'Soft Securitization': Unconventional Security Issues and the Arctic Council

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This article investigates whether the Arctic Council has sought to discursively construct particular security issues via its declarations and other official outputs. Through a textual analysis of its publicly available documents, the authors examine the Council's use of security language to assess whether such rhetoric is mobilized to identify specific threat-referent relationships or in an 'adjectival' sense that does not construct particular issues as existentially threatening. They, moreover, reflect on the analytical usefulness of securitization theory, and the dynamics of constructing unconventional and contested security threats in a multilateral intergovernmental forum.

Introduction

The Arctic Council is the principal institution for Arctic regional governance, and it is involved in numerous activities in the Arctic region. Although its mandate explicitly excludes matters related to military security, some scholars have argued that the Council nonetheless contributes to Arctic security governance through its coordinating and policy-shaping role on a variety of topics essential for the interests of states and human well-being in the region (Charron 2012; Chater 2014; Chater and Greaves 2014; Greaves 2013; Wilson 2016). In this sense, the Arctic Council can be viewed as an unconventional security actor that contributes to framing different policy areas in 'security' terms. However, there has been limited empirical analysis of which issues the Arctic Council frames as security-relevant through its declarations and other official outputs, and what the specific security implications of those issues are understood to be.

This article contributes to understanding the Arctic Council's role as a security actor in the context of a rapidly changing circumpolar region, and provides a starting point for assessing securitizing moves by a regional international governmental organization. As such, it asks: Does the Arctic Council use security language to depict particular

issues as relevant to Arctic security? How does the Arctic Council understand the 'security-ness' of those issues? Methodologically, the article undertakes textual analysis of the Council's publicly available online documents, including multilateral agreements and declarations, policy papers, working group reports, public statements, and other related sources. It examines the Council's use of security language to assess whether such rhetoric is mobilized to identify specific threat-referent relationships or whether such rhetoric is mobilized in an 'adjectival' sense that does *not* construct particular issues as existentially threatening.

The article proceeds in three sections. First, it outlines securitization theory as a framework for understanding the social construction of security issues. Second, it outlines the Arctic Council, and discusses the emerging role it has played in the governance of regional security issues, particularly 'soft', unconventional security issues that are not prohibited under its mandate. Third, it examines which issues the Council has articulated as security-relevant for the circumpolar region. We find there is some evidence to suggest that the Arctic Council depicts certain issues as relevant to security in the Arctic, but that most instances of its use of security language conform to adjectival uses of security rather than securitizing moves that identify specific threats. The concluding section offers some reflections on the Arctic Council and the construction of Arctic security issues, as well as theoretical reflections on the analytical usefulness of securitization theory, and the dynamics of constructing unconventional and contested security threats in a multilateral intergovernmental forum.

Securitization Theory

Although 'security' is often associated with the use of military force to defend the national interests of sovereign states, it is an essentially contested concept that has no fixed or inherent meaning (Smith 2005). Rather, security is contextual and a result of specific configurations of social relations within a given political context. What security means is, in short, socially constructed. Security is defined by how powerful or influential political actors articulate its meaning and the specific security threats they identify, and whether their security claims become widely accepted and enacted into public policy.

One approach for explaining the process through which security issues are socially constructed is securitization theory, a "radically constructivist" account developed to explain the changing nature of security threats after the end of the Cold War (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). The core contribution of securitization theory is to provide a convincing framework for understanding how language and discourse interact with systems of power to (re)produce particular meanings of security that inform the ideas and practices of political actors (Balzacq 2011). Specifically, 'securitization' refers to the process through which political issues are transformed into security issues, and thus elevated above the realm of 'normal' politics by legitimizing extraordinary measures to address them. Thus, "to 'securitize' an issue [is] to challenge society to promote it higher in its scales of values and to commit greater resources to solving the related problems"

(Sheehan 2005, 52), by claiming a privileged place for that issue within the associated realm of public policy.

