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How the media frames Arctic mining as a rush

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ABSTRACT

Mainstream media frequently portray the Arctic as the next great frontier for critical minerals. This article distinguishes analytically between broader political discourses, journalistic frames, and specific narrative metaphors. Employing a deductive frame analysis, the study systematically reviews mainstream news media and selected grey literature using a set of pre-defined keywords to identify salient linguistic markers, followed by an in-depth interpretive analysis of how these terms are mobilized to produce meaning. By pre-selecting the generic frames of "economic consequences" and "conflict" our findings demonstrate how the media operationalises these frames to make them highly salient in the coverage. These frames are reinforced through urgency metaphors, most notably the language of a "rush" or "race", which serve to concretize wider geopolitical discourses of mineral "criticality" and national security. At the same time, the framing of the Arctic as a strategic resource frontier marginalizes alternative perspectives, particularly those foregrounding decolonisation, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

1. Introduction

The Arctic, the planet's northernmost region encompassing the area within the Arctic Circle across the eight circumpolar States is undergoing a profound physical transformation. Accelerated climate change and the rapid retreat of sea ice are reconfiguring the region's material and geopolitical accessibility, transforming what was long perceived as remote into an increasingly reachable space. This shift has intensified geopolitical competition, as global powers seek to secure access to the Arctic's largely untapped critical mineral resources (Dodds and Nutall, 2016; Parkash, 2025).

However, the label of criticality attached to minerals does not represent an objective geological fact but is rather a socially constructed concept driven by national security anxieties and economic vulnerabilities (Riofrancos, 2023). While these minerals are considered indispensable for the global energy transition, the unquestioned "green imperative" to extract them at all costs is highly contested (Riofrancos, 2023). Furthermore, recent literature highlights a shift toward 'securitisation', where minerals are framed as existential threats to justify emergency actions that bypass standard trade rules (Laurent et al., 2025). The Arctic push for rapid extraction risks reproducing historical patterns of colonialism under the modern guise of "green colonialism" in vulnerable territories, portraying the Arctic as an empty resource frontier rather than the homeland of Indigenous Peoples.

This article examines how media discourse regarding the Arctic and critical minerals constructs specific narratives by using frames that centre on certain actors and interests and marginalise others. News media play a constitutive role in producing how critical minerals mining is understood, narrated, and contested in the public sphere. Through journalistic framing, media exercise political power by systematically selecting, emphasizing, and normalizing particular dimensions of the Arctic and its extractive potential, thereby fixing a dominant and seemingly commonsense interpretation of events. Framing is therefore not a neutral representational practice but a deeply political one (Marchart, 2011). By privileging narratives aligned with specific geopolitical and extractive interests, media coverage actively structures the boundaries of legitimate knowledge and debate, while excluding alternative realities and marginalizing perspectives that challenge the prevailing extractivist logic.

To ensure conceptual precision when analyzing the media surrounding Arctic extraction, this study adopts a three-tiered analytical framework that distinguishes between discourses, frames, and

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narratives (Brüggemann, 2014). At the macro-level, we identify overarching discourses, such as criticality and security, or marginalized discourses such as decolonisation, which represent the broad ideological boundaries and power relations defining the region. At the meso-level, we analyze frames (specifically, conflict and economic consequences) as the specific journalistic packaging strategies used to translate those macro-discourses into daily news. Finally, at the micro-level, we track specific narratives and metaphors (such as a 'race' or 'rush') which serve as the rhetorical devices used to linguistically build and legitimize these selected frames.

The following sections set out the essential background, explaining the Arctic as a region and Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic. We first establish the research context by reviewing the literature on Arctic, the designation of critical minerals, and the ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous rights. The Theoretical Framework section then justifies our application of framing theory and a Critical Cultural Political Economy (CCPE) perspective. Following this, we outline our deductive methodology for discourse analysis, explaining how we selected our sources and search terms. Our results reveal that media regularly employ "conflict" and "economic consequences" frames, a practice that actively marginalizes or excludes Indigenous-centred and decolonial narratives. The Discussion section addresses the consequences of these dominant narratives, specifically the "hegemonic fixing" of the Arctic, The Conclusion summarizes our core findings and proposes avenues for future work.

2. General background and literature review

2.1. What and where is the Arctic?

The Arctic refers broadly to the circumpolar north of the globe, centring on the North Pole. It is the home of approximately four million people and spans eight States (Russia, Canada, USA, the Kingdom of Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland). While mostly sparsely populated with vast wilderness, about two-thirds of inhabitants live in urban, coastal areas. Somewhere between 10 and 20 % of the population are Indigenous, with the precise number varying according to definitions of the Arctic and definitions of Indigeneity (Durfee and Johnstone, 2019; Jungsberg et.al., 2019). Different institutions and stakeholders apply various definitions of its southern limits, the most concrete of which being the area north of the 66°N parallel, which is also the basis for State membership of the Arctic Council. However the working groups of the Arctic Council use different definitions tailored to their areas of study, e.g., Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna largely follows the tree-line (itself unstable owing to climate change), digressing to include habitat of keystone species; while Sustainable Development Working Group extends considerably further south to accommodate human and economic regions (Johnstone, 2015). Each Arctic State has its own internal designations of "Arctic" zones but at times there is flexible – and often political – use of the Arctic (Durfee and Johnstone, 2019). Media representations of the Arctic rarely bother to define the region. In our analysis of the data, we found only two distinct articles that included a definition of the Arctic (Al Jazeera Staff, 2024; European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2025).

2.2. Indigenous peoples in the Arctic

Indigenous Peoples' representatives have resisted strict definitions, for example, in legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007). However, the 1986 working definition of UN Special Rapporteur Martinez-Cobo is broadly accepted in practice (Martínez Cobo, 1987). Indigenous Peoples are nations who have been colonised by others who came later and constructed (modern) States on their traditional territories (Johnstone, 2023). They are distinguishable from Colonial Peoples (i.e., salt-water colonies in territories at a distance from the modern State) by ancestral ties to the land they inhabit (Wildcat and Voth, 2023) and the contiguity of their territory to the modern State, a consequence of which is that Indigenous Peoples do not enjoy a right to independence (Johnstone, 2023; UN General Assembly, 1960). Indigenous Peoples are legal persons in international law and enjoy rights based on collective identity and sovereignty that differ from those of so-called "local communities," the latter lacking any legal status as such (Olsvig and Cullen, 2024).

Six Indigenous organisations sit at the Arctic Council table alongside the Member States: Sami Council, Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council and Gwich'in Council International. Domestically, each Arctic State (but for Iceland which has no Indigenous People in the legal sense) has bespoke constitutional and legal provisions for Indigenous autonomy and resource governance, including Sami Parliaments in the three pertinent Nordic States, self-government in Greenland, land claims agreements in Canada, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (Durfee and Johnstone, 2019).

