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Institute of Political Studies
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Analyzing the Security Dilemma in the Arctic Region through
the Lenses of Securitization

Master's Thesis

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 31/07/2024

Martina Camicia

References

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Abstract

This thesis aims to analyse the security dilemma in the Arctic region through the lenses of securitization. Therefore, threats and perceptions become relevant in assessing how securitization plays a key role in the security dilemma dynamics. In order to have an understanding of the forces behind the so-called 'Polar Security Dilemma', the United States and the Russian Federation have been chosen as case-studies. The methodology used is discourse analysis of both public speeches of the securitizing actors and military-strategic doctrines. The data is gathered through public databases, official transcripts and press releases of the respective governments. The military doctrines are taken from the White House's website, and the Russian Federation ones are found translated in English. The expectations are to find how the progressive degradation of the relations between Russia and the US affected the Security Dilemma as regards the social construction of threats. This thesis will place great importance to the effects of the war in Ukraine, and how mistrust and worst-case assumptions hinder cooperation in the High North. By comparing the two countries, this research will serve as a basis to understand what has contributed to the social construction of the other as a threat. In particular, this research will be limited to the military domain and the perception of the military capabilities deployed.

Abstrakt

Tato práce si klade za cíl analyzovat bezpečnostní dilema v Arktické oblasti skrze objektivní securitizaci. Hrozby a vnímání hrozeb se tak stávají relevantními pro posouzení, jak securitizace hraje klíčovou roli v dynamice bezpečnostního dilematu. Aby bylo možné pochopit síly stojící za tzv. „Polárním bezpečnostním dilematem“, byly vybrány Spojené státy americké a Ruská federace jako případové studie. Metodologií použité v této práci je analýza diskurzu, a to jak veřejných projevů securitizujících aktérů, tak vojensko-strategických doktrín. Data jsou získávána z veřejných databází, oficiálních přepisů a tiskových zpráv příslušných vlád. Vojenské doktríny jsou čerpány z webových stránek Bílého domu, ruské doktríny jsou k dispozici v anglickém překladu. Očekává se, že práce odhalí, jak postupná degradace vztahů mezi Ruskem a USA ovlivnila bezpečnostní dilema ve vztahu k sociální konstrukci hrozeb. Tato práce bude klást velký důraz na dopady války na Ukrajině a na to, jak nedůvěra a předpoklady nejhoršího scénáře brání spolupráci v oblasti vysokého severu. Porovnáním obou

zemí bude tento výzkum sloužit jako základ pro pochopení, co přispělo k sociální konstrukci druhé strany jako hrozby. Zejména se tento výzkum omezí na vojenskou oblast a vnímání nasazených vojenských schopností.

Keywords

Arctic, militarization, Security Dilemma, Threats, Russia, US, discourse analysis, perceptions

Klíčová slova

Arktida, militarizace, bezpečnostní dilema, hrozby, Rusko, USA, analýza diskurzu, vnímání

Title

Analyzing the Security Dilemma in the Arctic Region through the Lenses of Securitization

Název práce

Analýza bezpečnostního dilematu v Arktické oblasti prostřednictvím objektivu securitizace

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We need to save the Arctic not because of the polar bears, and not because it is the most beautiful place in the world, but because our very survival depends upon it.

Lewis Gordon Pugh

Introduction

This thesis aims to analyse the perceptions of the United States and the Russian Federation through the analytical lenses of securitization, looking for the social construction of threats that have fuelled the ongoing security dilemma in the Arctic Region. The Arctic is heating two to three times quicker than the rest of the globe (Duggan, n.d) and, consequently, opening new commercial routes, making available resources and showcasing the vicinity of the US and Russia from a relatively new perspective. Authors have described the emergence of a security dilemma in the High North after the 2014 annexation of Crimea (Wither, 2021), namely the increase of fear and threats in the expanding military capabilities of the other. This generates a loop of insecurities and accumulation of power given the uncertainty of the dual-use of the currently deployed capabilities.

This thesis aims to apply the concept of the security dilemma, commonly associated with a realist tradition, with the (radical) constructivist theory of securitization. Therefore, with a dual case study of the US and the Russian Federation, discourse analysis will be performed. Public speeches will be considered, as well as national strategies. After a theoretical part introducing the literature review, methodology, the theoretical framework, this work will provide an introduction to the key elements of the Arctic framework, followed by two analytical chapters. Therefore, the hypothesis is that the Arctic security dilemma is deepening as a result of the perception and fear among Russian and American élites, and it is expected to parallelly follow the course of events happening on the globe. Analysed through the lenses of constructivism (or

radical constructivism, as Buzan et al. described it in 1998), the security dilemma is perceived as made by the social construction of threats by the US and Russia. The main research question is, therefore:

How does securitization in the Arctic region affect the security dilemma?

This research will seek to fill the gap in the literature as it aims to provide a comprehensive comparison of the threats and perceptions of the Arctic by the US and Russia, and to analyse the factors underlying the security dilemma.

Literature review

This chapter intends to provide an overview of the academic debate evolving around the securitization of the Arctic region. First, it will delve into the concept of security dilemma, analyzing its aspects and different interpretations. Then, an overview of the existing schools of securitization will be explained, followed by the academic debate concerning the implications of the US and Russia in the Arctic region. Finally, the desired contribution to the literature of this research will be discussed, as well as the gap it seeks to fill.

The security dilemma

While a more comprehensive overview of the security dilemma will be provided in the theoretical framework, this section will give an analysis of the debate on the definition of the security dilemma and the main authors that contributed to it. In 1951, Herbert Butterfield in *History and Human Relations* coined the security dilemma and defined it as a result of the ‘universal sin of humanity’, portraying states as bound to harm each other in a Hobbesian world (Butterfield, 1951). Hertz (1951), also took part in the realist viewpoint, and described the

security dilemma as the outcome of the accumulation of power driven by fear, as in the anarchic framework states are bound to exist in. Robert Jervis (1978), took part in the debate, arguing that the SD can be regulated both by physical factors as well as by psychological ones, namely misconceptions and perceptions. Booth and Wheeler (2008), professors of international politics at Aberystwyth University, rebutted scholars that place importance to anarchy and highlighted the role of human agency in the SD dynamics, and used the term ‘security dilemma sensibility’ as “the ability to understand the role that fear might play” (Wheeler, 2008).

With a completely different opinion than Wheeler and Booth, Tang (2009) criticised all previous definitions of the SD to provide his own, based on the imperative role of anarchy and, therefore, the unintentional origin of the SD. However, while Tang explained his rigor as the choice to fill the gap in an area of confusion and disagreement, his definition proved to be too strict and applicable only to a few practical case studies in the Cold War. Mitchell (2019), criticized Tang for his strict definition, analysed the SD through the lenses of the ‘cycle of insecurity’ and the Security dilemma’s role in generating insecurity in the international arena.

Taking distance from the defensive realism proposed by Tang, a new notion of the constructivist’s security dilemma emerged, and will be used in order to assess this research’s topic. Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2015), describe the security dilemma as a socially constructed topic. This view is shared by Lupovici (2021), who believes that threats are socially constructed and physical/objective elements are mediated through discourse to construct (or not) a threat.

Securitization - Schools of Thought

The theory of securitization holds particular importance in this thesis. Initially it was developed by the Copenhagen School, composed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde in Conflict and Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in Copenhagen in the 1990s. It lies its foundations in

Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Buzan et al., 1998), and in Securitization and Desecuritization (Waever, 1995). The Copenhagen School claims that in the context of international relations, an issue is considered a security problem when it is felt as an existential threat to a target and needs extraordinary moves to be tackled. However, it received criticism as securitization is portrayed as a fast process, where the speech act is followed by an exceptional measure. As a result of this debate, the Paris School emerged, with Didier Bigo as its main pioneer. Bigo described securitization as a process where speeches are not central but consist of practices. He believed that actions (that could be both of insecurity and securitization) are so ingrained in routines that they are never addressed as an anomaly, but as a normal extension of the mentioned routines (Bigo, 2008).

Literature on the Arctic

Experts do not all agree on the reasons why Russia is engaged in the Arctic, and the extent of which this reflects geopolitical tensions on the continent. Grajewski argues that Russia's interests in the region are hidden behind a rhetoric evoking symbolism and historical ties to increase domestic political legitimacy (Grajewski, 2017). Boulègue (2019), believes that Russia's posture in the Arctic is defensive, has no intention of becoming otherwise, and it is aimed only at defending the coastline and the nuclear arsenal in case of an attack. On the other hand, Wall and Wegge (2023), clearly stated that Russia has offensive goals, and called for major prudence in the NATO allies. In 2022, the Chatham House in a report written by Katarzyna Zysk took distance from media and sensationalistic tones describing the Arctic as a WW3-like scenario, but at the same time acknowledged the offensive posture of the build-up, and remarked the concept of 'active defense' in Russian military strategic thinking (Zysk, 2022).

The United States' posture in the Arctic is a relatively new issue. Odgaard (2024), called NATO for urgent action, stating that even with Sweden and Finland, the military deterrence in the High North is not enough to counter Russia's threats. Caldon (2023), takes an unconventional approach and stated that the US is not interested in the North Pole, and the strategic documents are a mere response to Russia and China's involvement. He concluded his analysis by explaining that, even if US are losing the 'Arctic race', China and Russia's efforts come at a great cost that, in the medium term, will benefit America (Caldon, 2023). Burke and Matissek (2021) provided an overview of Russia's actions, and concluded his research by calling the US to recognise the potential for conflict and act immediately to avoid an imbalance of power.

