

# Securitizing the Arctic: New Environmental Security Realities



Iris van Dulst - s1028252

Wordcount: 22529

Supervisor: Edwin van der Wiel, Shelli Israelsen

## Acknowledgements

I want to thank Shelli Israelsen for assisting me in the first steps of this thesis and always supporting my ideas. I also want to greatly thank Edwin van der Wiel for assisting me in the finishing weeks of this research and helping me understand how to do research.

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## Introduction

The name given to the current geological epoch is ‘Anthropocene’, a term which denotes human activity’s dominant influence over the earth systems. Within this current geological age, climate change induced by human activity increasingly shapes the condition of the earth (Hamilton, 2019). In the field of security, the prominence of this natural process is widely acknowledged. Depending on the context, climate change is seen both as a risk and an opportunity. Opportunities often focus on economic gains from newly accessible land masses and emerging sea routes. However, the risks far outweigh these opportunities. Direct impacts include severe storms, intensified droughts, and rising sea levels caused by melting ice caps. These environmental changes not only undermine ecological stability but also trigger indirect threats such as biodiversity loss, food and energy shortages, health crises, and displacement.

The consequences of climate change are no longer ignored; instead, they are increasingly integrated into security discourses. Within the context of this thesis, the field of security is referred to in terms of International Security, especially focussing on the military. Within the broader security field, climate change is understood as a process that intensifies existing security challenges. For example, droughts intensify food shortages, while rising sea levels threaten coastal communities. The notion of climate change being a catalyst of risk is conceptualised within the concept of ‘*Environmental Security*’. This specific concept translates climate change to being understood as ‘threat multiplier’; a catalyst to already existing problems (Sweijs et al., 2022, 1-2). Environmental Security therefore introduces a new security framework based on risks based on climate change.

In response to the shifts in security frameworks perceiving climate change, militaries are progressively incorporating the framework of the Environmental Security framework into their strategic outlooks (Jayaram and Brisbois, 2024). Traditionally focused on conventional threats such as state sovereignty, militaries are now tasked with addressing climate-induced risks as part of national defense. This shift raises critical questions about the types of climate change-related threats the military seeks to counter. While protecting the nation-state is undoubtedly vital, this role is paradoxical given the military’s significant environmental footprint which intensifies climate change (Vogler, 2024; Thomas, 2017; Brzoska, 2012). Moreover, military involvement is inherently political, as armed forces represent specific nation-states and pursue their interests. The military’s engagement with non-conventional security issues demands critical analysis, especially since militarization is often met with skepticism or opposition.

Taking a closer look at the specifics, the Arctic Region received heightened strategic attention due to its rapidly changing geospatial landscape. Warming nearly four times faster than the global average, this region is subjected to intensified interest. Since 2016, the Department of Defense has published policies addressing this region, with the latest ‘Arctic Strategy’ released in 2024 outlining the U.S. security perspective as an Arctic state. Given the Arctic’s vulnerability to climate change, this thesis examines how the Department of Defense frames climate change in the Arctic region as a significant threat to its own national security.

The concept of climate change as a ‘threat multiplier,’ central to Environmental Security, promises a relevant and evolving framework for understanding security in the Anthropocene. Despite this promise, a critical analysis of how the concept is applied is essential, as it sheds light on the military’s role in shaping climate security narratives and interventions. Ultimately, the way security perspectives are constructed today will influence future understandings and policies surrounding security.

## Problem Statement and Research Question

The field of security is characterized by its constructive nature by which it shapes new forms of reality. Simultaneously, reality shapes the way the field of security perceives itself and the world. Recognizing, analyzing and understanding the newest developments therefore proves crucial in understanding new realities, the dynamics within them and eventually determining appropriate responses. As introduced, *Environmental Security* is one such new development in the field potentially shaping a new reality. To give clear direction what this thesis will explore, it is important to define the concept and simultaneously specify how the concept is implemented in this thesis. Environmental Security refers to the security threats posed by the process of climate change, as it is perceived as a ‘threat multiplier’. Climate change, in this sense, accelerates standing insecurities such as displacement, natural disasters and extreme poverty due to the general deterioration of natural resources. These accelerating insecurities are expected to advance existing conflicts and furthermore stimulate new ones.

The focus in this research is on the military and its interaction with this relatively new concept. The military's engagement with environmental security is compelling because it broadens the scope of threats to include non-military challenges, potentially stimulating militarism on non-traditional military territory. The fact that militaries are bound to nation-states and therefore operate in line with the nation's interests gives rise to questions revolving around what incentives lie behind the incorporation of environmental security perspectives.

Having established the formulation on the direction of this thesis, the next step is to define the context in which the research will be conducted. For the sake of the scope of this thesis, the research will limit itself to one Arctic state which has shown particular interest in the Arctic region, namely the United States of America. In the year 2014 the United States Department of Defense published their first ‘Arctic Strategy Policy’, followed by updated versions in 2019 and 2024. In doing so, this thesis aims to research the evolution and framing of the concept of Environmental Security constructs new military realities in the Arctic region. This thesis will answer the following main question:

“In what ways has the United States framed climate change as a security threat through its Arctic security agenda from 2019 to 2024, and how has this framing influenced the region's security discourse?”

The following three sub questions are implemented to answer the main research question:

1. How did the contemporary debate of ‘*Environmental Security*’ come into being and how does it relate to the military as a security actor?
2. How does the environment become securitized according to the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School?
3. Case study: How does the United States military securitize the environment and how does this apply to military presence and deployment in the Arctic Region?

## Societal Relevance

The societal relevance of this thesis lies in the complex intersection between the field of security and

the defining challenge of the Anthropocene: climate change. As the environment increasingly changes due to consequences of human action, it gives rise to relatively new security issues. Capturing perfectly the challenges faced by social and security sciences, Frans Berkhout (2014, 156) illustrates the essence of the newly perceived challenges: “*the right question to ask is how the Anthropocene analysis may influence the perceptions, norms, plans and actions of people, organisations and governments, now and in the future.*” This quote perfectly captures the existence and use of the concept of Environmental Security; the concept is based on the perceptions of what influence climate change will have on security.

Climate change has severe consequences for every form of life on earth as it is not restricted to certain areas, but will ultimately influence ecosystems over the whole world. However, some regions are changing more rapidly or more noticeable than others, like the Arctic Region. The Arctic Region is currently one of the most rapidly changing areas on earth due to the melting of a vast majority of its ice caps. This transformation attracts significant military attention from nationstates like the United States, Russia, China, Denmark, and Canada (Brzoska. 2015). Adding to the most recent development in the region related to this described problem, United States’ president Trump proposed an overtake of Greenland to the control of the US from Denmark. In response, Denmark boosted their defence expenditure with 2 billion dollars to enhance its military presence in the Arctic Region (Aikman 2025). This example perfectly illustrates the tense circumstances in the region.

The increasing military interest can be attributed to the security concept of ‘environmental security’. This concept gained momentum in the 1980s when debates on environmental problems emerged at national and international level (Trombetta 2008, 586). Not to be confused with ‘climate security’, environmental security refers to ‘the maintenance of achieved levels of civilization’, while the prior concerns itself with the maintenance of climate conditions (Buzan et al 1998, 76. Trombetta 2008, 595). Environmental security in military concepts is often described as climate change being a ‘threat multiplier’ for conflict, rather than a cause for it (Gilbert 2012. Mcdonald 2013). The increase in military focus on environmental security is an interesting development, as climate change is a universal challenge that transcends all boundaries and contexts, in stark contrast to national policies which only focus on the interests of the specific nation-state. Nevertheless, nations implement an environmental security perspective in their national security policies, calculating a ‘risk-framework’ to prevent future conflicts or issues threatening the interests of the state (Diez et al. 2016).

Environmental security is still an upcoming concept, therefore tremendously interesting and relevant to not only security actors, but also to societies as a whole. As the concept proposes a new perspective on security and the enabling of various extreme security measures, such as deployment of the military, it is important to build a strong understanding of the said process. By researching the case study of the U.S. Arctic Strategies, this thesis aims to contribute to this constructive understanding. While the process bears significant relevance on its own, scholars furthermore frequently caution against the expanding militarism in the Arctic Region. The military buildup in the Arctic and growing regional interests are often warned to resemble a potential new ‘Cold War’ (Wezeman 2016). These warnings give significant reason to deploy greater understanding of the transformative nature of environmental security and the real-time presence of several militaries in the Arctic region. This thesis therefore does not aim to merely critique existing climate security policies and practices, but to extend awareness on how these new notions are used in the real world and enable further critical thinking on this topic. (635)

## Theoretical Relevance

The theoretical aim of this thesis is to contribute to the contemporary security debate concerning the concept of environmental security and the intersection of this concept with the military as a security

actor. However the relatively new concept of ‘environmental security’ already sparked a significant amount of research and theoretical debate, research on the the driving forces behind the concept remains largely unexplored. Scholarly interests in the concept of environmental security predominantly focus on the linkages between climate change and conflict. The argued linkages primarily consist of climate change being the driving force behind food and water shortages and land degradation, focussing on resilience and adaptation (Goodman and Baudu. 2023). However the links between conflict and climate change are often presented as evidence, some scientists, like Selby (2014), argue these to be at best suggestive (retrieved: Dalby 2017, 238). Contrary opinions like the one of Selby are highly intriguing, as it indirectly proposes the environmental security perspective to be a suggestive and somewhat false frame. Researching the geopolitical incentives of the environmental security framework therefore is deeply interesting and insightful.

In the security field, many scholars refer to climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ when talking on a military perspective on environmental security (Barnett et al. 2010, Gilbert 2012, Amakrana and Biesbroek 2024). In this sense, the threat multiplying aspect of environmental security, also refers to climate change provoking food and water shortages, environmental degradation, poverty, the proliferation of disease, and large-scale migration (Gilbert 2012, 2). The relatively new perspective of environmental aspects being a ‘threat’ towards perceived security enables a new analysis of security and conflict. Speaking in the terms of this thesis, environmental security stresses security actors like the military to broaden up their security perspective to include the climate as an important factor. Looking specifically at theoretical attributions to the debate on the convergence of environmental security and military actors, present research predominantly focuses on how climate change will alter the military as organisation (Söder 2023, Jayaram and Brisbois 2021, Estève 2021), how the military addresses climate change in new policies (Brzoska 2012) and critiques on the military as major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions (Vogler 2024, Holloway et al. 2014, Barnett 2003).

As becomes apparent, a small but intensive body of research has been conducted on the new security perspective referred to as Environmental Security. However, the incentives constructing the underlying drivers for the implication of environmental security, leading up to an increase in militarisation, remains underdeveloped. It is exactly this gap in theoretical knowledge this thesis aims to contribute to. Therefore, to conclude, the theoretical aim of this thesis is to contribute to the emerging debate concerning the interaction between the military and the concept of environmental security and to critically analyse the interests underlying this interesting concept.