2.3. Critical minerals in the Arctic: a not so new frontier

The history of industrial mining in the Arctic is closely tied to colonial settler missions, with efforts as early as the 16th century. It became widespread across all Arctic States but for Iceland in the 19th century (Johnstone and Joblin, 2020). However, the 21st century is witness to a refashioning of the Arctic as a crucial resource frontier, in light of shifts in expectations of supply and demand and perceptions of increased accessibility to Arctic ore owing to climate change. Accelerated warming and the retreat of sea ice are considered key factors enabling access to previously untapped resources, thereby altering the region's position in the global economy (Parkash, 2025). This perceived accessibility is compounded by the urgency of climate change mitigation goals. Rather than being objectively essential, these specific Arctic deposits are discursively framed as indispensable for a fast-tracked, extraction-heavy model of the green energy transition, in preference to alternative sites for mining or strategies of lowering consumption (Bidgood and Hall, 2024).

Storr identifies a contemporary "third wave" of critical minerals in political, security and economic strategies beginning in the early 2010s, with a sharp increase from 2020 that has perhaps yet to peak (Storr, 2025). The US, Australia, Japan, India, China and international organisations including the EU, the World Bank, the International Energy Agency and the OECD all compiled reports, strategies, and or legal frameworks to promote access to critical minerals (ibid). This is often tied, rhetorically at least, to the green energy transition or, more realistically, rapid *expansion* in energy demand. However, a closer look at the instruments concerned indicates that defence technologies, automation, and rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence are also behind the anxieties regarding potential supply shortages (United States Congress, 2020; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). Furthermore, the US administration (2025–2029) while rejecting the science of climate change and systematically disinvesting in renewable energy projects, continues to push a critical minerals narrative, even expanding the list (President of the United States, 2025a, 2025b, and 2025c). This highlights the tenuous nature of the connection between critical minerals and low-carbon energy supply.

2.4. Colonialism, indigenous peoples and mining

Colonialism is commonly understood as a form of territorial and social domination that is historically associated with settler colonialism and the establishment of permanent settler populations (Chuffart and Johnstone, 2025). Indigenous Peoples within settler-colonial states in the Arctic continue to face the long-term effects of colonization, including ongoing struggles over land, self-determination, and political

authority. In response, Indigenous Peoples have for decades fought to assert their rights through international human rights treaties and litigation as well as through United Nations fora, leading to UNDRIP (2007). This instrument, although not a strictly binding treaty, is used to interpret binding human rights instruments to move beyond an individualistic rights model to recognising collective rights to land, resources, and autonomy in international affairs (Johnstone and Wilson, 2023). While reconciliation processes have been extensively discussed in settler-colonial contexts such as Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, similar approaches have also gained political attention in the Nordic countries, particularly through emerging truth and reconciliation processes concerning state–Sámi relations in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Nonbo Andersen, 2024). Both the rights-based approaches that center Indigenous Peoples *as* Peoples in international law with a collective, legal personality, and the truth and reconciliation processes that attempt to unravel and address multi-generational consequences of colonialism are central to decolonisation efforts. It is the history and ongoing impacts of colonialism that differentiate Indigenous Peoples from settler populations or so-called "local communities" (Olsvig and Cullen, 2024).

Indigenous scholars and politicians have argued that the turn to the Arctic for critical minerals to save the world from runaway climate change risks reproducing forms of "climate colonialism" in vulnerable territories, a trend conceptualized as "green extractivism" (Dunlap et al., 2024; Keskitalo, 2018). Furthermore, scholarly discourse surrounding Arctic resources encompasses the complexities of geopolitical competition among major powers, particularly the U.S. and China. As the Arctic Sea routes open, different players compete for control over its vast natural resources, including hydrocarbons and critical minerals (Solyanova, 2025).

Extractive expansion and critical mineral mining in the Arctic can pose challenges to the Sámi people across Sápmi (spanning Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula), Inuit in Nunavut (Canada), Greenland and Alaska (Dale and Gross, 2023; Kuokkanen, 2019), as well as multiple Indigenous communities in the Russian Arctic (Sidorova, 2019). For these groups, mineral development may bring direct risks to culturally significant landscapes and traditional livelihoods, such as reindeer herding for the Sámi (Kuokkanen, 2019) and subsistence hunting practices tied to sea-ice ecosystems for the Inuit (Pelaudeix et al., 2017). However, there is no single Indigenous perspective on mining: many Indigenous communities seek more, rather than less, investment in mining as a means to boost living standards.

2.4.1. *The rights of indigenous peoples in respect of mining*

The Preamble, UNDRIP "…recogniz[es] the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such") and that the States at the General Assembly are: "Convinced that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, culture, and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs" (UNDRIP, 2007). In the substantive articles, the Declaration states that: "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources" (UNDRIP, 2007, article 32).

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a principle of international law requiring that Indigenous peoples have the right to give or withhold consent to projects affecting their lands, territories, and resources. *Free* means an independent decision; *prior* refers to consent being sought appropriately in advance of authorization or beginning of activities; *informed* requires access to all relevant information in an understandable form; and *consent* involves an honest possibility to approve or reject a project according to their own deliberative processes (Maharjan, Carling, and Sherpa, 2012, 59). FPIC is a core element of UNDRIP and reflects the collective nature of Indigenous peoples' rights.

Responsibility for managing Arctic socio-ecological conflicts is dispersed across national, regional, and international institutions, with no unified governance system or common standard setting exists. Instead, regulatory approaches, consent mechanisms, and enforcement practices vary significantly across Arctic states and self-governing regions, reflecting distinct political systems, legal traditions, and Indigenous relations. This fragmentation results in uneven protection of Indigenous rights and environmental standards, with outcomes largely shaped by country-specific priorities rather than coherent Arctic-wide norms.

All the main political parties in Greenland support mining *in principle,* on the condition that it is conducted under Greenlandic leadership and control, meeting high social, economic and environmental standards (through the institutions of the Self-Government). However, debates on uranium and mineral extraction have revealed longstanding structural limitations related to transparency, public participation, and access to information, which have constrained meaningful Indigenous involvement and weakened the basis for consent in licensing processes (Bernauer et al., 2023; Pelaudeix et al., 2017). The final licensing decisions are in the hands of the government, which is technically a public government (as opposed to an Indigenous government) but in practice composed of elected Inuit representatives (Johnstone, 2020). Across Sámi reindeer herding territories in Sweden and Norway, mining developments frequently conflict with traditional land use practices, with tensions arising from legal frameworks that leave final decision-making authority with the state, thereby creating a persistent gap between formal consultation and the realization of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (Kyllönen et al., 2024; Latola et al., 2016; Sörlin, 2022).

