	Moscow Kremlin
“Svalbard” (white paper)	11-05-2016	Report for the Storting	The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security
“The Norwegian Svalbard Policy – Respected or Contested?”	22-11-2017	Online News Article	The Arctic Institute
“Kommersant: Russia lists Norway’s Svalbard policy as a potential risk of war”	04-10-2017	Online News Article	The Barents Observer (Thomas Nielsen)

## 5.3 Results

The following tables show the results in numerical data that we have obtained from our thematic content analysis.

### 5.3.1 - Thematic Coding Results

*Table 3.0 - Numerical Coding Results from the Svalbard Treaty Document*

International legal framework	International legal framework	10
	Collaboration	19
	Imperative terms	31
Sovereignty	Collective access	17
	Exclusive rights	11
Strategic Thinking		0
Territorial interests	Norwegian	0
	Russian	1
Perceptions	Identity	4
	Reactions	8

The main findings from coding this document show that collective access is referred to more than exclusive rights, proclaims Norway's sovereignty but highlights the equal rights of all contracting parties to a larger extent.

**Table 4.0 - Numerical Coding results from the United Nation Convention Law of the Seas Document**

Sovereignty	Sovereignty	2
	Collective Access	5
	Exclusive Rights	21
Strategic Thinking	Strategic Thinking	0
	Plan	0
	Profit	0
	Risk/Threat	0
Territorial Interests	Territorial Interests	10
	Norwegian Interests	0
	Russian Interests	0
International Legal Framework	International Legal Framework	16
	Collaboration	25
	Imperative Terms	37

The prime results from coding this document display an emphasis on exclusive sovereign rights, though under the sentiment of creating a strong binding legal framework that enforces collaboration and stability.



*Table 5.0 - Numerical Coding results from the Mining Code of Spitsbergen Document*

Sovereignty	Sovereignty	0
	Exclusive Rights	8
	Collective Access	13
Strategic Thinking	Strategic Thinking	0
	Plan	0
	Profit	0
	Risk/ Threat	0
Territorial Interests	Territorial Interests	4
	Norwegian Interests	0
	Russian Interests	0
International Legal Framework	International Legal Framework	0
	Collaboration	2
	Imperative Terms	60

Perceptions	Identity	5
	Reactions	0

Noteworthy results from coding this document are that collective access is elaborated upon more than exclusive rights, because property rights grant equal mining privileges as long it complies with Norwegian law. Imperative terms are also used to a large extent in this document, which gives insight to intention for contracting parties to adhere to the obligatory terms within it.

### 5.3.2 Summarizing Qualitative Content Analysis Results

**Table 6.0 – Main summarized ideas of the Kremlin transcript of “Meeting with leaders of coal mining regions” document and the related themes from diagram 1.0**

Key points within the document	Related themes
Coal mining is a key industry that is part of Russian identity/tradition	Perceptions → identity Sovereignty → Collective Access
Russia has future plans regarding coal mining and the infrastructure development that follows	Strategic thinking → plan/profit
Statistics prove growth in the industry so Russian investment in coal have increased	Strategic thinking → plan/profit
Russian coal is significant in the international market	Strategic thinking → profit

**Table 7.0 - Main summarized ideas of the “Svalbard” to the Storting (white paper) document and the related themes from diagram 1.0**

<b>Key points within the document</b>	<b>Related themes</b>
The guiding white papers have contributed to Svalbard’s development for a number of years.	Strategic thinking → plan
Norway aim to enforce a consistent and firm upholding of sovereignty	Sovereignty → exclusive rights
Norway wants to ensure compliance with the Svalbard Treaty	International legal framework
Norway aim to maintain peace, predictability and stability in the area to ensure security for the population	Strategic thinking → risk/threat
Norway wants to sustain Norwegian communities in the archipelago - mainly Longyearbyen	Territorial interests → Norwegian interests

**Table 8.0 – Main summarized ideas of article “The Norwegian Svalbard Policy: Respected or Contested?” and the related themes from diagram 1.0**

<b>Key points within the document</b>	<b>Related themes</b>
Russia sees Norwegian policies in Svalbard as provoking	International Legal Framework Perceptions → Reactions
Russia and the international community respect Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard, yet criticizes the execution of their sovereignty	Sovereignty → collective access Territorial Interests

The Svalbard Treaty talks in favor of equal access, which is a cause for differing interpretations	Sovereignty → collective access
Disagreements between Russia and Norway regarding Svalbard lie mostly within the maritime policies, primarily the different foci laid out in the UNCLOS and the Svalbard treaty	International Legal Framework Perceptions → reactions
Russian officials repeatedly approach Norway to no avail	International Legal Framework → Collaboration  Territorial Interests → Russian Interests
Norway's lack of dialogue with Russia is perceived as a source of conflict by Russia	Perceptions → Reactions  Strategic Thinking → Risk/ Threat
Predictability and stability are the main goals of Norway's Svalbard policy	Territorial Interests → Norwegian Interests

**Table 9.0 - Main summarized ideas of the “Kommersant: Russia lists Norway’s Svalbard policy as potential risk of war” document and the related themes from diagram 1.0**

<b>Key Points within the Document</b>	<b>Related Themes</b>
Svalbard is named an area of threat in a 2016 Russian national security report	Strategic thinking → Risk/Threat
Norway argues that the area is of cooperation, rather than conflict	International legal Framework → Collaboration