The process of securitization involves two basic steps. First, a social actor, called the securitizing actor, makes a *securitizing move* that identifies a relationship between a valued object and a phenomenon that threatens its survival or wellbeing. However, for a securitizing move to become successfully constructed as a security issue or threat, it must be accepted by an *authoritative audience* within a given political context, often though not exclusively a sovereign state. The second step in the securitization process is thus the adjudication of securitizing moves by an audience with the power to mobilize exceptional measures in defense of the threatened object (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). Once accepted, securitizing moves transform something into a security issue, legitimating action corresponding with the urgency of being designated security-relevant. It is through this intersubjective process of making and accepting security claims that security issues and specific security threats are socially constructed, from which point they are often institutionalized and reproduced through the structures and routine practices used to manage security issues.

Securitizing moves were originally conceived as speech acts, but they can also be written, visual, or semiotic representations of threat-referent relationships (Williams 2003). In theory, anyone can be a securitizing actor and anything identified as a referent object in need of protection, but in practice not all actors or objects are equally positioned for successful securitization, nor can all phenomena be considered threatening (Greaves 2016). But the basic logic that underpins securitizing moves is one of danger, emergency, and imminent crisis. Securitizing moves use language such as, but not limited to, 'security', 'insecurity', 'threat', 'survival', and 'danger' to invoke an existential threat to a specified referent object with the goal of mobilizing an urgent political response. The discursive construction of something as threatened is more important than the specific language used.

In this respect, 'security' and related terms can be used in ways that have distinct meanings and political implications. Bill McSweeney (1999) notes that security has both 'nominative' and 'adjectival' forms that connote different things. The nominative form of security implies 'protection from', in the sense of security being a property of being free from threat or danger. Implicitly or explicitly, nominative uses of security invoke the need to protect a valued object from a threat to its survival or fundamental wellbeing. This encompasses the standard usage of security within international relations, whereby what is typically implied is the security of a sovereign state from the threats of military defeat or political subjugation. By contrast, adjectival forms of security connote an 'ability to', a positive attribute or aspiration in terms of the ability of people, states, or societies to satisfy particular needs and desires (McSweeney 1999, 14). Adjectival uses of security – such as food security, energy security, health security, etc. – do not necessarily specify threat-referent relationships, and do not conform to the discursive logic of securitization

insofar as they do not attempt to legitimate emergency measures in response to an existential threat to objects of social value. Rather, they describe aspirational conditions of satisfying particular social needs in various policy areas.

The likely success of a securitizing move is structured by three 'facilitating conditions': use of securitizing language, the authority and social capital of the securitizing actor, and the features of the threat (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 33). These conditions shape whether securitizing moves invoke an existential threat, whether actors are heard, and which phenomena can be credibly securitized. Typically, state actors have been understood to possess privileged access to securitizing processes, but there is no given reason why state institutions alone should be able to make securitizing moves. Indeed, some analyses depart from a strict focus on the state (Greaves 2013, 2016; Vuori 2010), but conform to Ole Wæver's (1995, 57) expectation that "security is articulated only from a specific place, in an institutional voice, by elites," even if those elites are transnational or non-state in nature. The remainder of this article examines the Arctic Council as an example of a non-state institutional actor that uses security language, but assesses its use of security language to determine whether it appears consistent with nominative or adjectival uses of security. When the Arctic Council 'speaks security', does it seem designed to identify threat-referent relationships in order to mobilize a political response from its member-states, or is it employed in an adjectival way to describe desirable conditions in different policy domains?

Methodologically, securitization "aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful)" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 32). They note that "securitization can be studied directly; it does not need indicators. The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 25). For this article, data on which issues the Arctic Council has identified as security-relevant were collected through textual and discourse analysis of the Council's publicly available online documents during the 20-year period from 1996-2016, including declarations and agreements, policy papers, working group reports, public statements, and other related sources. These provide a representative sample of the Arctic Council's outputs and thus reflect which issues it understands to be relevant to security in the Arctic region.