2.5. *Critical minerals as a rhetorical device*

The framing of critical minerals often operates as "a rhetorical device used to argue that the security of the US and its allies depends on the preservation of US hegemony rather than on the defense of international institutions and trade norms" (Storr, 2025). Ultimately, this "critical minerals discourse has served as an effective means of leveraging geopolitical instability in favor of extractive interests" (Storr, 2025). An effective way to do this is to create certain narratives and frames in the news. A frame functions as an overarching narrative or organizing idea that helps make sense of what is happening around us. Rather than treating all details as equally important, a frame selects and highlights certain elements of an event or issue and connects them in a particular way (Heide and Villeneuve, 2021; Østergaard, 2026). This means that framing is not only about what happens, but about how it is presented and understood. By emphasizing some aspects while downplaying or excluding others, a frame shapes how reality is interpreted, what is perceived as significant, and which conclusions are ultimately drawn (Heide and Villeneuve, 2021).

This understanding is particularly important when analyzing national security discourse, as it concerns how an issue, such as critical minerals, is constructed as a security problem. This, in turn, shapes which considerations are perceived as legitimate and which are marginalized, including Indigenous Peoples' rights. On its adoption at the UN General Assembly in 2007, only four States, all settler colonies, voted against the UNDRIP - Australia, Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the United States. Even when they later endorsed the declaration, they did so with an express rejection of its legally binding nature (Durfee and Johnstone, 2019).

2.6. *Questioning the "criticality" of critical minerals*

At any given time, governments decide which minerals are added to the critical mineral list. In many cases, these end on the list because they hold promise for the national resources industry (Csiro/Australia's National Science Agency, 2026). This process highlights that "criticality" is not a static geological property but a dynamic, socially constructed concept that evolves to serve specific geopolitical and economic

goals (Laurent et al., 2025).

War and military build-up are also interrelated to why some metals end up on the critical list. For example, war was the reason the US made its first list of critical minerals during WWI. Five key minerals were identified: Tin, Nickel, platinum, nitrates, and potassium, all of which are important inputs into weaponry. This historical origin established the foundational discourse of security, where "strategic minerals" were defined by their necessity for national defence (Riofrancos, 2023). However, recent literature highlights a shift toward 'securitisation', where minerals are framed as existential threats to justify emergency actions that bypass standard trade rules (Laurent et al., 2025).

Different nations and international organisations prioritize different critical minerals in response to perceptions of supply and demand within their jurisdictions. For example, Australia focuses on lithium, cobalt, and tungsten, demonstrating that mineral stratification is fundamentally time-dependent and an expression of sovereignty. While the EU views resource sovereignty as "market de-risking," others exercise "resource nationalism" to control value chains (Laurent et al., 2025). This time-dependent nature is evident in historical boom-and-bust cycles. For example, following the post-WWII "golden period" of high prices, the depressed mineral markets of the 1980s and 1990s meant metals were no longer "regarded as strategically important to economic development" and were instead "treated as simple commodities" (Dicken, 2015, p.403). The era of treating metals as simple commodities abruptly ended at the dawn of the new millennium, as a sudden reversal of declining prices created what were in effect "gold rush" conditions (Dicken, 2015, p. 404). This sharp acceleration in demand reflected the rapid growth of the global economy, most notably the economic ascendency of the Asian Tigers and China (Dicken, 2015). By taking on an increasingly significant role as an export producer of raw minerals and metal-intensive manufactured goods, China drove a renewed surge in demand that once again elevated these commodities to critical geopolitical status (Andrews-Speed, 2024; Pousette and Reischl, 2025).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the first two discourses of critical mineral importance served military and imperial ambitions, while the focus on criticality now serves four goals. Firstly, as a rhetorical device for asserting that the security of the US and its allies lies in the defence of US hegemony, and not in the defence of international institutions and trade norms. Secondly, critical minerals discourse has served as an effective means of leveraging geopolitical instability in favour of extractive interests. Thirdly, critical minerals discourse has worked to re-mystify the economics of market speculation, and the predictability of state intervention in markets.

Critical minerals discourse has been used to leverage the existential urgency of the climate crisis in favour of elite and extractive interests, and against local communities and ecosystems (Storr, 2025). This aligns with the concept of "virtue velocity," where the urgency of the climate crisis acts as a Trojan Horse. The rhetoric of a "race against time" conceals the expansion of industrial mining, allowing states and corporations to bypass environmental protections in the name of saving the planet (Hitch and Barakos, 2026).

Ultimately our analysis demonstrates that the "criticality" of critical minerals is not a fixed scientific fact or geological classification, but a constructed political label. Governments label a mineral "critical" to justify national security interventions, economic protectionism, and the preservation of global power asymmetries in the green energy transition as well as for other purposes (Pousette and Reischl, 2025). The materiality of extractivism also brings to light the cultural political constructions (Artiga-Purcell, 2026), which in turn shows the relevance of the Critical Cultural political economy perspective (CCPE).

3. Theoretical framework

We focus on media not because media is a neutral channel through which information about Arctic minerals circulates, but a central arena where meanings, priorities, and urgencies around criticality are actively produced. Media discourse shapes how mineral scarcity, security risks, and environmental trade-offs are defined and communicated, thereby influencing policy agendas, market expectations, and investment decisions. By focusing on media discourse, this analysis reveals how Arctic mining is represented through specific frames, how certain extractive futures are naturalized as inevitable, and how alternative voices are systematically marginalized within public debate. The media both reflects and creates dominant political narratives, which in turn strongly influence decisions of what, where and how to mine. Rather than suggesting that media narratives unilaterally determine where extraction occurs, our analysis argues that they strongly influence these outcomes. This aligns with the Critical Cultural Political Economy (CCPE) perspective, which argues that semiotic processes, e.g. narratives, and structural material factors, e.g., who controls the resources, creates the rules, and provides the financial investment share an equal ontological status (Chiasson-LeBel et al., 2026). Consequently, discursive narratives and material realities do not exist in isolation but are interdependent and actively co-constituted.

Framing theory explains media discourse as an active process of social construction embedded within institutional structures, professional cultures, and societal contexts, rather than a simple reflection of reality (Scheufele, 1999). Media operates through frame-building processes where journalistic routines, organizational pressures, and external influences shape how information is selected, emphasised, and presented to audiences. The choice of frame identifying problems, finding causes, making moral decisions, and suggesting policy solutions. It uses stories and symbols that fit common cultural ideas.

In the context of Arctic critical minerals, framing theory provides a valuable analytical lens for examining how media discourse constructs and legitimises extractive activities by selectively highlighting certain aspects of mineral development, *e.g.,* economic opportunities, national security concerns, or technological advancement, while potentially marginalising alternative perspectives on environmental impacts, Indigenous rights, or sustainability. By analysing these frames, we can uncover how media institutions, through their routine practices and cultural resonances, shape public understanding and political support for resource extraction in the Arctic, effectively privileging certain interests and agendas while excluding others from dominant narratives. Media exercise political power through their capacity as signifying institutions to hegemonically establish and structure meaning (Marchart, 2011). Media does not operate in a vacuum, the frames are shaped by political-economic relations, media funding structures, and colonial assumptions rooted in education and institutional knowledge production. Colonial assumptions refer to the ways in which knowledge production, curricula, and academic institutions have historically been shaped by colonial perspectives, privileging Western viewpoints while marginalizing Indigenous knowledge systems. These legacies continue to influence how issues are understood, taught, and represented, including in media discourse (Østergaard, 2026).