Russian official Rogozin (a sanctioned individual by the EU and Norway) visits Svalbard, which triggers negative reactions	Perceptions → Reactions
NATO visits Svalbard to learn more about climate change, but Russia sees this as a provocation	Perceptions → Reactions Strategic thinking → Risk/Threat
Norway has an annual navy vessel present on Svalbard, despite military presence being prohibited in the Svalbard Treaty	Perceptions → Reactions Strategic thinking → Risk/Threat
Russian “Chechen” special forces land in transit in Svalbard, which sparks judicial debate	Perceptions → Reactions Strategic thinking → Risk/Threat
Oil drilling activities in Svalbard’s territorial waters by Norway results in discussion where Norway claim that Svalbard is located on its continental shelf, whilst Russia claim that Svalbard has a continental sheet of its own	Territorial Interests → Russian Interests & Norwegian Interests

## 6. Analysis

The following analysis chapter will contain an examination of our empirical findings within the context of the leading literature combined with our theoretical considerations. The coding and content analysis conducted has led us to data results that we will be utilized to answer two of our supporting questions. The first sub-question herewith being inherently more descriptive where we address Russian coal mining and thereafter interpret the intentions behind. The second sub-question is naturally more analytical and interpretative focusing particularly on the UNCLOS and Svalbard Treaty, and how they are perceived and practised. Hereafter, the third sub-question will present a theoretical analysis with a more argumentative style that will lead us to the discussion.

### **6.1 How is Russia utilizing coal mining in Svalbard to project influence?**

First and foremost, ‘The Svalbard Treaty’ (1920), which Russia signed in 1924, is the reason behind Russia’s ability to mine in Svalbard. Specifically, the treaty’s article n. 3 states that “nationals of all the High Contracting Parties shall have equal liberty of access and entry for any reason or object [...] they may carry on there without impediment all maritime, industrial, mining and commercial operations on a footing of absolute equality” (Svalbard Treaty, 1920). This section, additionally, employs the findings from the Kremlin transcript of the ‘Meeting with leaders of coal mining regions’ (Moscow Kremlin, 2019), ‘The Mining Code for Spitsbergen’ (1925) and the ‘White paper on Svalbard’ (2015-2016) to investigate if and how Russia is utilizing coal mining in Svalbard to project influence.

As has been made clear in the historical background chapter, mining is an industry that historically has been used to gain footing and secure territory in Svalbard, by establishing settlements and active mining communities (Stange, 2019). However, the coding of the ‘Mining Code for Spitsbergen’ document shows that significant emphasis is given to the facilitation of the collective access to resources, and equal rights of all high contracting parties thereof, instead of reinforcing Norway’s absolute sovereignty (Mining Code, 1925). As seen in table 5.0 the sub-theme ‘collective access’ was one of the most coded themes in the document as well as the sub-theme ‘imperative terms’. This shows that mining is an activity in which several states, aside from Norway, can exercise their territorial claim in Svalbard by law

(ibid). Nonetheless, the Norwegian government has the ultimate right to legally overrule others, but with respect to the non-discrimination article of the Svalbard treaty, enabling equal access to all high contracting parties (ibid; Svalbard Treaty, 1920).

Russia has made use of this by constructing mining settlements in Grumant, Pyramiden and Barentsburg of which only the latter is still operating. This has enabled them to maintain long-term settlements on Svalbard, with Russian communities that make up a considerable portion of the overall population of Svalbard. In 2017, Arktikugol as the only Russian mining actor in Svalbard, registered a revenue of 419,159,000 Russian Ruble (equivalent to 6.5 million US Dollars), yet their net income is -6,865,000 (equivalent to -107 thousand US Dollars, with the exchange rate: 1 USD = 63.5462 RUB, the 11th of December 2019), this goes to show that Russian mining in Svalbard is unprofitable (Arktikugol, 2019; XE.com). Out of Barentsburg itself, about 100,000 tons of coal is shipped every year (Arktikugol, n.d). Following the company's annual production plan of 120,000 tons a year, the Barentsburg mine is expected to stay operational until 2024 (ibid). This indicates that coal mining is not predicted to be a long-term interest in Svalbard. This is in accordance with our secondary sources, which also voice the unprofitability of the mining industry in Svalbard, which has been discussed as a politicized excuse to maintain a foothold in Svalbard instead of a means of economic gain (Statistics Norway, 2016).

Yet, unprofitability does not seem to apply to the mining industry as a whole as presented in our Geopolitical Context chapter wherein Russia has evolved to become the third-biggest coal producer in the world with increasing governmental investments (Moscow Kremlin, 2019). In this regard, the summarizing content analysis shows that the Kremlin transcript portrays coal mining as a significant element in the Russian economy (Moscow Kremlin, 2019). Table 6.0 presents how Russia's investments and prospects towards coal relates to our theme 'strategic thinking' and the sub-themes 'profit' and 'plan.' Furthermore, the significance of coal mining for Russia relates to our sub-theme of 'identity' as shown in table 6.0 as well as the sub-theme 'collective access' under 'sovereignty'.