Governance and the Arctic Council

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 through intergovernmental agreement as a successor to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). It has a unique structure consisting of all eight Arctic states as Members, six Permanent Participants (PPs) representing Indigenous peoples from across the circumpolar region, and various non-voting state and non-state Observers. The Council has a broad mandate to promote cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable development, as well as facilitating

and promoting the participation of Indigenous peoples in Arctic governance. Given the relative underdevelopment of a multilateral architecture in the circumpolar region during the Cold War, since the 1990s the Arctic Council has emerged as the premier forum for regional cooperation and governance, and is built on a consensus-based model of decision-making that affords all member-states and PPs the opportunity to influence the agenda and shape the Council's outputs (English 2013). The reports and studies of the Arctic Council and its Working Groups – most prominently the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, the Arctic Human Development Report, and the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment – have become "touchstone documents" that are widely employed by policymakers, activists, and scholars (Charron 2012, 771).

Building on the AEPS, the Arctic Council has principally focused its activities on issues related to environmental monitoring and conservation, sustainable economic development, and emergency preparedness and response. Indeed, five of its six Working Groups focus exclusively on environmental issues, and the sixth is mandated to work for sustainable economic development.[1] The Working Groups' findings have been influential, inspiring high-level policy change and international agreements, such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Fenge 2012, 64). More recently, all eight Arctic states have signed two multilateral treaties under the auspices of the Arctic Council that enhance cooperation in areas related to public safety. In 2011, members signed the *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*, the first legally binding instrument established under the auspices of the Arctic Council, followed in 2013 by the *Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic*. The main features of these treaties are commitments to collaborate in case of a search and rescue or oil spill emergency, which includes information sharing and cooperation between Arctic militaries, coast guards, and other agencies. This demonstrated a significant expansion of the Council's activities into important new policy areas, including those which, as discussed below, necessitate the deployment of military and paramilitary assets.

Although it has some noteworthy achievements, the Arctic Council has particular limitations. It was established through a multilateral executive agreement rather than a formal treaty, and thus lacks international legal personality (Bloom 1999). The Council only established a permanent secretariat in 2013, and continues to experience challenges related to its capacity and the resources necessary to fulfil research and its other mandated activities. It is also specifically limited in its ability to address security issues. Indeed, the very first article of the *Ottawa Declaration* (Arctic Council 1996) that established the Council includes a caveat specifying that it "should not deal with matters related to military security." This provision was included in the text at the Council's founding because

[1] The Arctic Council's Working Groups are: Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (EPPR), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), and the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG).

the United States insisted that extending the mandate to include military security could interfere with America's global security and defense interests (Bloom 1999, 714; Nord 2006, 301). As a result, the Arctic Council has focused its activities on 'soft' policy areas pertaining to the environment, economic development, and political representation for the region's Indigenous peoples.

Military security cooperation among most Arctic states has thus principally occurred through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The significant exception to this is Russia, as NATO was founded to deter the Soviet Union and protect its members – of which five possess Arctic territory – against the prospect of Soviet/Russian aggression. After the Cold War ended, there was considerable cooperation in the Arctic region between post-Soviet Russia and its Arctic neighbors, notably Norway, on a range of military issues, including decommissioning Soviet nuclear materiel and limiting the flow of conventional armaments (Eriksson 1995). More recently, there has been growing regional military coordination outside of NATO. In June 2013, Greenland hosted the first meeting to include the defense chiefs from all eight Arctic countries. This summit strengthened cooperation in the areas of marine surveillance, search and rescue (SAR), and expanded joint military exercises, and built upon the SAR agreement reached in 2011. The meeting specifically addressed military security issues excluded from the Arctic Council's mandate, and built upon other progress in security cooperation among the member-states pertaining to search and rescue. It also signified important military cooperation between Russia and the other seven Arctic states, five of which were its foes during the Cold War. Such cooperation was brief, however, as regional relations have been strained by new tensions related to the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in spring 2014, its on-going support for armed separatist proxy militias in eastern Ukraine, and Western sanctions imposed as a result.