In methodological terms, discourse and framing are treated as analytically distinct but interconnected. Discourse constitutes the macro level ideological environment within which meaning is produced, namely the socially constructed understanding that certain minerals are "critical" for economic security, technological survival, or the green transition. This overarching discourse establishes the boundaries of what is considered necessary, urgent, and legitimate. Media frames, by contrast, operate as specific rhetorical devices through which this broader discourse is translated into everyday news narratives (Brüggemann, 2014). Frames such as conflict and economic consequences operationalize discourse by rendering abstract geopolitical logics tangible, immediate, and newsworthy (Brüggemann, 2014; Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2012). In this way, framing functions as the practical mechanism through which macro level discursive assumptions are communicated, reinforced, and normalized in daily reporting.

Scholars have identified five dominant generic news frames frequently used by the media: conflict, economic consequences, human

interest, human interest, and morality (Semetko andValkenburg, 2000; De Vreese, 2005). The conflict frame emphasises disagreement between individuals, groups, institutions, or countries as a means of capturing audience interest, frequently reducing complex substantive reporting to a "game" or "horse-race" with clear winners and losers. The economic consequences frame presents events, problems, or issues in terms of their financial impact on individuals, groups, institutions, regions, or countries, commonly translating policy implications into specific mentions of costs, expenses, or future financial losses and gains. The human interest frame brings an emotional angle to personalise stories for audiences. The morality frame interprets events within the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions and is typically employed indirectly through quotations or inferences based on journalistic objectivity norms.

For this research, we selected the economic consequences and conflict frames following De Vreese (2005) in his analysis of the Euro's introduction. Our selection of the economic consequences and conflict frames extends beyond replicating De Vreese (2005) and rests on three core methodological justifications. First, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified conflict and economic consequences as among the most commonly used generic frames in national print and television news, making them the most likely candidates for how this issue is being covered in practice. Second, both frames are deeply rooted in journalistic conventions: the conflict frame aligns closely with the news value of reporting clashing interpretations, while the economic consequences frame is routinely used by journalists to translate policy implications into tangible domestic or individual impacts (Deuze, 2002: De Vreese, 2005). Third, and critically, research explicitly demonstrates that these two frames have a proven ability to influence the direction of audiences' thoughts when engaging with contemporary political issues (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003). Focusing on this specific pair therefore allows us to capture the most prevalent and impactful ways this issue is likely being communicated to the public.

4. Methodology

4.1. Discourse analysis and identification of frames

This study employed a deductive approach to frame identification (De Vreese, 2005). Given that "criticality" is a top-down designation imposed by state actors (e.g., EU and US critical mineral lists), a deductive approach is necessary to examine how pre-defined narratives are reproduced by the media. Our selection of frames is not arbitrary; it mirrors the logic of the topic itself. A mineral only becomes "critical" when viewed through the lens of supply urgency or strategic vulnerability. This research employs a deductive approach to frame identification (De Vreese, 2005). While an inductive approach allows frames to emerge from the text, a deductive approach is necessary to examine how predefined narratives are being reproduced by the media.

Discourse analysis serves as the methodological framework for this study because, as Laurent et al. (2025) argue, "criticality" is not an inherent geological property but a socially and politically constructed concept. The classification of a mineral as "critical" is a performative act that entangles geological data with national security anxieties and economic vulnerabilities. By deconstructing the language of sovereignty (Runganga, 2025) and security (Bridge, 2015; Machacek, 2017), this research exposes how these specific discursive choices legitimize extractive interventions in the Arctic. Defining a mineral as "critical" is a process of "resourcification" (Hultman et al., 2021), bringing critical materials into being as objects of collective concern worthy of state intervention. In the Arctic context, discourse analysis reveals how this labelling transforms a fragile ecosystem into a strategic inventory necessary for national survival.

Therefore, we utilize two generic frames. The first frame of economic consequences is operationalized via the logic of "urgency"'. It captures how the discourse equates extraction with moral significance, portraying the transition as a race against time where "virtue velocity" turns deliberation into a vice (Hitch and Barakos, 2026). Narratives like the "race to net zero" often serve as a "Trojan Horse" that introduces extractive logic into climate governance under the pretence of ecological salvation (Hitch and Barakos, 2026). To clarify the operationalisation of the economic consequences frame within this study, it is necessary to bridge traditional economic metrics with the unique geopolitical reality of Arctic extraction. While the economic consequences frame typically emphasises political-economic narratives of profit, financial impact, and regional development (De Vrees, 2005), in the context of Arctic critical minerals, this frame is driven by a systemic crisis of global supply and demand that is controlled by China. This framing translates economic competition into a temporal logic of urgency, articulated through metaphors of a race, rush, or scramble, which accelerates calls for fast tracked extraction. Approaching the economic context through the lens of urgency is analytically important because it reveals how economic imperatives sideline Indigenous rights, reframing protections such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent not as democratic safeguards but as obstacles to national economic survival and competitive advantage. Thus, in the media's Arctic discourse, the primary economic consequence emphasized is the catastrophic financial impact of being too slow.

To engage with the broader analytical lens of CCPE, this study's focus on framing bridges the material realities of extraction with the semiotic processes of meaning-making (Chiasson-LeBel et al., 2026). CCPE argues that the social world is driven by both material structures and semiotic processes, treating both as equally important. These two forces function together to organize social reality and explain the dynamics of economic expansion. Extractive conflicts illustrate this dynamic, as the physical materiality of critical minerals and economic investment directly interacts with discourses that redefine the role of the territory. By tracking the "economic consequences" frame, this analysis demonstrates how the media engages in a conflictual process of semiosis, selecting and retaining specific constructs to translate raw economic metrics and material resource distribution into an overarching narrative of geopolitical urgency. This aligns with the CCPE perspective by illustrating that the "rush" for Arctic minerals is actively co-constituted and made sense of through discursive media practices.

The second frame utilized is the conflict frame. This frame is operationalized via the logic of "security." It captures the portrayal of supply chains as issues of existential survival (Runganga et al., 2025). This framing justifies extraordinary measures, even involving the violation of sovereignty rights. These two frames capture the Arctic region's increasing characterization as a strategic frontier for critical resource extraction and global supply chains and the nature of geopolitical friction between state actors and ethical disputes regarding the impact of industrial expansion on vulnerable territories.