The following quote by President of Russia Vladimir Putin presents the significance of coal: "The hard, often risky mining work enjoys well-deserved respect in our country, and the strong mining character is passed down from generation to generation" (Moscow Kremlin, 2019). By saying this, president Putin ties together national sentiment and economic growth, thereby promoting nationalistic thought. Following the notion of interdependence stemming from

economic nationalism, both economic power and national power are needed for a state to thrive and prosper (Nakano, 2004 p.222). Furthermore, these powers are codependent as a nation takes pride in its economic strength, thereby enhancing national sentiment by galvanizing the people. Simultaneously, in order to stimulate and validate state power, one must have a unionized people who believe in the state. In this regard, Russian leaders in the Kremlin transcript utilize a discourse that draws from economic nationalism to underline how mining will lead to growing prosperity, thereby validating the industrial expansion of coal.

Building upon the theoretical assumptions of economic nationalism, constructivist theory suggests that an image is created for the Russian people. This image steers the self-perception of the Russian people to consider Russia as a coal mining nation. Through the constructivist principle that self-perception is based on interaction and socialization, a self-image of the Russian nation is produced in the Kremlin transcript through the various leaders' interaction. Moreover, constructivism emphasizes that social acts bring about expectations and reinforce beliefs about actors. In regards to this, the social act of Vladimir Putin stating the importance of coal mining for the people reproduces the self-perception of the Russian people as coal mining workers.

Despite the fact that global gains from the coal industry for Russia are evident, Svalbard becomes apparent as a Russian mining settlement that has a different underlying intention. Hereunder, Stange (2019) confirms that Svalbard's coal mining industry was important due to its securing territorial claims rather than for-profit (ibid). Following this idea, realism emphasizes as one of the fundamental criteria for the manifestation of power, which amongst other things are: geography, military amplitude and preparedness, which aligns with the concept of "boots on the ground" (Safire, 2008) as referred to by U.S. general Volney F. Warner in 1980 (ibid). Warner's phrase is used as an analogy for physical military presence as a manifestation of power (Safire, 2008). However, due to article n.9 in the Svalbard Treaty eliminating the option for military occupation of any form on the islands, this analogy can be interpreted differently in the context of Russia in Svalbard (Svalbard Treaty, 1920). Hereunder, the notion of 'boots on the ground' can exemplify the Russian Arctic policy wherein Russia has increased infrastructure investments generally in the Arctic, which is closely connected to coal mining as mentioned in the 'Geopolitical Context' chapter.



By analysing the empirical findings, coal mining in Svalbard is used as a means for Russia to attain and expand its significance within the archipelago. Coal mining serves the initiating factor of Russian presence; it is the reason for the construction of mining communities. By stating indisputable facts, namely civil presence, infrastructure and industry, a realist perspective would suggest that Russia supplies a diplomatic take on ‘boots on the ground’. However, a constructivist perspective would see these Russian actions as legitimizing Russia within Svalbard. These can be seen as factors establishing Russia’s identity as an Arctic nation. This becomes related to some of the key ideas in constructivism that refers to the character and conduct of states.

Hereunder, the Russian exploration for alternative industries in Svalbard is arguably a step meant to undermine Norwegian sovereignty (Norwegian “rule” in the words of Per Arne Totland) over the island, Totland claims (Staalesen, 2019c). One of these alternative industries that radiate Russia’s character and conduct is tourism. Since the late 1990s tourism has grown as an economic activity, yielding around 80,000 tourists in 2001, but developing to attract around 130,000 tourists in 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2016 p.16). In this context, the Barents Observer highlights that “Barentsburg is reshaping its business-focus to become a modern Russian hub for explorer travellers” (Nilsen, 2018.). Furthermore, as an illustration of the increased investment on tourism, one can look to Pyramiden, the formerly abandoned coal-mining town, that is now being renovated and repurposed into a hotel (Statistics Norway, 2016 p.17). Furthermore, the Norwegian white paper recognizes Russian activities in Svalbard when addressing that “for years, Russian helicopter operators have been granted dispensation to conduct helicopter flights in association with the mining operation in Barentsburg” (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015 p.100).

The Pomor Museum in Barentsburg is an example of a tourist site being invested in which spreads knowledge of the Russian history of the Pomor settlers in Svalbard (Gerlach & Kinossian 2016, p.10). Whilst the museum and growing tourism industry can be seen as mere replacements for the limited coal mining industry, constructivism indicates that they serve a wider purpose. Hereunder, establishing a Russian-Arctic identity is of importance as it enforces Russia’s political connection to the Arctic, for future strategic purposes.

Moreover, in 2015 a specific branch of the mining company Arktikugol was founded to develop tourism in the area (Nilsen, 2018). Hereunder, Nilsen (2018) presents a quote by Ivan Velichenko, a local employee of GoArctica (Arktikugol’s tourism leg) stating ”today, we have

guides, drivers, bartenders and others [...] they want Barentsburg to image itself as a modern Russian society in the Arctic, rather than a preserved Soviet-style industrial town” (ibid). The narrative-building embodied in the shift toward tourism illustrates that tourism in Svalbard comes from a political standpoint that plays a role in constructing Russia’s image as a rightful actor in Svalbard. Hence, seeing as tourism in the area is operated by a Russian state-owned enterprise, it works as a practical representation of the Russian Federal Government in Svalbard. This ties into the notion of the expansion of the nation-state within economic nationalism.