The expansion of the Arctic Council's work into areas like search and rescue and emergency preparedness and response has situated it at the center of emergent areas of Arctic policymaking. In the process, its activities have effectively broadened to include new areas linked to a range of regional security issues, including the management and deployment of military assets (Chater 2014; Chater and Greaves 2014; Greaves 2013). This has led analysts to discuss whether the Council may be assuming a greater role in regional security cooperation. Charron (2012, 774) notes: "One area that was thought to be *verboten* was that of matters related to military security. However, given that the [SAR Agreement] necessitates the coordination of the states' military, coast guard, police, and transport services for rescue purposes, hard security may be entering into the agenda by stealth." Wilson (2016, 63) also observes that, "over time, such practices in the 'soft security' sphere may help to erode the practical effect of the Ottawa Declaration's prohibition of 'hard security' discussions from the Council." While still developing, the expanding scope of the Council's activities into areas involving military assets has raised new questions about the Council's role in governing regional security.

The argument that the Arctic Council may, in fact, be involved in managing military security issues is more controversial than the claim that it has been actively involved

in making policy around a number of issues that affect human and the environmental security in the region (Chater and Greaves 2014; Greaves 2013; Hoogensen Gjørv et al. 2014; Wilson 2016). True, the Council remains fairly weak in terms of its ability to affect substantive outcomes in the region, providing a forum for interstate negotiation rather than an autonomous actor for Arctic governance. However, its very establishment fostered important changes in the nature of Arctic politics, particularly with respect to environmental protection, human security, and Indigenous peoples. Indeed, the Arctic Council has contributed to the changed post-Cold War regional security context in which understandings of Arctic security have been widened to include a greater range of issues. At the same time at the Arctic Council's establishment, "the very meaning of security was also being extended beyond traditional concerns with 'military' threats to focus on environmental and societal problems such as health, cultural survival, freedom of expression and security of communication" (AHDR 2004, 219). In this light, it is appropriate to investigate how the Arctic Council has used security language and whether and how it has articulated the nature of security issues within the region.

Security Issues and the Arctic Council

The structure and nature of the Arctic Council raise a number of relevant questions for securitization, with the most important being: which entities does the actor-audience relationship necessary for successful securitization operate between? International governmental organizations (IGOs) pose a number of theoretical and empirical challenges for securitization in this regard, particularly the question of whether they are best understood as fora for state actors to make security claims to other states (in which case the authoritative audience would be the organization's executive body, such as the United Nations Security Council, or the plenary comprising all the organization's members) or whether they can operate as securitizing actors or audiences in their own right (Hanrieder and Kreuder-Sonnen 2014; McInnes and Rushton 2011). The answers will vary depending upon such factors as the IGO's mandate and organizational structure, institutional autonomy and legitimacy, whether it possesses an independent legal personality, and how its decision-making mechanisms operate. Some IGOs may be able to effectively advocate for particular issues to be understood as security-relevant while others will not, just as some may possess sufficient capabilities, resources, and independence from their members to operate as an audience for the acceptance of securitizing moves made before it.

For the Arctic Council, there are several possibilities as to how the relationship between securitizing actors and audiences might operate. Theoretically, the Council could be an audience for securitizing moves brought by its Member States or Permanent Participants; or the Council, particularly through its Working Groups, could play the role of securitizing actor identifying issues of concern for the Arctic region and communicating these to the Member States and Permanent Participants for their acceptance. If one were to disaggregate the work of the Council's Working Groups from its biannual ministerial

meetings, it is also possible that the working groups could frame security issues for the consideration of the Council's decision-making body.

However, we argue here that the Council's lack of a founding treaty providing it with legal personality, the formal exclusion of security issues from its mandate, its consensus-based decision-making, and its lack of independent monetary or other policy resources make it less persuasive to view it as an audience for securitization. Rather, it seems more appropriate to view the organs of the Arctic Council as articulating unconventional security issues for consideration by its members and, perhaps, other authoritative audiences beyond the Arctic region such as other IGOs. This is particularly so given that the Council operates on the basis of consensus, whereby all of its decisions and outputs require the approval of all members and, de facto, of the Permanent Participants, as well (Koivurova and Heinämäki 2006). Since each of its members is able to exercise a veto, the Council as a whole cannot be conceived as an audience with particular agency independent of the states and Indigenous peoples that comprise it. Each member acts as an audience of one that must be convinced for the Council as a whole to support a decision. As a result, the Arctic Council is *not* best understood as an audience for the adjudication of securitizing moves, but rather as consisting of sub-components (members, Indigenous peoples, and working groups) positioned to make security claims for the consideration of other audiences (including Arctic Council Member States) with the authority and capacity to effectively respond.