Following Entman (1991), these two frames are detected by the presence of specific keywords, stock phrases, and thematically reinforcing clusters of judgments (see Tables 1–3). Additionally, we identify themes relevant to Arctic and Arctic Indigenous People that are silenced. Building on the understanding that framing is a form of "world-making" (Goodman, 1978), this research adopts a methodological approach that scrutinizes not only what is made visible but, what is rendered invisible. If selecting, naming, and categorizing are the tools used to construct a reality in which actors can function, then silencing is the necessary

Table 1
"Search words for economic consequences frame".

Search for words	Total
Race	34
Rush	14
Fast-track	7
Economic	352
China	485
Chinese	231

Table 2
"Search words for conflict frame".

Search for words	Total
Security	661
Greenland	1380
Denmark	398
Kingdom of Denmark	17
Secure	144
Military	503

Table 3
"Search words for silenced topics".

Search for words	Total
Colonisation	3
Colonialism	4
Decolonisation	1
Self-determination	13
Local community/communities	18
Human rights	19
FPIC	0
Indigenous People's rights	3
Extract	109
Local	131
Indigenous	217

byproduct of that construction (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016). Therefore, we are also focus on silenced topics, where certain voices, contexts, or angles are rendered "newsworthy" while others are deemed irrelevant. While frequency tables are utilized to map frame occurrence, the methodological orientation follows Weaver (2007), foregrounding qualitative analysis of how frames construct meaning through moral assessments and causal narratives over statistical measurement of frame frequency.

Viewed through the lens of CCPE, these frames represent the specific semiotic mechanisms through which the material dynamics of capital accumulation and geopolitical power are legitimized. In this context, the "economic consequences" frame is used to translate raw material extraction into a narrative of vital necessity, while the "conflict" frame maps the structural struggle for geopolitical control. Consequently, the deductive approach employed in this study does not seek to confirm the unsurprising presence of these well-known frames. Our approach lies in measuring their exclusionary power—specifically, whether these dominant frames actively silence alternative perspectives. Drawing on discourse theory, which highlights how the discursive constitution of a public sphere enables certain meanings while radically excluding others, we examine whether the strong presence of the "economic" and "conflict" frames actively determines the overarching narrative by systematically silencing alternative material realities. Thus, our deductive test verifies whether the media's framing process inherently forces the marginalization of counter-discourses, such as Indigenous sovereignty, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and decolonisation.

4.2. Data description

The data utilized in this study was systematically gathered from two primary databases: Factiva and ABI/ProQuest with search criteria "Arctic" and "critical minerals." ABI/Proquest data includes news and trade journal publications spanning from 2007 to December 4, 2025, resulting in 34 unique publications, with 12 (35 %) publications from the year 2025. The data for the year 2025 were collected using the Factiva database, which grants access to proprietary content unavailable through open web searches. This platform was selected because of its ability to aggregate diverse content streams. Specifically, it facilitated the collection of "grey literature" such as corporate disclosures (via Public Technologies/PUBT) and translated transcripts of non-English media (via BBC Monitoring), alongside standard broadsheet coverage. Data collection from Factiva focused on the current geopolitical landscape, spanning from the beginning of 2025 to November 13, 2025. A total of 134 unique publications were retrieved from Factiva (See Appendix I).

The databases intentionally include grey literature because media frame construction often draws directly on texts produced by elite actors, such as corporate communications, policy statements, and interest group materials, which function as actor frames later taken up by journalists (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). In contemporary media ecosystems, the boundary between journalism and corporate or governmental communication is blurred, and materials distributed through databases such as Factiva and ProQuest circulate alongside news reporting and actively shape public opinion.

While the prioritization of English-language business news ensures a representative sample of dominant media publications, this approach inherently limits the analysis by excluding non-translated local media. Furthermore, data collection via Factiva was retrieved through manual batched downloads, and the dynamic nature of commercial proprietary databases means that article availability may fluctuate over time. However, to mitigate this transparency issue, a complete bibliographic list of the analyzed sample (excluding the full text due to copyright restrictions) is provided in the Supplementary Materials (see Appendix I).

Moreover, our analysis focuses predominantly on year 2025. While earlier developments are relevant, the selected period captures a recent intensification of geopolitical interest in Arctic extractives and a particular focus on Greenland. The English-language basis of the datasets also results in a bias towards US and Canadian sources where these themes are most prominently articulated. The spike in coverage of Greenland and critical minerals in 2025 corresponds with renewed U.S. strategic interest, connected explicitly in media and political discourse to mining and hard security.

4.3. Data analysis

Methodologically, this study follows De Vreese's (2005) deductive approach, which requires the operationalization of frames prior to analysis to measure their prevalence within a dataset. Instead of allowing themes to emerge inductively, we verified the existence of economic consequences and conflict frames by detecting a pre-established set of keywords and stock phrases. Specifically, the economic consequences frame was identified via linguistic markers of "urgency," while the conflict frame was identified via markers of "security"' (see Appendix I for the list).

Our study intentionally avoids calculating the strict statistical percentages of overarching frames to prevent the decontextualization of meaning. Instead, we utilize tables of specific word occurrences to systematically map the linguistic markers of the frames. Following Entman (1991), frames are manifested through the presence or absence of specific keywords and stock phrases. Following the deductive approach, the specific keywords and stock phrases used to operationalize the frames were established prior to the analysis, rather than emerging inductively from the texts. Tracking the frequency of terms related to "urgency" or "security" allows us to operationalize our deductive frames and observe the deliberate processes of selecting and naming (Van Hulst and Yanow, 2016) utilized by the media. Thus, these tables serve as a foundational map of the rhetorical strategies at play, while our primary methodological orientation, following Weaver (2007), remains focused on a qualitative, interpretive analysis of how these vocabularies construct meaning and marginalize alternative discourses.

4.3.1. Economic consequences frame

We operationalized this frame by identifying the occurrence and co-occurrence of a specific vocabulary of speed, race, and urgency, which media use to construct a narrative where the energy transition is not merely a policy shift, but a crisis-driven competition. This

methodological approach allowed for the systematic tracking of a rhetorical strategy that privileges rapid extraction over standard procedures. The analysis focused on recurring words such as "economic" "fast-tracking," "rush," and competitive terms such as "race."

4.3.2. Conflict frame

This frame highlights the strategic rivalries and defense concerns that increasingly define the contemporary Arctic, merging traditional military anxieties with the race for resource sovereignty. We operationalized this frame by conducting targeted keyword searches within the dataset for words including "security," "secure," "military," "critical minerals," "Greenland," "Denmark," and the "Kingdom of Denmark." The selection of this frame was designed to capture the specific discursive shift where the Arctic is portrayed not merely as an environmental frontier but as a contested geopolitical space where access to resources is synonymous with national safety, involving control over Greenland.