Additionally, the constructivist notion which claims that people act toward other actors and ideas based upon their preconceived perceptions of actors and ideas, Russia’s conduct in Svalbard can be explained by a Russian conception of Svalbard as belonging to them. The attachment to Svalbard is, among other things, based upon Russian Pomor settlers who arguably discovered the archipelago first, thereby influencing the development of a Russian tourism sector in Svalbard. This can be seen in the examples of the Pomor Museum, as well as the growing retail industry in the archipelago, stemming from Russian historical presence. Moreover, constructivist theory sets forth that actors acquire their identities through acceptance, participation and reproduction in collective meanings. Actively participating in the collective meaning that Svalbard belongs to the Russian people, Russia develops an identity of being a legitimate actor wanting to advance communities within the archipelago.

As the findings illustrate, Russia has historically utilised coal mining as a tool to have a firm presence in Svalbard and thereby exude influence. Although coal is found to be a profitable industry for Russia in general, this is not the case in Svalbard. The projection of influence in Svalbard has subsequently shifted towards research and tourism. Therefore, Svalbard appears to represent a potent area within the Arctic, placing profit in a secondary role to national occupancy. This is not to exclude that this occupancy could result in future economic prospects and strategic importance for Russia. Furthermore, Svalbard can be seen as a place where Russian conduct is being constantly observed by the international community, making identity construction and projection all the more significant.

## **6.2 How has the Svalbard Treaty and the UNCLOS constructed norms and rules that have affected the contemporary jurisdiction of Svalbard?**

Thematic coding has shown that the Svalbard Treaty is shaped by imperative terms as highlighted in table 3.0, reinforcing its binding nature as the main jurisdiction for governing the archipelago. Furthermore, the exclusive right for Norway, in terms of sovereignty, and as the main legal regulator is underlined in the treaty. However, the treaty puts more exceptions to Norway's sovereignty, than it does enforce Norway's sovereignty as absolute. This can be regarded as a norm that has been produced by the treaty. Table 3.0 shows that 'collaboration' and 'collective access' are the most coded themes after imperative terms, signifying that cooperation is encouraged and that collective access for all contracting parties as a paramount part of presence in Svalbard. Consequently, both Russian and Norwegian entities at Svalbard are governed by the same rules within the international legal framework; the Svalbard Treaty. The international guidelines provided in the treaty focus mainly on: collaboration, security and industry (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015 p.20).

Furthermore, the white paper of Svalbard, which mainly deals with the Norwegian policy objectives in the archipelago, underlines the enforcement of compliance with the Svalbard Treaty along with peace and stability in the region (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015 p.5). Other than peace and the collective compliance to the Svalbard Treaty, table 7.0 displays that Norway wishes to actively uphold their sole sovereignty of the archipelago, which relates to the sub-theme 'exclusive rights' under 'sovereignty'. This adheres to the realist assumption that states are power maximizers. Table 7.0 also sets forth that Norway wishes to maintain and support Norwegian communities on Svalbard, namely Longyearbyen, which relates to the sub-theme 'Norwegian interests' under 'territorial Interests'. This shows that Norway prioritizes stability and a law-abiding framework for Svalbard and all of its inhabitants and actors. Forbye, Norway wants to make sure that Norwegian communities in Svalbard subsist and thrive, thereby further enforcing Svalbard as Norwegian. From a constructivist standpoint, this can be seen as the Norwegian equivalent to Russian identity construction in Svalbard through tourism.

When coding the UNCLOS it becomes apparent that the document, similar to the Svalbard Treaty, utilises many imperative terms and thereby underlines the binding nature of the

document. However, the UNCLOS emphasises exclusive rights to a greater extent than the treaty and thereby downplays the aspect of collective access. This is seen in table 4.0, where ‘exclusive rights’ and ‘collaboration’ are the most coded themes. The UNCLOS focuses on exclusive rights for sovereign powers of territory and enables Norway to promote its influence. This can be considered as a norm produced by the UNCLOS, which has given Norway the ability to argue for the establishment of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the maritime areas in Svalbard, even though an EEZ has not been set up. According to the OECD, an EEZ is an outlined maritime area extending 200 nautical miles of the coast, whereby the coastal state establishing it has the exclusive rights to explore and exploit the resources it may offer (OECD 2003).

Furthermore, Norway’s ability to establish an EEZ has been largely contested by Russia, as well as other high contracting parties, who see it as a violation of the Svalbard Treaty’s equal access clause (article n.9) wherein the zone should be available to all high contracting parties (Svalbard Treaty, 1920). Russia holds that Svalbard has its own continental shelf, further confirming that Norway has no right to construct an EEZ (Groenning 2017). Norway on the other hand, puts weight on the Svalbard Treaty’s declaration of sovereignty to Norway as absolute. However, the Svalbard Treaty does not expand upon the territorial waters that prevail past 12 nautical miles from the coast, and so Norway has turned to the UNCLOS to govern Svalbard’s surrounding maritime areas (Groenning 2017). Herewith, the UNCLOS allows sovereign authorities to govern their territorial waters as they please, including the right to form an EEZ. By considering constructivism, this demonstrates how Norway has constructed a favourable understanding of the UNCLOS, thereby enabling them to act with a certain purpose in mind.

This disagreement brought Norway to set up a fisheries protected zone (FPZ) instead, which was enacted in 1977 and is still classified as temporary. An FPZ, according to Wolf (2013) pertains to the ability of a coastal state to control the amount of fish being caught and exported in a maritime area as a quota to be upheld (ibid, p.4). By establishing quotas, Norway follows a protectionist policy which ties to the economic nationalist theory. Simultaneously, Norway prioritizes the relative gains of a fishing quota, which permits their share of profit.