Academic literature can also be found in relation to the security dilemma in the Arctic. James Kenneth Wither has published an article entitled "*An Arctic security dilemma: assessing and mitigating the risk of unintended armed conflict in the High North*" (2021). Starting from the assumption that the security dilemma in the High North started in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea, the author illustrated the fact that Russia's ambitions both as a revisionist actor and as a status quo actor fuel the uncertainty in the SD. Focusing on the mitigating aspects of the Northern Security Dilemma, he concluded that the stability of the status quo would depend on the United States' approach to the Kremlin and their willingness to engage in diplomatic effort with Russia. Kristian Åtland, in *Interstate Relations in the Arctic: An Emerging Security Dilemma?* (2014), provided an overview of the littoral states' engagement in the High North, and concludes the research by stating that the SD is possible to overcome through increased transparency and regional cooperation. Another relevant research conducted that deals with the Arctic Region has been written by James Rogers in 2022. Focusing on drone capabilities, he highlighted the current security dilemma in the region and concluded that unmanned aerial vehicles are deepening the security dilemma due to their dual-use (Rogers, 2022).

The gap in the literature

This thesis aims to fill the gap in the literature by providing a comparative case study of both Russia and the United States' perceptions and threats regarding the Arctic Region. It contributes to the literature as it adopts a constructivist approach to dealing with the security dilemma, a classical realist concept, and will seek to explain how the social construction of threats and the relative securitization affected the SD in the Arctic. Moreover, the existing literature primarily focuses on European States and their interaction with the Russian Federation, due to geographical proximity and it is focused primarily on Norway, Sweden and Finland. Finally, this thesis could be a starting point to research on the global consequences of the war in Ukraine, to avoid the spillover of armed conflicts and how to mitigate the security dilemma in a militarized region.

Methodology

This section will present the methodology used in this thesis's work. It will present the research design used to gain insight into the phenomenon, and then proceed with an explanation of the cases chosen. Furthermore, a brief description of how the data are collected will be presented, followed by an explanation of how the data will be analysed.

Research design

The methodology used to identify and assess the existence of securitization in the Arctic adopts a qualitative approach aimed at determining the elements that have contributed to it. The main objective of this thesis is to analyze how the security dilemma evolved overtime, influenced by tensions in the rest of the world. In particular, I am expecting an intensification of securitization in the past decade with a particular increase following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This thesis

will analyse the discourses on the Arctic region by élites, and the timeframe considered will stretch from 2007 to nowadays.

A qualitative approach is preferable in this kind of analysis, as it suits the final goal of understanding a specific topic (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Moreover, as securitization is the best way to analyse perceptions and emotions, qualitative research is the best option to dive into people's mentality and to understand the reasons behind their actions (Tomaszewski et al, 2020). The security dilemma is, in fact, based on the state's perception of being threatened by others accumulating power, and therefore, the best approach to be used while analysing it has to grasp the nuances of human emotions and, in this case, fears.

A dual-case study has been chosen to analyse the Arctic region. From one hand, the US have been selected and, on the other side, the Russian Federation. This thesis will present a theoretical framework to provide the analytical part with a background to base the findings and give guidance while collecting the data. Furthermore, a brief introduction to the High North is given to delimit the geographical scope of the research, followed by a short historical overview of the security dilemma. Then, it will delve in the analytical part, analysing if and how securitization occurred first within the Russian Federation, then in the US political field. A comparative chapter will be added at the end of the analysis, to outline the differences in the fears and perspectives of the two countries. The conclusion will outline the potential ideas for further research and summarise the findings.

Case Justification

The Arctic region was selected as it represents a perfect security dilemma to look through securitization. As will be outlined in the next chapters, the increasing tensions and mistrust represent the characteristics present in the literature defining the security dilemma. Therefore, it presents itself as a case study instrumental for the theory chosen. For reasons due to the scope

and limitation of this research, the two main actors that will be presented will be from one side, the Russian Federation and from the other, the United States.

As the High North is not commonly referred to as a country or a state, its definition has to be specified to delimit the geographical scope of this research. Defined by the UN Environment Programme, the Arctic comprises the area north of the Arctic Circle (66°32'N). However, when needed, in this work the definition of the region will be interpreted in a broader sense, including the sub-Arctic areas of Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark (Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States (as it is covered by AMAP studies). In this way, a better understanding of the militarization of the Arctic and the accumulation of power will be provided.

The dual case study is envisaged to provide the analytical part of this thesis' findings for mainly two reasons. First, by analysing two case studies and adopting the constructivist security dilemma, this thesis will support and reinforce the theoretical background adopted, showing its applicability in different cases. Secondly, it allows for a detailed examination of the phenomena, which would not be possible in case of a multiple case study design.

Data Collection

As Polkinghorne (2005) outlined, data are essential to give evidence to the research and provide the foundation for the final findings. This thesis will rely on existing data, as it aims to analyse a particular phenomenon through the lenses of an existing theory. Moreover, triangulation will occur to verify that the data are reliable and convergence of data from various sources to test validity is expected (Patton, 1999).

To collect the data, this thesis will analyse primary and secondary sources found in official documents, such as:

Primary Sources:

- Official Declarations and Statements: Collect data related to Arctic Region interests from official websites, databases, and archives.
- Meetings and Conferences: Data will be gathered from final reports from meetings and conferences involving official councils, governments, and experts on the Arctic Region.
- Military and National strategic plans: in order to analyse changes, data will be derived from strategic and military plans.

Secondary Sources:

- Academic articles from experts that have investigated the region and the theory applied. Most of the scholarly articles are found through Google Scholar or with access to digital libraries provided by Charles University.
- Media and journalists that have covered the recent developments in the region. Investigative journalists' work will be valued as a precious source to investigate information not disclosed by official governments yet.

The limitation in collecting the data for this work is that some speeches might not be published online or, especially as it regards the Russian Federation, might not appear in the databases and could be found only with research in the original language. This is why the work of NGOs, media reports, and investigative journalists will be taken into account while researching the Arctic region.

Moreover, this thesis due to time and resources limitations, will not examine the role of other actors that are actively engaged in the Arctic region. First, the European Union would be a great study to assess, but due to its lack of political discourse on the Arctic Region, it would be premature to assess a potential securitization. Secondly, the emerging actor in the Arctic is

China, that considers itself an Arctic region and would deserve, in the future, an analysis by itself and how the activities there could constitute a potential threat. Thirdly, for future research and to have a comprehensive understanding of the topic, the indigenous people currently living there should be interpellated, with on-field analysis of their perspectives.

Data Analysis

Discourse analysis will be employed to assess the security dilemma and states' perceptions and fears of being threatened. Therefore, the analytical part of this thesis will be dedicated to the 'psychological' part of the security dilemma, analysing fears, tensions and responses from littoral States. Discourse, defined as "*all forms of spoken interaction, and written texts of all kinds*" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), will be at the foundation of this analytical part. Investigating the relationship between discourse and reality, deciphering a hidden meaning, and mediating it between the past and present are, therefore, the objectives desired to attain with this methodology (Bondarouk and Huub, 2004).

To conclude, through discourse analysis this methodology aims to contribute to the existing literature by adopting a constructivist perspective in order to analyse a concept that has always been attributed to the realist approach and associated to security as intended in the traditionalist approach.

Theoretical framework

The next section of this thesis will be dedicated to the theoretical underpinnings used in this final master's research. As Grant and Osanloo (2014) outlined, a theoretical framework in research mirrors the current understanding of a particular topic and constitutes the foundations on which the future knowledge will be based.

First, the chapter will provide a section of the traditional definition of the security dilemma, to provide the conceptual basis for the future interpretations of it. Then, it will delve into the constructivist stances of it, assessing how the security dilemma can be seen and perceived through this stream of thought, in particular the one referred to as the Copenhagen School. Moreover, it will continue with an analysis of securitization and its meaning.

Theoretical definition of the security dilemma

As previously analysed in the literature review, there have been many authors defining the security dilemma. First coined by Herz, it has undergone several revisitations and different changes. In particular, which is also the ultimate goal of this thesis's work, it has been proven that, regardless of its origin as a product of realism, the security dilemma can be conceptualised as through the lenses of constructivism. When it comes to analyse threats and perceptions of the states involved, constructivism has proven to bring a particular insight and to be able to analyse fears and emotions on a deeper level than other traditional theories of the IR academia. This theoretical part will be divided as follows: first a broad definition of security dilemma will be provided, followed by a detailed analysis of the new meaning given by the constructivist school of thought.

The traditionalist view of the security dilemma

Even if this Master's thesis will adopt a different angle to analyse the phenomenon, it is recognised that the traditionalist, and in particular in this case, realist, thinkers have played a fundamental role in bringing the concept into the debates of international relations. In this paragraph, the work of Herz and Tang will be explained, with a particular focus on their strengths, followed by the reasons why their theory has not been selected as the backbone of this work.

Hertz coined the term in the '50s, and defined the security dilemma as the situation when individuals and groups must always be concerned about their own security as attacks from others are always likely to happen. To escape the 'power' that others have, these entities start accumulating power (Tang, 2009). This process will inevitably lead to a vicious cycle. He put great emphasis on the concept of anarchy as a structural feature of the security dilemma, and on the original unintentionality of it. As anarchy is at the base of international relations, according to Hertz states are bound to feel threatened and therefore the consequent security dilemma is unintentional in its origins (Hertz, 1950).

Similarly, Shipping Tang (2009) has described the security dilemma as a situation in which two defensive states are unsure about each other's present or future intentions. Therefore, fear is generated and states start to accumulate power and military capabilities which, inevitably, contain both offensive and defensive tools. This generates a vicious cycle of measures and countermeasures that inevitably add fear and uncertainty. Therefore, according to him, the SD has 7 major aspects:

- The anarchic state of international politics generates it;
- States fear each others as they cannot be sure about intentions and always fear for their domestic security;
- The SD unintentionally must be genuine, states should be defensive realists and start aggregating power not with the intention of starting a war;
- One important point of the definition provided by Tang is the nature of military capabilities, both offensive and defensive in nature;
- The SD would initiate self-reinforcing dynamics that lead to the so-called spiral and potentially to arms races. This could lead to tragic events such as war;

- States will tend to follow the rationale “more power, less security”, focusing on defending themselves as a priority;
- Material and psychological factors influence the severity of the SD.

