NATO’s Securitisation of Climate Change in the Arctic
NATO’nun Arktik’teki İklim Değişikliğini Güvenlikleştirmesi

Abstract
This study analyses how and why the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) securitises climate change in the Arctic. The study recognises that climate change has not only endangered the environmental security of the Arctic but has also intensified geopolitical competition over the region’s resources and trade routes as a threat multiplier. Regarding the impact of the changing structure of the region from the “cooperation front” to the “competition area”, the study reveals that NATO considers climate change as a part of the collective defence dimension of its organizational identity, along with increasing geopolitical competition, to develop an integrated approach in its Arctic policy. Drawing on the Copenhagen School and social constructivism, the study presents that NATO resorts to securitisation discourses that concretise the threat to address climate change within the scope of its organizational identity.

Keywords: NATO, Climate Change, Social Constructivism, Copenhagen School, Organizational Identity

Öz
Bu çalışma, Kuzey Atlantik Anlaşması Örgütü’nün (NATO) Arktik’teki iklim değişikliğini nasıl ve neden güvenlikleştirdiğini analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, iklim değişikliğinin yalnızca Arktik’in çevresel güvenliğini tehdit etmeye yetmediğini, aynı zamanda bir tehdit kaynağı olarak bölgenin kaynakları ve ticaret yolları üzerindeki jeopolitik rekabeti de yoğunlaştırdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bölgenin “iş birliği cephesinden” “rekabet alanı” doğru değişen bir yapıya etkisiyle dikkat çeken çalışma, NATO’nun artan jeopolitik rekabetle birlikte Arktik politikasında birleşik bir yaklaşım geliştirme için iklim değişikliğini örgütsel kimliğinin kolektif savunma boyutunun bir parçası olarak gördüğünü ele almaktadır. Köpenah Okulu ve sosyal insacılıkta yola çıkan çalışma, NATO’nun iklim değişikliğini örgütsel kimliği kapsamında ele almak için tehdidi somutlaştırıcı güvenlikleştirmeyi söylemlerine başvurduğu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: NATO, İklim Değişikliği, Sosyal İnşacılık, Köpenah Okulu, Örgütsel Kimlik
Introduction

Since the 1990s, the norms constituting global environmental governance have been revealed within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) framework, the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Climate Agreement. In the 21st century, many countries have failed to take action under these global norms. The scope and intensity of climate change risks like severe weather situations, floods, and deforestation are thus predicted to increase exponentially in the upcoming years. Climate change has adversely affected the Arctic region more rapidly and to a greater extent. Causing the Arctic to warm faster than the global average as a whole, climate change may bring about difficult-to-manage threats such as socio-economic inequality, geopolitical competition, and conflicts. Due to rapid warming, permafrost, ice sheets, glaciers, and sea ice are melting, and the snow season has shortened. These changes have led to severe implications, including an increase in extreme weather situations, the endangerment of certain species, the rise of new health problems, and food insecurity in the Arctic.

Despite its detrimental effects, climate change has also created opportunities for financial gain. The melting Arctic ice has created new transportation routes previously inaccessible due to the frozen seas. It has also provided opportunities to access Arctic reserves like oil and gas. The expanding a number of maritime routes and the presence of about 90 billion barrels of oil and 48 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have attracted the attention of great powers and the area’s coastal states. Competition over trade routes and resources has intensified among the coastal states, Denmark, the United States (the U.S.), Norway, Russia, and Canada, as well as the European Union (EU) and non-Arctic states, particularly China. Another actor that has joined this geopolitical competition in the Arctic is NATO. This study examines how NATO acting upon its collective defence identity securitisises climate change issues in the Arctic. Although securitisation of climate change can lead to growing anxieties and ontological insecurity due to disruptions in routines and rising uncertainties, this study shows that NATO uses securitisation to strengthen its collective defence.