Even though Russia fundamentally disagrees with the FPZ, they mostly comply with the fish quotas (Groenning 2017). The FPZ is regarded as a compromise from the Norwegian

standpoint, and a diplomatic act to avoid conflict with Russia and other contracting parties (ibid). From a strategic realist standpoint, assuming that diplomacy is utilized as a tool to achieve goals, Russia and Norway's diplomatic behaviours are employed to achieve their respective goals. These findings indicate that Norway's behavior assumes the status quo. This can be understood as a way for Norway to avoid damaging tensions or conflict since according to the economic nationalist theory, relative gain is always better than no gain (O'Brien and Williams 2016 p.12).

Moreover, the Arctic Institute 'The Norwegian Svalbard Policy – Respected or Contested?' and the Barents Observer 'Kommersant: Russia lists Norway's Svalbard policy as potential risk of war', exhibits that Russia and Norway have different interpretations of the legal documents. According to the Groenning (2017) in the Arctic Institute article, Russia believes that Norwegian policies regarding Svalbard are provoking, and may spark conflict and war (ibid). Specifically, table 8.0 briefs that these statements relate to the sub-theme 'reactions' under the theme 'perceptions.' Additionally, table 8.0 exhibits that the main disagreement of Russia and Norway is between their varying interpretations and different focus in of the UNCLOS and the Svalbard Treaty, adhering to the theme 'perceptions'. Following constructivism, Russia's statement regarding Norwegian Svalbard policies can be considered as securitization. Hereunder, the statement can be seen as a speech act, that frames Norwegian policies as a security threat. Though it is important to note that Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard is not challenged, some of its actions draw direct legal reactions from the international community (ibid).

Norway's persistence and lack of willingness to address the issue are surprising (ibid). Table 8.0 relates this to the themes 'reactions' as well as the sub-theme 'risk/threat' under 'strategic thinking'. It is, therefore, not unexpected that the Russian Defense Ministry reads this behaviour as a "source of conflict" (ibid), signalling Russian disagreement. As mentioned previously, some of Norway's main policy goals are stability, predictability and peace keeping (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015 p.5). These policy goals seem to clash with Russia's perception of Norway's actions, namely, the lack of communication over the issues presented. The constructivist notion of a predatory, competitive system that is said to be constructed by social acts, can be utilized to explain Russia's perception of Norway and the two states' relations. The social acts, which constructs a predatory, competitive system, can consist of interpretations, responses and signals. Since Russia perceives Norway as aggressive,

this behaviour will affect the way in which these states interact and operate, making it a self-help, competitive system where states care for themselves in an egoistic manner.

Within contemporary collaboration in Svalbard, there has not been any direct military confrontation (Pezard et al. 2017). However, tension and conflict have occurred from both sides (Russia and Norway). Subsequently, whilst summarizing the Barents Observer ‘Kommersant: Russia lists Norway’s Svalbard policy as potential risk of war’ article, occasional tension between Russia and Norway can be detected. The article highlights one of the concerns, which has been voiced by Moscow, in the following quotation; “details from a Defense Ministry report show that Moscow is not happy with Norway’s attempt to establish absolute national jurisdiction over Svalbard and its shelf” (Nilsen, 2017). This quotation sets forth that Russia’s main issue with Norway is caused by Russia feeling threatened by the interpretations of legal documents fearing that Norway objective is a unilateral understanding (ibid). Table 9.0 presents how ‘perceptions’ and ‘reactions’ are listed as the most related themes, emphasizing that Norway and Russia react frequently to each other’s actions, which continually forms and reproduces their perceptions of each other. Additionally, table 9.0 displays how the theme ‘territorial interests’ prevail as a result of the fundamental disagreement.

These phenomena relate largely to the security dilemma which is a central concept in realist theory. The security dilemma addresses the circumstance of when a state’s actions reflect a perceived threat from the others (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016, p.353). Russia and Norway’s interaction can, therefore, be understood by utilising the security dilemma. Closson (2018) describes how military presence has increased by all parties in the region. Hence, Åtland and Pedersen (2008) state that “Russia’s main difficulty in its relations with Norway was ‘the legacy passed on from the Cold War: fear, mistrust, and suspicion” (ibid, p.227). Hereunder, Norway’s military vessel which visits once a year (as seen in table 9.0) appears hypocritical, seeing as according to Norway’s understanding of the Svalbard Treaty, foreign military presence in Svalbard is considered as “infringement of sovereignty” (Nilsen 2017). This shows how literal the interpretation Norway has of article n.9 of the Svalbard treaty and the severity associated of foreign military action in Svalbard. However, “Russia interprets the provision as a de jure demilitarisation clause. Seen from a Norwegian perspective, however, article n.9 does not entail an absolute prohibition against Norwegian military activity on Svalbard“ (Åtland and Pedersen, 2008 p.229). This shows how the two states’ divergent interpretations of a rule reproduce two different norms and thereby two different underlying meanings. Hereby, Russia

deems Norway's supposed 'military' action as a threat and in turn securitizes it by using coloured language, to evoke response (Nilsen, 2017). This same principle was seen when Svalbard's Environmental Protection act resulted in the establishment of satellite stations and radars for scientific research. Russia took this as a violation of the Svalbard Treaty's demilitarization act (Åtland and Pedersen, 2008 p.229). In 2003 the mainstream Russian newspaper Pravda published an article titled "Spitsbergen: NATO's outpost under Russia's nose" (ibid, p.228) as a response, highlighting the extent to which Russia found this threatening.