This definition separates the security dilemma from the spiral, posing that they present two different conditions in the international relations arena. Starting his critique from Jervis’s overlapping of SD and spiral, Tang (2009) argues that it occurs when one or both states become malign and decide to pursue aggression. Therefore, a spiral can be identified not always, but only when a security dilemma ceases to adhere to the principles and the intentions become malign. He highlights that the security dilemma and the spiral are part of a *reversible and graduated continuum*. The spiral can be classified into a *imperialist or expansionist threat* when one actor turns malign; or a *mutual threat or deadlock* when both actors switch to aggressive and offensive behaviour (Tang, 2009).

These views have several limitations, which will be described in detail in the next section. However, they are important in this Master’s thesis as they provided a base to develop the constructivist’s security dilemma, which will be analysed in the next section.

The constructive security dilemma

As emerging schools of thought have challenged realism throughout the years, authors have also tried to re-conceptualise its themes through other perspectives and schools of thought. Eric Van Rythoven, in *The Securitization Dilemma* (2020), for instance, has applied the theory of constructivism and securitization to the traditional concept of the security dilemma, giving it a wider meaning that encompasses multiple aspects of the social arena.

Firstly, the main takeaway of Van Rythoven’s theory, is that he considers the agency of the political actors or the ‘voices of authority’ in a wider and greater perspective. In fact, he

attributes to state officials and politicians the power to behave according to their agency, not merely because of the international anarchic arena (Van Rythoven, 2020). He asserts that political actors identify and construct threats, and it would be simplistic to believe that they just respond to a pre-defined course of events. Supported by examples such as Bush's stances towards Iraq in 2003, the portrayal of HIV as an existential threat as well as trade tariffs and climate change, the author sustains that his vision is not standing alone in the academia, but has some precedents in the thinkers considered at the origin of the security dilemma itself. (Van Rythoven, 2020). In fact, he argues that Hertz in *Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma* (1950), started noticing the social parts of societies and mentioned groups, tribes and therefore conducted an analysis that went beyond the classical concept of inter-state insecurity. Therefore, even if Hertz's definition of security dilemma is considered obsolete by the constructivist academia, Van Rythoven appreciated some of its parts and interpreted it through a different conception of the meaning of security.

The constructivist school of thought has given its definition to the security dilemma, which will be the one driving this Master's thesis approach to the ongoing securitization of the Arctic region:

“a social structure composed of intersubjective understandings in which states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions about each other's intentions, and, as a result, define their interests in self-help terms” (definition provided by Wendt, as cited in Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p.3) .

Contrarily to the traditional definition of security dilemma, Wendt argues that realists and neorealists did not fully understand the concept of security dilemma, which is, according to him, not defined by the structural anarchy of the international system but is made of intersubjective understandings. Moreover, he argues that the anarchy of the international

system exists only because states define it. Furthermore, he does not deny the importance of military capabilities. Still, he explains how the effects of those capabilities are a social construct, and ‘presuppose structures of shared knowledge’ (Wendt in Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2021).

Securitization – The Copenhagen School

Traditional schools of thought have focused on the state as the main provider of security and did not extend the concept of security to other domains. After the Cold War, Critical Security Studies started to emerge in the academic debate, and the Copenhagen School started being taken into account as a new perspective to analyze events in international relations (Buzan and Hansen, 2009).

Looking at fears and emotions therefore, became instrumental in analysing how the threats are made, analysing the role of societal actors and groups in identifying and creating these threats and fuelling the fears. In the second half of the ‘80s, securitization started to be present in academia with the work of Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan. In their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan et al, 1998), the authors gave themselves the goal to “*set out a comprehensive new framework for security studies*”. They strived to answer the question of what an international security issue is and, they assessed it as when an issue is (existentially) threatening a referent object (Buzan et al, 1998), leading for a state to consider military mobilization legitimised, as well as the use of force and the adoption of certain measures. A securitizing move is, therefore, an attempt to undergo this process, which will be finally completed once the audience accepts it.

The theoretical underpinning of this school of thought lies in the fact that “security is not a given but it is constructed through inter-subjective social and discursive interactions between

powerful actors who proposed definitions of threats and relevant audiences who acknowledge these definitions.” (Stepka, 2022). Therefore, the pillars of the CS are the following:

- **The speech act:** “through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan et al, 1998) – in this thesis, will be the speeches and the doctrines;
- **An audience:** formed by the group of people that is the ‘receiver’ of the speech act – in the case of the Arctic SD, the audience is the population, local communities and whoever needs to be convinced that a defined issue poses a threat;
- **A securitizing actor:** According to Buzan, the securitizing actor are the ones that ‘securitize’ by declaring the referent object as threatened – in this research’s case, the government.

Therefore, the Copenhagen School separates public issues in 3 stages: they can be non-politicised, meaning that they are not handled in public discourse, politicised (part of public policy), and securiticised (they underwent a process of securitization).

Another important aspect of Buzan’s work and the Copenhagen School is the classification of the sectors of security. Recognising the impossibility to separate them clearly, the exponents of the CS have elaborated 5 sectors of security (Buzan, 1981):

1. **Military:** According to the authors, it is the most likely to be securitised. When the threat is external, which will be the case of this research, military security will be based on the correlation within one state’s offensive and defensive capabilities, and the perception of the other’s, alongside with the perception of the other’s intentions.

2. **Political:** The political sector deals with the organization and the stability of the social order.

3. **Societal:** The societal sector linked to the political one, but revolves around the concept of identity. In fact, the authors identify societal insecurity when a community feels threatened in their relation of being a group.

4. **Economic:** At the time of writing, the authors believed that the economic agenda was shaped by the need to implement it in the area of trade, production and finance;

5. **Environmental:** Buzan argued that usually the environmental sector becomes ‘securitised’ when the environmental epistemic community securitised the environmental agenda.

In this thesis, only the military sector is analysed, as it fits with the definition of the security dilemma and the social construction of threats that have contributed to its creation. While acknowledging that the sectors are strictly intertwined, this work aims to provide a discourse analysis of the social construction of threats underlying the security dilemma.

Therefore, the Copenhagen School posits that securitization is made by a speech act, followed by a specific measure. However, it has been subject to criticism as it could be ‘theoretically restrictive’ and non-applicable in many real-life scenarios (Balzacq, 2010). While retrieving Copenhagen’s idea of securitization and using the Buzan’s factors to identify securitization, this thesis approaches the idea of security as a process made with discourses. It embraces the vision of ‘pragmatic act’, adhering to the sociological model of securitization. Heuristic artefacts (such as emotions, ideas, images), are contextually mobilised by an agent, who persuasively created “an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized political act must be undertaken immediately to block its development” (Balzacq, 2010).

Conclusion

To conclude, the theoretical framework provided by this thesis outlines the approach and the angle that will thesis will adopt in order to analyse the security dilemma in the Arctic through

the phenomenon of securitization. The next chapter will be dedicated to a historical overview of the Arctic region from the years of the Cold War to the current times, focusing on how and if global conflicts and tensions have been reflected in the High North.

Historical overview

The Arctic region is gradually melting, opening space for new resources and space to assert one's power. In the last decades, a resurgence of the interest for it has been clearly shown by the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Before delving into the analysis of the US and Russia securitization of it, this chapter is intended to define the geographical region. This chapter is divided as follows: first, it will present a geographical definition, then it will present an historical overview of the subject.

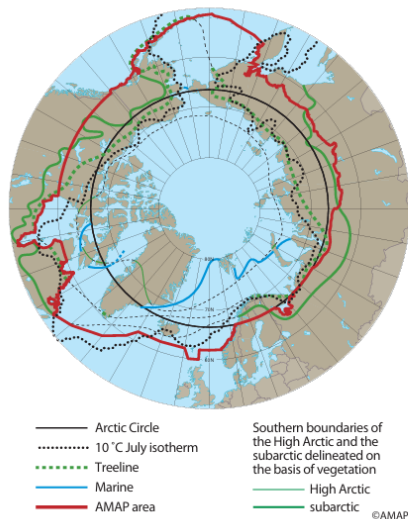
Definition of the Arctic

Defining the Arctic region has become increasingly more important for littoral states. With the melting of the sea ice and the opening of new commercial routes, there has been a struggle for states to consider the Arctic region as a part of Earth where to exert influence. Natural resources started to appeal state's desires, and commercial routes such as the Northern Sea Route started to become available and highlighted the emerging need to define the borders of the Arctic region.

In a UN Panel held in 2003 on Oceans and the Law of Sea, Professor Orlav Orheim, the Director of the Norwegian Polar Institute, defined the Arctic region as the area north of the Arctic Circle (66°32'N), (2003). Basing his speech on the data provided by The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, he delimitates the Arctic as : “ *where the water of the Arctic Ocean, cool and dilute from melting ice, meets warmer, saltier water from the southern*

oceans”. Therefore, he considered an area covering 20 million km², comprising 4 million people and covering 8 % of the Earth’s surface (Orlheim, 2003). The Arctic, therefore encloses eight Arctic States, Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States, and the 5 directly bordering with it can exercise sovereignty and their jurisdiction in the Arctic Ocean (Aiken et al., 2020).

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
 AMAP Assessment 2009: Human Health in the Arctic, Figure 1.1



(Definitions of the Arctic Region | AMAP, 2010)

With more than 24,000 km, Russia has the longest Arctic coastline, the largest landmass and 2 million Russian citizens live in its Arctic region (Dunay, 2021). There are 9 federal entities located in the Arctic, the Murmansk Oblast, Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Komi Republic, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (Raspotnik, 2024). Moreover, 80 % of Russia’s natural gas reserves are based in the area, and it has always considered fundamental for Moscow’s economy (Dunay, 2021).



(Figure 1. Map of the Russian Arctic Territory ("Arctic Zone of The . . . , n.d.)

The Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 defines the US territory of the Arctic as “includes territory north of the Arctic Circle and north and west of the boundary formed by the Porcupine, Yukon, and Kuskokwim Rivers; the Aleutian chain; and adjacent marine areas in the Arctic Ocean and the Beaufort, Bering, and Chukchi Seas.” (Arctic Region - United States Department of State, 2021). The US Arctic territory is above the Arctic Circle, situated 66.3 degrees North, and comprises Alaska and some parts of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas (Østhagen, 2022).