## I. Evolving Security Field towards Environmental Security

The broad concept of ‘security’ proves to be constantly evolving itself as new security issues require the development of old models. Recognizing how the field of security has evolved itself is crucial to understand current and future developments, such as the concept of Environmental Security. Therefore,

this first chapter is dedicated to creating an understanding of the concept ‘security’ and the field around it as it ultimately builds towards the emergence of the central concept of this thesis. This chapter is structured in four sections, following consecutive historical security contexts and concepts. The first section introduces the concept and field of security. This section will establish a theoretical foundation by discussing definitions and examining the socially constructed nature of the concept. The second section, ‘Traditional Security,’ analyzes the historically dominant model of security, which has significantly shaped the field and continues to influence it. However this model strongly influences how security is shaped to this day, the stark focus on militarism proved to fall short in the aftermath of a war-torn late twentieth century. Emphasizing a more holistic perspective on security, ‘Human Security’ presented itself as a successor. The third section discusses this prominent transformation in which the field broadens up to include non-traditional issues of security, ultimately leading to the emergence of Environmental Security. Lastly, the fourth section examines how the transformation of the security field has impacted the military and its shifting relation with the nation-state.

## *I. Understanding Security*

The word ‘security’ stems from the Latin word ‘*Securitas*’ which was embodied by the Roman goddess of security, freedom from danger and safety. As Latin evolved into modern languages, *securitas* influenced the formation of related words across European languages, including ‘security’ in English (Buzan. 1991). The roots of security as a conceptual understanding stems from the work of Cicero (106 - 43 B.C), coining the concept to reflect a state of calmness that is undisturbed by fear, anger and anxiety. This concept encompassed that with the absence of ‘*securitas*’ one was ‘incapable’, implying that humans need *securitas* to ensure the capacity to pursue their ambitions (Hamilton, J. 2013). This early concept of security was perceived to relate to the individual, however Cicero also acknowledged the importance for the greater political community. The latter fact is interesting as the concept of security later on in history shifts from the referent object being the individual to being the nation-state. Examining this process by means of analyzing political thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith, Gjørsv (2018) argues that security continued to be theorized from the standpoint of the individual until the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century. During this period the referent object of security gradually shifted to the state. In this security perspective, as long as the nation-states were secured its inhabitants were ensured security and safety through the form of a ‘trickle-down’ working.

Nowadays, the Oxford Dictionary defines ‘security’ as “*a state of being free from danger or threat*” (Oxford University Press). ‘Being free from danger or threat’ refers to being free from a state of insecurity, which is the constant state against which measures are to be taken to reach levels of security. Additionally to this interpretation, Meerts (2019, 1) coherently captures the difference between ‘safety’ and ‘security’, for these two terms are closely related but still distinctly different. She states that ‘safety’ pertains to a situation of being free from physical harm or risk and ‘security’ as being the measures taken to prevent, or respond to, threatening behavior. The action and decision-making taken to achieve, distribute and protect, which are encapsulated in the term ‘security’, transforms this concept into the political domain (Bourne 2014, 5). Because security is in need of decisions of what actions are to be undertaken, it automatically transforms into being a political practice. Security is political because of what is perceived as threats and what is perceived to be the right response to it .

At the core of security being a political concept is the understanding that it is a social construct. It is shaped by continuous interactions between concepts, beliefs, norms and values (Berger et al. 1991). Security is highly context dependable, as it is always actively shaped by historical events, cultural interpretation and many other factors. Security therefore is not a given fact, but rather a complex understanding by those who ‘shape’ security, and those who understand ‘security’. Underlying security

being political in nature is the perception of what constitutes a threat towards security. A threat in itself needs an enemy, for without an enemy, in what sense this may be, there exists no threat (Senellart et al. 2009). Enemies could consist of states, persons and other tangible actors, but can also consist of, for example, economic or environmental threats that often exist in a more abstract manner. For example, speaking of an enemy in the context of an ongoing war between two nation-states, the enemies are the fighting nation-states. However, when a nation-state undergoes an economical crisis, the enemy or threat is more abstract. What is perceived as a threat is deeply subjective and context-dependent. The subjectivity of the concept is shaped by a continuous and complex process influenced by individual and national interests (Wolfers 1952).

The focus of this thesis on 'security' centers on the national security level, which refers to the protection of a country's borders, institutions, and interests. This includes safeguarding against external and internal threats, and ensuring the stability of the nation through political, economic, and military measures. More precisely, this thesis focuses on the military as an actor in this form of security. Notwithstanding the military being a tangible actor in the field of security, the concept of security is socially constructed and therefore deeply dependent on historical context and the actors that play a role in the process of securitization. The military is an active actor within the security field, influentially shaping the field in various ways and therefore constructing new social realities

## II. *Traditional Security*

The evolution of the concept of security is one with a long history and knows an abundance of theoretical as well as practical applications. Due to the evolving nature of the concept and field of security, it is important to examine the historical and conceptual development that led to its current forms. Building towards a full understanding of the concept of environmental security it is necessary to trace its historical context and explore how this concept is constructed. So, the logical starting of this chapter is to trace the relative modern origins of security to build upon this to the current conception of security relevant to this research. Because the field of security is a very broad one including numerous actors, this thesis focuses on the military. This section will start with this focus. For the sake of this thesis this section will focus on relatively modern times, discarding historical security dilemmas.

However security can be seen as an ever-existing concept, it steadily emerged to be a subject in modern theoretical debates in the late 19th and early 20th century. Focussing primarily on Western contexts, the perspective of these 'modern' debates are referred to as '*Traditional Security*'. As one of the most prominent thinkers in the traditional security debates, Arnold Wolfers defines the concept as follows: '*(...) security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked*' (1952. 484-485). The objective sense of security refers to a condition of actually being secure, while the latter, subjective security, involves the feeling that one is secure. The two terms are closely related, but still differ substantially. This is an important distinction because subjective security is integral to objective security, for the sense of being insecure motivates one to act on their objective security (Bourne 2014. 3).

In the traditionalist perspective, the nation-state is the absolute referent object of security. Not only because the nation-state meant subjective security by the institutionalization of the achieved levels of civilization and the corresponding values, but also because the state was perceived to assure objective security by protecting the survival of human beings (Ibid. 13). In this perspective, to secure the state is to secure the people. This model of state-centered security has contributed to the concept that nowadays is commonly known as 'national security'. Nevertheless the similarities of the referent object being the state, the current understanding of national security differ substantially from that of the traditional security perspective. The most important difference is the narrow focus of the traditional security perspective. Security issues in this model consist predominantly of threats against the state, such as

threats towards essential values of the state, territorial integrity and political sovereignty. An equally important characteristic is the means that are used in this specific model, namely consisting primarily of weapons, armament systems and the military (Attina 2016. 175). Both the perceived threats as well as the means to react to it, are military in nature. However diplomatic relationships to build pacts and alliances also accounts to the traditionalist perspective, the focus predominantly lies on hard security. The extreme emphasis on militarism in the traditionalist perspective becomes even more apparent when looking at the definition of traditional security given by Okolie (2022. 249): *'the state of military preparedness to defend a country against external threats'*. This deviates considerably from the current 'national security' perspective, as the present concept transcends the sole focus of militarism.

Following that at the centre of gravity in the traditional security model is the nation-state, this influences how nations-states interact with each other within the international security arena. Kenneth Waltz (1979) adds to this by arguing that international politics are subordinate to an anarchic system due to the absence of a centralized authority capable of enforcing regulations on individual nationstates. This approach indicates a strong dependence of nation-states on each other to maintain international peace (Okolie. 2022, 249). When nation-states maintain their national security, international peace would prevail because nation-states would not have the desire to annexate one other. Generally spoken, this process creates an interesting interaction in which a continuing discourse revolving around hard security prevails.

Throughout time, the traditionalist perspective on security proved to fall short. After two World Wars, the Cold War accelerated in extreme militarism and ended in a great need for a new perspective on security that moves away from solely focussing on militarism (Walt, 1991). The ending of the Cold War meant a prelude for this new perspective introducing a human focussed model of security; *Human Security*. However, some aspects of the traditionalist view remain relatively unchanged until this day. In securing the nation-state, the military remains the primal actor as the only bearer of legitimate force within the bounds of the sovereign state. The military as a security actor continues to be heavily influenced by the traditionalist perspective.

### *III. Human focussed security*

The unraveling of a deeply war-thorn 20th century called for a new security perspective departing from the militaristic view as prevailed by Tradition Security. After two World Wars with a tremendous scope of destruction, the traditional security perspective proved to fall short and in need of change. For the first time in recent history, the referent object of security shifted away from focussing predominantly on the nation-state, towards a more holistic model which prioritizes humans. This historical transformation is known as 'Human Security'.

The concept 'human security' was first introduced by the UNDP in its 1994 *Human Development Report* as an extension of the 'human development' paradigm.(Liotta, 2002. Paris, 2001. Bindenagel Šehovic, 2018). In line with this paradigm, the definition of the new security concept was characterized as 'freedom from fear and freedom from want', expressed in a twofold of aspects. The first type of security applies to security against physical threats. 'Freedom from fear' refers to physical and chronic threats like hunger, widespread diseases and repression in broad terms. 'Freedom from want' on the other hand is harder to define. It focuses on protection from indirect harmful events threatening peaceful daily life, like unemployment and risks against community life (Tadjbakhsh. 2005, 14). Widely argued, this aspect refers to critical, yet indirect, conditions that ensure a *'dignified life'* (Gasper and Gómez. 2015, 103). Interesting and pivotal in the shift away from militarized traditional security towards human security is the deviation from being threat-based to a focus on more indirect risks (Liotta 2002, 478). Whereas 'freedom from fear' still refers to physical threats that were at the

core of traditional security thinking, 'freedom from want' offers a new perspective that emphasizes on indirect 'threats', translating it to vulnerabilities. This pivotal shift in focus expanded the scope of security studies to a broader range of subjects. It offers a drastic broadening and deepening perspective, influencing all actors involved in the field. The Commission on Human Security (2003, 4) described the new perspective as *'the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive environmental, economic, food, health, personal and political threats'*. Moreover, human security aims to protect all human lives, not differentiating between, for example, deaths from floods, wars or disease (Owen 2004, 383). 'Broadening' the security field essentially opened up the security perspective to also include vulnerabilities that surpass the military scope. Next to that, 'deepening' the security field means a new willingness of considering individuals and groups as the referent object of security, moving away from narrow focus on nation-states (Paris 2001, 97). The pivotal development of broadening and deepening the field of security encompasses the new focus on climate change being perceived as riskful factor, presenting a stepping stone for security frameworks such as environmental security.