The data in this section are drawn from textual and discourse analysis of publicly available documents from 1996-2016 archived online by the Arctic Council, such as Declarations and Senior Arctic Officials meetings reports, Legally-Binding Agreements, Observer States Reports, and Working Group documents.[2] These provide a broad, representative sample of the Arctic Council's policy outputs, and can be reasonably expected to include instances of how it articulates security issues in the region. As of January 2017, there were 1678 documents archived in the Arctic Council's database. Of these, 1299 were produced after 2006, indicating a substantial increase over time in the number of policy documents produced by the Council and its Working Groups. Keywords such as 'security', 'insecurity', 'threat', and 'danger' were employed to search for uses of security language that might indicate threats being depicted to Arctic referent objects. This produced 55 documents that also included variations like 'securities' and 'insecurities'. These documents were then examined to assess whether their use of security language suggested the construction of a threat-referent relationship or was 'adjectival' in nature.

Upon analysis, there is evidence to suggest that the Arctic Council depicts certain issues as relevant to security in the Arctic. However, most of the Council's instances of security language conform to adjectival uses of security rather than securitizing moves that identify specific threats in the region. Through its use of security language, the Council generally describes policy areas in which current conditions could be improved such

[2] Arctic Council Archive Home. 2017. "Arctic Council Repository." Available from: <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/>.

that conditions of human life in the region might be made better or more resilient. Overall, it appears that the Council does not employ such terms to construct issues as existentially threatening and requiring an urgent response from its members.

For instance, of the 11 major Arctic Council declarations issued from 1996-2015[3], seven contained references to 'security', but the first such reference is the footnote to the *Ottawa Declaration* that prohibits the Arctic Council from dealing with military security, which is clearly not a securitizing move. Other uses of security in the declarations refer to "human security" (Notes from the Second Ministerial Meeting 2000, 15), "energy security" (Ninth Ministerial Meeting, 'Information for Press', 2015, 20), and most of all, "food security" (*Barrow Declaration* 2000, 4; Notes from the Second Ministerial Meeting 2000, 5 and 12; Report of Senior Arctic Officials to Arctic Council Ministers, Barrow 2000, 13; *Nuuk Declaration* 2011, 6; *Iqaluit Declaration* 2015, 7). Some of this language appears to be borrowed directly from the Arctic foreign policies of member-states, as with the reference in the *Notes from the Second Ministerial Meeting* appended to the *Barrow Declaration* that discussed "enhancing the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially northerners and aboriginal peoples" (2000, 15). This phrasing directly echoes the human security discourse that briefly influenced Canada's Arctic policy in the early 2000s (Greaves 2012). However, none of these uses of security language construct a threat-referent relationship, but rather describe or develop plans to address the various human, energy, and food security challenges faced by Arctic inhabitants.

Similarly, 13 documents from Arctic Council ministerial meetings from 2000 to 2015 mention 'security' or 'insecurity' in relation to a variety of non-military issues. These issues are often mutually constitutive and interrelated such that one is seen to affect or produce others in related but distinct policy areas. For instance, the 2002 Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) Report to Ministers discusses security in reference to food security and persistent toxic substances in the Russian North (14). The 2004 SAO Report discussed the potential for cooperation on data gathering and information exchange in the Arctic similar to the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security network that exists elsewhere (15), the importance of the RAIPON/AMAP food security initiative (18), and a statement from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre on its assessment of the importance of the Arctic for the security and reliability of European energy supplies (45). The 2006 SAO Report discusses an AMAP report on food security in relation to Indigenous peoples in the Russian North (12) and a number of projects related to environmental protection and security (47). The 2011 SAO Report discussed the intent of the incoming Swedish chairmanship to focus on food and water security and safety (27), while the 2013 SAO Report refers to SDWG projects on food and water security (5).