(Figure 2. “Responding to Oil Spills in the U.S. Arctic Marine Environment,” 2014)

Unlike the Antarctic, the Arctic Region is governed only by domestic, international and customary law. In particular, the main body dedicated to act as a forum of cooperation and dialogue is the Arctic Council. Founded in 1996 during the Ottawa Declaration, it is the most inclusive forum, including littoral states and Indigenous' people organizations (*Arctic Governance and the Arctic Council - RGS*, n.d.). The Council has been pointed out in the academic literature as a very successful and efficient tool to promote governance in the region (Wehrmann, 2020) and in many public declarations it has been highlighted how it worked to preserve peace in “a region prone to international conflicts” (the 2015-Iqaluit Declaration, Arctic Council, 2015 in Wehrmann, 2020).

Moreover, the other fundamental treaty that applies to the governance of the Arctic region is the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), entered into force in 1982 . While for the scope of this thesis it is not relevant to provide a detailed legal framework of the technicalities of the treaty, it is relevant in its application to the Arctic Ocean, as it because it establishes several overlapping domains for rights, obligations, and political authority (Carlson et al., 2013). Even if the US has not ratified it yet due to doubts initially concerning deep sea mining, and later issues of partly losing sovereignty in favour of international organisations, the norms and practices outlined by the UNCLOS are regarded by international customary law (*U.S. Already Abides by UNCLOS as A Matter of Customary International Law And Domestic Policy | UNCLOSdebate.org*, n.d.). More specifically, UNCLOS is relevant in the Arctic Region as it outlines a classification of states into coastal, port and flag (*UNCLOS*, n.d.). This separation provides a legal framework for states to exert their jurisdiction, sovereignty and the right to create an exclusive economic zone up to 200 nautical miles and a territorial sea up to twelve nautical miles is granted to the five polar states that border the Arctic Ocean. The final clause gives these nations the authority to exploit the sea's resources, including the ocean floor and its subsoil (Federal Environment Ministry, n.d.).

To conclude, both the US and Russia are considered ‘Arctic States’, as part of their territory touches the region that will be at the centre of this research’s work. Starting from 1996, governance in the Arctic has been guaranteed by the proper and efficient functioning of the Arctic Council, promoting peace and a knowledge-based forum to advance their needs and, in case, express their concerns on burning issues such as climate change and adaptation. While the subject of this thesis will concern discourses and perceptions, the instruments to mitigate conflicts in the region were described, as their proper functioning limits the possibility of a military escalation in the region.

Historical Overview

During the Cold War, the High North was a theatre for power competition and reflected the tensions between the blocs. The dynamics of (non)cooperation between the United States of America and The Soviet Union were dependent on the fears and perceptions by the states in the rest of the globe, and the Arctic proved to be no exception. Already in 1945, the Chief of the US Army Force General Henry H. Arnold declared *“if a third world war emerged, the region would be the strategic center of such a devastating war.”* (Uğur & Dal, 2021, p. 7). Through the ‘50s and ‘60s, both blocs deployed arms and weapons in the area, primarily in case of an attack from the other side. Therefore, early warning and air defense capabilities were deployed: from the URSS particularly focused on the Kola Peninsula, while the US responded by activating a series of radar stations in the Canadian territory. In the ‘80s, the security dilemma deepened as nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines were introduced (Uğur & Dal, 2021). It is believed that, with the new Soviet weaponry, an attack could have reached Washington D.C. in half an hour. Therefore, as a response, the US and Canada established the North American Defense Command, aimed to focus only on Arctic issues (Beixi, 2016).

As soon as the Cold War was coming to an end, the academia coined the term ‘exceptionalism’ to describe the cooperation that has been put in place, particularly for the Arctic region. In 1987, Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev delivered the so-called ‘Murmansk speech’, where he defined his project of an Arctic seen as a zone of cooperation and ‘de-securitization’, envisaging a nuclear-free zone and a restriction of military exercises (Gorbachev, 1987).

While experts debate the nature of this exceptionalism and its very existence, many argue that it describes a particular cooperative approach that states adopted specifically for this region. Lassi Heininen, professor of International relations, has rejected the idea of Arctic exceptionalism as a result of traditional geopolitical conceptions such as the Hobbesian zero-sum approach, and defines the Arctic exceptionalism as the result of a focus on ‘immaterial values and that the environment matters’(Heininen in Lackenbauer & Dean, 2020, p. 330). Others have tried to explain the reasons behind this approach due to its geographical location that enabled actors to separate their actions worldwide and promote a regime of international cooperation in the Arctic region (Lackenbauer & Dean, 2020). These years have been characterized by the idea of Arctic exceptionalism, which culminated with the establishment of the Arctic Council. Rather than competing and showcasing their power, states have chosen to work together on issues such as the environment and scientific research (Lackenbauer & Dean, 2020).

However, this idyllic scenario seemed to start changing with the beginning of the new millennium. Due to the melting of the ice cover, natural resources and maritime routes started becoming available, which put the Arctic in the spotlight again as a strategic region. The ‘Arctic exceptionalism’ that prevailed in the preceding years began to waver, and both the United States of America and the Russian Federation started to feel threatened and ‘exposed’, therefore

perceived their borders on the Arctic region as vulnerable and in need to be 'securitised' again. Therefore, the notion of the security dilemma that characterized the Cold War era experienced a resurgence to explain, in line with the theoretical framework considered, the militarisation and tensions that drive states to engage again on the North Pole and its surroundings.

To conclude, the history of the Arctic area during and after the Cold War demonstrates a mix of collaboration and competition. At first, it was a zone of great strategic importance for both the US and the USSR, characterised by military outposts and elevated hostilities. Nonetheless, a change toward collaboration occurred in the latter part of the 1980s, as evidenced by the establishment of the Arctic Council and Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev's demand for a zone free of nuclear weapons. Collaboration in science and the environment was given priority during this era of "Arctic exceptionalism". Melting glaciers and the finding of natural riches in the new millennium sparked renewed strategic interest, which escalated militarization and the fear of a potential conflict.

Russia's securitization of the Arctic region

This first analytical chapter is intended to assess and analyze, through discourse analysis, the securitization of the Arctic Region by the Russian Federation. In particular, this chapter will focus on the timeframe from the early 2000s to recent events, particularly highlighting the shift in the intensity of the discourse in parallel with the degradation of relations on the continent. The expectation from this analysis is an increase in securitization of the Arctic as the relations between Russia and the United States of America degenerated (and, by extension, with NATO). In this chapter, military sector is considered, therefore, the ability of actors to fight wars and relations of forceful coercion (Albert and Buzan, 2011). It will be dedicated to the militarization, the political justification given by elites to argue the moves in the Arctic, and

how (and if) securitization occurred. In order to assess it, public speeches have been analysed, as well as the doctrines available that indicate the Arctic and present references to the military domain. To identify the public speeches available online, the research was based on keywords, such as ‘Threat’; ‘Arctic’ and ‘Militarization’, in public databases transcribing conferences, press releases and declarations. On the other hand, the public doctrines selected are the ones that are symbolic and representative of a given period. Moreover, secondary sources researching on the narrative adopted by the Russian Federation are also considered. In particular, the research conducted by Julie Wilhelmsen in collaboration with other experts, has been relevant to finding translated speeches as, referring to a precise translation, adds general value to the selection of speeches and the specific choice of words used by representatives.

To summarize the main data used as well as the findings, this tab represents the main document used and how the Arctic has been addressed. In order to classify the data available, I decided to discern between 3 categories: the Arctic depicted as a priority, as a zone of cooperation and a zone where military threats are present:

Date	Type	Topic	Classification	Note
2007	Speech	On the planting of a flag in the Arctic Seabed	Priority	cooperative approach, outlined importance of the Arctic region
2008	Speech	Airborne Forces Lieutenant General Vladimir Shamanov	Priority	Mention on the need to be ready for a potential conflict
2010	Speech	General optimism regarding the Arctic	Cooperation	Very cooperative approach and optimism
2012	Speech	Militarization of the Arctic should be avoided	Threat	Reference to NATO's vicinity
2014	Doctrine	Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation	No mention	No reference noted
2014	Speech	Moscow as under direct threat	Threat	US submarines as linked to Moscow security
2014	Speech	US's military capabilities	Threat	others depicted as having "anti-Russian hysteria" when deploying capabilities
2015	Doctrine	National Security	Cooperation	No reference to the military domain

		Strategy		
2017	Speech	US as offensive / nuclear	Threat	US in Alaska as 'nuclear potential' / direct threat
2017	Speech	Cooperation possible even in light of unfavorable events	Cooperation	Reference to the 'Arctic exceptionalism'
2017	Doctrine	Naval Policy	Threat	Not many mentions in the Arctic, only US'aspiration to control
2020	Doctrine	Strategy to 2035	Threat / Priority	Direct mention of conflict potential but not clearly mentioned the US
2022	Doctrine	Maritime Doctrine	Threat	Foreign Naval Presence linked to potential of conflict
2023	Speech	Trust on dual-use capabilities	Threat	NATO/US not trusted
2023	Speech	Confrontation is possible	Threat	NATO is bringing confrontation
2024	Speech	Threat to national security	Threat	direct link to national security

Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Arctic was not a priority for the Kremlin, who did not see it as a zone of strategic confrontation (Godzimirski & Sergunin, 2020). In July 2001, the Arctic was considered a national priority and worth of attention, but only in the following years it took a prominent space in Russia's policies. (*The Foundations of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic, 2001*).

