

High North - low tension?

A case study of the Norwegian-Russian bilateral relation in
the Arctic through the theoretical lens of securitisation

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Abstract

The High North has gained a top priority position on the Norwegian political and security agenda in a context of the Arctic region's growing geopolitical importance. As a result of this, Norway deems that it is 'necessary' to maintain close bilateral relations with Russia as some issues in the Arctic region can only be solved through bilateral cooperation. However, this important bilateral dimension to Norway's High North policy is to a large degree dependent on how Russia gets along with NATO, the European countries and the US. This thesis is carried out as an idea analysis of the Norwegian government speeches and statements stretching from 2008 to 2014. The speeches are analysed through the theoretical lens of securitisation with the aim to determine if Russia's actions in international relations are representing a threat to the organisational stability of the bilateral relations. Three dimensions were analysed: the legal framework, issues in the Arctic region solved through a bilateral approach and the climate of cooperation. The results showed signs of a securitisation-move that can be traced back to Russia's actions.

Key words: Securitisation, political threats, bilateral relation, Russia, High North
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Table of contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Problem definition and research question	2
1.2 Organisation of the study.....	2
2 Theoretical framework	3
2.1 Copenhagen school and the origins of securitisation theory	3
2.2 Securitisation theory	3
2.2.1 Securitisation	3
2.2.2 Politicisation and securitisation-move.....	4
2.3 Analytical sectors and political security	5
2.4 Securitisation of bilateral relations	6
3 Methods and material	7
3.1 Bilateral relations: a case study of securitisation	7
3.2 Idea analysis	7
3.3 Idea analysis and securitisation theory	8
3.4 Material.....	8
3.5 Analytical strategy.....	9
4 Analysis.....	12
4.1 Overview Norwegian- Russian bilateral relations in the Arctic.....	12
4.1.1 Russian flag in the North Pole and Russian intervention in Georgia.....	13
4.1.2 Maritime delimitation Treaty between Norway and Russia.....	13
4.1.3 Russian intervention in Ukraine	13
4.2 Analysis of official speeches and statements	14
4.2.1 2008	14
4.2.2 2010	16
4.2.3 2014	18
5 Conclusion	20
5.1 Results	20
5.2 Conclusion.....	22
6 References	24
Material used in the analysis:	25

1 Introduction

The Arctic region ¹ is changing and has throughout the past decade gained growing political attention, notably due to the increasingly visible consequences of climate change and the changing geopolitical dynamics of the area. The USGS's (US Geological Survey) estimate that the Arctic region is likely to hold around 25% of the world's undiscovered hydrocarbon reserves, has sparked a debate about new economic opportunities in the region (Wilson Rowe 2013: 72-73).

Being an important Arctic coastal state with significant hydrocarbon reserves, Norway is actively engaged in Arctic politics. In fact, in the context of the "new" emerging Arctic and the region's increasing geopolitical importance, the High North was brought to the top of the Norwegian political agenda in 2005. From 2008, it became the centre of attention for Norwegian security and defence policy (Sigurd Hilde 2014: 93). Indeed, Norway distinguishes itself from other Arctic countries ² as unique in regards to the extensive amounts of political capital invested in Arctic relations as well as the central position Arctic politics and security issues occupy in the national debate (Wilson Rowe 2013: 72).

The country is actively engaged in various forms of multinational Arctic organisations such as the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (Bergman-Rosamund 2011: 16,20). However, several key political, economic and military issues in the Arctic region are insufficiently or not treated by these multinational political forums, which are set up to tackle emerging challenges in the region. Thus, considering that many issues in the Arctic can only be solved through bilateral cooperation, an important dimension of Norway's High North policy consists of maintaining and developing close bilateral relation with its northern neighbour Russia (Wilson Rowe 2013: 73).

The two countries have successfully resolved issues in the Arctic region and the cooperation has throughout the years remained at a relatively good level despite challenges. However, Norway has made it clear that this bilateral relation and the maintenance of this important dimension of Norway's High North policy, is to large degree dependent on how Russia gets along with the US, the European countries and NATO. In the context of Russian assertiveness and implication in recent events in international relations, Russia's relations with NATO and the EU have become strained (Hilde 2014: 100). The question is how this is

¹ The Arctic region is referring to the area north of the Arctic Circle (66°33'N) (Bergman-Rosamund 2011: 14)

² The eight Arctic countries are represented by the eight states within the Arctic Circle, referring to the five Nordic States (Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland), Russia, Canada and the USA. All these possess Arctic territories but only five countries are Arctic Coastal States (Russia, Canada, the USA, Denmark and Norway) (Wilson Rowe 2013: 72)

affecting Norway's cooperation with Russia in the Arctic. Could Russia's actions in international politics threaten this interdependent Arctic bilateral relation?

1.1 Problem definition and research question

This thesis aims to contribute to previous studies on Russian-Norwegian bilateral relations and the study of political threats through the theoretical lens of securitisation. To achieve this, this study will analyse how different actions derived from Russian assertiveness might affect the cooperation; the aim is to investigate the importance attributed to these relations and the importance of their survival. Indeed, Norwegian-Russian cooperation has been presented as a relation of considerable importance to the Norwegian government and as a necessity to solving common issues in the Arctic region (Arctic Strategy 2006).

Furthermore, this study will analyse the concept of securitisation and how it can be applied to the study of political threats towards other referent objects than the state, which has been the core of previous security studies. Bearing in mind that a political structure such as international law can be threatened (Buzan et al. 1998: 144), this thesis was inspired to study how a bilateral relation could potentially be perceived as a referent object.

Hence, the questions that this thesis aims to answer are therefore the two following:

How has Russia's assertiveness affected cooperation with Norway in the Arctic region?

To what extent can a securitisation-move of political threats towards the bilateral relations be identified?