Ultimately, from summarizing the aforementioned documents, the empirical data combined with the theoretical perspectives illustrate that both Russia and Norway have acted in ways that can be perceived as threatening. This is due to the inherently different interpretations of the UNCLOS and the Svalbard Treaty and the varying prioritization of the two legal documents by the two states. Therefore, the constructed norms and rules differ based on which document a state chooses to abide by. This differentiation created tensions in the contemporary jurisdiction of maritime areas around Svalbard and in regards to the role of military in the archipelago. However, the Svalbard Treaty and the corresponding mining code provide the rules and conduct for coal mining.

### **6.3 How can Realism and Constructivism offer insight to Russian and Norwegian behaviour in Svalbard?**

At this point in the analysis, it is relevant to apply broader theoretical assumptions to the leading arguments of this project. After the analysis of the first and second sub-question, the following becomes apparent. Firstly, coal mining is used by Russia to gain footing in Svalbard, allowing Russia to develop its infrastructure, which further sustains their presence. Moreover, coal mining and the evolving Russian tourism sector in Svalbard can be seen as identity-building manifestations, enforcing Russian legitimacy in Svalbard. Secondly, the differing nature of the judicial documents (Svalbard Treaty and UNCLOS) is used by the two nations in order to further their respective interests in the area. Additionally, the second part of the analysis emphasizes that the diverging interpretations lead to varying reactions, consequently different images of Russia and Norway are formed within the international system. In culmination with the knowledge gained from previous chapters, a theoretical analysis will enable an explanation the interests of Russia and Norway in Svalbard.

Primarily, when considering the issue of Svalbard from an offensive realist perspective, Norway is inclined to maximize power (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2016 p.52) and thereby prefers to uphold and further promote their absolute sovereignty, exclusive access to resources and control over Russian activity in Svalbard. This project suggests that, in line with an offensive realist stance, Norway might eventually be opposed to the international presence in Svalbard if boundaries are continuously challenged. However, given the circumstances that precede in Svalbard as a result of the Svalbard Treaty, realism can also allow an understand how Norway can utilize their relative sovereignty over Svalbard for optimization. Hereunder, Norway can arguably be established as a defensive realist nation that wishes to maintain the status quo and maximize security (ibid, p. 53). Further, following Waltz's defensive realism, survival is the main aim for Norway as well as optimising their position in the international hierarchy. In this regard, Norway as a relatively small and militarily weak nation has the opportunity to control the large and Arctic-strong nation of Russia to a certain extent. Hereunder, Norway's relative control over Russia in Svalbard, can help sustain the peace between Norway and Russia, which is important to uphold a stable Russian-Norwegian border and relations in general.

A realist perspective would indicate that Russia occupies an offensive realist position in relation to Svalbard (ibid, p.52). In the sense, they attempt to maximize their share of legal benefits to challenge the status quo Norwegian dominance. By exerting physical presence in the archipelago, Russia extends its legal rights to their best capacity. Drawing from realism, Russia is arguably challenging the balance of power that exists in Svalbard, based upon the treaty's equal access article (Svalbard Treaty, 1920). Russia assures its presence is of maximal impact, yielding the utmost benefits. It can be categorized as a revisionist state since it wishes to change the established system.

Considering Mersheimer's (1980) notion of balanced and imbalanced power, which claims that in cases of a roughly equal balance of power between any two actors, the situation is inherently open to the defeat or victory of any of the two equal actors (ibid, p.60). This is to be understood as follows; the Svalbard treaty situates Norway and Russia in a "roughly equal" power position from a legal aspect, making it more likely that one will challenge the other (ibid). Herewith, Norway as the smaller state can control and challenge Russia in a manner that would not otherwise be possible. Russia is put in a situation where, despite its military capabilities and size, cannot assert dominance over Norway in a combatant way. As set forth in the 'Literature Review', Wegge (2010) echoes this arguing that Norway benefits from the compliance with



international law instead of the traditional reliance on power capabilities (ibid, p.173). However, the two states both occasionally “stretch” the acceptable boundaries, yet, their diplomacy remains.

Strategic realism signifies that diplomacy is used as a rational instrument by both Russia and Norway. According to Schelling (1996) diplomacy is a necessary part of strategic thinking that encompasses the planned and calculated interaction between states for mutual benefit (Jakobson & Sørensen, 2007, p.71-74). Following this notion, Russia and Norway, though they fundamentally disagree, maintain diplomatic relations because it allows for the collective access to Svalbard. Hereunder, Russia accepts Norwegian sovereignty in order to be allowed to develop its settlement in Barentsburg.

However, this raises a question concerning sovereignty as a concept when regarding Norway’s power in Svalbard. Following constructivism, the whole idea of Norwegian sovereignty is ultimately legitimized through the legal documents; the Svalbard treaty, the Mining Code and the UNCLOS by all parties. Furthermore, legal opinions are social constructs (Pedersen, 2017 p.99), and can be discerned as social facts which are constructed by human agreement (ibid, p.99), since they are continuously interpreted and constructed by Norway and Russia.