5. Results

5.1. Word cloud

To provide a macro-level overview of the dataset, a word cloud was generated using the most frequently occurring nouns and adjectives across the text corpus. This exercise was intended to map the broader media discourse and identify the dominant vocabulary present in the coverage. It was not used to develop or validate the keywords applied in the framing analysis. The word cloud serves solely as a descriptive visualization of the broader vocabulary present in the media coverage. To create a word cloud, text was extracted, tokenized, and filtered to retain only nouns and adjectives, with common stop words removed. As a result, 50 terms were identified; subsequently, each was visualized with a size proportional to its frequency, highlighting the dominant themes and actors in the corpus (see Fig. 1).

The resulting word cloud visually displays the central role of geopolitical actors in Arctic discourse alongside key themes such as minerals, security, climate, and infrastructure. The prominence of terms such as Arctic, Greenland, Canada, Russia, and China reflects the strategic importance of these regions and actors. Other frequent terms such as minerals, security, climate, and infrastructure illustrate the intertwined narratives of resource development, environmental change, and policy debates shaping the Arctic future. he word cloud is a descriptive tool, which serves as a visual summary of the dataset to confirm the heavy saturation of security themes.

5.2. Economic consequence frame: urgency to mine critical minerals in the Arctic

The framing analysis relied exclusively on a deductive approach based on pre-defined economic and conflict frames. We examined framing in media sources through word choice and recurring phrases. This linguistic emphasis on urgency constructs a specific problem definition, such as dependency on adversaries, and signals a treatment recommendation: accelerate domestic extraction before vulnerability becomes a crisis. In this way, language becomes not just descriptive but directive, shaping how audiences perceive both the stakes and solutions.

The economic consequences frame was identified through a mixed-method analysis of lexical frequency and semantic association, focusing on how specific word choices structure the narrative. As indicated in Table 1, the dominance of the terms "China" and "Chinese" (appearing a combined 716 times) establishes the geopolitical other as the antagonist in the discourse, defining the central problem as external dependency on China as a producer of critical minerals.

This provided the context for the specific directive metaphors of "Race" (34 counts), "Rush" (14 counts), and "Fast-track" (7 counts). While these urgency metaphors appear less frequently in total count, their strategic placement, featured in the titles of 13 out of 169 articles, signals their function as high-impact framing devices used to capture attention and define the stakes. This pattern demonstrates a clear functional division: reference to China is used to describe the problem, while "rush" terms are used to prescribe the solution via acceleration. By pairing a threat with high-urgency metaphors, the media constructs a frame that compels the audience to view rapid domestic extraction in the Arctic not as a choice but as an economic imperative. In this analysis, China is deliberately positioned within the economic consequences frame rather than the conflict frame because its involvement in the Arctic is predominantly portrayed as an economic threat rather than a direct military one. Furthermore, China's ambitions in the region as articulated in Chinese Arctic Policy from 2018 (Lim, 2018), such as the development of a "Polar Silk Road", are understood through securing access to natural resources and new shipping routes.



Fig. 1. Word cloud.

5.2.1. Vulnerability due to Chinese domination

The foundation of this narrative is the depiction of China as exercising dominant control over the global economy through its monopoly on critical minerals. The media and political discourse emphasizes the risk of reliance, frequently citing China's "virtual monopoly" on rare earth elements and controlling over "80 percent of global rare earth processing." (Congressional Documents and Publications, 2025, February 12). The monopoly is presented as a direct threat to Western industrial survival; articles warn that China could "hold technology producers to ransom," potentially causing "production lines to grind to a halt." (Mitchell, 2018). Chinese investment is described as "predatory" activity (Congressional Documents and Publications, 2025, February 12). Narratives regarding the Polar Silk Road and infrastructure investments in Greenland employ terminology such as debt traps, coercive political control, and framing of Chinese capital as undermining state sovereignty.

5.2.2. The "Race" and "Rush" metaphors

The portrayal of China as a predatory monopolist establishes a narrative that perceives the current situation as an unacceptable risk. As a result, media discourse transitions from identifying threats to advocating for solutions, where the emphasis is on swift action. Words such as *race* and *rush* were selected because they operate as illustrative metaphors that frame the issue as a competition. According to framing theory (Shah et al., 2002), metaphors do more than describe, and they structure how audiences understand a problem and what actions seem appropriate. When the situation is defined as a "race," the implied logic is urgency: move quickly or risk falling behind. This framing transforms resource development from a technical or economic process into a high-stakes contest, where delay equals defeat and surrenders to Chinese dominance. As noted in the literature, such metaphors create a social reality that prioritizes speed and positions actors as competitors rather than collaborators.

The media documents examined frequently use metaphors of speed and competition to frame the extraction of minerals not as a choice but as a time-sensitive necessity with economic consequences. Using Canada as an example, the "race" metaphor is used, as seen in the headline: "Canada races to secure its Arctic frontier" (Gridneff, 2025). In the case of Russia, the race is used in the context of dominance as "Russia leads race to dominate the Arctic"; with a head start of decades, Moscow already derives 10 % of its GDP and 80 % of its natural gas from a region now being recalibrated for critical mineral extraction (Dow Jones Institutional, 2025).

The narrative of a new "resource rush" is driven by the fact that the region is "already known to hold vast reserves of oil, gas and critical minerals," leading to a landscape where nations are "scrambling to counter" one another to secure the materials that "shape the race for both clean energy" and traditional power (Al Jazeera Staff, December 9). The Arctic is increasingly depicted as a "critical frontier in the race for mineral wealth, fossil fuels, and geopolitical dominance." The melting of sea ice at is viewed as a starting point opening access to deposits that are expected to "intensify competition among global powers" (Singh, 2025).

The framing of the Arctic race emphasizes a sense of urgency through the fast-tracking of infrastructure, positioning the expansion of the Port of Churchill in Canada as a vital "gateway" to "economic sovereignty" that is essential for the rapid export of critical minerals (Piché, 2025). In the context of the global race for resources, the promise of fast-tracking major infrastructure is closely tied to a sovereignty frame that prioritizes strengthening "Canada's autonomy, resilience and security" through the fast-tracked development of "national interest" projects like critical mineral mines (Taylor, 2025).

In the U.S., the drive to secure copper has led to the reinstatement of federal permits for the Ambler Access Road in Alaska (Milne, 2025). The media has portrayed this regulatory reversal as a move to progress for copper production, emphasizing quick access to the environmental concerns that had previously delayed the project. This framing legitimizes the removal of regulatory hurdles in the name of economic sovereignty. By linking these projects to the threat posed by China, the media portrays environmental regulations as impediments to national security, emphasizing that in the "race" for mineral wealth, speed is the primary metric of success.

5.3. Conflict frame: security and the role of Greenland

Within the dataset, we conducted targeted keyword searches for the terms *security, secure, military, Greenland, Denmark*, and *the Kingdom of Denmark*. "Denmark" concerns only that part of the territory and population contiguous to or immediately adjacent the European mainland. The "Kingdom of Denmark" refers to the entire State (or Realm), i.e., including the autonomous Faroe Islands and Greenland as well. A broad use of "Denmark" to include Greenland and the Faroe Islands is itself a framing that reinforces a colonial narrative. The frequency and co-occurrence of these terms were recorded and systematized, as summarized in Table 2.