Securitization in public discourses and speeches

Scholars tend to mark 2007 as the year when Russia started to engage militarily in the Arctic and restore the Cold War-old concern about it. One crucial moment, at least in the narrative and rhetoric surrounding it, was the planting of the Russian flag in the Arctic seabed during a polar expedition in 2007. Polar explorer Artur Chilingarov on his return, the North Pole belongs to Russia', and '...we are reclaiming [the Arctic]' (R, 2021). While the planting of the steel flag sparked criticism among other states, it has been recognised that it consisted only in a demonstration of power, as the Canadian Foreign Minister stated: "There is no threat to

Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic ... we're not at all concerned about this mission. Basically it's just a show by Russia." (MacKay, cited in Reuters, 2007). Lavrov outlined how this move had no aggressive intentions, but was a means to prove Russia's legitimate claims in the Arctic, therefore the narrative used did not contain traces of alarming securitization : *"The goal of this expedition is not to stake out Russia's rights, but to prove that our shelf stretches up to the North Pole,"* (Lavrov, in Chivers, 2007).

The words 'conflicts' as related to the Arctic region can be found in public speeches related to the projects aimed at enhancing the military preparedness in 2008: *"After several countries contested Russia's rights [to] the resource-rich continental shelf in the Arctic, we have immediately started the revision of our combat training programs for military units that may be deployed in the Arctic in case of a potential conflict."* (Airborne Forces Lieutenant General Vladimir Shamanov, head of the Defense Ministry's unit for combat readiness, as cited in Atland (2014)). However, the general tone has been marked with a consistent collaborative approach.

In 2010, for instance, a dispute that regarded the maritime delimitations of the Arctic Sea and the Barents region, which had been ongoing for 40 years, was solved during a bilateral agreement with Norway, and highlighted by public discourses of Russian authorities as a crucial step in enhancing regional cooperation (Klimenko, 2014). On the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, public speeches, interviews and press conferences are available throughout the year of the treaty's signature, all of them characterised by a positive outlook towards the future. Russian MFA Spokesman Andrei Nesterenko, for example, described the treaty as a *"tangible breakthrough in bilateral relations"* (Nesterenko, 2010) during an interview given to media questions. Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the view of the future of the area and the consequences of the treaty as crucial in

“maintaining an atmosphere of peace and cooperation” (MFA Information and Press Department Comment, 2010). According to the existing theory on the security dilemma, these years of optimism could be defined as a dormant security dilemma, where two states initially react but do not engage in further measures (Tang, 2009).

However, in the following years, the Russian Federation showed an increase in its activities in the Arctic Region and, whilst still trying to maintain a peaceful approach, the narratives presented tones specifically directed at aimed at answering alleged actions from NATO and the Western countries. In 2012, Lavrov declared:

“[In the Arctic], the situation is not that complicated when it comes to military blocs, which are not there, although some of our partners are persistently trying to call for NATO to come there. We oppose this. We believe that such a step will be a very bad signal to militarize the Arctic, even if it is the case that NATO simply wants to come there and get comfortable. Militarization of the Arctic should be avoided by all possible means.” (Lavrov as cited in Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018, p. 395)

In order to justify its military spending and attempts to militarize the Arctic area, Russia began to place more emphasis on perceived threats in its narrative in 2014. These threats were mostly military in nature, and the purpose of this calculated speech was to convince the public that these measures were essential. Simultaneously, Russia's military presence in the Arctic was significantly enhanced as the Northern Fleet was incorporated as an essential part of the Kremlin's armed forces and the Arctic Joint Strategic Command was founded (Rumer et al., 2021). The security dilemma deepened in its military aspect, and public speeches and discourses started to depict Russia as being threatened in the Arctic, with explicit references to the US and NATO. Public speeches added the explicit presence of foreign forces as a threat: therefore, Russia had military interests in the Arctic not only because it consisted as an integral

part of the homeland, but also because it was threatened by the military components of other states. While international cooperation and the need to maintain the Arctic a zone of peaceful interactions between states, traces of securitization can be found as in identifying the military threat posed by the West, in parallel with the military build-up and militarization of Arctic regions.

During a speech delivered at the Seliger Youth Camp in 2014, Putin stated:

“The Arctic plays a very important role for us when it comes to safeguarding our security, because—unfortunately—it is the case that US attack submarines are concentrated there, not far from the Norwegian coast, and I remind you that the missiles they carry would reach Moscow within 15–16 minutes.” (Putin in Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018, p. 398). This speech holds relevance as the threat of being attacked in the very capital of the country is an overstatement, and portrays US submarines as an existential threat not only to Russia in the Arctic, but at the heart of the country.

Similarly, Russian MFA spokesperson Mariya Kakharova commented Norway’s decision to deploy 330 American submarines in Trondheim: *“This decision by the Norwegian government appears to be yet another link in a chain of US-led military preparations that have markedly intensified lately against the backdrop of the anti-Russian hysteria”* (Kakharova in Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018, p. 398). While the relations between Norway and Moscow are not the scope of this thesis, this speech is worthy to be included as it outlines how the US are portrayed as capable of such an act. The narrative is in line with the description of the US as someone whose aggressiveness has to be considered.

In May 2017, President Putin delivered a speech that perfectly fits the definition of security dilemma, outlining, at least in the public discourse, how the Russian Federation is deploying capabilities for defense-only purposes, while the US’s activities in Alaska are “*not just a*

defense system but a part of the nuclear potential removed to a distant area." (Tass, 2017). In the same speech, held at the Fourth international forum The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue, he declared that "*US military activity does represent a threat to us*", after being asked for an explanation of its aggressive behaviour (Putin, 2017).

Nonetheless, Russian narratives have maintained a cooperative approach even after 2014, pledging for a cooperative and pacific Arctic. In 2017, the governmental press released the statement: *(...) this makes it possible to maintain sustained Arctic cooperation, which has been successful despite an unfavorable international situation.*, which summarises the Kremlin's intentions, despite moments of tensions and friction (Allan, 2018, p.11). The change between before and after 2014 can be noticed as the US started being depicted as more threatening and the potential of conflict is not neglected.

Russian discourse over the sense of threat in the Arctic has significantly escalated since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Winkel, 2023). The Arctic has been presented by the Kremlin as being under assault by Western powers, especially NATO, and as a front in the larger fight against Western invasion. The strategic significance of the Arctic is emphasized in this story, not just because of its wealth of natural resources but also because it is an essential military border. Russian authorities and official media have increased their alertness on the supposed aggressive plans of NATO countries in the Arctic, implying that these countries are attempting to compromise Russia's security and sovereignty. With Sweden and Finland joining NATO, the Kremlin has increased the rhetoric and narrative of the Arctic considered as a burning issue for its national security, placing great emphasis on the proximity of foreign military capabilities.

In 2022, tones sharpened in light of the Danish-American defense agreement for the Arctic region. While concluding with what might seem a pledge for peace and cooperation, in a

commentary by the Russian Ambassador to Denmark, it is highlighted how, the agreement of deploying US weapons in Greenland, might be “*drawing Greenland into a confrontation with Russia*” (Barbin, 2022)

In July 2023, a press transcript was released from the MFA on the results of the NATO summit in Vilnius, “*NATO is trying to bring military confrontation in the Arctic*”, clearly identifying the military threat existing in the region and addressing its responsible, namely NATO and its enlargement (*Press Release on the Results of the NATO Summit in Vilnius July, 2024*). Likewise, NATO has been identified as a threat in many public discourses that justify Russia’s engagement in the High North, as highlighted by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in 2022. After a meeting with the Board of the Ministry of Defence, he stated that NATO’s expansion in the North will provoke a reaction by the Russian’s Armed Forces, and “*retaliatory measures*” such as “*an appropriate grouping of troops in Northwest Russia*” will be taken (Shoigu in Nilsen, 2022).

The Armed Forces and their representative have also voiced their concerns and contributed to the securitization and the construction of threats in the Arctic region. In December 2023, Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, at the opening of the International Arctic Forum, stated that the Navy presence and efforts in the country consist of a ‘*forced reaction*’ against the aggressive behaviour of other states, pointing at the US as they are “*trying to contain Russia with (...) military means*” (Yemenov in Staalesen, 2023).

Traces of the words ‘militarization’ can also be found in official documents published online. For instance, in March 2023, President Putin approved “The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation”, where without clearly mentioning from who the threats are coming from, places great importance in the “*countering the unfriendly states’ policy aimed at*

militarization” in the Arctic region (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2023, under the section dedicated to the Arctic; found in the MFA’s website).

In February 2024, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, in a public briefing transcribed on the MFA’s official website, declared:

“The Russian Federation will not leave unanswered the buildup of NATO military capacity on its borders and will take adequate defensive measures to address threats to its national security.” (Zakharova, 2024). On a similar note, Navy Commander in Chief warned about the dual-use of the civilian equipment deployed in the Arctic, praising the Navy’s preparedness in times of need (*Russia Does Not Allow NATO Into the Arctic*, 2023).

The security dilemma, by definition, is regulated both by material and psychological factors (Booth and Wheeler, 2018). Uncertainty about the other’s intentions is exacerbated by the deployment of dual-use weapons, which relate to the definition of ambiguous symbolism, namely, according to the authors, the difficulty/impossibility to distinguish if a weapon is offensive or defensive. In the case of the Russian Federation and the speeches identified, dual-use capabilities deployed by the US and the overall lack of trust contribute to the identification of Western’s military posture as aggressive and likely to have malign intentions.

These speeches offer an overview of the proclamations, comments, and interviews that have been made public over the previous fifteen years, emphasizing a notable shift in language. The conversation has steadily changed from one characterized by a cooperative attitude to one that frames NATO's expansion and the 'Western' countries as a military threat. The tone, which has become more antagonistic than before, represents a break from past attempts at cooperation and shows how geopolitical narratives change in reaction to global events and security concerns, and highlights how threats are socially constructed and how historical events are filtered through rhetoric and narrative.

Traces of securitization in military doctrines

This paragraph is intended to analyse the doctrines and strategic plans of the Russian Federation, in particular the ones after 2014, to trace securitization and analysing its reference to the military domain. The main messages and concepts looked out after are, firstly any reference to the justification of the build-up of military capabilities, secondly, if the tones and words used express an explicit or implicit reference to an existing threat that is menacing Russia. Moreover, in order to analyse the doctrines, particular the work of the NATO Defense College in collecting essays and analysis of the Russian doctrines.