Sovereignty can be considered a construct that is either reproduced or dismissed. By analyzing Nakano’s (2004) discussion of state power under economic nationalism, policies and institutions are only successful if people adhere to them. This draws a direct parallel to constructivism and Wendt’s (1992) notion of anarchy being “what states make of it” (ibid, p.391). Therefore, sovereignty is a power construct that Russia adheres to but ultimately challenges. Russia adheres to Norway’s sovereignty over Svalbard by mostly complying to the FPZ fishing quota since 1977, even though it disagrees with Norway’s ability to establish the FPZ due to differing legal interpretations (Groenning, 2017). By doing this, Russia is subconsciously reproducing the fishing quota as a norm, thereby validating Norway’s power.

Russia ultimately challenges Norway’s sovereignty, by constructing its own identity and attaching it to Svalbard. In other words, Norwegian sovereignty is being defied by Russia and their continued presence as a local community. This is reflected by the tourism industry with museums, hotels and airstrips being constructed. The self-promoting nature of Russia’s conduct through these industries, results in an association amongst third party actors, strongly tying Russia to Svalbard. This consequently links Russia to the archipelago on the level of

jurisdiction, through property rights. The constructivist notion of social acts, which has been set forth previously, shows that the actions taken by Russia create expectations from both sides about the future (Wendt, 1992, p.405). These expectations could be associations that tie Russia to Svalbard, which could arguably play a part in the development of a Russian Arctic. Moreover, Russia's attachment to Svalbard might contain a Norwegian fear of Russia expanding their presence or violating any rules/norms in the archipelago.

Furthermore, soft power prevails in Russia's Svalbard agenda, as it embodies characteristics of soft power, which can be seen in the pressure applied on Norway. In this context, identity-building can be seen as a method of exuding soft power. Russia can harness its growing Arctic identity in Svalbard to stimulate public opinion and thereby gain support nationally and internationally to obtain political power. Soft power could, additionally, be used to explain the agreeable character of Russia's actions in relation to Norway's FPZ. This suggests that maintaining diplomacy is due to Russia's wish to preserve relative gains within its position in Svalbard.

On a broader scale, the actions taken by Russia exemplify the importance it attaches to the Arctic as they invest and promote the development therein. This course of action can be seen in Arctic military capabilities and expansion of infrastructure. These actions can be seen from a realist perspective as a power demonstration, wherein states take advantage of the uncertain nature of the international system. Hereunder, states look to each other with apprehension, to showcase their military might.

## 7. Discussion

The ambiguity and complexity of the Svalbard dispute are reflected in the documents analysed in this project. Svalbard has become the melting pot of East and West, employing different conducts and discourses in the pursuit of jurisdictional influence. Empirical findings suggest that this pursuit is based on a wider set of interests, common to all the high contracting parties, and mainly, the littoral states in the Arctic. This is equally reflected in the applications to the UN regarding the acknowledgment in revised continental shelves which will, if accepted, attribute to the absolute rights of the submitting countries.

The changing reality of the Arctic region is caused by the melting glacial ice alongside decisions made by Arctic nations such as furthering military build-up and creating infrastructure in preparation of an ice-free Arctic Ocean. This changing climate has brought the region into further cooperation with environmental acts fueling collaboration for conservation, however, it is equally a ground for dispute. The growing interest in the region, due to the changing environmental circumstances caused by the climate crisis can be seen as a catalyst for states to turn against each other for the increasingly lucrative access to resources. Because of these pertinent conditions, states act in self-interested, power maximizing manners.

Consequently, Russia expands its foothold in Svalbard both economically and socially, challenging the absolute sovereignty of Norway by employing soft power. The formerly known notion of ‘boots on the ground’ is a part of an overall Russian policy in the Arctic, meant to fortify their presence through the construction of infrastructure and the presence in the region. This is done through governmental subsidies to unprofitable industries (Conley, 2013. pp.1-2). To further exude their influence, in the light of the “dying” coal mining industry in Svalbard, Russia seeks to set a discourse of international perception tying itself to the Arctic. As a response, Norway attempts to avoid any revision of the Svalbard Treaty by instead focusing on the UNCLOS with the intent to preserve the status quo, and thereby enforcing Norwegian rule over the archipelago.

It is claimed that the interests of nations are manifested by their actions. This being said, the conduct of states, we believe, should not be interpreted in the light of one particular international relations theory. For this reason, this project has chosen to combine two grand theories and several concepts which will enable us to dissect the conduct of the two aforementioned states. By combining realism and constructivism as two contrasting yet

complementary schools of thought, we have learned the complexity of Norway's and Russia's conduct, as comprising many elements, which may at first seem contradicting. In addition to this, we offer a multidimensional perspective enabling us to gain more meaningful insight into why states act in the way they do. In the context of this project, puzzling conducts such as Russian coal mining despite continual loss of profit, Norwegian "avoidance" of dialogue given their diplomatic character, and Norwegian agreement to the Svalbard Treaty or Russia's novel interest in tourism should be understood on the spectrum of behaviour between realist and constructivist.