1.2 Organisation of the study

Chapter 2 will start with an introduction to the theoretical framework of securitisation as well as its origins and roots in social constructivism. Following this, the theory of securitisation will be discussed and situated in the context of security studies. The thesis will then proceed with a theoretical discussion of political security and political threats and will give an overview of previous studies on bilateral relations analysed in context of the securitisation theory. Chapter 3 dealing with the methodological framework of this thesis, will begin with a discussion about the methodological implications and concerns of an idea analysis followed by a discussion concerning the methods of an idea analysis and its compatibility with securitisation theory. Furthermore a discussion about the material chosen as empirical ground for this thesis will be brought to attention, followed by the analytical strategy of the study. Chapter 4 represents the analysis of this thesis, which is based on official speeches and statements from the Norwegian government. The results of the analysis will be discussed in Chapter 5 with the ambition to answer the research questions of this thesis.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Copenhagen school and the origins of securitisation theory

The field of security studies is animated by a debate between those advocating a “narrow” take on security and those arguing for a “wider” security view. The traditionalist and military-focused view on security associated with the “narrow perspective” is challenged progressively during and to large extent after the Cold war (Buzan et al. 1998: 2-4). A discussion whether the concept of security should include a wider range of political issues other than strictly military security issues has found large support in an era of increasing globalisation. Indeed, globalisation has fuelled a growing political interaction among various political actors, which has eventually blurred the distinction between national and international security policies. Security “wideners” are therefore arguing for a security perspective that includes a wider range of actors and that is clearly challenging the traditionalist perspective. Furthermore this has led to questions concerning what should be considered as a security threat (Hough 2013: 2). Overall Buzan, Waever and de Wilde’s theoretical framework for studying security takes the traditionalist position into account but includes it in a wider security agenda where a broader range of different threats are taken into consideration (Buzan et al. 1998: 2-4).

The Copenhagen School’s development of the concept of securitisation and the outcome of their securitisation theory is said to be the result of a merger between two central theoretical concepts within the realm of security studies: Barry Buzan’s concept of different security sectors and Ole Waever’s concept of securitisation (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015: 92). The theory has a strong anchoring in social constructivism, pointing out that security and security threats are the products of social interaction. Further, the process of securitisation is essentially inter-subjective according to the scholars associated with Copenhagen school (Buzan et al. 1998: 30).

2.2 Securitisation theory

2.2.1 Securitisation

Securitisation refers to a process throughout which an issue is presented as a security threat to a designated referent object, therefore making the issue securitised. Hence, the core of the securitisation theory relies on how a security issue is framed through a speech act, sometimes in contrast to how the security threat actually occurs.

“Thus, the exact definition and criteria of securitisation is constituted by the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects” (Buzan et al. 1998: 25).

In order for a political issue to be perceived as a security issue, certain requirements have to be met. According to Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, what leads to securitisation is the representation of an *existential threat* towards a designated *referent object* in a *speech act*. By moving a security issue from being politicised towards being securitised, one gives the issue a sense of urgency and a superior character, leading for instance to legitimising the use of extreme measures in order to prevent a negative development. The superior character of a securitised issue and the means put at disposal to prevent a further threatening development is what differentiates a securitised issue from a politicised one. The issue can be perceived as being moved from “low politics” to “high politics”, giving the issue its superior character. Further, what is to be considered as an existential threat, what referent object the existential threat is pointed towards and what security measures are to be undertaken, vary depending on the issue’s character and under which sector it falls under (Buzan et al: 1998: 21).

The actor issuing the speech act is referred to as the securitising actor, which could be an individual or a group. Usually, political leaders, governments, lobbyist or pressure groups represent the securitising actor. What differentiates the securitising actor from the referent object is the “relevant audience”, which the securitising actor is trying to convince to accept the representation of an existential threat towards a designated referent object. A consensus taking form of a certain acceptance between the actor issuing the securitisation speech act and the “relevant public” perceptive to the speech act, is an important requirement for a “successful” securitisation of an issue (Buzan et al: 40-41).

2.2.2 Politicisation and securitisation-move

Presenting something as an existential threat towards a designated referent object through a speech act is a *securitisation-move*. The issue is only securitised when the relevant audience accepts the representation of a security issue as such. It is often easier to distinguish the first part of the securitisation move, which refers to the arguing for existential threats, giving the issue a sense of urgency and emphasising the survival of the referent object. It is however harder to distinguish whether the representation of an existential threat points to specific emergency measures or not. A plausible reason for this could also be the challenge of differentiating emergency measures that are to be undertaken in consideration of how the emergency solution presented might vary from one sector to another (Buzan et al. 1998: 25, 178).

Politicisation on the other side means that the issue is part of the public debate, making the issue appear as a matter of choice, something decided upon that requires government decisions and political resources. The issue involves responsibility (Buzan et al. 1998: 29).

Overall, securitisation can be perceived as the intensification of politicisation. Security is about priority, going as far as elevating the issue to absolute priority.

2.3 Analytical sectors and political security

A central concept within the realm of securitisation theory is that other units than the state can be recognised as referent objects (Buzan et al. 1998: 176). In more traditionalist studies on security, the referent object has always been the state. However, the securitising actor can in theory attempt to construct anything as a referent object by arguing that it is existentially threatened and further accentuating that the referent object has a legitimate claim to survival (Buzan et al. 1998: 36)

The founders of Copenhagen school have identified five different sectors where political, military, societal, environmental and economic security issues are given a special significance. A differentiation between these different sectors has an analytical meaning since they point towards a distinct type of interaction. For instance, the economic sector identifies security issues in regards to interactions related to finance, trade and production whereas the political sector, which will be the focal point of this analysis, refers traditionally to relationships of authority, recognition and governing status.

The five identified sectors are interlinked and interrelated, hence this disaggregation is used to simplify and clarify the analysis of a securitisation process. One must however bear in mind that in order to fully understand the complete security agenda and how the sectors relate to one another, one must reassemble these different parts (Buzan et al. 1998: 7-8). By referring to different types of interaction, the sectors are given a specific analytical status. There is a debate whether sectors should be granted a distinctive ontological status. However, according to Buzan, the sectors serve a simple analytical purpose as the items identified by a specific sector cannot be perceived as independently existent. Further, there is an on-going debate whether the five most commonly identified sectors are the most relevant ones for security studies, or if other sectors should be included in the securitisation realm, challenging the framework of securitisation associated with scholars from Copenhagen School. For instance, some wish to differentiate a legal sector from the sector that will be the focal point of this analysis: the political sector (Albert, Buzan 2011: 415-416, 418).

According to Buzan, the political sector represents the most complex sector to define as he reflects upon how all security issues are somehow political. The act of politicisation is political and within the process of securitisation, threats and measures that are to be undertaken are defined and established politically. Further, all the issues brought to attention by different analytical sectors are becoming the object of a political discussion, hence referring to political-environmental security or political-social security.