Although being of great significance to the security field because of its admirable aim, human security received an abundance of criticism regarding their broad scope and definition. In this regard, Ronald Paris identifies two main problems concerning the interpretation and use of human security. Firstly, Paris (2001, 88) argues the concept of human security to be lacking in a precise definition: *'(...) human security is like 'sustainable development'; everyone is for it, but few people have a clear idea of what it means'*. The definition lacks a precise interpretation due to the broad scope of what human security entails. The, considerably too, wide scope of what is perceived as threats leaves policymakers with little guidance to which problems are to be prioritized (Ibid). Following this critique, prioritizing everything is equivalent to prioritizing nothing, and therefore leads to inaction. Critics argue that when everything is prioritized and consequently leaves political action impossible, 'securitization' as a call for rapid military solutions is left as the only option (Tadjbakhsh 2005, 8). The second problem of Paris regarding human security is that promoters of the concept seem to have an interest in keeping the definition broad and vague. He argues that 'middle state powers', NGOs and development agencies benefit from a shift of attention and resources from the security discourse towards a very broad perspective of the concept that fits the scope in which those organizations are involved (Paris 2001, 88).

Alongside the criticism regarding the interpretation of the concept of human security, the question regarding who or what will maintain 'security' arises. Human security was brought into being as a critique against traditional security and therefore also heavily criticizes the nation-state as a security actor due to its stark focus on state interests (Bellamy and McDonald. 2002, 375-376 ). Despite great criticism regarding the state in the security field, many also saw potential for human security to improve the state as a security actor. In line with the evolving field, nation-states adopted a more citizen-oriented focus in their policies, also including this development in military policies. However this may sound logical in present day terms, this shift in focus is one of the most pivotal changes in defining security. Initially, traditional security derived its legitimacy from an outward position, the international arena, for power, recognition, and independence. With the influence of human security, state legitimacy now emanates from its people, turning the focus inwards and having to justify its decisions towards citizens (Owen 2004, 379).

To sum up, the tidal wave of influence stirred by the introduction of the concept of human security created a broadened field of security which has to justify their actions. Now deriving its legitimacy from an inward position, the military actively have to justify their actions by employing policies accounting their intentions behind interventions. Moreover, the military now broadens their security perspective to include non-traditional issues, expanding its scope to include tasks beyond the conventional role of maintaining its nation-states' sovereignty. This development plays a pivotal role in the construction of 'environmental security' and the interaction of the military with this concept. While the military remains influenced by a traditionalist perspective, it now takes non-traditional risks such as

climate change into account. The shift in the field of security required the military to change accordingly; creating an interesting dynamic of security perspectives based on the traditionalist and human security view. As the security actor subjected in this thesis, this significant development will be elaborated on in the following section.

#### *IV. New Security for Nation-State and its Military*

The development of the 'human security' framework generated a new perspective on security, including that of the nation-state. Departing from being the sole referent object of security, the nation-states increasingly concern itself with prioritizing their citizens. As the military is de facto an extension of the state, being their means of sovereignty, it inevitably has to alter their security perspective likewise (Schmidt 2014). In other words, the way the state interprets 'security', both voluntary and imposed by the international community, determines the application and role of the military. However, the military remains a nation-state-led institution, firmly rooted in the traditionalist perspective as the sole bearer of sovereign force. The shifting perspective therefore creates an interesting dynamic between a traditionalist security perspective and the holistic view presented by human security.

A prominent movement in the shift towards a human security perspective in state actors is '*The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*' (Glasius. 2008, 36). In its own words, this influential report addresses '(the) "*right of humanitarian intervention*": the question of when, if ever, it is appropriate for states to take coercive – and in particular military – action, against another state for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that other state.'" (ICCS. 2001). Ultimately, the report stresses sovereign states to reevaluate their military stakes from 'the right to intervene' towards 'the responsibility to protect'. The report identified six criteria for justifying military intervention: a) obtaining authorization from the UN Security Council, b) the presence of a situation potentially leading to large-scale loss of life or ethnic cleansing, c) the necessity to prevent or mitigate significant human suffering, d) the use of military force only as a last resort, e) the application of appropriate methods, and f) the existence of reasonable prospects for success (Tadjbakhsh 2005, 14). Before actually intervening in accordance with these criteria, other applications had to be proven to fall short. Military involvement should be the last resort to put in function. This perspective reflects the diminished role of the military as it no longer dominates the field of security. As Buzan (1997, 16) argues in accordance with this reasoning, the main function of the military is reduced to the defence of the state. However, one venue for military action is often justified as it supposes to promote peace, being 'humanitarian interventions'. Although humanitarian intervention is framed 'justified' by some in accordance with criteria of the UN, there is a great reluctance towards intervention after the invasion of Iraq in the presumption of 'the War on Terror'. This invasion specifically received an abundance of criticism because of its big scope on aggression and losses of lives, with scholars warning that 'security' with the connotation 'human' legitimizes all kinds of interventions, whatever these interventions entail Gultang (2008).

Touching upon a rather ethical aspect of military intervention, the rightful question remains when, and under what conditions, a military action is justified. Remaining within the scope of this thesis, this fundamental question is connected to what is perceived as a threat which necessitates military intervention. One word circulates most as an answer in the debate on the role of the military in the human security model; *protection*. In line with projects like Responsibility to Protect, the protection of civilians proves to be the new focus of the military. In the context of the military, protection refers to the citizens of the nation-state, as the military remains an extension of the state. The defense of the nation-state and the protection of its citizens therefore prevails to be the most considerable task of the military in the human security framework. This encompasses traditional tasks such as territorial defence and protection against external threats, but also supporting counter-terrorism, disaster relief and

domestic crises (Wilén and Strömbom. 2021). While ‘defence’ and ‘providing protection’ are identified as the military’s roles within the human security framework, the question remains what constitutes a threat that justifies the military’s deployment, especially as the widening scope of security includes risks such as climate change. At this point, the central focus of the thesis becomes clear: examining how the non-traditional issue of climate change is constructed as a threat and consequently used to legitimize military engagement, which is still embedded in a traditionalist perspective. The following chapters will take the reader to an understanding of what environmental security means and explore its use.

## II. Theoretical Framework

To fully grasp the emergence and use of the framework of environmental security, this thesis will use a theoretical framework that includes the securitization theory by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde and the framing theory by Entman. The theoretical framework will be used as means to introduce the concept of environmental security, as well as to equip the reader with thorough knowledge to explore the use of the concept as well as its implications.

## Securitisation theory

The term 'securitization' was first coined by scholar Ole Waever in his article '*Securitization and Desecuritization*' in 1993. Moving away from the prevalent perspective of 'traditional security', Weaver argued security to be a social construct rather than a fixed truth. Building further upon the theoretical framework of securitization, Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde co-authored their pioneering book '*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*' (1998) in which the foundation for the 'Copenhagen School' of the securitization theory was formed. The core of the argument is that security should be viewed as a discursive act—a socially constructed process in which an issue is framed as an existential threat, justifying extraordinary measures.

The securitization theory is based on the process of speech act. Drawing upon John Austin's 'speech act theory', the securitization theory acknowledges speech to be a cause of action next to being a statement. Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde describe this process to be at the core of framing something as a security issue: *(the) 'definition and criteria of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects'* (1998: 25). When an actor with sufficient influential power convinces an audience that something poses a serious and potentially survival-level threat, this shared understanding justifies decisions to combat this threat. The decisions to undertake action against the constructed threat are described by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde as 'extraordinary measures', referring to exceptional actions which surpass regular actions of 'normal politics' (Kurniawan. 2018).

The securitisation theory is operationalised through five distinct aspects; the '*referent object*', '*the securitizing actor*', '*the securitizing move*', '*the audience* on whom the securitization move is aimed and the justification of '*extraordinary measures*'. The identification of the '*referent object*', refers to the object or idea claimed to be threatened. The referent object could be anything, from 'tangible objects' such as coastlines or buildings to abstract matters such as a government or cultural identity. In the scope of this thesis, the referent object is the nation-state. The second aspect is the identification of the '*securitizing actor*'; the actor who ultimately claims the referent object to be under threat, for which the actor requires sufficient influence to persuade the audience of this claim. This actor is typically a politician, institution, or military authority. In this thesis, the focus is on the authority of military organisations to initiate the claim of threat. As discussed, the securitizing actor claims the referent object to be under threat; this active 'statement' is in the securitization theory referred to as '*securitizing move*'. This third aspect consists of a speech act performed by the securitizing actor; it constitutes the actual active construction of the threat against the referent object. The next aspect in the theory is the acceptance of the securitization move by the specific *audience* it regards. If the audience accepts and believes the claim of an existential threat, the securitization move is successful. In this dynamic, the intersubjective character of security is reflected; only the shared understanding between the securitizing actor who 'speaks' of security and the receiving audience constitute what is perceived as security. Lastly, the acceptance of the securitizing move by the audience serves to justify *extraordinary measures*; actions taken against the perceived threat that surpasses 'normal politics'. This highlights the 'inward' source of legitimacy as, as extraordinary measures are only justified once the audience accepts the securitizing move. A detailed explanation of securitization theory will be provided in the following chapter, as the theory forms the analytical foundation for examining how the environment and climate change are securitized.

Reflecting the move away from traditionalist security perspectives, Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde argue that security is not just about military threats, but includes multiple sectors of social life. The following five sectors within the securitisation theory are identified:

### I. Military Sector

The military sector concerns the traditional domain of security, where the primary referent object consists of the nation-state and its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Typically, threats consist of forces that endanger the existence of the nation-state, understood as armed attacks, foreign military aggression or terrorism. Implementation of extraordinary measures could, for example, include military mobilization, emergency legislations or increased military investments.

## II. *Political*

The focus of the political sector primarily addresses the stability of political structures, positions of political power and ideologies. Accordingly, the referent object within this sector consists of state authority, ideology or the positions of political power. Threats typical for this sector consist of challenges posed to political legitimacy, sovereignty, or political power positions. Extraordinary measures undertaken could include expanded surveillance of those who undermine political structures, putting pressure via political power positions or political sanctions.

## III. *Economic*

Within the economic sector, the focus of security lies on the access to resources, financial stability and economic markets. National or regional economic systems are the referent object in this sector. Threats typical to this specific sector consist of the collapse of the national or regional economic market, resource shortages, energy dependence or sanctions. The extraordinary measures could consist of trade restrictions, prioritizing security over economic efficiency or the imposition of capital controls

## IV. *Societal*

The societal sector focuses on collective identities, values, and norms as expressed through ways of life, such as culture and religion. Accordingly, communities of identity like nations, cultures or religious groups are referent objects. Threats comprise undermining of cultural values, identity loss or assimilation. Relevant extraordinary measures in this sector could consist of censored media, controlling cultural symbolisms or surveillance on identity-based communities.

## V. *Environmental*

The environmental sector focuses on natural resources, ecosystems and the biosphere. Referent objects within this sector are the environment, natural resources of nation-states and humanity in a broader sense. Threats typically of climate change, natural disasters, resource scarcity and pollution of ecosystems. Proposed extraordinary measures could include mobilization of military or civil protection for disaster response, environmental interventions like geoengineering or evacuation of populations.