The Arctic has been extensively examined in the literature on geopolitics, territorial disputes, and international law. The existing literature on climate change in the Arctic has assessed the potential impacts of changing climate for the future of Arctic security. Moreover,
recent research has made a substantial contribution to evaluating the roles of different actors. Padrtová has demonstrated which actors in the U.S. securitise climate change, including in the Arctic region. Lamazhapov has evaluated Russia’s securitisation of environmental issues by adding concerns for the Arctic region. Furthermore, Akikie has discussed the role of NATO, highlighting the issues of resurgent Russia and climate change, two problems essential in shaping the Arctic security environment.

By making use of the conceptual tools of social constructivism and the securitisation theory in the Copenhagen School, this study provides a contribution to the emerging literature on the increasing presence of NATO in the Arctic by examining how NATO has securitised climate change to justify the measures it has taken within the framework of its collective defence identity. The Copenhagen School offers a valuable framework for understanding the discourses used by NATO as a securitising actor to concretise climate change in the competitive region. Overall, the study examines the effect of climate change in the Arctic, which also shapes NATO’s behaviour and discursive strategies to concretise the threats of climate change within this context. To investigate NATO’s securitisation of climate change, this study has analysed a range of sources, including NATO’s strategic concepts, official documents on climate change and the Arctic, statements, Secretariat General reports, and secondary sources on the subject.

This study has three parts. First, the primary premises of the Copenhagen School are presented. The second part explains the security environment of the Arctic, focusing on the impending effects of the changing climate to grasp the political context of the securitisation discourses. The third part explains NATO’s discursive strategies to concretise climate change.

1. The Copenhagen School

Arguing that traditional approaches are insufficient to comprehend the security challenges that have emerged after the Cold War, including civil unrest, illegal immigration, environmental pollution, terrorism, and the spread of diseases, the Copenhagen School emerged in the 1980s and differentiated itself from the traditional security studies by defining security in a broader context. Assuming security is socially constructed, the securitisation perspective claims that truth is created by human ideas and discourses. Using an interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology, this approach challenges the realist conceptualization of security and assumes that social reality is intersubjectively formed and, hence, can be changed by human agency.

Securitising actors are individuals or groups who use security discourses. Waever argues that political elites, pressure groups, government organizations, and bureaucrats play

15 Buzan, Waever and De Wilde, Security, p. 36.
an essential role in defining and executing security owing to their positions of authority that legitimise the implementation of extreme measures or actions.\textsuperscript{16} The securitisation perspective claims that choosing which topics to categorise as threats is a political decision.\textsuperscript{17} Due to the power enjoyed by certain groups, the securitisation perspective argues that the decision to classify certain issues as threats is political.\textsuperscript{18}

This study analyses NATO’s approach to climate change in the framework of its evolving identity amidst a geopolitically competitive environment resulting from climate change. It, therefore, examines how NATO securitises climate change to present it as a concrete threat under the changing structure of the Arctic.

2. Shifts in the Structure of the Arctic and NATO’s Organizational Identity

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has raised the question of how NATO would survive in the new era. By developing new capabilities, NATO has begun to address evolving security threats like terrorism, migration, and energy security. NATO’s multi-layered and flexible identity has functioned as a key factor in the organization’s ability to survive in the post-Cold War era.\textsuperscript{19} NATO’s flexible identity is composed of three layers. The first layer of NATO’s identity, known as the “collective ideology”, prioritises protecting liberal political and economic values, such as freedom, democracy, and free trade, for Alliance members. The Strategic Concept of 1991 re-emphasises these objectives and specifies NATO’s role as the fundamental institutional embodiment of shared Western values.\textsuperscript{20} The second layer of NATO’s identity, “operational identity”, is based on three principles, “deterrence and defence”, “crisis prevention and management”, and “common security” that NATO follows in its operations. The last layer is the “organizational identity”, reflected in Article II (cooperation/collective security) and Article V (collective defence) of the NATO Treaty. Article II aims to promote peaceful relations between states, while Article V outlines that if a NATO Ally is the victim of an armed attack, the organization will respond by accepting the attack against all members.