In 2014, NATO's closeness was recognized as a severe danger in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, it is notable that the Arctic is not referenced by name in this context, and the Arctic region is not 'securitized', reflecting the willingness of the Russian Federation to continue cooperation in the region (Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, 2014). Similarly, in the 2015 National Security Strategy, the Arctic is mentioned only 3 times. Firstly, as an area with resources, as a place where private-state partnership must be increased and then as where cooperation is beneficial (Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015).

In October 2020, the Strategy of development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and the provision of national security for the period to 2035 was adopted. This document differs from previous official documents in that it specifically mentions the growing threat of conflict in the Arctic (Mehdiyeva, 2021). In fact, in the section specifically dedicated to the threat of the region, there is a mention to *“ensuring a favorable operational regime in the Arctic zone, including maintaining the combat readiness of groupings of troops (forces) of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and other forces, military units, and agencies to meet current and projected military risks and military threats to the Russian Federation in the Arctic”* (p. 19);

and specifically, one of the main threat is the “*increase of the potential for conflict in the Arctic that requires constant growth in the combat capabilities of the groupings of troops (forces) of the Armed Forces*” (p. 9). The narrative and the language used in this Strategy, aside from these references to threats and conflicts, focuses on socioeconomic and commercial development and prioritizes Russia’s national interests and security, with a clear reference to the need to maintain the Armed Forces’ capabilities modernised and with full operational readiness. This document places importance on the military aspect of the Arctic and has relevance in the case of the securitization of military threats, in order to, according to the document, safeguard Russia’s national security. However, NATO and the United States are not mentioned, and the military is often associated with the need to protect economic interests. It serves for the purposes of this thesis as it outlines the needs to take military actions and increase the military capabilities.

With the Arctic gradually melting, the naval domain has increased its power and importance, therefore naval doctrines are being examined in this paragraph to identify traces of securitization and their extent. In 2017, the Fundamentals of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of naval activities for the period until 2030 adopted a hawkish language in identifying the threat and explicitly named the Kremlin’s antagonists. First, in the “new risks and threats to the national security” section, the first point made is: “*the aspiration of a range of states, primarily the United States of America (USA) and its allies, to dominate on the World Ocean, including the Arctic, and to achieve overwhelming superiority of their naval forces.*” (p. 4) . Moreover, the presence of weapons of mass destruction and foreign capabilities is depicted as an obstacle for the Russian Federation to the full exploitation of the economic benefits in the area (Fundamentals of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of naval activities for the period until 2030, 2017).

In July 2022, the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation was approved by President Vladimir Putin, identified the Arctic region as one of the main directions of Russian policies. It recognised the presence of threats in the region and appointed the Navy to safeguard Russian interests in an area of acknowledged military competition, to counter the “*efforts by a number of states to weaken Russian control*” (Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation, 2022, p.7). NATO and the US are again depicted as a military threat, to the point that the whole document, especially in the Atlantic region, is ‘determined’ by the activities of NATO and its activities aimed at confrontation with the Russian Federation. Vázquez (2023), has warned about the consequences of the use of language to address the West as a military threat which in turn, is likely to feel threatened and increase risk awareness as well as its presence (Vázquez, 2023). Therefore, securitization in the maritime sector occurred and it is present in the naval doctrines. Lastly, traces of the deepening of the security dilemma can also be found in the Russian narrative regarding the Arctic Council. Since its formation, the Arctic Council has been seen as an instrument of international cooperation, as well as the UN framework governing the Arctic. In practically all policies and public speeches, the Kremlin stressed the importance of international cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Even after 2014, the Kremlin’s representative adopted a collaborative attitude, as the 2017’s Lavrov speech at the Arctic Council demonstrated:

“There is no potential for conflict here. International law is reliably protecting the national interests of the Arctic state” (Lavrov, 2017).

In February 2024, the Arctic Council was depicted as an ‘*unfriendly institution to Russia*’ (Zakharova, 2024a), and in the 2023 Strategic Concept unfriendly states are portrayed as limiting Russia’s sovereignty. In the new concept, however, relations outside established common frameworks are privileged, especially with states that adopt ‘*a constructive policy*

towards Russia' Moreover, in February 2023, the Fundamentals of State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035 were amended, with a removal of the paragraphs dealing with international cooperation. Greater emphasis was added concerning bilateral relations, all in accordance with Russian national interest (*Amendments Have Been Made to the Fundamentals of State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035, 2023*). Moreover, the amendment replaced the word 'Arctic' with 'foreign' states in indicating littoral states, as long as Russia's national interests are taken into account (Devyatkin, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Russia's approach changed from constructive engagement to heightened threat perception and securitization. Russia's first attitude to the Arctic was cooperation, as seen by the settlement of long-standing conflicts with Norway and the official declarations and treaties that strongly focused on peaceful cooperation. However, the war in Ukraine, the consequent suspension of activities in the Arctic Council and the enlargement of NATO contributed, according to discourse analysis of the available speeches and talks, to an increase in the feeling of being threatened.

According to the securitization theory analysed in the theoretical background, the case of securitization of the Arctic from Russia fits the criteria envisaged by the Copenhagen School. In the construction of military threats, Buzan defines them as a threat that endangers people's lives and involves the use of force (Stone, 2009) and the analysis of the public discourses used by the Russian Federation displays how the presence of foreign capabilities in the High North is depicted as directly threatening the Russian population. According to Ole Waever, securitization occurs when something is defined as a security problem by the élite and constructed as a threat, and the public audience accepts it. In the case of the military threat in the Arctic, the political elites framed the discourse, which was accepted by the military sphere.

Defining the degree of acceptance of the decision of militarizing the country between the population is hard to define, an examination of the President's speeches and events with Governors of the High North's Regions can outline the fact that the local authorities have accepted the presence of the military, backed by Putin's promises on increasing the wellbeing of the population living there (see, for instance, meetings of the President in the Murmansk region).

The securitization theory, moreover, posits that a move that 'goes beyond politics' has to happen, an extraordinary move performed by the securitizing actor. While identifying a single action from the Russia elite is difficult, there has been a few actions that conform to Putin's securitization of the Arctic. From the years following 2007, major investments have been performed in the Arctic, and military capabilities have been consistently deployed. Moreover, the organization and structure of the Armed Forces (Bolègue, 2019) was renewed to operate in these problematic areas.

Finally, the public speeches confirm the existence of a security dilemma, as the academia framed it. In particular, referring to Wend's definition, a security dilemma occurs when states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions and define their interests in self-help (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2021). In the case of the military aspect of the security dilemma occurring in the Arctic, the military threat of NATO at the northern borders has been constructed by the elite to justify the measures taken or planned to take. Worst-case assumptions have been made of US and NATO's capabilities developed, and the Russian Federation has acted in order to defend its territory in case of an attack.

Some experts think that the likelihood of an escalation in the Arctic is not limited to zero, as the risk of incidents given to the militarization of the area is not improbable to happen (Tingstad et al., 2022). On the other side, the opposite point of view posits that there will be no spillover

of the conflict in Ukraine in the Arctic (Borozna, 2024) and highlights how, despite rearmament and strong declarations, the risk of an escalation is being avoided by the European and NATO allies (Raspotnik, 2024). Therefore, the SD still has potential to be mitigated and, in this case for the Kremlin, to de-securitize the military threats in the Arctic and to make choices.

To conclude, the military sector of security in the Arctic has undergone a process of securitization, which has been proved by public discourses mostly after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In fact, if the 2014 crisis in Crimea and tensions in the continent managed, with some frictions, to keep the Arctic a zone of cooperation, 2022 marked a shift into a more direct and warlike behaviour. As noted in both the speeches and doctrines, Russia feels militarily threatened and plans to respond accordingly.

United States securitization of the Arctic region

This chapter focuses on the securitization of the Arctic region by the United States. It aims to assess the extent of the securitization and how it affected the security dilemma in the North Pole. To assess how the military threats in the Arctic were socially constructed through discourse, the speeches will be divided into timeframes according to the government at the time. Therefore, starting from the Obama Presidency (2009-2017), followed by Trump's one (2017-2021) and ending with Biden's Office (2021 - present), the discourses will be classified about the mention of military threats. Then, military policies and references to the Arctic will be considered. Less academic and secondary sources are available compared to the Russia's case study, therefore this section will rely mostly on primary sources.

To summarize the main data used as well as the findings, this graph represents the main documents used and how the Arctic has been addressed. Divided by the President on Office, the findings will reveal a pronounced identification of threats by the Trump's administration,

while Biden’s entourage showed some signs of willingness to moderate the aggressiveness of his predecessor’s rhetoric.

Date	Type	Type	Classification	Note
Obama (2013)	Doctrine	National Strategy for the Arctic Region	No mention	No mention of military threats
Obama (2015)	Speech	Papp's press release	Cooperation	No perception of threats
Trump (2019)	Speech	Pompeo's speech	Threat	Direct threat / Russia pointed as aggressive
Trump (2019)	Doctrine	Report to Congress	Threat	Direct threat for homeland due to Russian capabilities
Trump (2019)	Speech	Pompeo's speech in Finland	Threat	Arctic as the new South China sea
Trump (2019)	Speech	Trump in Alaska	Threat	America's first line of defense // need for military equipment
Trump (2019)	Doctrine	Fiscal Year 2020	Threat	Russia as a revisionist power
Trump (2020)	Doctrine	Air Force Arctic Strategy	Threat	Defensive capabilities used for offensive purposes
Trump (2021)	Doctrine	Strategic Approach for the Arctic Homeland Security	Threat	Undeniable threat due to defense capabilities
Biden (2021)	Doctrine	"Regaining dominance in the Arctic"	Threat	Alaska as a first line of conflict
Biden (2021)	Speech	US-Russia summit in Geneva	Cooperation	Positive outcome
Biden (2022)	Doctrine	National Strategy	Priority	Russia aggressive behaviour / willingness to engage but cautiously
Biden (2022)	Doctrine	National Strategy for the Arctic Region	Threat	Cooperation is unforeseeable

Biden (2022)	Speech	US Northern Command	Threat / signs of willingness to moderate	Challenge to homeland defense
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Obama and the environment as a national priority

Under Obama’s administration, the issue of the militarization of the Arctic was largely left out of the political agenda, preferring to focus on other issues. He recognized the implications of the Arctic in matters of national security but did not address any threats in the region coming from Russia or China. In 2013, President Obama approved the National Strategy for the Arctic Region where, even under the section dedicated to the US’s Security Interests, there is no reference to military build-up and concentration of forces in Alaska. The issues linked with military securitization of the Arctic are recognised, but a collaborative approach is adopted: *“Being too aggressive in taking steps to address anticipated future security risks may create the conditions of mistrust and miscommunication under which such risks could materialize. There is some risk that the perception that the Arctic is being militarized may lead to an “arms race”.* (Arctic Strategy, 2013, p.13). The Strategy further highlights the benefits of trust-building measures such as enhanced transparency of military operations and joint exercises.