The search was undertaken to include publications available prior to November 13, 2025, and therefore does not take into account the flurry of attention from the US administration and global media following the appointment of a special envoy in December 2025 and the increasing rhetoric of annexation and demands for US control of Greenland from January 2026. The selection of these specific keywords is informed by framing theory, which emphasizes that the repeated use of narratives and associations can shape public understanding and contribute to the construction of perceived realities (Crow and Lawlor, 2016, p.473). To further explore this dynamic, we conducted an additional search focusing on instances where *Greenland* appeared in the same sentence as the term *"national security."* Such co-occurrences appeared repeatedly across the dataset.

The recurrent linking of Greenland to national security narratives contributes to a discursive setting in which potential annexation or expanded U.S. involvement in Greenland is framed as a matter of strategic necessity, also referring to the Chinese threat to justify it. Through repeated associations, national security is positioned as a primary explanatory and legitimizing framework for discussions concerning Greenland. The examples presented below illustrate this pattern but are not intended to be exhaustive. Keywords referring to Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark were selected because media texts consistently use these actors as focal anchors and as a proxy through which broader Arctic geopolitical conflict is articulated, allowing region-wide conflict framing to be captured via Greenland-centred reporting.

The article "The struggle for Greenland" quotes President Trump: Since returning to the White House Trump has insisted the US needs Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, "*for national security" and "international world security". "Breaking Beijing's stranglehold on global supply chains in the critical mineral space is necessary to maintain strategic advantage in geopolitical terms and stay at the tippytop of global power*" (Stallard, 2025). President Trump focused attention on the region recently when he proposed buying Greenland from Denmark to expand America's Arctic presence, saying, "*We need it for national security*." (Kiss et al., 2025). Greenland is strategically located and rich in rare-earth elements, the raw minerals used to make everything from smartphones to jet fighters (Kiss et al., 2025).

President Trump has threatened to annex Greenland, refusing to rule out the use of military force - Greenland *"to ensure international security";* and he has harshly criticized Denmark for not investing enough in the defense of the gigantic island that is part of his kingdom (CE Noticias Financieras, 2025). The region's warming climate has boosted the interest of foreign firms hoping to extract mineral deposits underneath Greenland's shrinking ice sheet. President Trump threatened to take control of Greenland from Denmark for U.S. national security and access to these critical minerals (Dow Jones Institutional News. 2025, April 25). The media echoes this by writing that *"Incorporating" Greenland into the US would likely insulate Washington from the disruption of critical*

mineral supply chains and keep Russia and China at bay" and signals that President Trump is prepared to act regardless of the cost suggests that, moving beyond his characteristic rhetorics, suggesting his foreign policy will be characterized by an immediate and aggressive lack of restraint (ForeignAffairs.co.nz., 2025, January 10).)

Denmark's public broadcaster DR reported that, according to a joint press release by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) and the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS), Greenland's general election took place *"without prepared, systematic or coordinated influence campaigns by foreign intelligence services"*. However, they noted that US and international attention, as well as intense debates about international security in connection with Greenland, contributed to the sharing of false or manipulative information on social media during the election campaign. (BBC Monitoring Europe, 2025).

When Mr. Trump assumed office in January 2025 and started talking of his desire to incorporate Canada into the Union, seize the Panama Canal, and plant the Stars and Stripes on Greenland, he was greeted with derision. Mr Trump said "*getting"* the frozen land is a national security priority. However, Denmark is a fellow member of NATO and has always been happy to furnish the US with bases. "*The suspicion must be that Mr Trump, ever the businessman, is interested in what lies beneath Greenland's vast icecap and wants the US to be there when some of it melts"* (The Times, 2025, March 31).

In a phone call with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Trump conveyed a *"serious"* and *"firm"* desire to acquire Greenland, citing national security and resource interests. Forbes has referred to Greenland as a *"strategic Arctic asset"*—and these assets are resources that could significantly reduce US dependence on China, which currently controls over 80 per cent of global rare earth element production (Lekhi, 2025, March 31).

The strategic foundation for the administration's approach was laid by the U.S. In a March 4, 2025, speech to the US Congress, President Donald Trump declared, "*We need Greenland for national security and even international security. And we're working with everybody involved to try and get it*" (DW English, 2025, March 12). This was later reiterated by Vice President Vance's speech at the US Pituffik Space Base in Greenland on March 28, 2025. "*We believe in the self-determination of the people of Greenland*", JD Vance reiterated, saying their argument was *"not with the people of Greenland who I think are incredible*", but really *"with the leadership of Denmark."* He warned that "*If Greenland doesn't have self-determination, if the people of Greenland have their future controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, it is not going to make their lives better off*" but make US national security and world security "*much, much weaker*" (Polar Research and Policy Initiative, 2025, March 29).

5.4. Missing discourses, silenced topics

As shown in Table 3, we conducted a keyword search for terms expected to appear in the articles if these issues were a focal point. This approach is intended to illustrate which topics are silenced/underrepresented or marginalized in debates of this nature. While the word "Indigenous" appears frequently in 169 publications, it appears in the title only twice. A major concern - and right - of Indigenous Peoples regarding extractive industries, as mentioned above, is that of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): but this was not found at all in our search. The article that has Indigenous in the title argues that *"As international powers vie for influence in the Arctic, the voices of Inuit and other Arctic Indigenous peoples must not be lost in the current geopolitical posturing.*" (Chamberlain, 2025, March 14)

Table 3 indicates the emphasis that the news articles might have and what voices are being silenced. The analysis reveals a strategy of nominal inclusion, where Indigenous peoples are frequently mentioned but their political agency is systematically silenced. The complete absence of "FPIC" and the negligible presence of "Indigenous People's rights" or "self-determination" creates a discourse where Indigenous Peoples are visible as passive stakeholders to be managed, but their primary legal mechanism to refuse extraction via FPIC is invisible. Simultaneously, the media omitted the historical context of extraction. While the technical term "extract" appears 109 times, discourse related to "Colonisation", "Colonialism", or "Decolonisation" is virtually non-existent. By ignoring the link between current mining projects and historical dispossession, discourse portrays extraction purely as a forward-looking economic necessity and provision of security, silencing reality as a continuation of colonial relations. Indigenous-focused research in this area would likely provide insights into how Indigenous Peoples and their rights are presented (or not) in media framings, for example, as issues of justice and equality or as barriers to private profit or national security.

Sara Olsvig, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, highlights a profound geopolitical conflict: the majority of the critical minerals required for the global energy transition are located *"on or near the lands of indigenous people."* Olsvig warns that this proximity presents a severe risk, noting that the mining sector *"bears a terrible track record"* defined by *"forced* relocations" and "land-grabbing," leaving Indigenous communities "facing a huge challenge" as industrial pressure mounts (Milne, 2025).