During the Cold War, Alliance emphasised the collective defence dimension of its organizational identity. However, with the restructuring of the international system after the Cold War, several NATO member states no longer viewed the Alliance as an organization solely focused on defence planning and secrecy. Prioritizing the concept of enhanced cooperation with other countries,\textsuperscript{21} NATO shifted its focus from Article V to Article II.\textsuperscript{22} This focus on cooperation also spread to the Arctic in the post-Cold War era. With the reduced Russian military presence in the 1990s and NATO’s focus on out-of-area operations like Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arctic became less of a priority on NATO’s agenda. Moreover, the need to solve environmental issues strengthened collaboration between the Arctic states: Sweden, Russia, Iceland, Canada, Norway, the U.S., Finland, and Denmark.\textsuperscript{23} The launching of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in 1991 and the foundation of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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16 Waever, “Securitization and Desecuritization”.
18 Ibid., p. 40.
21 Flockhart, “Understanding NATO through Constructivist Theorizing”, p. 144.
22 Akikie, NATO and the Arctic, pp. 61-66.
\end{footnotesize}
Arctic Council in 1996 were examples of increasing cooperation to address sustainable development and environmental concerns.\(^{24}\)

Throughout the 2000s, the Arctic nations achieved noteworthy progress in regional collaborations. In 2008, the Ilulissat Declaration effectively addressed the contentious territorial disputes between the Arctic’s five coastal states. The maritime border dispute between Norway and Russia continued for about 40 years and was resolved in 2010. In the same year, the first formal dialogue between Russia and NATO was launched on “Environmental Security in the Arctic Ocean”, which was later enlarged to include seventeen states, as well as indigenous communities’ representatives and an interdisciplinary group of scientists.\(^{25}\) In 2011, the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue was adopted, followed by the formation of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable. The Arctic Defence Chiefs Conference was held in 2012, and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response was introduced in 2013.\(^ {26}\) Under all these cooperation initiatives, Russia assumed the “partner” role in the area, while the West did not need NATO’s military deployment in the area. Canada, for instance, expressed opposition to the Alliance’s military build-ups in the area, claiming that NATO’s involvement may undermine the progress made by Arctic states in terms of regional cooperation.\(^ {27}\) NATO began to reduce its military posture and deployment and transfer its activities to member states. For example, after closing the AFNORTH regional command, NATO transferred the mandate to functional structures in Brunssum, the Netherlands (Joint Force Command) and Northwood, Britain (Maritime Command).\(^ {28}\)

Despite ongoing cooperative efforts, perceptions of the Arctic have dramatically changed due to the increasing geopolitical significance of the Arctic area, thanks to the opportunities triggered by climate change. The structure of the region has been reshaped by ocean acidification, the loss of sea ice and rising sea levels, which are increasingly affecting the Arctic ecosystem, commercial activities, and geopolitical stability. Initially, all Arctic and many non-Arctic states have acknowledged how the melting of the Arctic’s ice cover has allowed for more accessibility to the international community.\(^ {29}\) The richness of the Arctic Ocean in terms of resources has been highlighted by the U.S. Geological Survey (2008),\(^ {30}\) which reported that 6% of global oil and 24.3% of natural gas reserves lie in the area. In addition to oil and gas, many other commodities have become more accessible, including fish stocks and expanded aquaculture opportunities, strategic minerals, and forest products.

Global warming in the area has not only facilitated the exploitation of numerous oil and gas reserves, together with other commodities but also enabled new sea routes, including


\(^{26}\) Lambach, “Cooperation in the Cold-The Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement”, p. 258.


\(^{28}\) Voronkov, “The Arctic for Eight”.