In September 2015, the Governor of Alaska Bill Walker told President Obama that: *“It’s the biggest buildup of the Russian military since the Cold War. They’re reopening 10 bases and building four more, and they’re all in the Arctic, so here we are in the middle of the pond, feeling a little bit uncomfortable with the military drawdown.”* (Walker as cited in Bennet and Hannigan, 2015). However, no traces of securitization in the military domain can be identified throughout Obama’s Presidency. To sum up Obama’s whole approach towards military threats

in the Arctic (even after 2014's crisis), Barack Obama's envoy for the region Robert Papp stated in a press conference in 2015:

"The military buildup that I have seen does not seem to be at the level of the time of the Soviet Union (...) But once again those things can be used for dual purposes. They can be used for military operations, or they can be used for search and rescue (...) I am not alarmed by anything that I have seen." (Goldenberg, 2015). Obama's only concern regarding the Arctic region concerned environmental matters, and in the majority of speeches and press releases transcribed during the Obama administration, the words climate change and threat are associated, referring to a global problem that is directly menacing the US homeland ("*Climate change is an urgent and growing threat to our national security*", National Security Strategy, 2015, p.12).

Trump and the Arctic as an arena of competition with Russia and China

While the Arctic held particular importance for Obama, Trump's references to it in public speeches and discourses are initially scarce and hard to detect. Orttung and Weingartner (2019) stated that the only reference to the Arctic of the former President was "... *it is necessary to increase security in the Arctic*" (Trump as cited in Orttung and Weingartner, 2019, p.4). However, the Administration's concerns towards the perceived threats in the region gradually increased. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, at an Arctic Council meeting, stated:

"We're concerned about Russia's claim over the international waters." Then, he added: "*These provocative actions are part of a pattern of aggressive Russian behavior here in the Arctic. (...) We know Russian territorial ambitions can turn violent.*" (Pompeo, 2019).

In 2019, the Ministry of Defense updated the Arctic Strategy and placed great emphasis on Russia's military threats to the US homeland, mentioning Russian long-range bombers and cruise missiles (Report to Congress, 2019, p. 9). The Strategy also stated that US's Ministry of

Defence could be, directly or indirectly, constrained to engage more to confront Russia and China, and will act globally (Europe and the Indo-Pacific are mentioned).

Similarly, in a transcript reported by the White House entitled *Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of the Republic of Finland in Joint Press Conference*, former President Trump declared “*and, as you know, there are other people coming into the Arctic, and we don't like it. And we can't let it happen, and we won't let it happen.*” In the same year, Secretary of State Pompeo backed Trump’s view and compared the Arctic to the South China Sea, adding that the administration aims: “*to heighten the awareness of the security threats that China and Russia pose in the Arctic region...this increasing risk that China and Russia will choose to militarize this place and use it for their own national security advantage...*” (Trump, as cited in Pincus, 2019). Pompeo’s focus on military matters was reiterated in Finland, where an article published by the Guardian reported:

“Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims? (...) On the security side, partly in response to Russia’s destabilizing activities, we are hosting military exercises, strengthening our force presence, rebuilding our icebreaker fleet, expanding Coast Guard funding, and creating a new senior military post for Arctic Affairs.” (The Guardian, 2019).

In 2019, in a speech delivered in Alaska, Donald Trump focused only on economic and military issues. He justified the increasing budget for military purposes in Alaska: “*the generals are going to be very happy when they hear because it’s going up yet again, because we have no choice. You know, I’m a cost cutter but we have no choice. Without a military, what do we have? We have to have a great military.*” (Trump, 2019). He then continued by praising the military to protect ‘America’s first line of defense’, and deterring attacks. The speech, while not mentioning directly Russia, securitises Alaska in the way it outlines the paramount importance to have a strong military presence, ready to protect Alaska, and by extension, the

entire homeland. The speech was delivered in a way to praise and justify the equipment Trump has given, and talking directly to military personnel, took the responsibility for the military spending (“*at my very strong urging*”), outlining how great America is (Trump, 2019). 2019 marked a decisive year in the defense spending in the US. In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, the Arctic is mentioned 89 times, which is a significant increase compared to the 20 times of the 2018’s same document. The bill provides a collection of all the speeches from Military and Governmental representatives that depict Russia as a revisionist power. Great emphasis in the document is placed on the need to “*to show the commitment of the United States to this emerging strategic choke point of future great power competition*” (p. 654) and pledged for further engagement in the identification of strategic ports in Alaska and in the funding of equipment for risk awareness and homeland defense.

In 2020, following the trend of increased prioritisation of the Arctic region, Donald Trump issued a memorandum expressing the need for a polar security icebreaking fleet to “*retain a strong security presence*” (Trump, 2020). In July, the Department of Air Force, published the Arctic Strategy, where the American homeland is defined as being threatened by great power competitors (implying Russia and China). On the military side, Russia is regarded as a threat because, to protect Moscow’s interests, it might “*leverage ostensibly defensive capabilities for other purposes.*” (p.6).

Shortly before Biden’s inauguration speech, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security published the Strategic Approach for the Arctic Homeland Security. In the strategy outlined, Russia and China are considered security threats: “*China’s and Russia’s coercive actions, their attempts to undermine our alliances and partnerships, and their aggressive military modernization efforts pose an undeniable threat to global security and prosperity*” (p. 10) and

then proceeded: *“Left unchallenged, Russia and China will continue malign activities in the region to further their insular agendas and desire for dominance in the Arctic Region.”* (p. 13).

To summarize, the Trump’s presidency has been marked by an increase in the narrative of the US being threatened by the Arctic in terms of military force.

Biden and the war in Ukraine

Biden’s Presidency has been characterized by an increased attention on the Arctic region. As regards this research, Biden’s social construction of threats is fundamental in this research, as it overlaps the 2022 outbreak of the Russian aggression of Ukraine and the consequent NATO enlargement.

In 2021, the US Army published “Regaining dominance in the Arctic”, Russia (along with China” are clearly identified as a military threat: *“seek to use military and economic power to gain and maintain access to the region at the expense of US interests”* (p.15). In the foreword of the strategy, the military aspect of the Arctic region is clearly securitised, to the point that it is described as *“a line of attack in conflict”*. However, a US-Russian summit held in Geneva in 2021 produced more positive outcomes regarding cooperation. In the transcript available, Biden outlined that the two leaders discussed how to ensure that the region remains a zone of *“cooperation rather than conflict”* (Schreiber & DeGeorge, 2021).

In 2022, the Biden administration published 2 strategies that mention the Arctic as regards its military component. In the National Security Strategy, the US identifies Russia’s military posture as an aggressive behaviour, which has created the risk of an *“unintended conflict”* (National Security Strategy, 2022). The rhetoric and the narrative presented maintained a peaceful tone, with the acknowledgement that, even if the US engagement will increase, it will do it cautiously, avoiding the risk of escalation.

In 2022, the National Strategy for the Arctic Region was published, which mentioned international cooperation as unforeseeable in the near future. Stating that Russia's war in Ukraine has major ripple effects, the strategy put security as the main US priority in the High North. It envisaged an increased military presence *"in support of our homeland defense, global military and power projection, and deterrence goals"* (p.9). The strategy holds relevance as it officially states a connection between Arctic's dynamics and Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine and plans to enhance capabilities to *"deter threats to the U.S. homeland and our allies"* (National Strategy for the Arctic Region, 2022, p. 3).

Moreover, the US Northern Command's transcripts date up to 2021, and clearly mention Russia under the threat section: *"Russia presents a persistent, proximate threat to the United States and Canada and remains the most acute challenge to our homeland defense mission. Russian leaders seek to erode our influence, assert their regional dominance, and reclaim their status as a global power through a whole-of-government strategy that includes information operations, deception, economic coercion, and the threat of military force."* (General Glen VanHerck, 2021).

However, as Raikov's suggested in an article published in 2021, the US military has expressed its view of having to carefully mitigate the risk of unintended consequences of the military build-up, showing the willingness to mitigate the SD and preventing it to escalate.

A closer look at Governor Dunleavy's official database of public discourses it is clear that, despite being associated with different political colours, his statements are in line with the White House concerns. In February 2023, in a press release entitled 'Defense assets must reflect Alaska's role as frontier outpost against threats', he outlined the strategic importance of Alaska due to its geographical location. Then, after listing some examples of Russia's disrespect of

traditional rules in the Arctic highlighted the threat posed by unarmed vehicles as the “*new emerging threat*” for the US, as well as Russia and China’s projections of naval power. This press release is important when analysing the security dilemma and its deepening, as the governor mentioned that cooperation between the Kremlin and Beijing is strengthening since the war in Ukraine and pledged to increase their cooperation in the Arctic. He ended his statement by proposing the reopening of the Adak Naval Base, repeating that it would be a consequence of naval cooperation between the two ‘others’ (Dunleavy, 2023).