Although beyond the core scope of this article, a similar assessment can be made of recent documents from Arctic Council Observers, which provide descriptive accounts

[3] There are 11 declarations, but for our purposes three other documents associated with these declarations were also analysed: a page of "Notes" and a "Report of Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) to Arctic Council Ministers", both presented during the Barrow Declaration, and a document containing 'Information for Press' associated with the Iqaluit Declaration.

of security-related issues including: space satellites and maritime rules-based governance and security (European Commission 2016, 12-14), environmental protection and security (Observer Report: Spain 2016, 5; Observer Report: China 2016, 5), and human security (The University of the Arctic 2016, 3; The International Union for Circumpolar Health 2016, 3). Arctic Council members, Permanent Participants, and Observers discussed possible security issues related to these areas, but did so without constructing specific threat-referent relationships or invoking the survival of the object in question. Specifically, the European Union (European Commission 2016) is primarily concerned with space technology and the role of satellites in contributing to environmental, safety, and security needs (2016, 4; 2016, 12), maritime security threats and maritime rules-based governance dialogue with Arctic stakeholders (European Commission 2016, 13; European Commission 2016, 14), as well as continued research in security matters (European Commission 2016, 17). Spain (Observer Report: Spain 2016) had similar concerns, as their observer report suggested a preference for fostering peacekeeping, environmental protection, and security (Observer Report: Spain 2016, 5), but they were the only two that echoed such sentiments in their documents. The rest of the Observers were much more focused on human security matters related to food security (University of the Arctic 2016, 3) and environmental security (Observer Report: China 2016, 5). Noticeably absent from any of this discussion is the World Wildlife Fund, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR).

The generally adjectival nature of these uses of security language can be contrasted with the securitizing potential of the terms 'food security' and 'food insecurity', which are the most common uses of security language by the Arctic Council. For instance, the *Arctic Resilience Interim Report* (2013) includes many more references to 'security' than any other document because it contains a chapter devoted to food security, understood as a condition where people are able to access and afford the nutrition necessary for their wellbeing. The *Arctic Resilience Interim Report* discusses food insecurity as a subset of welfare-related discussions around poverty and welfare support within Inuit communities (2013, 117). However, in the context of social and ecological changes occurring at both local and regional scales across the Arctic, references to 'food insecurity' may actually depict a more acute emerging threat to the survival of Arctic peoples facing inadequate access to reliable food supplies. The 2011 *Food-based Dietary Guidelines in Circumpolar Regions* (Jeppesen, Bjerregaard, and Young 2011, 30) outlines a framework for dealing with food insecurity among the Inuit population in Nunavut. The *Arctic Human Health Initiative* (Parkinson 2013, 24) and the *AMAP Assessment of Human Health in the Arctic* (AMAP 2009, 21, 46, 203; AMAP 2015, 42) also include specific references to diet and food insecurity among Indigenous populations, suggesting a threat-referent relationship whereby 'food insecurity' poses dire threats to continued health and survival of Indigenous populations in the region. In some contexts, 'food insecurity' may thus invoke quite direct threats confronting specific Arctic populations.

Recently, the discourse has shifted further towards the human security dimension of Arctic governance. The 2015 SAO Report notes that security has been discussed in terms of gender equality with explicit reference to human security and the material and cultural well-being of northern residents (39), interest by multiple Working Groups in food and water security (52-73), and energy security in remote Arctic communities (74). However, as with most other uses of security language by the Arctic Council, references to human security typically do not provide clear or explicit threat-referent relationships. For example, the above studies of food and health security provide explicit and detailed reference to communities in danger, what those dangers are (such as specific chemical pollutants), and proposes solutions about how to deal with those. By contrast, the 2015 SAO Report that discusses gender equality with explicit reference to human security and the material and cultural wellbeing of northern residents is more vague about who is threatened and why, providing a more descriptive account of the dangers involved (2015, 39). Such a description is also found in the *Gender Equality in the Arctic* report (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014, 59), which refers to the way in which states might actually contribute to the production of insecurity for some actors while seeking security for itself. The *Arctic Social Indicators* report similarly provides a descriptive account of insecurities associated with social and cultural life whereby their absence can "predict life satisfaction" (Larsen and Schweitzer 2013, 294).