This thesis employs the securitization theory in a twofolded manner. Firstly, the theory will be used throughout the Literature Review to explain how the environment and climate change emerges into the security framework. Employing the securitization theory gives a clear and concise exploration of the processes behind this specific development. Secondly, the five distinct sectors of social life will be used in combination with the *Framing Theory* to explore what sectors of social life are used to construct a 'frame', which will be elaborated on in detail in the chapter of the Methodology.

## *Framing Theory*

In addition to the securitization theory, this thesis will build upon the 'Framing Theory' as proposed by Robert M. Entman. Initially coined by Erving Goffman (1974), the concept of 'frames' was introduced as mental structures that shape the way people perceive and interpret experiences. The concept quickly gained recognition as being essential to the understanding of how people give meaning to events or

situations, functioning as an organiser of experience (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). According to Entman (1993), ‘framing’ denotes the process by which certain elements of perceived reality are selected and made salient, thereby shaping and promoting a specific interpretation of an issue. In other words, reality becomes actively constructed due to highlighting specific aspects of it by using the process of framing. Here, the emphasis on the process being ‘active’ is important as it underscores the conscious practice of framing rather than being a merely accidental process. This thesis will use the conceptualisation of the framing theory as proposed by Robert M. Entman in his influential work ‘*Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*’ (1993). Entman defines framing as ‘.. to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described’. As articulated in this definition, framing aims to shape perceptions of an audience in a way that mobilizes support for a specific cause. By implementing frames, people are persuaded by a constructed reality to support according to the needs of those who impose the frame Benford and Snow (2000, 614). Whereas the securitisation theory accounts for the construction of issues as security concerns, the framing theory contributes to this understanding by revealing how the perceptions of the audience are actively shaped to justify and legitimize the use of the proposed extraordinary measures. Entman identifies four functions within the framing theory:

#### I. Defining problems.

This function identifies what is perceived to be ‘the problem’ and why it should be considered important. Often, this function claims a sense of urgency as it constructs a certain issue to be perceived as a threat.

#### II. Diagnosing causes of the stated problem.

This function explains who or what is responsible for the perceived problem as constructed by the first function. In doing so, it assigns blame and identifies root causes of the perceived threat.

#### III. Moral Judgments.

Framing evaluates the moral impacts of the perceived problem and its causal actor. In this evaluation moral judgements are imposed, suggesting whether something is good or bad. The aspect of moral judgement shapes the way in which the audience feels about the problem and its causal actor.

#### IV. Suggesting remedies.

This last function suggests intended remedies to the constructed threat as is constructed by the prior functions. Frames suggest necessary action being taken against the stated problem, justifying the remedies as suggested in this specific function.

This thesis combines the five sectors of the Securitisation Theory with the Framing Theory to build a framework for examining how climate change is constructed as a security threat, resulting in the concept of Environmental Security. The following conceptual model illustrates this theoretical framework.

### III. Securitizing the Environment

Building on the developments of the security field as discussed in Chapter one, the next chapter is dedicated to create an understanding on how the environment, and especially climate change, has emerged as a security issue. In order to achieve this, the five aspects of securitisation theory will be used to build the understanding of this new development. In addition to employing the securitization

framework developed by the Copenhagen School, this chapter will enhance the critical perspectives proposed by the Paris school which emphasizes the contextual nature of the theory. Understanding the securitisation of the environment and climate change is a crucial aspect in the emergence of the concept of Environmental Security, as it marks the necessary steps leading up to how the concept has evolved. This chapter will firstly introduce the critical perspectives on the securitisation theory proposed by the Paris School. Afterwards, the processes regarding the securitisation of both the environment and climate change are explored by following the five aspects of the securitisation theory as discussed previously.

### *I. Climate Change as Risk*

The securitisation theory coined by the Copenhagen School sparked an abundance of theoretical debate. One specific perspective has enhanced the theory thoroughly, namely that of the Paris School by Balzacq, Bigo and Davison. The Paris School contests the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen school, arguing its perspective on securitisation processes being too narrowly defined. The distinction between the Copenhagen School and the Paris School can be distinguished as the first employing a 'linguistic approach' and the second as 'practice-based' approach (Balzacq et al. 2016, 498). Where the Copenhagen School focuses on the 'declaration' of a threat, the Paris School emphasizes securitization as a process shaped by political context, social practices, power dynamics, and material structures. The practice-based approach by the Paris School entails a discursive security perspective in which decisions are made based on historical contexts and daily symbolism (Ibid). Moving away from exceptional and top-down speech acts, the Paris School focuses on how security is managed.

Issuing securitisation as a continuous process rather than a performative act, it falls in line with scholars arguing that the security field has shifted to a 'riskification' perspective. In this perspective, security is steadily shifting towards practices of prevention, probabilities and possible future perspectives (Corry 2012, 236). Where existential threats are direct and urgent in nature, risks often seem manageable and therefore invites calculation (Beck 2002, 41). The development of the 'riskification' perspective reflects the Human Security approach discussed in the first chapter, which emphasizes insecurities arising from non-traditional security issues. Prominently, Corry (2012, 238) has distinguished two logics of security, identifying 'securitisation' and 'riskification'. He conceptualizes securitisation as the framing of direct, harmful threats that justify the use of exceptional politics and measures, whereas he refers to 'riskification' as the anticipation of potential harm (Ibid. 548).

Emphasizing its practice-based character, the Paris School views security as a practice of governing. This particular argument reflects the Paris School's inspiration and influence from Foucault's concept of '*governmentality*'. The concept refers to the rationalities and techniques through which modern nation-states exercise power, not only through coercion and laws but also by shaping how citizens think and behave Foucault (1978). In other words, modern nation-states exercise their power in a practice-based and day-by-day manner in which they shape how people think, by which it creates a regulation of people's behaviour. Within the Paris School, Didier Bigo (2005) influentially merges the concept with securitisation, arguing security to be an everyday policing discourse acting through surveillance practices. In his argumentation he introduces the concept of 'ban-opticon', the situation where technologies are used for surveillance and profiling (Bigo. 2002). However this term is used by Bigo in the specific context of immigration, it touches upon the real-life technological and discursive developments of the contemporary security field. Shifting away from a rather fixed security perspective, these forms of governmentality emphasises security to be based on day-to-day bureaucratic practices and routines (Diez et al. 2016, 8). Ultimately, the developments regarding 'riskification' and governmentality increase the involvement of the government in the security field. Climate change is one such issue regarded through the lens of 'riskification' (Corry 2012).

Having illustrated how climate change has emerged as a security issue through two key developments, Human Security and the process of ‘riskification’, the following section examines this process by means of the securitisation theory as proposed by the Copenhagen School. The influential theoretical contributions of the Paris School are used in this thesis to explain how government actors increasingly engage with non-traditional security issues, in this case, climate change.

### *Securitising Climate Change*

Having illustrated how climate change has emerged as a security issue through two key developments, Human Security and the process of ‘riskification’, the following section examines this process by means of the securitisation theory as proposed by the Copenhagen School.

#### 1. Referent Object

Securitisation theory identifies five distinct sectors through which security issues can be analysed: the military, political, economic, societal and environmental sectors (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Each of the five sectors articulates a specific type of threat that targets a particular referent object. Eroukhmanoff (2017, 1-2) explains ‘sectorialising’ security helps to understand that existential threats are shaped by the distinct characteristics of each referent object. For instance, in the societal sector, identity is the primary referent object, whereas in the environmental sector the referent objects may include ecosystems and endangered species. Given that the military is the focus as the securitizing actor in this thesis, it automatically follows that the nation-state is the primary referent object (Ibid. 2).

When the nation-state is taken as the referent object, climate change can be seen as a potential threat to ‘national security’. National security is a broadly defined concept, best understood by the following definition given by Paleri (2008, 521): ‘*National security is the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance and is extendable to global security by variables external to it*’. The multi-dimensional aspect of national security is important, as it reflects its vulnerability to threats imposed by different sectors. When considering the multi-dimensional nature of national security, climate change can be seen as a threat that poses risks across all five sectors identified by the Copenhagen School. For instance, climate change could endanger the economic sector as it limits the proceeds of agricultural goods (Scholze et al. 2023). Furthermore, the societal sector could be stressed due to increased migration and displacement as a result of climate change induced deterioration of habitable regions (Praag and Timmerman. 2019).

#### 2. Securitizing Actor

The securitizing actor is the actor who claims an issue to be a security threat towards the referent object. To successfully accomplish the following *securitizing move*, the actor should yield enough influence to convince the audience of the threat it perceives against the referent object. In this thesis, the military is identified as the primary securitizing actor. Being the bearer of legitimate force within the nation-state, the military often yields sufficient influence to undertake a successful securitization move. The term ‘military’ still presents a broad conceptualisation of the organization which typically is subdivided in several organisational ‘branches’. In this thesis, the overarching organisational branches being responsible for policy decisions is taken as subject. Translating this decision to the case study of this thesis the securitizing actor is the U.S. Department of Defense.

#### 3. Securitizing Move

Third in the aspects of the securitizing theory is the securitizing move. Performed by the securitizing actor, a 'speech act' constructs an issue to be a security threat. This aspect interestingly depicts the centre of gravity of this theory because it ultimately connects all actors in the theory. A securitizing move could for example consist of a speech, a report, a policy or a declaration made by a military leader. Important to keep in mind is that the securitizing move does not necessarily have to consist of political statements, it merely has to yield enough influence to 'persuade' the audience. The fundamental goal of the securitizing move is to construct an issue in such a way that it is framed as an existential threat so as to legitimize the use of 'extraordinary measures' (Onditi. 2022, 43). However, as the theory of the Copenhagen School predominantly focuses on the performative act of declaring an issue a security threat, it tends to overlook the dynamic nature which characterizes the field of security. Stepka (2022, 34) therefore argues to look at this theory in addition with the processes of framing; '*The inclusion of framing opens securitisation to more processual and iterative aspects of linguistic and non-linguistic construction of security, allowing one to look at this process as inherently diverse and proliferated with various and often conflicting security-centred interpretations of the problem*'. In short, the inclusion of a framing analysis offers the best perspective in order to gain a full understanding of how an issue becomes securitized through frames and is therefore employed in this thesis. By selecting specific aspects of a perceived reality it influences the human consciousness on information (Ibid. 52). The implementation of the right frame matters greatly, for it intends to 'persuade' the audience into perceiving the issue in question to be an existential threat and therefore justify extraordinary measures to counter it. A great example for the use of frames is the legitimization of military invasion of Iraq under the frame of a 'War on Terror' initiated by the Bush administration in 2001. Following the horrendous attacks of 9/11 by Al-Qaeda, the United States commenced an invasion justified by the presumption of the existence of weapons of mass destruction (Sakib, S.M.N. 2024) However, the existence of such weapons was never found.