\(^{29}\) Huebert, Exner-Pirot, Lajeunesse and Jay, “Climate Change and International Security”.

the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and Northwest Passage, which possess greater advantages over the existing routes between Asia and Europe, especially in terms of commerce. Some states, notably Russia, China and the U.S., have published comprehensive plans and constructed research institutes to produce icebreaker ships and develop new technologies to ensure their position in the Arctic.\(^\text{31}\) Although the Soviet leader Gorbachev called for the Arctic to be a zone of peace in 1987,\(^\text{32}\) contacts between Russia and the West have decreased significantly and the spirit of Arctic exceptionalism was damaged following Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014. Therefore, climate change has been a key factor in changing the meaning of the Arctic from “a front of cooperation” to “an area for competition” by highlighting the region’s commodities and commerce potential. The competition between Arctic countries in commodities, tourism, commerce, and technology carries the potential risk of increased military capacity in the region escalating into conflict.\(^\text{33}\)

Russia was one of the countries that showed significant interest in this structural shift in the Arctic. By taking various initiatives, such as ratifying the Maritime Doctrine in 2001, applying to the UN to extend its exclusive economic zone, placing its flag in the Arctic in 2007, approving the “Russian Federation’s Policy for the Arctic to 2020” in 2008, Russia has highlighted the value of the area for Russian interests.\(^\text{34}\) Furthermore, Russia has intensified its military initiatives in the region after 2014. Creating the Joint Strategy Command “Northern Navy/Fleet” in 2014, increasing military spending to modernise its operational capabilities, re-opening Soviet-era military bases, having large investments for the Russian air force, creating a flexible inspection system network that would connect unmanned aerial systems, space and underwater satellites, monitoring the developments in the Arctic on land, above and below the ocean, and in the air, and announcing 2035 Arctic Strategy in 2020, Russia has undertaken to protect and maintain its position as a dominant force.\(^\text{35}\)

Despite the significant growth of Russia’s military stance in the Arctic, cooperation and dialogue were maintained until the breakdown of NATO-Russia relations in 2014.\(^\text{36}\) In 2009, NATO stated that its missions in the region aimed to maintain soft security.\(^\text{37}\) Secretary General Scheffer reiterated this strategic stance in April 2009 when he insisted that NATO

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\(^{31}\) Huebert, Exner-Pirot, Lajeunesse and Jay, “Climate Change and International Security”.

\(^{32}\) Mikhail Gorbachev, “The Speech in Murmansk at the Ceremonial Meeting on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star Medal to the City of Murmansk”, 1 October 1987, https://www.barentsinfo.fi/docs/Gorbachev_speech.pdf, accessed 01.03. 2024.


\(^{37}\) Voronkov, “The Arctic for Eight”. 
should prioritise political and preventive action over military operations, particularly in the Arctic. However, this stance has changed after Russia’s military involvement in Ukraine in 2014. The U.S. expressed concern that the spirit of peace in the Arctic could be undermined. Criticizing the growing number of Russian military forces in the region, the U.S.’s former Secretary of State Clinton expressed that Russia’s expansionist policies could spread to the Arctic and made a call to Western powers to unite against the Russian threat. Following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, cooperation between Russia and the Arctic states broke down and pressure mounted on NATO to reconsider its regional strategy. These events have led to Russia’s loss of participation in the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable and the cancellation of the Arctic Chiefs of Defence Conference.

NATO has accelerated its engagement in the Arctic in response to Russian rearmament. A new Joint Force Command (JFC) for North Atlantic and High North operations has been deployed and the North Atlantic Council has more closely monitored Russia’s actions in the region. NATO has also developed its large-scale military exercises in the Arctic. To demonstrate its commitment to preventing the region from becoming a hotspot for international conflict, NATO established a new command, NATO’s Arctic Command (ARCCOM), to use deterrence and counter Russian aggression in the High North. This enables NATO to maintain the security of its northern borders and prevent future conflicts from spilling over into the Arctic. Emphasizing how a great power game has replaced the absence of strategic competition in the Arctic, NATO Assistant Secretary-General for Defence Investment Grand stated that Arctic governments are now “more in favour of seeing NATO in the region”. This aligns with the NATO 2030 report, which highlights how developments in the region can impact NATO’s interests.