The adjectival nature of the Arctic Council's use of security language is supported by the fact that while uses of 'security abound there is little discussion of 'insecurity' or 'danger' in the same documents. In fact, there is no mention of 'insecurity' or 'danger' in any of the Arctic Council's declarations. Documents from the ministerial meetings refer to insecurity sparingly along the same themes discussed above, while the *Arctic Resilience Interim Report* (2013) refers to 'danger' in discussions around endangered species preservation (80), dangerous travel conditions (83), and the Endangered Species Act (104). There are no references to insecurity in the Observer States reports either, though there is some mention of 'danger' in the Ministerial Meetings documents that variously either echo the necessity of protecting threatened or endangered species (SAO Report 2006, 17), and understanding that education is lacking in relation to the dangers of certain human behaviors, especially the ability of communities to educate expectant mothers of the dangers of certain behaviors (The Future of Children and Youth in the Arctic 2000, 17), and the protection of endangered Indigenous languages (The Arctic Council Secretariat, Keeping Our Traditions Alive 2015, 28). Further reference to 'danger' in these documents involve the dangers associated with shipping and natural resources exploitation and oil spill preparedness response (SAO Report 2011, 6), and Iceland's national responsibility as codified by domestic legislation to protect the country from actions that endanger human health, resources, or ecosystems (Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic 2011).

Overall, this analysis suggests that particular uses of security language in the documents produced by the Arctic Council indicate, at most, the construction of a specific threat-referent relationship in which the survival of certain Arctic populations, mostly

Indigenous, is threatened by lack of access to food. More commonly, however, the use of security language in the Council's documents is adjectival, and does not connote the context of crisis or emergency suggested by a securitizing move.

Conclusion

Drawing on the evidence from the Arctic Council's repository of documents from 1996-2016, three preliminary conclusions can be made about the role of the Council in the social construction of regional security issues. First, by producing these documents, the Arctic Council has contributed only modestly, and perhaps indirectly, to the social construction of unconventional issues as relevant to security in the Arctic. The research of the Council's Working Groups provides useful data that may be used by other regional actors in various ways, including to articulate their own security claims. But overall, it does not appear that the Arctic Council itself attempts to construct issues as security relevant. In short, the Arctic Council does not particularly function as a securitizing actor attempting to construct issues as existentially threatening. While there are various possible explanations for this, a likely one is that international institutions that lack robust organizational structures, legal personality, or policy-making autonomy are unlikely to be in a position to articulate security claims independent of their member states. This is even more likely when decisions are made on the basis of consensus, whereby the Council's outputs must reflect the positions of all eight of its members and the Permanent Participants.

Second, although the Arctic Council does not function as a securitizing actor per securitization theory, it does make considerable use of adjectival forms of security language to describe preferred or improved conditions for Arctic peoples, societies, and ecosystems. Many issues ranging from human- to state-centric concerns are described as being security-relevant. In this respect, the adjectival use of security by the Council reflects the considerable challenges posed by the pace and scale of regional changes associated with phenomena such as environmental change and economic modernization, and the numerous ways in which the conditions of existence in the Arctic region can be improved. The key distinction is that whereas these adjectival uses of security identify aspirational conditions that can be worked towards through changes in practices and policies, they generally decline to identify specific relationships of existential danger to specific referent objects.

Finally, while the Arctic Council may not function particularly as a securitizing actor, a different question is raised by the analysis in this article: namely, whether the Council has been an audience for the securitizing moves of other actors, and thus whether its extensive use of adjectival security language to describe an array of Arctic issues reflects its acceptance of other actors' security concerns. Though this requires further research to fully answer, the fact that Permanent Participants and environmental organizations with observer status at the Arctic Council have made extensive use of securitizing

language to refer to issues of gravest concern to them – and to mobilize an effective political response to phenomena such as climate change and loss of Indigenous cultures and languages – suggests one possible avenue for future study. This article thus provides an analytical starting point to examine whether a more appropriate way to perceive the Arctic Council is not as an actor advancing security claims of its own, but as a forum in which others might make securitizing moves with a chance to be heard and enacted by a group of powerful states with considerable capabilities to respond to the many challenging issues in the circumpolar region.

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