In line with the process of 'riskification', climate change is often depicted as a 'threat multiplier' within the securitizing move. Framing climate change as a 'threat multiplier' moves beyond the notion of it as an 'existential threat', portraying it instead as accelerating and intensifying a range of other security challenges (Buzan et al. 1996, 78). This perspective results in the emergence of the concept subject to this thesis; climate change as threat multiplier conceptualised by 'Environmental Security'. The military, acting as a securitizing actor, frames climate change as a 'threat multiplier' to construct the nation-state as the referent object and legitimize action against emerging climate-related threats. How the dynamic of framing climate change as 'threat multiplier' exactly works, is examined by this thesis.

#### 4. Audience

The audience plays a crucial role in Securitization Theory, as its acceptance ultimately legitimizes the extraordinary measures implied by the securitizing move. In the work of Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde (1998), the process of securitization is regarded as unsuccessful when the audience does not accept the securitizing move. However, the concept of 'the audience' is widely criticized for its vague definition and ambiguous interpretation. Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde suggest that '*the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible*' (1998, 25). As becomes apparent by means of this quote, the audience remains an underdeveloped and hard to grasp component of the theory. Similarly, the theory received critique on how the acceptance of the securitization move of the audience, and therefore a successful securitization process, is determined or measured (Onditi 2022., 44). Although the formulation of the audience by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde is ambiguous, this thesis identifies the audience, within the scope of this research, as being the citizens of the nation-state. Given that the nation-state serves as the referent object and the military acts as the

securitizing actor, the legitimacy of the intended extraordinary measures depends on acceptance by its citizens (Owen 2004, 379).

#### 5. Extraordinary Measures

The fifth factor in the securitization theory are the ‘extraordinary measures’ that are enacted when a securitization move proves itself successful. Within the Securitisation Theory, extraordinary measures extend what is called ‘normal politics’, by which Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde (1998) mean ‘(...) *justifying actions that would otherwise be considered extreme*’. These measures are, in line with the theory, only be taken when an existential threat requires them to do so; the securitization process has framed these actions to be necessary to counter the existential threat. The intended extraordinary measures are dependent on the other actors of the securitizing framework and the perceived threats. Associated with the aspect of the enabling of extraordinary measures is *desecuritization*; the process of ‘*shifting out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere*’ (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). However this aspect of the securitization theory is as good as ‘optional’, it bears an important message. Without desecuritization, a threat will remain ‘existential’ and in need of far-reaching measures.

## IV. Defining Environmental Security

As discussed in the previous chapter, Environmental Security functions both as a conceptual model of security and as a specific framing application. In this chapter, the conceptual framework regarding Environmental Security as a security model will be examined. As discussed in the previous chapter, the securitization of the environment is a highly contested and debated subject. Various perspectives on the subject are possible, specifically in determining the referent object in the securitization process. This thesis has thus far illustrated differentiated referent objects in the securitization process in the context of the environment, however it put specific emphasis on the nation-state as a referent object. This falls in line with the specific choice for analyzing the role of the military within the securitization of the environment, as the referent object of the military as securitizing actor remains the nation-state. This is the reason that this chapter will explicitly focus on the interaction of the military with the concept of environmental security.

## I. *Environmental Security in perspective*

Around the world, the consequences of climate change are increasingly affecting both individuals and nation-states. Focusing on the nation-state as the referent object and the military as the securitizing actor reveals an interesting dynamic in how the consequences of climate change are addressed. As previously discussed, despite the developments introduced by the Human Security framework, the military remains largely embedded within a traditionalist perspective of security. Since climate change transcends the traditional security perspective, a redefinition of national security has become necessary to effectively address its consequences (Özcan 2023, 74).

In line with this argumentation, Simon Dalby (2008) critically examines the relationship between environmental degradation and international relations. In doing so, he concludes the traditionalist security perspective to be inadequate for addressing the complex consequences of climate change which transcends the typically nation-state centered military-perspective. In pursuit of an appropriate revision, refers to environmental security as ‘(...) *the natural resources and habitable environment of a country in a way that threatens the economic, political, and social stability of a country*’ (Ibid. 182). Here, Dalby acknowledges the importance of sectoralising security issues in order to better understand vulnerabilities. In line with this definition, environmental security is often, as stated previously, referred to as ‘threat multiplier’ (Gilbert 2002). However, the notion of ‘threat multiplier’ is a very broad and therefore vague conception.

When breaking the concept down and transferring it in generally speaking terms, the threat multiplier aspect of environmental security proposes that climate change is expected to propel food, water and resource shortages. In turn, these causes are consequently seen to increase poverty, migration and conflict - if not outright warfare (Ibid., 2) This general expectation can be applied to different contexts and actors. By focusing on the military as a securitizing actor, the Environmental Security framework sees climate change as a ‘threat multiplier,’ creating a strong narrative that highlights security risks from climate change and supports the growing trend of governments taking control of global security. Bringing non-traditional security issues into the military boosts the governmentality trend, leading to a stronger emphasis on state-centered solutions. Moreover, the accelerated institutionalisation of ‘risk’ adds to this trend, compelling traditional security actors such as the nation-state and the military to address environmental security issues and take preemptive responses. Conceptualising climate change as risk through a lens of ‘threat multiplier’ therefore enables interventions of traditionalist actions.

The implementation of the Environmental Security perspective by traditionalist actors provides security to the nation-state and its citizens. In examining how climate change has become a threat towards national security, McDonald (2013) analyzes that most people see security and the state as synonyms (Ibid. 45). As a result, security approaches used by the nation-state and its military are often seen as essential for ensuring security, reflecting a strong reinforcement of the socially constructed nature of security. In his influential work ‘*Discourses of Climate Security*’, McDonald’s argues that climate change is framed as a threat to the sovereignty and institutional capacity of the nation-state, as it is proposed to propel armed conflict (Ibid.). Environmental security therefore is not solely about security to the nation-state and its citizens, but also about the maintenance and reinforcement of a specific global position. Trombetta (2012, 159) supports this view, adding climate change as ‘threat multiplier’ possibly threatens the global hegemonic order as it accelerates geopolitical uncertainties. The jump towards a geopolitical perspective on Environmental Security can best be illustrated by recalling the conceptualisation of Environmental Security by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde (1998, 76) as they argue it to be ‘(...) *the maintenance of achieved levels of civilization*’. The ‘external force’ that defies the state’s ‘achieved levels of civilization’ is perceived as a threat. Concretely, these threats in terms of climate change are threats against the sovereignty of the state and its territorial borders,

undermining the current capacity of institutions, geopolitical positions and any other forms of subversion against the maintenance of the position of the state in the global security arena (McDonald 2013, Trombetta 2008).

The broad scope of Environmental Security can be regarded as both a strength as well as a weakness. The broadness of the concept could be seen as a strength since it could strategically be used to justify combatting different threats in the context of the environment. It allows securitizing actors to address consequences of climate change across different sectors of security, as well as implementing various extraordinary measures. In this very argument also lies a weakness, as the broadness of the concept could also induce a militarization of the environment, consequently increasing global security tensions (Gilbert 2012, Vogler 2024, 4). It constitutes a strong discourse in which the environment is posed as an ‘external threat’ that fits in the ‘us’ vs. ‘we’ terminology, therefore stressing extra importance to counter the threat.

## *II. The Military and Environmental Security*

This section outlines the debates concerning the interlinkage of Environmental Security and the military. While the concept of Environmental Security is widely debated, its implementation by military actors remains limited (Vogler 2024, 3). The limited literature on the topic can be attributed to the concept's relative novelty and the secrecy surrounding military knowledge. This thesis therefore aspires to relevantly contribute to this limited debate.

Existing literature suggests that the link between the military and Environmental Security can be analyzed through both direct and indirect impacts (Amakrana and Biesbroek. 2024, 2. Direct impacts refers to the challenges faced by the military due to consequences posed by climate change. Widely discussed are the impacts of climate change on military infrastructure (Vogler 2024), public critique on the extent of greenhouse gas emission (Vogler 2024. Brzoska 2012.) and on ‘Strategic Military Geography’ (Holloway et al. 2014. Estève 2021. Brzoska 2015. Gilbert 2002). The first aspect of damage to military infrastructure refers generally to risk of deterioration to military bases, equipment and infrastructure. The second aspect, greenhouse gas emission of the military, is a broadly discussed and criticized facet of environmental security within military institutions. Militaries in general sense are considerable contributors to greenhouse gas emission. To indicate the tremendous scope of emission volume, Neta Crawford (2019) researched the Pentagon’s emission rate of 2017 in which she found the rate surpasses those of entire countries like Sweden and Denmark. Indications like the one given by Crawford spark great critical debate concerning a ‘greener’ or ‘leaner’ military (Brzoska 2015). Third, and most importantly in the direct impacts of climate change and environmental security on the military institutions is the shift in the so-called ‘Strategic Military Geography’. This term represents the framework used to analyze the relationship between military operations and geographical, environmental and geopolitical factors (Holloway et al. 2014, 2). Already touching up the indirect impacts of climate change on the military, the Strategic Military Geography framework necessitates continuous adaptation due to climate change. Next to being a highly useful framework to explore and take action in large military organizations, it also symbolizes the shifting tasks for the military due to new demands from an environmental security perspective. Speaking in terms of direct impact, key shifting tasks of the military in the context of climate change concern disaster response, humanitarian assistance and climate change adaptation (Vogler 2024).

Next to these direct and empirically noticeable impacts, the environmental security perspective also indirectly influences the military as an organization. Key to the indirect impact lies in the adjustment of strategic planning (Gilbert 2002). The Environmental Security perspective increasingly presents a renewed global instability caused by climate change (Estève 2020). A renewed global instability resonates a new security perspective for the military in which a mindset of ‘risk’ and

‘vulnerabilities’ prevails (Estève 2021). This translates itself into climate change mitigation tasks, but maybe even more interestingly also pursuing new geopolitical goals (Vogler 2024, 7). The development of the security field in which the military is equipped with tasks of maintaining and pursuing geopolitical goals resembles a renewed traditional security perspective. In other words, climate change and the environmental security perspective invoke a risk aversion mindset that benefits the human security perspective in including broad humanitarian assistance, but also renews the traditional security framework in which the nation-state is at focus.

## V. Methodology

### I. Documents

The data used for the analysis of this thesis derives from two policy documents from the United States’ Department of Defense (DoD), namely the ‘Arctic Strategy’ from the year 2019 and the year 2024. The two documents are official and public policies concerning strategic policy of the DoD perspective on the Arctic Region. The ‘Arctic Strategy’ document of 2019 is an updated version of the previously published document from 2016, which is not publicly available anymore. Both documents are retrieved from the official website from the Department of Defense.

### II. Research Design

This thesis employs a Framing Analysis, following the Framing Theory by Entman (1993) in addition to the Securitisation Theory as proposed by Buzan, de Wilde and Weaver (1998). This section will exclusively reflect and discuss methodological considerations.