Although Russia’s ultimate ambition in the Arctic is to protect its nuclear arsenal, the second-strike capabilities of its powerful Northern Fleet, and Russia’s strategic territory, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, this increased presence has revived the region’s Cold War legacy and mobilised the West’s Northern Flank spirit. The lack of dialogue between Russia and the West after Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014

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41 Depledge, “NATO and the Arctic”, p. 84.
42 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
makes militarization in the region critical.47 Furthermore, the fragile relations between Russia and Western governments have been undermined by serious disagreements over the Syrian conflict, Russia’s support for anti-government forces in Ukraine in 2014, interference in the 2016 U.S. election and the recent Russian-Ukrainian War, all of which have revived historical rivalries.48 Due to distrust, fear, deft diplomacy, and lack of dialogue, security dilemmas have arisen in the Arctic.49

Overall, the emergence of climate-based geopolitical rivalry has changed the “structure” of the region. The structural shift in the Arctic has triggered a change in NATO’s interests, behaviour, and overall identity. As noted by Akikie, with the pressure of increasing geopolitical competition, NATO would emphasise the “collective defence” dimension of its identity, but since climate change is not a concrete threat, the use of “collective defence” had to be justified.50 The next part demonstrates that NATO has attempted to develop and justify a comprehensive policy towards the Arctic by securitising the changing climate as a concrete threat.

3. NATO’s Securitisation of Climate Change

Climate change and the geopolitical competition resulting from it in the Arctic have restructured the region. According to Akikie, although NATO emphasises the “collective defence” dimension of its organizational identity in response to Russia’s growing presence under changing conditions, this identity is not well-suited to address climate change due to its intangible nature.51 NATO has thus engaged in transforming climate change into a tangible threat by securitising it as a crisis multiplier and a threat multiplier.

One of the discursive strategies NATO has used to securitise climate change has been treating climate change and security as interchangeable and two sides of the same coin52 rather than distinguishing security threats “tangible and intangible” NATO has addressed many global security issues together, such as Russia’s conflict in Ukraine, North Korea’s missile tests, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and climate change.53 Emphasizing the importance of changing climate for the Alliance due to its connection with security issues,54 NATO has often used the expressions “crisis multiplier” and “threat multiplier” to underscore the severity of the threat.55 Using these expressions, NATO has stated that climate change exacerbates

48 Sfraga and Durkee (eds.), “Navigating the Arctic’s 7Cs”.
50 Akikie, NATO and the Arctic, p. 74.
51 Ibid., p. 74.
54 NATO, “High-Level Discussion on Climate Security with the NATO Secretary General at COP27”.
existing threats as a “threat catalyst” rather than creating new ones. By giving the example of the Arctic, NATO has addressed the growing security problems through the lens of Arctic security, emphasizing the consequences of changing climate both in the civilian sector and military operations.

The focal points of NATO’s securitisation speech acts are related to the military and political security sectors. Regarding the political security sector, the securitisation discourses are centred on conflicts and violence within states. Specifically, NATO states that climate change intensifies the struggle for scarce resources like water, food, and land, which can lead to conflicts and even wars or exacerbate existing tensions. By emphasizing the worsening interconnected security problems in vulnerable areas of the Middle East, the Sahel region, and North Africa, NATO explains the effect of climate change in providing a fertile environment for violent non-state actors, including terrorist organizations. Regarding the Arctic region, NATO has re-emphasised the effect of the rapidly changing climate on shifting the low-tension areas towards increasing global competition. Recalling climate change as a “conflict multiplier”, NATO notes that authoritarian regimes often use military intimidation or aggression to gain an advantage in the region.

However, NATO’s discourse on military security centres on its military operations. Within this framework, NATO highlights that extreme weathers, like those in Iraq and the Arctic, have a detrimental impact on Alliance bases, military operations, and supply routes. NATO notes that the impact of rising sea levels, specifically in the Arctic region, will have consequences for all naval bases. Referring to the role of traditional security structures and the military in building security, former NATO Secretary General Rasmussen stated that the

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59 NATO, “Opening Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Youth Summit”.

60 NATO, “High-Level Discussion on Climate Security with the NATO Secretary General at COP27”.

61 NATO, “Vilnius Summit Communiqué Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government”.


64 NATO, “The Geopolitical Implications of COVID-19”; NATO, “Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau”; NATO, “High-Level Discussion on Climate Security with the NATO Secretary General at COP27”.