Although the complexity in identifying a clear political sector, the identification of political security is necessary. Traditionally, political threats are aimed at the organisational stability of states. It could be threats that undermine or endanger the idea of the state and its organisational and political ideology as well as threats towards political institutions of the

state. Hence, political security would overall refer to the organisational stability of states, systems of governance and the ideologies that give the state or the political system its legitimacy (Buzan et al. 1998: 8, 141- 142). However, bearing in mind that the securitising actor can attempt to construct anything as a referential object, this should also imply that other units beside the state could become the object of a securitisation process. Thus, political security could also refer to the survival of a political structure, processes and institutions, all essential patterns created through interactions among political units (Buzan et al. 1998: 144).

Since the end of the cold war, we are witnessing a rising density in international relations within the international anarchic structure (Buzan 2007: 132). The political impact of this rising density has led to increasing interdependence among states in a vast spectrum of issues, leading eventually to the growth of an international system and the increasing institutionalisation of these relations (Buzan et al 1998: 21-22; Buzan 2007: 132). International regimes and international societies are progressively emerging. Considering that these entities rely on international law and norms, a political threat in this context relates to threats that undermine the system that these international regimes are built on, referring here to rules, norms and institutions. Threats can for instance be pointed towards the European Union as a “supranational” referent object where a threat towards this specific referent object could refer to signs of fragmentation that would undermine the advancing integration process of the European Union (Buzan et al: 1998: 21- 22). The point is that this growing interdependence among nations makes relationships of relational patterns and general structures more “costly to disrupt” (Buzan 2007: 132-133)

“To lead to securitisation, some important principle- and thereby the international or regional political order- has to face an existential threat” (Buzan 2007: 148).

2.4 Securitisation of bilateral relations

The aim of this thesis is to study how the Norwegian-Russian bilateral relations as a referent object could be threatened. Threats in this context refer to political threats undermining or endangering the organisational stability, political order or essential structure that this interdependent bilateral relation in the Arctic relies on. This thesis will take its inspiration from and rely on previous studies from authors who have tried to analyse bilateral relations through the theoretical lens of securitisation. For instance, Cenap Çakmak analysed the bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria in context of the popular uprising in 2011 through the framework of securitisation-desecuritisation. Further, Francois Perreault analysed security issues in the contemporary Arctic through a comparative case study of Norway and Canada through the theoretical framework of securitisation. In his thesis Perreault claims that a securitisation within the political sector in context of the bilateral relations between Norway and Russia can be identified since 2008 (Perreault 2010). This thesis will investigate this claim further by analysing if ideas of securitisation can be identified in official Norwegian speeches selected from 2008, 2010 and 2014.

3 Methods and material

3.1 Bilateral relations: a case study of securitisation

The analysis will be conducted as a comparative case study of securitisation over time by analysing potential threats towards the bilateral relations within three distinct time contexts. The idea is to detect changes over time in the Norwegian governments attempt to securitise political issues in relation to Norway's cooperation with Russia in the Arctic. A case study raises concerns in terms of the case's generalisability, hence a thorough description of the analytical strategy and a discussion linking the theory to the results of the analysis is emphasised (Esaiasson et al. 2012: 109, 159). This enables readers to understand the logic behind the analysis making it possible to reconstruct and question the results of the thesis (Boréus and Bergström 2012: 42-43).

3.2 Idea analysis

The methodological framework of this thesis consists of an idea analysis, which in general aspires to the scientific study of political communications. An idea analysis can take different forms depending on the aim of the research question, which will have certain methodological implications for the study as for its results. The research question can take the form of either a describing or an explanatory question, and in some cases the aim of the study would be to take a stand to the material. However, this distinction doesn't mean that the study can't have a two-folded ambition as long as the main ambition of the study is clear (Beckman 2005: 11,14).

This thesis will mainly aspire to a descriptive purpose with the ambition to describe signs of a securitisation-move in the Norwegian Government's discourse. However, an explanatory purpose will also be included in the analysis as it aspires to find out whether ideas of a securitisation-move can be put in the context of Russia's increased assertiveness in international relations. More specifically, the methodological framework was inspired from the logics of a function-oriented analysis.

The purpose of a mainly describing idea analysis is the analytical reading of texts through a theoretical lens in hope to find underlying ambiguous messages that cannot be seen at first sight (Beckman 2005: 49-50). A function-oriented idea analysis goes one step further and can be defined as the systematic study of political ideas, their origin, how they're spread as well as their consequences. This type of study raises questions of how certain ideas are related to a certain environment and context as the political messages are to be perceived as variables in a

chain of occurrences (Beckman 2005:13). A function-oriented study can take a very broad orientation and it is therefore up to the researcher to determine the delimitations of the study (Vedung 1982: 7). Considering how this thesis will analyse material stretching from 2008 until 2014, a regime change can for instance have an impact on how the government talks about the bilateral relations. However, this thesis will limit itself regarding its explanatory purpose of the thesis by analysing if the distinct ideas of a securitisation-move can be put into the context of Russia's assertiveness in different time contexts and how this affects the cooperation. Further, a function-oriented analysis doesn't seek reasons of justification but reasons of motivation as to why something is said (Vedung 1982: 13).

3.3 Idea analysis and securitisation theory

According to scholars associated with Copenhagen School's securitisation theory, security is a self-referential practise where a security issue is created through social interaction. It is through the denunciation of a security issue through a speech act in contrast to how the threat occurs that creates a security issue. For Buzan et al. the most obvious way to study cases of securitisation is through a discourse analysis where also the historical and social contexts of the discourse are taken into account (Buzan et al. 1998: 24-25, 144).

This study will however investigate a potential securitisation-move through the methodological framework of an idea analysis, which in general refers to the analytical study of political communications (Beckman 2005: 25). The study of discourse is still of central importance, however the social and historical context and how much the analysis will acknowledge these factors will depend on the aim of the thesis. Further, a discourse analysis will look for securitising discourses while an idea analysis will look for ideas that are embedded within the securitisation discourse. This thesis will therefore analyse if ideas associated with securitisation can be identified in the Norwegian governments discourse.