This thesis employs the *Securitization Theory* alongside the *Framing Theory* to explore how environmental security, particularly through the ‘threat multiplier’ lens, enables the construction of climate change as a security concern. Therefore, this thesis will apply a *Framing Analysis* using

Entman's four-part model which is embedded in the *Critical Discourse Analysis*. To understand the process of how an issue becomes transformed into a security issue, the securitization theory as coined by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde (1998) will be taken as the basis. This theory proposes a constructivist perspective which is embedded in the broader 'turn to language' movement (Glynos et al. 2009). However the theory is highly relevant in understanding how something gets 'securitized' and which actors make this 'transformation' happen, it is simultaneously heavily criticised on its black-and-white perspective. As the theory predominantly focuses on the 'declaration' of an issue to become a security issue, the dynamic nature which characterizes the field of security is severely neglected in this theory. In order to address this shortcoming in the securitization theory Stepka (2022, 34) argues to look at this theory in addition with the processes of framing; '*The inclusion of framing opens securitisation to more processual and iterative aspects of linguistic and non-linguistic construction of security, allowing one to look at this process as inherently diverse and proliferated with various and often conflicting security-centred interpretations of the problem*'. In short, the inclusion of a framing analysis offers the best perspective in order to gain a full understanding of how an issue becomes securitised and is therefore employed in this thesis. The framing analysis follows the four functions of the Framing Analysis as proposed by Entman; *Defining Problems, Diagnosing causes of the stated problem, Moral Judgments and Suggesting Remedies*.

In analyzing the Arctic Strategy documents, a deductive approach is used by first examining individual sentences to identify their framing function. Following this, the analysis determines which sectors, as outlined by securitization theory, the specific framing functions relate to. It is important to note that sentences could include multiple functions of both theories. The five sectors as identified by the Securitisation theory consists of: *Military, Political, Economic, Societal and Environment*. The sectors are operationalised as follows:

- I. Military: perceived threats related to armed conflict or (potential) foreign military aggression.
- II. Political: perceived threats towards the political system or state sovereignty.
- III. Economic: perceived threats to the economic system of the nation-state, like trade, energy security and independent financial stability.
- IV. Societal: perceived threats towards national identity, culture and social cohesion.
- V. Environmental: perceived threats of environmental challenges like natural degradation, natural disasters and resource scarcity.

The two Arctic Strategy documents will result in two separate framing analysis which function as the basis for the Comparative Analysis. In this manner, exploration on how the concept is used and has changed throughout the years 2019 until 2024 is brought to light. The analysis will be conducted by comparing the use of the identified frames, as it will ultimately answer the main question: '*In what ways has the United States framed climate change as a security threat through its Arctic security agenda from 2019 to 2024, and how has this framing influenced the region's security discourse*'

## VI. Situating the Arctic: Introduction into the Case Study

In this chapter, the case study as described in the ‘methodology’ chapter will be conducted. This section begins with a historical contextualisation of the geopolitics concerning the Arctic region, which have led to the current Arctic Strategy documents subject to this case study. Next, the two Arctic Strategy documents are examined in context to understand how the policies have come to being. Situating the context of both the Arctic region and the DoD’s Arctic Strategy is an important aspect of this case study, as it provides insight into what factors have influenced the formation of these documents. This chapter therefore functions as an introduction towards the analysis of both documents and provides a foundation on how to interpret them.

### *Situating the Arctic Region.*

Similar to Antarctica, the Arctic does not have an official internationally recognized framework for locating what comprises this specific region. In 1991, The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) was founded with the task of monitoring and assessing the pollution of the Arctic environment, necessitating a clear definition of the geography of the region. The definition of the location of the Arctic region as proposed by the AMAP is taken as the foundational interpretation in this thesis. According to the AMAP, the Arctic includes areas north of the Arctic Circle (66°32’N),

regions with Arctic climate conditions where the average temperature for the warmest month is below 10°C and territories covered under Arctic Council membership (AMAP, 1998).

The leading forum of governance is the intergovernmental organisation of the Arctic Council which is composed of eight Arctic States and six indigenous permanent participants. Recognized as official Arctic States are the United States, Canada, Denmark (through Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Russia because their national territories extend into or directly border the Arctic region. The Arctic Council was founded in 1996 to promote cooperation, coordination, and interaction among Arctic states, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders on issues related to the Arctic. The council is mandated with the preservation of the environment, sustainable development and scientific research and explicitly averts military involvement of Arctic States in the region. The council advocates strongly for continuation of the so-called ‘Arctic Exceptionalism’, a term representing the idea stemming from the Cold War era in which the Arctic region was depicted as a ‘zone of peace’ and ‘a territory for dialogue’ between the West and Russia, despite conflict elsewhere in the world (Mikkola, Paukkunen and Toveri. 2023, 3). Although the effort taken to promote cooperation on environmental, economical and political cooperation is worth pursuing, this framework can be disrupted when nation-states fail to maintain this order.

Despite the cooperational nature of the Arctic Council and the historical continuation of ‘Arctic Exceptionality’, the Arctic region is a site for increased international competition (Medby. 2014, 252). Material interests, political influence and ecological degradation are factors greatly contributing to a shifting perspective on the Arctic region. An interesting example that captures this notion is China’s intensifying presence in both the debates surrounding the Arctic region and its physical presence in the area. Xi stated in 2014 that China aspires to become a ‘polar great power’, leading to the first Arctic White paper published in 2018 which established the strategic perspective of the ‘polar silk road’. The intensifying focus of Arctic States as well as ‘Near-Arctic States’ contributes to a new reality dominated by international competition. This new reality is reflected by the increased military build up by Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States (Wezeman. 2016).

### *Militarization in the Arctic.*

Prior to the intergovernmental forums and Arctic Exceptionalism, the Arctic region was an intermittent scene of military presence and even combat. The first modern large-scale combat in the region was during the Second World War, in which the region posed a significant geographical position for both sides for transporting goods and winning territory. After the Second World War, the Arctic rapidly gained international focus during the Cold War era. In this period of time, the region was subjected to the arms race between Russia and the United States. One of the keys on why this region was deemed of high strategic importance was the nuclear deterrent strategy of both sides of the arms race. While the United States deployed the secret ‘Project Iceworm’, a plan to deploy intermediate-range ballistic missiles under the ice cap of northern Greenland, Russia had its most powerful naval force with ballistic missile submarines stationed in this same region (Weiss 2001). The strategic location of the region and the neighbouring characteristics between two military powers, the region was deemed to be a ‘Cold War hotspot’ (Bykova 2024, 1). Nearing the end of the Cold War, the tensions around the Arctic region steadily decreased to a matter of ‘low politics’, focussing on matters such as economics, social issues and the environment (Sam-Aggrey and Lanteigne. 2020).

The most recent impact on the Arctic region as a scene of geopolitical tensions started in 2014, when Russia’s annexation of the Crimea reshaped the current security dialogue. In the illustrative words of Kämpylä and Mikkola (2013) the current security dilemma of the Arctic region becomes clear: ‘to understand the Arctic today, one needs to have a global perspective. The Arctic is not a closed system and regional development is increasingly intertwined with global dynamics’. Following the annexation of the Crimea, Russia evoked an ongoing war against Ukraine which led up to an international security

instability. Käpylä and Mikkola identify three key effects of the ongoing Ukraine crisis on Arctic cooperation. Firstly, the crisis had an impact on the established discourse in the Arctic. The widespread distrust of Russia in the West increased dramatically during this period, invoking a Western discourse of seeing Russia's military presence as aggressive and threatening. This perspective on Russian military presence provoked a counter reaction in which the West refocused on the Arctic region as an area of great strategic importance. The public discourse around geopolitical strategies in the Arctic could therefore almost be seen as the 'new normal' and, as Käpylä and Mikkola argue, could affect the political imagination towards the Arctic in general. Secondly, the crisis has affected the standing practices of security cooperation in the Arctic. Previous to the crisis, several international military cooperation events such as naval exercises on a hard power scale, and the cancellation of international workshops on a low power level. These consequential developments are a significant loss because they were unique to the NATO-Russia cooperation that facilitated Arctic Exceptionalism. Lastly, despite efforts to limit spill-over consequences, Arctic governance structures have also been affected due to the crisis. The Arctic Council has known internal disputes between NATO-countries and Russia, disrupting the council's cooperation. Käpylä and Mikkola warn that the Arctic Council could possibly be sucked into the vortex of the crisis in Ukraine.

Alongside geopolitical interests in the Arctic, economic considerations are at stake in this region. The first economic incentive revolves around the international scramble for raw materials. In the Arctic, natural resources are claimed to be of abundance in this region as the region contains reserves of oil, gas and minerals. However, Käpylä and Mikkola (2015, 8) note that ninety percent of the 'undiscovered' hydrocarbon reserves are located within the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEC) of individual Arctic states. The EEC zones are undisputed maritime areas in which a specific country claims exclusive rights including the extraction of natural resources. The incentive for the scramble for natural resources therefore could be challenged, but nevertheless remains an important factor in the contextualisation of the region. The second economic incentive includes the melting ice caps of the Arctic, which offer new possibilities for acquiring trading routes. As the Arctic Ocean opens up because of the rapid warming of the region, new routes for naval trading become exposed.

To sum up, geopolitical as well as economic incentives for increased interests in the Arctic steadily intensify due to global climate change and geopolitical conflict, specifically the crisis of the Ukraine war. However both incentives are of importance for nations-states, geopolitical tensions concerning territory and defense seem to dominate the Arctic perspective. It is therefore of importance to take into account any recent shiftings in geopolitical terms when analyzing this exceptional region. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, analyzing documents dating to 2024, the most recent tensions regarding president Trump's statements concerning 'taking over' Greenland and development in revolving the Ukraine crisis are highly interesting, but not taken into account of this thesis. This would however be of great significance to take into account in later analyses and research.

### *Introduction to the Arctic Situation in 2019*

#### **Geopolitics**

Several events have led up to the build-up to the DoD Arctic Strategy of 2019. The Russian invasion of the Crimea renewed a strong focus on military capacities, as the country proved not to shy away from using military aggression in pursuing their national interests. Alongside the invasion, Russia continued to invest developments in the Arctic security environment with enhanced capabilities in electronic warfare, improved air force and air defense systems, stronger surface and underwater naval forces, and a greater ability to keep the Northern Sea Route navigable using additional icebreakers (Aliyev. 2019). These developments have added up to Russia being mentioned to be one of the actors in the 'Great Power Competition', marking it to be a 'Arctic Equity' in DoD documents that aim to operationalise the Arctic Strategy (Brown. 2020, 14). As Russia asserted control over the Northern Sea Route including

military use, the Arctic State actively posed an economical and military threat towards United States national interests. Not only Russia explicitly posed threats to national interests of the U.S., the self-declared status of near-Arctic state included China to be a nation-state of interest. In their 2018 Arctic Policy, China aimed to ‘understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic’. Within this policy, the ‘Polar Silk Road’ perspective on the Arctic is established which entails a economical opportunistic view on the region, operationalised by integrating dual-use infrastructure (Brown. 2020).