65 NATO, “Keynote Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Sciences PO Youth & Leaders Summit”; NATO, “Opening Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the High-Level Dialogue on Climate and Security”.

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Alliance should improve its efforts to tackle the insecurity consequences of changing climate with the following statements:

“I believe, for example, that the security implications of climate change need to be better integrated into national security and defence strategies— as the US has done with its Quadrennial Defence Review. That means asking our intelligence agencies to look at this as one of their main tasks. It means military planners should assess potential impacts, update their plans accordingly and consider the capabilities they might need in future... What about also including cooperation that helps build capacity in the armed forces of our Partners to better manage big storms, floods, or sudden movements of populations?”

NATO also securitises climate change in terms of its effects on human security, which is primarily linked to migration. NATO reports mainly indicate that rising sea levels and temperatures will impact the lives of individuals and force people to migrate. Underlining that threats to socio-economic development, food and water security and health may cause climate migration and social instability, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report predicts that by 2070, extreme temperatures will force billions of people to migrate from regions including South America, Africa, Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East. More importantly, the report warns that Alliance members may face political, economic, and humanitarian difficulties as these migratory flows shift towards European countries.

Noting the varying effects of climate change on different states regarding this humanitarian crisis, NATO states that food production will decrease by 10% with every 1.8-degree increase in temperature and this insecurity will have a greater impact on individuals and governments who cannot afford the financial burden of this situation. Apart from migration, NATO recognises the adverse outcomes of the changing climate on gender equality. According to the Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment Report, factors such as gender, socio-economic structure, and social expectations will influence how individuals are exposed to the harmful outcomes of changing climate. The report indicates that climate change will not affect every individual equally and particularly women and girls will be the most vulnerable group.

In connection with human security, another area of NATO’s focus is economic security. By stressing economic disparities among states caused by climate change, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly report observed that the economies of hot and disaster-prone countries decreased by over 25% between 1961 and 2010. The report revealed that developing countries, where agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors are concentrated, will be the most vulnerable to the negative outcomes of climate change. The NATO Parliamentary

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66 NATO, “Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Emerging Security Risks”.
68 NATO, “Keynote Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Sciences PO Youth & Leaders Summit”; NATO, “Speech by Prof. Dr. Rob de Wijk on NATO’s New Strategic Concept”.
70 NATO, “Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Emerging Security Risks”.
72 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, “Understanding, Adapting to, and Limiting the Impact of Climate Change on Allied Civil Security. Special Report”.
Assembly has specifically stated that 30 million people may need humanitarian assistance in the Sahel region, where climate risks overlap with poor socio-economic conditions.\textsuperscript{73}

Energy security is the last key sector in NATO’s climate change discourse. Stating that Russia uses energy as a tool of pressure, NATO argues that alternative ways must be found to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and Russian oil and natural gas.\textsuperscript{74} NATO has demonstrated its commitment to investing in green energy technologies by arguing that reducing dependence on other countries is not the solution.\textsuperscript{75} Regarding the Arctic’s importance for energy security, NATO acknowledges Norway’s crucial contribution to enhancing the Alliance’s comprehension and response to the challenges in the High North, thus strengthening common security, including energy security. Attributing its increased military deployment in the Arctic to deter and respond to threats to critical infrastructure,\textsuperscript{76} NATO stated that the gas platform in the North Sea is essential in ensuring energy supply to Norway, the Nordic Regions, and Europe.\textsuperscript{77}