3.4 Material

According to Beckman, all descriptions are in some sense a comparison between the content of one material in relation to another. The idea analysis in this case, which is mainly descriptive, will be studied over time, choosing three empirical points in time structuring the chosen material (Beckman 2005: 52-53). The idea is to study changes in the Norwegian government official discourse regarding the bilateral relations between Norway and Russia from 2008 to 2014 through the theoretical lens of securitisation.

The material was chosen in context of events that are believed to have had an impact on the bilateral relations. Speeches were selected from 2008 to 2014 in context of Russia's actions in Georgia, respectively Ukraine. In 2010 Russia and Norway signed their bilateral Maritime delimitation Treaty, an event that is believed to have had a positive impact on the

relations. Thus it is believed that this should create a contrast between on one side material selected from 2010 and on the other speeches and statements selected from 2008 and 2014.

Selected official speeches and statements from 2008, 2010 and 2014 from either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Defence will be representing the “speech acts” analysed in this thesis. It is important that the material intended for the idea analysis holds a red line or a distinguished theme (Bergström and Boréus 2012: 88). Thus, the documents were all selected according to a specific topic: Norway’s political and security agenda in the High North.

3.5 Analytical strategy

The use of an analytical instrument is imperative to structure the text material chosen for the idea analysis. Further, two distinguished analytical strategies are commonly used in this context: ideal types and dimensions (Beckman 2005: 25). This thesis will rely on the later analytical strategy. By structuring the analysis through a few distinguished dimensions, the purpose is to capture interesting aspects of the text that are of relevance for the analysis. The advantage of using dimensions instead of ideal types is that dimensions are more loosely constructed, allowing a more creative approach (Beckman 2005: 28). The problem with dimensions is however that the analytical framework could appear as being forced onto the material or that the dimensions are the results of the study rather than an independently constructed analytical framework on beforehand. Therefore, a concluding discussion linking the analysis and the research question should be held after the analysis (Bergström and Boréus 2012: 173). Since an idea analysis is carried out through a specific theoretical lens, one has to argue for the interpretation and the results from the text analysis (Beckman 2005: 49-50).

What defines a securitising speech act isn’t the mentioning of the word security but rather the representation of an existential threat and the legitimate use of extreme measures to deal with the issue. Further, the acceptance of the representation of the existential threat by a significant audience is an essential requirement for a “successful securitisation” (Buzan et al. 1998: 27,31). However examining this ‘acceptance’ will not be the object of this analysis. Hence only signs of a *securitisation-move* will be searched for in this analysis.

The analytical framework set up to study the Russian-Norwegian bilateral relations was inspired from the general requirements of a securitisation-move. The first part of a securitisation-move refers to the representation of an issue as existentially threatening and the arguing for the survival of this collective unit. There should also be a sense of urgency attributed this issue. Further, the other part of the securitisation-move refers to distinguishing the legitimate use of extreme measures in dealing with the issue (Buzan et al. 1998: 27). Further, the Norwegian government as a whole will be considered as the securitising actor in this analysis considering how there is a clear governmental strategy for the High North. Hence, individual Ministers will be perceived as representing the government and this strategy.

This general logic will be combined with three dimensions of the bilateral relations that will structure the analysis. This thesis will narrow its analytical lens to the search of political threats towards the bilateral relations of Norway and Russia, hence referring to threats that could undermine the political stability and organisational structure of this highly interdependent relation. Hence, the following three dimensions of the bilateral relations will be the objects of the analysis:

- *The legal framework* referring to an essential political structure regulating interactions between Norway and Russia in the Arctic. This could refer to international law, international norms or Treaties.
- *Political issues* shared and solved commonly through a bilateral approach in the Arctic region.
- *The climate of cooperation* referring to the public national and international debate.

These three dimensions will be analysed through the theoretical lens of securitisation by looking at three dimensions associated with a securitisation-move:

- The identification of an issue impacting the bilateral relation. Is the issue represented as existentially threatening? Is there a sense of urgency and arguing for the survival of the referent object?
- Is the Norwegian-Russian bilateral relation represented as the referent object? Is there a link between the threat and the bilateral relation?
- Is the representation of an existential threat pointing towards specific ‘emergency measures’ and the legitimate use of these?

With the previous guiding analytical dimensions and questions in mind, my analytical framework for analysing speech acts issued by the Norwegian government (from 2008, 2010 and 2014) will take the form of the following structure:

Table 1. Analytical dimensions

<p>Securitisation-move / Bilateral relations</p>	<p>Issues impacting the bilateral relations (Existential threat?)</p>	<p>Bilateral relations-referent object?</p>	<p>Legitimate use of emergency measures?</p>
<p>Legal framework International law, norms, treaties</p>			
<p>Political issues shared and solved commonly in the Arctic region</p>			
<p>Climate of cooperation public national and international debate</p>			

4 Analysis

One of the aims of the study is to investigate whether a potential securitisation-move can be traced back to Russia's assertiveness. Therefore, the material selected for this analysis was chosen in accordance to specific events that are believed to have had an impact on these relations. Hence, an introduction and an overview of these relations as well as these events, precedes the presentation of the result of the idea analysis.

4.1 Overview Norwegian- Russian bilateral relations in the Arctic

In the context of the Norwegian government's High North³ policy and the increasing political attention attributed the Arctic region since 2006, an important dimension has been to maintain and develop close bilateral relations with Russia (Hilde 2014: 97-98). In fact, the Norwegian government emphasises that a number of challenges in the High North can only be dealt with through bilateral cooperation with Russia (Arctic Strategy 2006: 9). By sharing a border and the Barents Sea, Norway's relations with Russia have become a central dimension of Norway's High North policy (Arctic Strategy 2006: 17). For instance, Norway's Arctic Strategy from 2006 recalled that Norway was engaged in extensive fisheries cooperation with Russia. There is also an interest for developing cooperation for the exploitation of petroleum resources in the Barents Sea by engaging in a strategic partnership with Russia on invitation from president Putin. Following the plans of mutual petroleum exploitation, the Norwegian government has also sought to engage Russian authorities, the petroleum industry and social partners from both countries with a view to also cooperating in areas such as health, safety and environmental issues. There is also a bilateral cooperation between Russian and Norwegian Coast guards to ensure coordination of fisheries control in the Barents Sea. Further, Norway and Russia have engaged in an enhanced military dialogue, notably with a view to solving naval incidents (Arctic Strategy 2006: 19-20).