Context surrounding the 2019 Arctic Strategy policy indicates a build-up in global tensions spreading to the Arctic region. However the region has not been subjected to confrontations or incidents, the military build-up in this region reinforces the region to be a site for a geopolitical ‘spill-over’ effect.

### **United States Domestic Situation 2019**

The Department of Defense Arctic Strategy of 2019 is a result of the National Defense Strategy (NDS) of 2018. The NDS presents a four year strategy produced by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and is signed by the Secretary of Defense. As one of the most important policies regarding security and objectives of interest of the United States, the NDS translates the National Security Strategy produced by the President’s staff and signed by the President himself. The Arctic Strategy policy of 2019 was issued during the first term of Republican president Donald Trump. As the National Security Strategy shapes coming policies in the term of the sitting president, it is highly relevant to understand this document as an introduction into the new perspective of security for the United States.

Articulated in language characteristic to Trump’s administration’s rhetoric, the strategy itself states to be formed by ‘principled realism’ which is ‘guided by outcomes, not ideology’ (National Security Strategy. 2017, i). In this strategy of 2017, two aspects appear to differ remarkably from preceding strategies (Ettinger. 2018). The first aspect is the great emphasis on geopolitical concerns. Stating that the U.S. faces an ‘extraordinarily dangerous world’ filled with transnational terrorists, and revisionist and rogue states, the strategy puts focus on a worldview which prioritizes ‘a world of strong, sovereign, and independent nations’ (National Security Strategy. 2017, ii). In the document, the terms ‘sovereignty’ and ‘sovereign’ play a significant role as it appears thirty times. The position taken here is that sovereignty is one of the, if not most, important part for protecting national interests. The second aspect that diverges strongly from previous National Security Strategies is the bold language concerning economic objectives. Where previous presidents emphasize on free trade, President Trump concentrates on ‘reciprocity’ and ‘reciprocal trade’ as these terms appear seventeen times in the document (Ettinger 2018, 479). Furthermore, Ettinger (2018, 479) notes absences in the documents to be striking. Where presidential predecessors from Reagan to Obama strongly mentioned promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, President Trump breaks with this tradition. The strong emphasis on geopolitics and economics, in combination with the previously stated absences could be seen as an accumulation of the ‘America First’ perspective.

### Arctic Situation 2024

#### **Geopolitics**

On the 24th of February 2022, Russia escalated the ongoing conflict by invading Ukraine and starting a still ongoing war between the two nation-states. This development once again demonstrated that Russia is both willing and capable of using military force to achieve its national objectives. Following these violent events, the U.S. provided substantial military aid to Ukraine, including weapons, intelligence, equipment and training through programs like the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (Masters and Merrow. 2025). Next to providing military aid, the U.S. and its allies swiftly invested in

their own militaries to strengthen their position. As the war occurred at the boundaries of their alliance, NATO invested in a renewed focus on Russia with increased military presence on the Eastern flank, establishment of new forces and strong support for Ukraine. Furthermore, a number of different countries, including the U.S. and European countries, introduced sanctions against Russia. Mildly surprising was the neutral position of China, which stated it hoped to see an early ceasefire. However, Chinese statements tried to position the country in a natural way, U.S. intelligence suspected China to provide lethal aid to Russia (Deyoung and Ryan. 2023). The dubious position of China in this war intensified suspicion of the U.S. which intensified its focus on the 'Great Power Competition'. The self-declaration of China as a 'near-Arctic state' intensified as new Chinese dual-use infrastructure in the Arctic Region emerged. These new developments increased concerns about military and economic interests of China in the region. Next to these geopolitical events and developments the world was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which intensified mistrust between the U.S. and China and increased geopolitical rivalry.

### **United States Domestic Situation 2024**

The 2024 Arctic Strategy was issued during President Biden's administration, which started in 2021. The National Security Strategy (NSS) issued by the Biden's administration was released in 2022 and highlighted two strategic challenges (Hyun-wook. 2022). The first challenge focuses on a strategic competition with China and Russia, continuing the 'Great Power Competition' frame used in the preceding NSS. However, after the development of the invasion of Ukraine, Russia was named explicitly more. The National Security Strategy of 2022 mentioned Russia a total of seventy-one times in its forty-eight counting pages. This represents a stark increase compared to the National Security Strategy issued by Trump, where Russia was mentioned only five times (Hamilton. 2022). The increase in explicit references to both China and Russia can be understood within the National Security Strategy's framework of competition between democracies and autocracies. Through this framework the document emphasizes to sustain and further strengthen deterrence in order to establish a strong position in the 'Great Power Competition'.

## VII. Results

This section outlines the results from the conducted Framing Analysis of two U.S. Arctic Strategy documents. Using Entman's four-function framework in combination with the five sectors of the securitization theory by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde, this section presents the results in relation to answering the main question of this thesis: *'In what ways has the United States framed climate change as a security threat through its Arctic security agenda from 2019 to 2024, and how has this framing influenced the region's security discourse.'*

Iterating briefly the methodological consideration of this research, the framing theory is used to identify individual sentences in the researched documents. After this process, every individual coding of the framing function was coded with the according sector. In doing so, an elaborate codebook was created, being the foundation of the framing analysis per document. In addition to the established sectors of the securitization theory, this research introduced the sector 'other' to account for contributions which could not be assigned to the established sectors. The Arctic Strategy of 2019 contained a total of eighty coded sentences over fourteen pages. For the 2024 Arctic Strategy, nineteen pages produced sixty-eight coded sentences. Although both documents have more pages than listed, blank pages and title pages were excluded from the coding. This section firstly presents in- and decreases in used frames resulting from the established codebook to give an overview of the comparison between the two documents. After the numerical results, the extensive qualitative framing analysis per document is presented. Lastly, the analysed frames of the two Arctic Strategy documents are subjected to a comparative analysis in order to research a development within the concept of 'environmental security' in the Arctic region.

### *Securitization Sectors per Frame Function*

The first function of the Framing analyses, *Defining of the Problem*, was identified 65 times in the 2019 document, compared to 61 coded instances in the 2024 document. For the 2019 Arctic Strategy, this means the first frame function was used 0.812 times per coded sentence, while for the 2024 Strategy

the code occurred 0.709 times. However the functions coded in both documents were nearly the identical, the sectors identified in this function show some divergence per document. In both documents, the political as well as the military sector are used most often. However, for the military sector a slight decrease of 1,89% in the use is detected, where the function of defining a problem in the political sector decreased for 8,85%. On the other hand, the 2024 document shows an increase in the non-traditional security sectors of economic, ecological and societal. See Chart 1 in the appendix for detailed percentages.

The function of '*Identifying the Cause of a Stated Problem*' was coded for a total of 44 times in the 2019 Strategy compared to 43 times in the 2024 document. The difference between the documents in the use of this code is minimal, with an average of 0.5 occurrences per sentence in the 2019 document and 0.55 in the 2024 document. Two significant increases as well as decreases are noticeable. Two increases are among the sectors 'ecological' and 'military'. The ecological sector has been identified as a cause of problems for 12,16% more compared to the 2019 document while the sector 'military' showed an increase of occurrences for 7,77%. Both the 'economic' sector and the 'societal' sector showed a decrease in occurrences. While the 'economic' sector dropped from a 11.36% occurrence in the 2019 document to no occurrences at all in the 2024 document, the 'societal' sector decreased for a small 6.76% of occurrences. See Chart 2 for full details on percentages of the function 'Cause of stated Problem'.

The third function of the framing analysis, *Moral Judgements*, showed a remarkable decrease in use of the 2019 document of the 2024 document. In the 2019 document, the function was identified 51 times, showing an average of occurring 0.637 times per coded sentence. In the document of 2024, the function was identified for 36 times, appearing 0.418 times per coded sentence. Looking at the sectors identified in the use of this third function of the framing analyses, the 'political' sectors showed a decrease of 15.52% in occurrences and an increase of 14.71%. See Chart 3 for full detailed percentages of sector occurrences per frame in this function.

The final framing function, *Suggestion of Remedies*, was identified 41 times in the 2019 document and 42 times in the 2024 document. This accounts for an average occurrence of 0.525 times per coded sentence in the 2019 document and an average of 0.478 times per coded sentence in the 2024 document. Interestingly, the 2019 covered all five sectors in this specific function, even involving the anomaly sector which was coded '*Other*', while in the 2024 document only the sectors 'military', 'political' and 'societal' were identified. Both the sector 'economic' as well as 'ecological' decreased from 7.32% to no occurrences in the 2024 document. Additionally, the 'societal' sector showed a decrease of 7.38% in occurrences. Nevertheless, the sector 'military' showed a considerable increase of 25.15% occurrences per coded sentence. See Chart 4 for the detailed summary of the percentages of this coded function.

## VIII. Framing Analysis

In this section, this thesis will critically assess the way frames are constructed and employed by the DoD Arctic Strategy of the years 2019 and 2024 which contribute to the concept of 'Environmental Security'. First, the 2019 Arctic Strategy will be subjected to qualitative frame analysis. The frame analysis is structured to follow the four framing functions, showing a detailed analysis on sectors per function. See the detailed overview on how the sectors are operationalized in table 2 in the Appendix. Next, an identical analysis will be done for the Arctic Strategy of 2024. Lastly, the two framing analyses will be compared to identify any emerging trends in the concept of Environmental Security over the years between 2019 and 2024.

### *2019 - Climate change as Geopolitical Stressor*

The first function of Framing Theory, 'Defining Problems', reveals a notable emphasis on the military and political sectors. The military sector comprises 46.15% of the function and the political sector 40% of the total usage of sectors, marking these sectors as most significant within the first function. Both sectors show individual as well as combined significance regarding the first framing function. An analysis of the combined significance of the two sectors reveals two central themes. The first and foremost combined sectoral significance lies in the emphasis on the 'era of strategic competition,' which forms the core of the 'defining the problem'. Firstly introduced in the section of the 'executive summary', the policy states to "(...) *outline DoD's strategic approach for protecting U.S. national security interests in the Arctic in an era of strategic competition*". 'Era of strategic competition' represents a strategic ambiguity; a deliberate use of vagueness in language which implies a sense of urgency. Notwithstanding the strategic vagueness of this term, this thesis has identified this term to be corresponding with both the political as well as military sector. The term is deeply political as 'strategic competition' refers to a binary worldview in which power politics require a strategic perspective. The binary worldview is explicitly present in this document, as will be outlined in the analysis of the second framing function. '*Era of strategic competition*' furthermore reflects on the military as the context implies a form of hard power to achieve its national interests within this specific 'competitive era'. The great emphasis on the defence of the U.S. homeland and the aim of maintaining a '*credible deterrent*' for the Arctic region directly represents the military notion. Using the word

*deterrence* and *deterrent*, especially as frequent as in this document, implies a coercive posture and simultaneously constructs an urgent threat. During the third function of the frame analysis, ‘moral judgements’, the implications of specifically used words will be elaborated on further, because the choice of words matters deeply in creating frames. Overall, the term ‘*Era of strategic competition*’ constructs a reality in which urgent political as well as military power is needed. As the document actively presents the Arctic as an ‘*uncertain region*’ which could be “*a possible vector for attacks on the U.S. homeland*”, this perspective is strongly reinforced. The actively constructed reality of the Arctic region being an uncertain region is the second main theme within the combined sectors of the ‘defining problem’ function. In the document, the Arctic region is framed as: “*(...) increasingly uncertain, with a deepening and intensifying of certain problematic strategic trends*”. This specific statement demonstrates the action-driven dynamic of the ‘Defining Problem’ function of the framing theory. It concludes a clear problem; the Arctic Region is not only presently uncertain, but it is also *increasingly* uncertain. The indication of a future deepening of overall regional uncertainty ultimately justifies interventions to actively deter these adverse dynamics. The notion of future uncertainty is further ratified by recurrences of problem statements which imply present concern, for example by stating: “*The Arctic security environment has direct implications for U.S. national security interests*”. Overall, analyzing the ‘Defining Problems’ function directs the military and political sector to be of most significant importance. This is demonstrated by the combination of presenting the Arctic as an increasingly unstable region within an era of strategic competition; it constructs a strong and urgent geopolitical problem statement which necessitates intervention.