The securitisation in different sectors also enables NATO to take two extraordinary measures in the field of climate issues. Firstly, by incorporating climate change into the three main areas of “Strategic Environment”, “Crisis Prevention and Management”, and “Collaborative Security” in the 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO aims to achieve its vision of becoming the leading international organization through adaptation. While reminding military units to remain strong against the adverse results of climate change, NATO presents the need for adjusting its operations, equipment, and uniforms to better cope with severe weather conditions.\textsuperscript{78} Secondly, in the face of the worsening security problems in the Arctic due to climate change,\textsuperscript{79} NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg re-affirmed NATO’s commitment to addressing issues like climate change and melting glaciers with the use of Article V. Stating that NATO’s primary role is a military alliance, Stoltenberg emphasised that NATO does not have a direct responsibility to combat climate change and reduce emissions, unlike many other various institutions and organizations that undertake this role. Instead, by emphasizing the relations between Article 5 and climate change, together with the various security threats it poses, Stoltenberg stated that NATO will focus on the security aspects of climate change.\textsuperscript{80} NATO Deputy Secretary General Gottemoeller conveyed this understanding with the following statement:\textsuperscript{81}

“First of all, I do want to say that this area is of extraordinary importance, and NATO recognises extraordinary importance in a strategic sense and the climate changes that have been developing speed there have only heightened that sense

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} NATO, “High-Level Discussion on Climate Security with the NATO Secretary General at COP27”.
\textsuperscript{75} NATO, “Opening Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the High-Level Dialogue on Climate and Security”.
\textsuperscript{78} NATO, “High-Level Discussion on Climate Security with the NATO Secretary General at COP27”.
\textsuperscript{79} NATO, “Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau”.
of strategic importance of the region. So, NATO is both concerned in a historical sense about the Arctic region but also, very I would say, seized on the matter that there is this environmental issue, and a rapid climate change is going on there. So, both aspects are something that NATO has been fully embracing.\

To summarise, NATO primarily addresses the securitisation of climate change through the military, political, and energy security sectors in the Arctic region while presenting human and economic security sectors out of the Arctic context. By drawing attention to its various concrete impacts in these sectors, NATO securitises climate change.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of the post-Cold War, the Arctic region provided a platform for international actors to pursue cooperative initiatives, leading to the foundation of regional initiatives such as the Arctic Council aimed at resolving regional problems. However, the intense effects of the changing climate in the region have not only resulted in environmental problems but have also eroded cooperation and increased geopolitical competition by opening access to previously inaccessible commodities and facilitating commerce through reduced transportation costs. The transformation of the region’s structure from a cooperative front to a competitive area has manifested itself with the conflicting interests of various actors, including Russia, China, and NATO in the region.

As the change in structure leads to shifts in the identities, interests, and behaviours of the actors, NATO has adjusted itself to the changing Arctic environment by using the collective defence dimension of its flexible identity, despite its post-Cold War emphasis on collaborative efforts defined by Article II. Mutual criticisms between Russia and NATO in the region have resulted in an increasing military presence. However, Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the Ukraine War launched in 2022 have led to NATO’s preparation to escalate the crisis and prevent Russia’s aggressive stance in the international system from being reflected in the Arctic. This has led to the emergence of the idea of the Arctic security dilemma.

Based on the premise that collective defence requires a tangible threat, this study has discussed how NATO has attempted to construct climate change as a concrete threat by securitising it as a threat and crisis multiplier. The study on NATO’s securitisation of climate change has three main findings. Firstly, NATO prioritises Arctic security through the political, military, and energy security sectors. Military security discourse focuses on the challenges in the conduct of military operations, such as extreme precipitation effect on holding air operations and the supply of military equipment or extreme heat impact on the conduct of NATO personnel in their operations. Regarding the political security sector, NATO highlights the potential conflicts and crises of climate change. Moreover, NATO’s discourse on energy security is in line with reducing dependence on Russia and fossil fuels.

The second finding is that climate change is securitised in the human and economic security sectors without relevance to the widespread Arctic context. These securitisation discourses are shaped around the issues of climate-induced migration, socio-economic inequality, the disproportionate impact on women and girls, and the greater vulnerability of Sahel, North Africa and the Middle East. The study concludes as a last finding that securitisation enhances NATO’s adaptive capacity, thus strengthening collective defence in the Arctic. By concretizing the threat through securitisation discourses, NATO justifies its actions taken in the area within its collective defence identity framework.
In conclusion, this study has analysed NATO’s securitisation of climate change; future research can provide a broader comprehension of the issue by focusing on Russia and its securitisation of climate change in the region.

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