While a young Greenlandic activist Miyuki Daorana explicitly labels extractive projects as "green colonialism" or "developmental aggression" (CE Noticias Financieras, 2025), the media coverage largely marginalizes these warnings, treating them as local complaints to be managed rather than structural realities. This dismissal is clearly reflected in the data: when human rights are mentioned, they are rarely presented as a non-negotiable starting point for policy. Instead, the discourse uses them as a comparative tool arguing that Western mining is "ethical" compared to Chinese alternatives (Simonelli, 2021), effectively using human rights to justify extraction rather than to protect Arctic communities on the ground. In this study, the absence of discourse related to Free, Prior and Informed Consent and decolonisation is treated as an empirical finding, as how dominant generic frames function to actively exclude Indigenous perspectives rather than reflecting a limitation of the frame typology itself.

6. Discussion

In this article we have showcased by applying framing theory that the framing in media transforms Arctic resource development from a technical or economic process into a high-stakes contest, where delay equals defeat. This game changer frames extraction as a competition in which speed is essential to avoid falling behind rivals. While the rationale is to decrease dependence on imports from China as evidenced by the EU and the U.S. rhetoric, the implication is that the Arctic is put into a perspective of a critical frontier in the race for mineral wealth, fossil fuels, and geopolitical dominance. Thus, critical minerals discourse has been used to leverage the existential urgency of the climate crisis in favour of elite and extractive interests, and against local communities and ecosystems (Storr, 2025).

By elevating the external threat of geopolitical rivals alongside the need to fast-track mining, Indigenous rights are effectively de-selected, reduced to regulatory noise or hurdles that impede the primary goal of national security. This process aligns with discourse theory's concept of "hegemonic fixing," where the Arctic is rigidly defined as a strategic resource base or place for security ambitions (Marchart, 2011). Powerful media and political groups have used their influence to pin down the meaning of the Arctic, which is predominantly defined through economic and military value. Dehumanization and referral to, for example Greenland as *"expanse of ice and rock'* (The Mandarin. 2025, September 29) that it has become nearly impossible for the public to see it as anything else, such as a fragile ecosystem or an Indigenous Peoples' home.

Amplifying the perspective of control, potential conflict, security, and sovereignty risks serving certain interests above others. Industrial expansion is fused with moral urgency while community and environmental interests are put into shadow. The analysis reveals a strategy of

"nominal inclusion," where Indigenous peoples are frequently mentioned but their political agency is systematically silenced. The complete absence of FPIC and the negligible presence of "Indigenous People's rights" or "self-determination" creates a discourse where Indigenous Peoples are visible as passive stakeholders to be managed, but their primary legal mechanism to refuse or support extraction via FPIC is invisible. Simultaneously, the media omits the historical context of extraction. While the technical term "extract" appears 109 times, discourse related to "Colonisation", "Colonialism", or "Decolonisation" is virtually non-existent. By ignoring the link between current mining projects and historical dispossession, the narrative frames extraction purely as a forward-looking economic necessity and provision of security, silencing reality as a continuation of colonial relations.

Furthermore, we observe that media coverage predominantly focuses on discrete, high-visibility events, such as a Vice President visit to Greenland, specific legislative bills, or mineral discoveries which prioritize the immediate commercial or diplomatic context. This focus on the present and future prospects prevents the thematic coverage necessary to understand colonialism as a deep historical structure. By isolating events from their temporal context, the media obscures the long-term processes of dispossession, thereby silencing the historical grievances.

We argue that the primary motive of political forces and the media is to legitimize extractive interventions by framing critical minerals as essential for the "national interest," creating a moral imperative that overrides local objection. If the media would acknowledge FPIC (the right to say no), it would contradict the language of the economic consequences frame's urgency to demand immediate access. Furthermore, media coverage aligns with the foreign policy consensus of Western governments, which identifies China and Russia as primary adversaries. In this context, discussing domestic colonial history becomes counter-productive, as it fractures the Western narrative of "Western values" required to contrast democratic virtue against authoritarian extractivism.

Consequently, framing serves to avoid cognitive dissonance among Western audiences, who are supposed to view their nations as fundamentally distinct from authoritarian regimes. Highlighting the violation of Indigenous rights in domestic mining projects would disrupt the preferred narrative of western virtues. To maintain consistency, the media utilizes human rights rhetoric to criticize foreign competitors while simultaneously silencing the same terms regarding domestic operations. This selective blindness exemplifies what Hickel and Kallis (2020) define as the "metabolic rift of green modernity," a process wherein the global North externalizes its ecological debts to peripheral regions, in this case the Arctic to support its moral superiority. Through this mechanism, high-income nations can maintain the illusion of moral progress while sustaining their material privilege, while the Arctic can serve as a sacrifice zone for the preservation of Western lifestyle. This selective application allows the audience to consume a narrative of strategic competition without confronting the reality that Western mineral extraction relies on similar structures of exploitation. Additionally, this discourse leverages the existential urgency of the climate crisis to serve elite and extractive interests at the expense of local communities and ecosystems (Storr, 2025)

7. Conclusions

Our analysis demonstrates that media framing transforms Arctic development from a technical economic process to a zero-sum geopolitical contest. By constructing a narrative of existential urgency driven by external threats, the discourse rigidly fixes the Arctic's meaning as a strategic resource base, ignoring its status as an Indigenous homeland. This "hegemonic fixing" operates through a mechanism of nominal inclusion: while Indigenous peoples are visible as stakeholders, their political agency, specifically the right to refuse extraction appears to be a blind spot when strategic urgency is prioritized in media discourse.

By framing domestic extraction as a moral imperative for national security and the green transition, the media allows high-income nations to maintain an illusion of moral progress while replicating colonial structures of exploitation. Thus, the rhetoric of urgency acts by leveraging climate goals to justify the conversion of the Arctic into a sacrifice zone for developed nations.

Many further avenues for research on this topic remain. These include analysis of other frames in the dataset, for example, human interest, attribution of responsibility, and morality, as well as a dedicated study of the inclusion (or absence) of Indigenous viewpoints in media reports. Specifically, research is needed to understand how Arctic Indigenous communities themselves make sense of or contest these narratives or even repurpose them in their own political advocacy.

The dataset could also be usefully expanded or replaced, to include Nordic and Indigenous languages, Russian and Chinese. We surmise that a wider dataset may turn up different results. Comparative studies involving non-Western media (e.g., Chinese or Russian state outlets) would clarify whether these frames or urgency and security are a global phenomenon or a uniquely Western projection. Finally, long-term research is needed to track whether the rising legal challenges regarding "green colonialism" eventually fracture the media's current consensus, moving coverage beyond the current focus on security and extraction.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Alexandra Middleton: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Rikke Østergaard:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization, Formal analysis. **Anna Karlsdóttir:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Rachael Lorna Johnstone:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Appendix I

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