³ In contrast to the 'Arctic' or 'the north', the 'High North' in Norwegian usage is referring roughly to the Barents Sea region and surrounding land areas (Hilde 2014: 93).

4.1.1 Russian flag in the North Pole and Russian intervention in Georgia

The “High North” became the focal point for Norway’s defence and security policy in 2008. Two major events interpreted as signs of Russia’s increasing assertiveness, were the reasons as to why official statement and speeches from 2008 were selected. Firstly, Russia claimed that it planted its national flag on the seabed below the North Pole in July 2007. This symbolic act of rediscovered Russian self-confidence gained significant international attention and was perceived as “provocative ” by large parts of the international community (Hilde 2014: 98-99). This event occurred in 2007 but was to large extent discussed and referred to during 2008.

Secondly, Russia’s intervention in Georgia in August 2008 became an important topic of discussion in international politics. In the context of a long period of deteriorating relations between Russia and Georgia, leading to a diplomatic crisis stretching from April to August 2008, the relations would eventually escalate into an armed conflict. On the night of the 7-8th of 2008, Georgian forces launched a military offensive against Russian and Ossetian separatist groups in hopes of retaking control of South Ossetia. The war lasted five days until Tbilissi conceded defeat and Moscow subsequently recognised the independence of South Ossetia and the region of Abkhazia (Le Monde 2012).

4.1.2 Maritime delimitation Treaty between Norway and Russia

On the 15th of September 2010 the “Treaty Between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation Concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean” was signed. The Treaty was perceived as a milestone after more than forty years of territorial conflicts opposing legal and political obstacles to reaching a solution acceptable to both parties. The Treaty came into force on the 6th of July 2011 and provided both parties with a legal framework concerning maritime border limitations as well as a delimitation of the gas and oil resources in the Barents Sea. In legal terms, neither parties are allowed to exercise or claim any sovereign rights or coastal State jurisdiction in maritime areas beyond the explicit line; any breach of this would undermine the treaty and the agreements that were reached (Arp 2011: 1110-1112).

4.1.3 Russian intervention in Ukraine

Between February and September 2014, Russia took control over Crimea and destabilised eastern Ukraine. The events in Ukraine have divided the international community with the EU and the United States considering Russia’s actions as breaching the existing international legal framework, notably by expanding its own territory to the detriment of a sovereign state. The 2014 events included a contested referendum resulting in Crimea returning to Russia and a separation of eastern Ukraine becoming de facto Russian protectorates (Allison 2014).

4.2 Analysis of official speeches and statements

4.2.1 2008

The High North was presented as the most important strategic priority for Norway in 2008. Following this, former Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre emphasised “*And hence the development of our relations with Russia is a main priority both for our High North strategy and for our foreign policy in general*” (Støre 2008c). Indeed, Russia is depicted as one of the main reasons as to why the High North has gained its top position on the Norwegian policy agenda (Støre 2008b).

Concerning the alleged planting of a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole, the act was perceived as “*a demonstration of a new Russian assertiveness*”. Further, the former minister of Foreign Affairs insists on the fact that the act is symbolic and it is not breaking any rules by referring to Russia as “*sticking to the book*” and respecting the Law of Sea. The message is clear: the act “*did not alter the rules and legal norms*”. This idea is developed further by mentioning how Norway and Russia coincide “*to large degree*” when it comes to their view on legal matters regarding the Arctic region (Støre 2008c).

The Russian intervention in Georgia, which occurred a few months after the planting of a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole, was however perceived as an act in “*breach of international law*”. Russia’s actions in Georgia are raising issues concerning Russia’s management of neighbourly relations and Russia’s respect overall for international law according to Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre. He continues by expressing how Norway may be entering “*a new demanding period*” in their neighbourly relations with Russia in the High North as a consequence of Russia’s transgression of international law by using military force to solve border disputes and how the situation must be taken “*seriously*” (Støre 2008b).

However, the government also emphasises that the bilateral relations have survived previous demanding periods emphasising that however bad the situation is, Norway will still cooperate with Russia in the Arctic region, as this cooperation is a necessity for dealing with specific issues in the region. There is therefore a distinct arguing for the survival of the relations as cooperation with Russia is referred to as a necessity in the region (Støre 2008b).

There is a clear link between Russia’s actions and how they are affecting their bilateral relations with Norway in the High North. Russia’s actions appear as threatening towards the bilateral relations by referring to the plausible entering into a new demanding period with Russia and by referring to the “*seriousness*” of the situation, the matter would appear as urgent. This is followed by the government arguing for the legitimate survival of the bilateral interdependent relation by referring to how some issues are dependent on the survival of these relations. This can be interpreted as an attempt to securitise the issue, hence referring to ideas of a securitisation-move. However, no signs of the likely use of extreme measures to deal with the issue were notified.

As for the shared political issues that are solved commonly in the Arctic through a bilateral approach, former minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre made it clear how energy potential, fisheries and maritime transport issues are all political issues that require cooperation with Russia (Støre 2008a).

Russia and Norway have managed successful cooperation in hopes to end illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the North (Walaas 2008). The cooperation on fisheries management will therefore remain a very high priority to the Norwegian government (Støre 2008b).

Further, the minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, expresses how Norwegian and Russian authorities have managed good cooperative relations in the area of safety at sea involving the preservation of maritime environment. The importance of this issue is emphasised by expressing how *“We can only ensure sustainable use of resources and sound environmental management in the Barents Sea with Russia’s engagement and Norwegian-Russian cooperation”* (Støre 2008b).

Overall no signs of threats to the organisational stability in regards to this dimension were notified. No specific areas of cooperation appear to be threatened.

Norway ascertained that the crisis in Georgia *“must be taken seriously”* and that the ensuing political situation is affecting the climate of cooperation and the public debate to the extent of impacting Norwegian-Russian bilateral relations (Støre 2008a). There is a sense of urgency and an alarming tone by referring to the situation as serious. Russia’s actions in Georgia are deemed to have an impact on the legal dimension but not exclusively. By becoming an important topic of discussion in the public debate, these actions also affect the Norwegian government’s policy and relations to Russia (Støre 2008a). The idea of a complex situation is built up as the government refers to their two-dimensional and asymmetrical relation with Russia: *“one defined by our (Norway’s) position as Russia’s neighbour. And one defined by our position as a member of NATO, and as part of what we still call the West”* (Støre 2008c).