As the Kremlin identifies the combination US-NATO as a threat, the United States started considering China, being a close Russian ally, as a military threat in the Arctic. Similarly to Russia’s suspicions about the duality of foreign activities in the polar sea, the US are suspicious about the other’s intentions. In the 2022’s Strategy for the Arctic Region, China is addressed as a security threat given the “*scientific engagements to conduct dual-use research with intelligence or military applications in the Arctic*” (National Strategy for the Arctic Region, 2022, p. 6). The military sector shares this concern, with the NORTHCOM Chief stating that “*And then I expect to see air activity in the Alaska part of the Arctic as soon as this year potentially. It’s a very big concern of mine.*” He stated that he believes that the Chinese’s scientific missions are hiding a military component. (Hitchens, 2024).

Conclusion

To conclude, the security dilemma in terms of the military sector deepened in parallel with the degradation of the relations worldwide. The language used indicates a major securitization of the region, and the potential for conflict as a direct threat to the homeland has been clearly mentioned in recent documents.

Even if the words ‘existential threat’ are not specifically mentioned in the public speeches and doctrines available, the tones used and the choice of language employed showcase the fear and uncertainty as regards the other’s actions. The military threat in the Arctic has been securitised (except from Obama’s Presidency, when environmental issues were the only threats considered), and there is room for debate to argue about the measures taken. The US have incremented their presence in Alaska and major military exercises are conducted, and in 2022 the 11th Airborne Division was reactivated (Bye, 2024). Securitization is assessed as the measures taken are the result of a narrative that describes the military threat as impacting the homeland.

As regards the degree of approval by the audience, it varies on the Presidents in Office and to whom the rhetoric was addressed. Trump’s focus on the economy and military rivalry in the Arctic has been criticised by many local representatives of Indigenous communities: “*People are coping with the loss of their history, places where they could reliably hunt and gather food, their burial sites,*” (Brubacker cited in Milman, 2017). However, the speeches and the narrative, alongside with the measures taken, satisfied the local élite that continued to support his instances. Biden, while changing the environmental-related aspects of Arctic policies, continued with the military engagement, in the region, highlighting how the Russian threat is consolidated and has become an integral part of US’s policy.

Comparison between the findings

This final chapter is intended to compare the findings between the US and Russia and to provide a final assessment of the aim of this research. Expecting to find increased traces of securitization in public speeches and military doctrines, the previous chapters have analysed

the increase in the aggressiveness of language and the identification of threats as ‘existential’, and affecting the homeland security. The theory of securitization posits that national security is not naturally provided to policy-makers, but it is an artifact constructed by actors as an extreme threat to be dealt urgently (Eroukmanoff, 2018), and has been applied to the Russian and US policies and public speeches from around 2007 onwards. Challenging the notion of Arctic exceptionalism, this thesis sought to assess the degree of securitization of the High North by the two powers, and expected an increase of threats and fear after the 2014 crisis in Europe. As regards the Russian case, traces of securitization can be found. The US and NATO are depicted as a military threat, and the language used in public speeches and discourses has significantly changed after 2014. The 2010 settlement of the dispute showcased how military means, even if already on site, were not even an option in settling misunderstandings, and how the Russian Federation, at least in the narrative used, prior 2014 maintained a peaceful approach aimed at not escalating tensions. After 2014, however, Putin’s arguments increased. The High North started being depicted as directly linked with national security (see, for instance, Putin’s direct remarks on US submarines), but strategic doctrines still maintained a door open for international cooperation, at least in the narrative and the choice of language used. After 2022 the situation clearly escalated with the choice of words ‘confrontation’ and ‘conflict’ The fact that the Russian Federation has increased its military build-up in the region can be seen as the result of a process of securitization, as means to tackle the threat have been implemented.

The following tab aims at summarizing the changes evolving over time. Securitization is taken into account, and to describe the period where the military threats in the Arctic were not securitised (in this case, the main marker is the perception of an existential threat), the concept of politicization is used. As Buzan et al. (1997) argued, politicization refers to the process of putting an issue at the forefront of the political agenda, something that needs to be addressed and handled.

	Politicization	Securitization
early 2000s - 2014	Arctic as a priority // no consistent reference to military imminent threats	
2014 - 2022		Growing mistrust // threats identified
2022 - onwards		Existential threat to the homeland

One issue that stands out of this classification is the difference between post 2014 and post 2022 and how the social construction of threats influenced the deepening of the security dilemma from the Kremlin's perspective. Among the scholars that have dealt with securitization, the case of the Russian Federation particularly applies to the theory envisaged by Amir Lupovici. Lupovici (2021) posits that securitization consists of a process of multiple speeches and applied the securitization theory to the so-called 'dual-use security dilemma'. He argued that first, actors act to socially construct a threat stemming from dual-use technologies, and later make the decision to securitize it or not. They consider the benefits that can derive from securitizing it and, at the same time, aggravate the ongoing security dilemma. Moreover, the constructivist approach of the security dilemma posits that, once having recognised the duality of a particular technology, enunciators might point out the strategic threat and define it 'existential'. Once having done it, the insecurity generated will reinforce the spiral dynamics and reinvigorate the security dilemma (Lupovici, 2021).

In the case of the Russian Federation, 2010 marks a year of cooperation and optimism about the Arctic's status. Even if experts mark 2007 with the beginning of politicization of the region (Conley & Merlino, 2020), the discourse analysis conducted showed how Russian élites started securitizing the foreign military's equipment and capabilities in the region from 2014 both in speeches and official documents, with a peak after the invasion in Ukraine. This trend complies as well with the definition of the constructivist security dilemma, where threats and perceptions

play a significant role in the creation of uncertainty. Therefore, the duality of the military capabilities started being questioned, and the threat started being felt as imminent.

To conclude, it is possible to say that global dynamics have influenced the way the Kremlin has perceived threats and choose to securitize them in the aftermath of Crimea’s invasion in 2014.

In the United States’ case study, the security dilemma has deepened differently. In fact, Obama’s administration has deliberately chosen not to securitize the Arctic. Applying Lupovici’s theory of the securitization of the SD to the Obama’s administration, it is noticeable how Obama deliberately choose to securitize the environmental threats in the Arctic in place of military issues. Furthermore, President Trump and Biden have started identifying Russia (and China)’s military presence in the Arctic as threatening and worthy of attention. However, even if during Biden’s Presidency securitization occurred, there have been signs of mitigating the SD.

	Obama	Trump	Biden
Securitization		Identification of threats for the Homeland	Concern of Russian activities as directly threatening the Arctic
Politicization			
No/little trace	Climate change and environment as the only security threat		

These findings comply with the notion of importance of the social construction of threats in the SD. The drastic shift between Obama and Trump’s narrative is an example of how threats are a result of the expression of intersubjective thoughts in a given securitizing actor. The most

interesting finding is that the change in perspective did not depend solely on the course of international events but depended on the setting and prioritization of the political agenda. Obama's administration, even if it stretched until 2017, continued seeking to achieve its goals and did not securitize the Arctic in military terms. Trump and Biden's administrations, on the other side, have depicted Russia's activities in the Arctic as a national security issue.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research has shown how the security dilemma is affected by threats and perceptions, and how historical events play a role when undergone a process of fuelling insecurities and the social construction of threats. Starting with the Russian Federation and conducting a qualitative analysis of the speeches and doctrines available from 2007 (the year used as a benchmark for Russia's activities in the Arctic), focusing in 2014 and 2022 as major years, where a change was expected. Starting from 2014 securitization is identified as both the élite's discourse and the doctrines identify a threat and envisage measures to counter it, but still room for international cooperation is envisaged to keep the Arctic peaceful. With 2022, the securitization of the Arctic increased, in parallel with the security dilemma. With little to zero dialogue between the parties, the feeling of being threatened by US/NATO's closeness increased. As regards the US, on the other hand, the major change in the narrative occurred after Obama's Presidency, when the focus on what threatens the national security shifted from climate change to the necessity to increment the military expenditures and the capabilities deployed.

This study emphasizes how the language used is fundamental in the creation of threats, and how politicians have the choice to construct the menace. Contrary to the realist view of the

security dilemma as an inherent feature of the international system, the theory of securitization shows that the threats are socially constructed, and how politicians have the choice to mitigate the security dilemma. To answer to the initial research question, “*How does securitization in the Arctic region affect the security dilemma?*”, the main takeaway of this work is that threats, perceptions and the lack of dialogue contribute to the deepening of the SD. It outlines how threats are constructed and the role played by fear and lack of trust. Dual-use capabilities are at the centre of warfare and fear and supposition of the ‘adversary’s use of them are a key element in choosing whether or not securitize a certain geographical region. While the transfer of findings of this thesis is not completely possible, it increases the applicability of the theory of securitization. In fact, it showed how historical events are not directly influencing the SD, but it depends on the actor’s choices and how they construct threats. In this work, securitization is intended as a combination of processes, and regrouping them by time frames and years has given an understanding of how the élite framed the threat.

As mentioned before, this research has some limitations. First, the difficulty to assess the exceptionality of the measures taken. Therefore, it focused mostly on the narrative and use of language by élites. One point of departure for future analysis could be a deeper comparison between the military assets deployed and to see if they reflect the choice of words used in the public narrative. Starting from a preliminary assessment that could be derived from this thesis, it would be used as a hypothesis to find congruence between psychological factors and the subsequent ‘material’ response. Another limitation of this work is that the personal bias of the author is challenging to completely avoid. Although taking into account two different cases limits the degree of not being objective, it almost impossible to limit it to zero. However, checking multiple sources with different points of view limited the subjectivity of the research.

To conclude, while the war in Ukraine and geopolitical tensions mark the perception of the need to reinforce military capabilities, climate change is already posing existential threats first to the local communities, and then to the rest of the globe. The security dilemma should be addressed not only because of mitigating the risks of a war, but also to restore scientific cooperation. To summarize the importance of the Arctic, Kumi Naidoo said: “*You know how they say, 'What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas?' What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic.*”

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