Therefore, international relations cannot be seen in black and white terms, but on a spectrum between two contrasting theories. To further this claim, the view of the world as a zero-sum game, originating by the realist doctrine, is not as relevant within Svalbard due to the Svalbard Treaty, which enables all high contracting countries to have some kind of power within Svalbard. Following this, it can be argued that Russia and Norway both have power within the archipelago. Therefore, a positive sum-game of power prevails due to the non-discrimination article within the Svalbard Treaty (Svalbard Treaty, 1920).

If looking at the world, and the power relations within it as a zero-sum game, one ignores the interdependency and heightened connectivity of the international system, making the lack of collaboration nearly impossible, and even harmful to one's self interest. Yet, even in a predatory, self-help international system, states interact and co-depend, making their actions, and displayed character, all the more important.

The idea of the Arctic and Svalbard is shaped by the changing circumstances of the international system as well as the aforementioned environmental crisis. The point of departure of this project, is the newly found interest in the Arctic. As we have shown in the geopolitical background chapter, followed by the analysis, states have a newfound fascination in the Arctic, following economic and strategic motives. As formerly discussed, Svalbard is a geographical landmark in which these interests are manifested by the struggle for influence. The archipelago which once was used for seal and whale hunting, as well as coal mining is no longer paramount in its economic importance, even though Russia and Norway still exploit natural resources and uphold industries in Svalbard. In absence of economic gain, the following question remains; why is Svalbard still of such interest? This project suggests that the answer lies in the transformation of the idea of the Arctic, hereunder Svalbard is a geographically strategic centre in the region. New opportunities arise for unexplored territory with natural resources and

trading routes in the Arctic Ocean, making it a highly profitable territory to claim and the strategic thinking interlinked to that interest.

Svalbard has become a landmark for international judicial disputes, which is evident on a larger scale in the Arctic. Seeing as it is a territory of equal access, it naturally allows the different parties to act within it, manifesting their presence and territorial interests. This goes hand in hand with the un-approved claims for continental shelves, making Svalbard the lone arena of physical presence for the high contracting parties to exude their influence to the best of their ability. This idea of Svalbard as the scene of international quarrel for territory follows the notion that the Arctic is one of the last unclaimed territories in the world. Hereunder, Russia and Norway act on the basis of strategic motives, representing each state's territorial interests. The conduct in Svalbard shows that meaning and identity is reproduced and used as tools in the dispute over the division of the Arctic.

## 8. Conclusion

This project aimed to examine how Russia utilizes coal mining to project influence in Svalbard. Realism and constructivism has been used to analyze Russia's conduct in Svalbard. Drawing from the theories, a set of themes and subthemes have been extracted and implemented throughout the thematic coding and summarizing qualitative content analysis.

The analysis has shown how different interpretations of the legal documents: the Svalbard Treaty and the UNCLOS lead to challenged cooperation between Russia and Norway. Moreover, it has shown that Sovereignty in Svalbard is a power construct, that Russia to a certain extent adheres to, but essentially challenges. Russia challenges Norwegian sovereignty by constructing its own identity which it attaches to Svalbard. This results in the preservation and further development of its territorial presence in and claim to the archipelago. Moreover, though Russia and Norway fundamentally disagree on the jurisdiction and legal framework that lays the foundation of Svalbard, Russia utilizes diplomacy as a rational instrument. This concludes that diplomacy is used by Russia as image-building leverage, and as a way to be recognized as a valid player to thereby enhance their position in the international arena.

Moreover, by utilizing coal mining for influence, Russia places profit in a secondary role to national territorial occupancy. The projection of influence in Svalbard has, however, shifted towards tourism, which is an industry that can be seen as a means of identity-building. Hereunder, Svalbard can be seen as a place where Russian conduct is being constantly observed by the international community, making identity construction and projection all the more significant. Furthermore, this project concludes that Svalbard represents a potent area within the Arctic whereby future international debate will persist as it is of prime strategic importance in contemporary geopolitics.

Further research of this problem area might embody the following; the use of primary empirical data in the form of interviewing relevant stakeholders. Obtaining primary data in the field could help expand the constructivist argumentation of identity building within Russian coal mining and tourism in Svalbard. Moreover, accessibility would ameliorate our research. Particularly, in the form of primary documents such as financial statements and statistics of production from Arktikugol, would be beneficial. Additional documents could be included as data, leading to a

different political angle. These documents could include political meeting transcripts such as from the Arctic Council. The theoretical framework could have been supplemented by liberalism that could help explain international cooperation, complemented by the method of discourse analysis which would facilitate the analysis of political debate around Svalbard. Further developments could additionally be made if the time frame of the project was extended.

It can therefore be deduced that the two different theories propose two different conclusions. From a constructivist perspective, it concludes that sovereignty is a social construct that actors must actively adhere to. Additionally, constructivism helped highlight the importance of different intersubjective interpretations and the importance these differences have on the jurisdiction of Svalbard. However, a realist perspective helps to conclude that states will try to maximise their influence in Svalbard to fasten a territorial claim that will benefit their national interest, as the Arctic holds a unique strategic opportunity.

The Arctic presents itself as one of the last unruled places on earth. In terms of relative and absolute gains, utilising realist terminology, the question remains - who will become the predominant actor in Svalbard? Hereunder, states act under their own self-benefiting, constructed meaning. By looking at Svalbard, sovereignty in itself is arguably being challenged. Moreover, climate change creates a situation that enables states to contest over territorial claims, and demands an updated idea of the creation of borders, leads the Arctic to be of utmost importance.

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