On one side, Russia’s *“assertiveness”* translated by its actions in the Arctic region as well recent events in Georgia, is discussed to a large degree in Norwegian newspapers by referring to a new cold war. These cold war references, which are prominent in both the public Norwegian and international debate are perceived as *“a huge conceptual mistake”* (Støre 2008b). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre is also referring to the cold war allusions as *“alarmist”* and adds *“but I would warn against what at times can appear to be “Russophobia” and Cold-War reflexes in the Norwegian public debate”* (Støre 2008c). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre is also insisting on how the frequent cold war references in the public debate are *“not productive in a time when a number of international constellations are shifting”* (Støre 2008a). In the context of the negative public debate, the Norwegian government emphasised how many issues in the Arctic region *“can only be dealt with in cooperation with Russia”*, hence arguing for the importance as well as the legitimate claim to survival of these relations. Norway will therefore continue developing and strengthening its relation to Russia (Støre 2008b). Seeing how the public debate and the climate for cooperation is affecting Norway’s policy, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs is warning how these cold war-references are alarmist in the context of Norway’s bilateral relation with Russia. Hence, by identifying the cold war rhetoric in the media as a threat, the

Norwegian government is attempting to start a securitisation-process where the referent object is the organisational stability of Norway's relation to Russia.

In addition to the threat that the cold war references represent for the cooperation between Norway and Russia, there is nonetheless a concern for the future of this bilateral relation. As the Jonas Gahr Støre refers to the asymmetric relations that Norway upholds with Russia, he expresses a rhetorical question: "*Could conflict arise between transatlantic solidarity and our neighbourly interest in regard to Russia?*" (Støre 2008c). This is however an issue of concern for the future of these relations. Hence the issue appears as a politicised issue but the situation does not appear as alarming.

4.2.2 2010

"Today Russia is actively engaged in High North and Arctic affairs. But as we perceived the increased level of activity, we also see that they do so in accordance with established norms and international law."(Støre 2010a)

Referring to the "framework" of the Arctic region, Jonas Gahr Støre insists upon how "*borders and international law are important precisely because they define framework conditions*". This idea is pursued by drawing attention to the Maritime Delimitation Treaty between Norway and Russia signed earlier in 2010 (Støre 2010a)

The political structure and legal framework for cooperation in regards to the Norwegian-Russian bilateral relation is expanding. The Treaty on maritime delimitation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean that was signed on the 27th of April is referred to as successful. Although the Treaty hadn't been ratified yet by both sides in 2010, the two neighbours resolved their border dispute by reason of the equal division of the disputed area of 175 000 square kilometres. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre insists on how the Treaty is a good example of how neighbours resolve issues, "*by peaceful negotiation, firmly based on modern principle of international law*". Further, the Maritime Delimitation Treaty is believed to "*ensure clarity and stability with regard to jurisdiction, law enforcement and the management of resources*" (Støre 2010b).

In the context of the Norwegian-Russian Maritime delimitation Treaty, it is believed that this agreement will lead to new possibilities and new areas of cooperation in regards to the management of resources, business activities, welfare and the creation of new jobs (Støre 2010a).

The relative importance of the High North as a growing energy supplier is brought to attention (Faremo 2010). Norway is actively engaged in cooperation with Russia when it comes to exploiting energy resources in the Arctic region. The common development of the Shtokman field north of Russia, through cooperation between the Norwegian company Statoil and the Russian company Gazprom (as well as with the French company Total) is brought to attention. In regards to the exploitation of energy resources, Norway is also committed in the development of common standards and rules for the Barents Sea in regards to the environment, health and safety with its Russian neighbour (Støre 2010b).

Further, the importance of the Russian-Norwegian management of one of the largest remaining fish stocks in the world through an effective common fishery administration and control in the High North is mentioned (Faremo 2010). The Norwegian-Russian extensive fisheries cooperation will continue to be dealt with through a Joint Commission. This agreement is said to “*provide a solid foundation for responsible management with our close neighbour*” (Faremo 2010).

Earlier in 2010, the first joint Norwegian-Russian military exercise for 16 years was launched. The Pomor exercise was referred to as a great success (Støre 2010a). Further, Former Minister of Defence Grete Faremo brought to attention Russia’s increased military activity in the High North referring to increasing patrols of strategic aircrafts and submarines. The High North is portrayed as an area of strategic relevance for Russia’s military for which the operation and defence of the Arctic nuclear assets is one of the main tasks. In the context of Russia’s military activities in the region, the Norwegian government makes clear that Russia’s military activities in the Arctic are not interpreted as hostile. Stating further: “*On the contrary, we want to expand our cooperation with Russia also on military issues. And we want NATO to engage in cooperation with Russia both in the High North and elsewhere*” (Faremo 2010).

In the context of the current and emerging opportunities and challenges in the High North, Norway clearly states that cooperation is key to solving issues in the region. Further, Norway is convinced that it could be faced with unwanted challenges in the region without Russia’s involvement and finds that the NATO-Russian Council (NRC) should be attributed an important role in the region (Faremo 2010).

There is a negative media-discussion concerning the High North and Russia’s intentions in the Arctic region. Former Minister of Defence Grete Faremo reacts to the on-going media-discussion concerning the High North as “*too focused on the potential for conflict*”. In context of article titles such as “*The return of the cold war*” and the “*race for the Arctic*”, the Former Minister of Defence reacts by emphasising that the Norwegian government disagrees with these “*alarmist views*”. Further on, she concludes, “*on the contrary, the region is currently stable and calm and the tension is low*” (Faremo 2010). Both Former Minister of Foreign affairs Jonas Gahr Støre and Former Minister of Defence Grete Faremo are reacting to the conflict-focused media-discussion by referring to the Arctic region in terms of “*High North-low tension*” in all the speeches analysed in 2010.

Further Grete Faremo is emphasising the fact that the Arctic region is an area of low tension by referring to solid international legal framework such as UNCLOS, the peaceful agreement on boundary issues between Norway and Russia as well as the solid foundation for fishery agreement between the two countries. Former Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre concludes: “*The fact that Norway and Russia reached agreement sends a strong message to other nations*”. The cold war references are perceived as threatening towards the bilateral relations as the Former Minister of Defence refers to these views as “*alarmist*”. There is a need to defend these relations by referring to the High North as a region of low tension and by referring to Norway and Russia’s strong history of cooperation in the Arctic region. A clear example of this is how the Treaty of Maritime delimitation that was signed between Norway and Russia in 2010, should send a strong message to other nations.

The Arctic is referred to as a peaceful region, speaking of the High North in terms of low tension. Further, Jonas Gahr Støre makes sure that other countries national interest in the region are not perceived as a “zero-sum game”. The message is clear: “*There is no race for the Arctic*” and “*the policies and mechanisms that are established in the region will ensure that cooperation- not confrontation- will continue*” (Støre 2010b).

4.2.3 2014

The High North remains a political area of key priority for the Norwegian government in 2014 (Eriksen Søreide 2014).

Russia and Norway’s long tradition of cooperation is highlighted and illustrated by the agreement on maritime delimitation in the Barents and the Arctic Ocean’s between the two countries followed by the statement “*clearly defined borders are conducive to cooperation*”. Norway attaches importance to the legal framework in place in the Arctic, especially The Law of the sea and to the fact that new rules are being developed within the framework of international law to deal with new developments in the Arctic region. An example of this is the signing of a binding agreement between the eight Arctic countries on search and rescue cooperation (Pedersen 2014). The international legal order is referred to as an “*essential framework*” according to Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende. These rules are enabling cooperation on a number of issues related to the use of offshore resources, environmental protection and trade to cite a few (Brende 2014).

With a view to reaffirming the need for a functioning legal framework in the Arctic, State Secretary Bård Glad Pedersen stays firm on the fact that Russia’s actions in Ukraine are “*in clear breach of international law*” (Pedersen 2014). Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen expresses how these actions are perceived as unacceptable and are referred to as crossing a “*vital red line*”. There is a link between Russia’s actions and how they are affecting the bilateral relation as State Secretary Bård Glad Pedersen concludes “*Russia’s violations of international law in Ukraine have affected also our relations*”. It is further brought to attention that “*political and military developments in Russia are and will continue to be important factors in Norwegian security and defence policy*” (Pedersen 2014).

Seeing how the respect for international law represents an important base for Norway’s security and its cooperation with other countries, it is “*necessary*” to react to these events (Pedersen 2014). As a consequence of this transgression of international law, Norway has adopted similar restrictive measures and sanctions against Russia as the EU (Pedersen 2014). Hence, Norway’s response to the threat posed by Russia’s actions centred on defining the latter as a violation to International law. The repercussions are perceived as “*a necessary response to Russia’s actions when diplomatic measures did not lead to changes in Russian policy*” (Pedersen 2014).

However, in spite of the political repercussions of the Russian action in Ukraine, Norway subsequently reaffirmed that cooperation in the Arctic is necessary. Shared geographical location and borders, “*require*” cooperation through a bilateral approach (Eriksen Søreide 2014). Thus, Norway reiterated the importance of retaining bilateral cooperation with Russia because several issues in the North are dependent on the survival of these relations. Yet again,

it was emphasised how important it was that the Arctic remained an area of low tension to the Norwegian government. *“Trade, cooperation and respect for international law lead to prosperity and security, in the Arctic as elsewhere”* (Pedersen 2014) although the relations are strained as a consequence of Russia’s actions in breach of international law (Eriksen Søreide 2014).

Considering shared political issues in the Arctic, it is made clear that in spite of the strained relations, it is necessary that the countries cooperate and continue to address challenges that can only be solved through a bilateral approach (Brende 2014). The fact that the two countries share a geographical border makes it necessary to cooperate on a number of issues related to search and rescue, environmental protection, nuclear and maritime safety as well as management of important fish stocks through the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission. Norway’s shared geography with Russia requires cooperation between the countries Coast and Border Guards (Perdersen 2014).

All bilateral military cooperation and activities with Russia are however suspended until the end of 2014 in context of the events in Ukraine (Eriksen Søreide 2014).

It is in Norway’s interest to continue cooperation with Russia in the Arctic region by stating firmly that cooperation with Russia in other areas will remain. However, it is made clear that the cooperation is limited to *“practical day-to-day cooperation”* (Eriksen Søreide 2014). Thus areas of cooperation are affected by Russia’s actions.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende is bringing to attention how the world is entering a new phase in their relation with Russia which is affecting the climate of cooperation It is further pointed out that Norway is aligning itself with NATO and the EU in the condemnation of Russia’s actions and that Norway has adopted similar measures as the EU because it is necessary that *“the international community stands together”* in context of these events.

In spite the complex security situation in Europe, it is in the Arctic countries’ interest to keep tensions in the Arctic low, as they have been for the two past decades.

A Nato-membership has been an essential factor for developing good relations with Russia seeing how this has contributed to the stability in the North (Brende 2014). Russia is increasing its military capabilities in line with its military investment programme. This includes increased capabilities in the Arctic region. These developments are followed closely by the Norwegian government and with a tone of alert: *“Given their demonstrated willingness to use military mean to achieve political goals, this is concerning to many”*. Hence the stability of the High North and the Arctic overall is best secured through the Alliance. It is in Norway’s interest to remain cooperation and a pragmatic relation with Russia but transatlantic solidarity is necessary to develop good neighbourly relations (Pedersen 2014).

5 Conclusion

5.1 Results

- *To what extent can a securitisation-move of political threats towards the bilateral relations be identified?*

2008: There is a sense of ambiguity in the Norwegian governments attempt to securitise threats towards the bilateral relation in 2008.

On one side, then Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre raises concerns about Russia's overall respect for international law and how the country manages its neighbourly relations in general in the context of events in Georgia. By emphasising the seriousness of the situation and by referring to how Norway may be entering a new demanding period with Russia, an existential threat to the bilateral relation is defined through his speeches. This is followed by the arguing for the importance of the survival of the bilateral relations. Thus, these steps can be interpreted as a securitisation-move regarding the issue of Russia's inadequate respect for international law.

On the other side, the Norwegian authorities are concerned by the cold war references in relation to the Arctic, which are prominent in the national and international debate as well as in the media. Oslo perceives these references as a 'huge conceptual mistake' that threaten the organisational stability of the bilateral relations. These references are also seen to influence the public debate to the extent of negatively impacting the bilateral relations, which represent a cornerstone in Norway's High North policy. The importance of the bilateral relations and their survival are made clear by Norway's insisting arguments in favour of the many issues in the Arctic that can only be solved through bilateral cooperation with Russia.

Hence, there are two aspects as to how the organisational stability and existence of the Norwegian-Russian relations are threatened according to Oslo.

2010: Norwegian - Russian relations are high up on the Norwegian political agenda in speeches analysed from 2010. Good cooperation as well as the maintenance and expansion of these relations in the Arctic region are deemed to be a necessity for Norway. The legal framework and common political issues that are addressed through a bilateral approach remain intact and hence no threats to the organisational stability of these relations were noted in relation to these two dimensions.

There is however a concern for the negative media-discussion regarding the High North, which to a certain extent refers to Russia and its activity in the Arctic region. The concern is such that the Norwegian government feels the need to defend its bilateral cooperation partner in the High North by arguing yet again for the importance of the survival of these relations. The region is referred to in terms of “High North-low tension” and Oslo stresses that the Maritime Delimitation Treaty should send “a strong message” of appeasement to other nations. This could be interpreted as a careful attempt to securitise the issue with a view to containing the effect the negative public debate.

2014: Russia is seen as challenging the international legal framework in context of the events in Ukraine. Stressing how cooperation in the Arctic relies on “defined borders” and respect for international law, Norway considers these actions as affecting the organisational stability of the bilateral relations. Hence, Russia’s transgressions of international law are perceived as threatening the legal framework of these relations. The legitimate use of extreme measure in response to this issue is translated by Norway adopting similar sanctions as the EU and NATO, a necessary reaction when normal diplomacy was deemed to be ineffective. A full securitisation-move of Russia’s threat to international law and hence the legal framework in the Arctic was identified.

Cooperation with Russia in the High North is now referred to as limited to practical day-to-day cooperation as a result of Russia’s actions. Hence, virtually all areas of cooperation are affected negatively. Russia’s actions in Ukraine, which led to Norway imposing sanctions against Russia, are seen as threatening areas of cooperation in the Arctic. Thus, additional signs of a securitisation-move can be distinguished.

The western world is at the time entering a new phase in its relation to Russia. Norway is aligning itself with the EU and NATO in the condemnation of the events in Ukraine. The climate of cooperation is threatened in light of Russia’s actions in Ukraine as well as Russia’s increasing military presence in the Arctic. Norway stands clear on the fact that its Nato-membership will have an important role fore maintaining pragmatic bilateral cooperation with Russia in the region.

In all three dimensions it is clear that the cooperation is threatened through the distinct arguing for the importance of the bilateral relations and their survival. Norway emphasises how shared borders and geography require cooperation in certain areas that can only be solved through bilateral cooperation.

- *How has Russia’s assertiveness affected cooperation with Norway in the Arctic region?*

Russia and the need for good neighbourly relations with Moscow have been identified as one of the main reasons as to why the High North Policy has gained a top priority position on Norway’s foreign and security policy agenda. In spite of existing multinational forms of cooperation in the region, Norway has made the development and maintenance of good relations with Russia a central dimension of its High North policy. Oslo has consistently reiterated that many issues in the Arctic can only be solved through bilateral cooperation with it’s big neighbour in the North.

However, Russia's actions and assertiveness have affected cooperation with Norway in the Arctic in the following ways.

Concerns about Russia's overall respect for international law and their management of neighbourly relations are raised in the context of Russia's actions in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2014. Most issues in the Arctic are solved in the framework of international law but in a situation where this framework is undermined, Norway is concerned that the bilateral relations can be affected.

Further, Russia's actions in breach of international law has an impact on the two other dimensions referring to 'Arctic issues solved through a bilateral approach' as well as the 'climate of cooperation'.

However, in spite of a deteriorating geopolitical situation, maintaining cooperation with Russia, even a limited one, is still important to Norway. In a context where Arctic states are highly interdependent because many issues in the region require cooperation, the disruption of relations are costly.

5.2 Conclusion

This thesis has contributed to the claim within the theory of securitisation that other political units than the state can be perceived as a referent object. By analysing the Norwegian-Russian relation and the countries cooperation in the Arctic region, this thesis has showed that an essential structure can be threatened in regards to its organisational stability.

Since the aim of this study was to investigate how a potential securitisation-move in relation to the bilateral relations had evolved over time, the pre-determined dimensions helped structuring the analysis and enabled an easier comparison.

Analysing changes in how the Norwegian governments perceive their bilateral relation with Russia through the theoretical lens of securitisation was challenging as few studies of threats towards bilateral relations have been carried out. However, by making clear that this study would only look for political threats that could undermine that organisational stability of a political unit, this facilitated the analysis. In accordance with securitisation theory, one must remember that the division into different security sectors has a pure analytical meaning, and thus, it would have been interesting and completing to see how political issues such as the maintenance of fish stock and combatting illegal fishing in the Barents sea, raising both economic and environmental issues, could potentially be securitised through a bilateral approach. This would however have taken up far too much space and is not in line with the aim of this thesis but could be of interest for future studies of the Norwegian-Russian bilateral relations.

In the context of increasing interactions between various political entities and the growing need to deal with interdependent political issues through multinational cooperation, the need for a comprehensive legal framework is increasingly necessary. This is brought to attention by Buzan and also proven in this thesis. Hence, distinguishing a legal sector and studying it separately from the political sector could be of relevance for future studies.

It should be recalled that the case was studied through an official Norwegian point of view. What is to be considered as a threat towards the bilateral relation from a Norwegian point of view might not be perceived as a threat according to Russia. Scholars associated with the Copenhagen School and securitisation theory have made it clear that a threat is the intersubjective product of social interaction. It refers to a self-referential practice where a threat is created by being framed as one through a speech act, in contrast to how the threat actually occurs. Hence, the representation of a threat can vary from one securitising actor to another. Therefore a comparative study between on one side the Norwegian perspective and the official Russian attitude could be highly interesting and completing. It could also be a challenge since the access to Russian official documents represents a substantially bigger challenge than getting official speeches and statements from the Norwegian government.

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