The second function in the framing theory identifies the cause of the formerly perceived problems. With reassuring words, the document introduces five key dynamics playing a role in the ‘Security Environment’ of the Arctic region, firstly stating: “*Although the immediate prospect of conflict in the Arctic is low, these trends could adversely affect U.S. national security interests, promote instability, and ultimately degrade security in the region*”. Interestingly, the ecological sector is mentioned first in identifying the possible threats to U.S. national safety and interests with the header ‘*Changing Physical Environment*’. Notwithstanding the ecological sector being mentioned first in the five key dynamics that increase uncertainty in the Arctic Region; the section does present deep analysis on ecological threats. The section identifies the ecological sector to be threatening concerning vital infrastructure in the Arctic Region. It furthermore identifies economical opportunities as a result of melting ice caps due to climate change. The opportunistic nature concerning climate change presented in this section is one that re-occurs more often when analyzing China’s role in the Arctic Region.

With 34.09% identified within the second framing function, the military sector emerged as the most prominent, closely followed by the political sector at 31.82%. Both China and Russia are frequently highlighted as direct actors in the function of ‘Cause of Stated Problem’, within the military and political sector. This notion contributes directly to the narrative of the ‘era of strategic competition’. The emergence of China as an actor in the Arctic security environment is best captured in the following statement: “*China’s stated interests in the Arctic are primarily focused on access to natural resources and the opportunities offered by the Arctic sea routes for Chinese shipping*”. However China’s role as causal actor is presented as limited to economic opportunism to new access of natural resources and shipping lanes, China is mentioned a remarkable total of seventeen times in the document. Russia on the other hand is presented as a direct threat towards the U.S. on multiple sectors, mentioning the country for a total of twenty four times. The extensive analysis of Russia’s involvement in the Arctic Region is predominantly shaped around an aggressive narrative in which the country poses political and military threats towards national security and interests of the U.S. and its allies. Russia is identified as an aggressor in the regulation of Arctic Sea Routes, increasing military investments and presence in the Arctic Region and overall competitor in the ‘great power competition’. Concerns around Russia’s

military and political aggression, and China's economic opportunism fuel the document's focus on the aimed 'end-state' of the Arctic; a secure and stable region with a 'rules-based order'.

Mentioned for a total of fourteen times, the term '*rules-based order*' captures the third function of the framing theory; 'Moral Judgements'. The great emphasis on this specific term implies a possibility, of what magnitude is not explicitly mentioned, of a rogue against this current order. Words such as 'maintaining' and 'strengthening' the rules-based order present a moral judgement in which identified causal actors are seen to undermine this specific order. The introduction of the document reveals the underlying geopolitical tensions tied to this term, stating cooperation between the U.S. and its allies helps to "(...) *deter strategic competitors from seeking to unilaterally change the existing rules-based order*. As previously analyzed, the strategic competitors are China and Russia, both explicitly named as such in the document. These moral judgements emphasise a certain urgency to the defined problems, it legitimizes solutions to deter those who want to change the rules-based order. As discussed earlier, the use of the word *deterrence* likewise indicates a moral judgement. Especially in connection with the term 'rules-based-order' the word 'deterrence' poses an urgent and coercive use of language strongly embedded in the military sector. Geopolitical tensions are defined as a problem to which Russia and China predominantly play the role of causal actor, and which are through this function constructed as unjust and unacceptable vessels. This constructed frame of geopolitical unjust aggression necessitates, and therefore legitimises, action in order to safeguard U.S. national security and interests.

As the three functions of the framing theory 'Defining Problems', 'Cause of Stated Problems' and 'Moral Judgements' construct a reality of threat, the fourth function of 'Suggestion Remedies' represents possible remedies to deter these threats. As with the other functions, the military and political sectors dominate the fourth framing function. Suggested remedies connected to the military sector were mentioned for 43.90%, and the political sector for a total of 29.27%. The following statement illustrates the dominance of the military sector within this fourth framing function: "*The NDS establishes DoD's goals and priorities for defending the homeland and protecting U.S. and allied interests globally by regaining the Joint Force's competitive military edge against China and Russia*". The named priorities are anchored in the Arctic Strategy, focussing on three key points: '*Defend the homeland*', '*Compete when necessary to maintain favorable regional balances of power*' and '*Ensure common domains remain free and open*'. These key objectives are, among others, pillars within the function of suggesting remedies. For the military sector, remedies are focused on maintaining and strengthening the DoD's position to "ensure a credible deterrent for the Arctic". This involves investments in adequate military equipment for the Joint Force and Arctic domain awareness. The political focus within the presented remedies entails a more outward approach, emphasizing international and regional cooperation in the region to "address shared challenges" and uphold and strengthen the 'rules-based-order'. Analyzing these frequent occurrences of military and political sectors reinforces the geopolitical narrative constructed in this document.

In conclusion, the Arctic Strategy document of 2019 strongly emphasizes a geopolitical problem statement to which geopolitical stressors are identified to be causal actors. It furthermore bolsters this narrative by including moral judgements fueled by geopolitical standpoints implying causal actors to act unjustful. Lastly, suggested remedies confronting the stated problems also contain strong geopolitical notions. Connecting the four framing functions into one specific frame, this thesis concludes the Arctic Strategy of 2019 to embrace a 'Geopolitical Stress' frame, as shown in Figure 1 below.

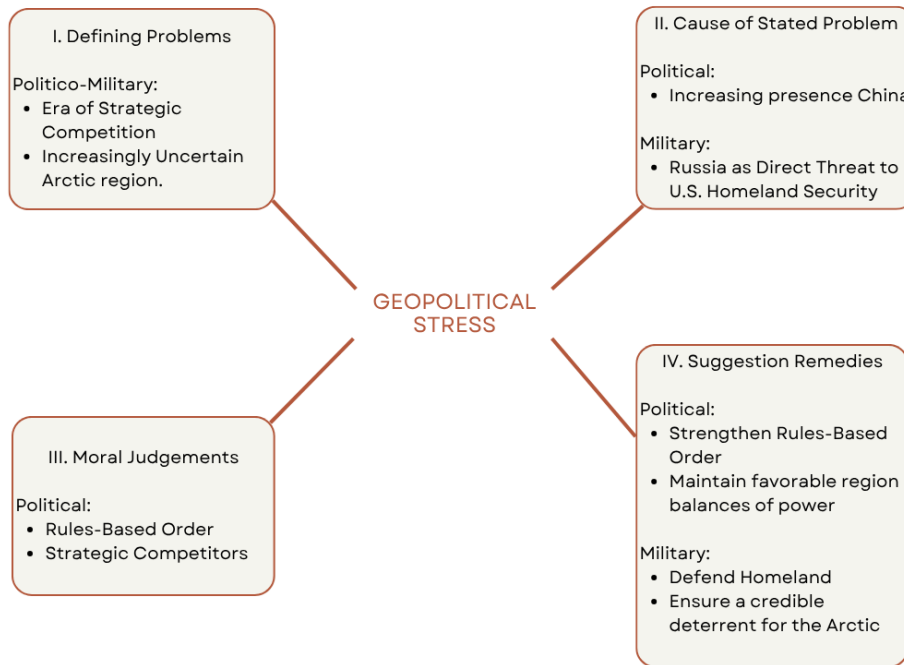


Figure 1: Overview Framing Theory Interpretation Arctic Strategy 2019.

## 2024 - Climate Change as Geopolitical Tension and Ecological 'Riskportunity'

Beginning with the first function of framing theory, 'Defining Problems,' the 2024 Arctic Strategy reveals a strong emphasis on the military and political sectors. The military sector is identified most frequently, comprising a total of 44.26%, followed by the political sector with 31.15%. However the politico-military perspective prevails within this policy, a new ecological dynamic is introduced in the first sentence of the 'executive summary' combining the three sectors in one statement: *"This strategy lays out the Department of Defense's (DoD's) approach to the Arctic as the region undergoes rapid geophysical and geopolitical change"*. The occurrence of the ecological sector as a direct impact for strategic considerations is an interesting development, leaning towards a more direct connection between climate change and security risks. In the same section as the previous quote, the policy more specifically appoints climate change to be a risk: *"climate change and shifts in the geostrategic environment drive the need for a new strategic approach to the Arctic region"*. Important to note is that the direct connection between climate change and security risks are not reflected quantitatively. The ecological sector comprises merely 8,20% of the function, while the qualitative significance is substantial. The development of the ecological sector as a threat will be analyzed further in the section of the function 'Cause of Stated Problem'. The geopolitical change referred to in the previous quote concerns military and political tensions as a result of increased activity in the Arctic region of the China's People Republic (CPR) and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Interesting here is that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is merely mentioned indirectly when the country's Arctic capabilities are analyzed. Focussing further on the involvement of the military sector in identifying threats, the policy states the region to be *"(...) critical to the defense of our homeland, the protection of U.S. national sovereignty, and our defense treaty commitments"*. The defense of the U.S. homeland and its sovereignty directly impacts the military sector, as its problem defines not only defense but also deterrence of aggression. This is coupled later on in the policy to the Arctic capabilities of Russia, which presents a direct and active threat towards the national security of the U.S.

The language used in the Arctic strategy of 2024 differs substantially from that of its predecessor. Where the 2019 policy presented threats with a more global yet direct use of language, the 2024 policy connects identified threats more directly to its causal actor. A cause for this development is the diminishing of the use of ‘buzzwords’ or rather ‘buzzterms’ like ‘rules-based-order’ or ‘era of strategic competition’. Instead, identified threats are more directly connected to their causal actors, refraining from terms with a broad interpretation. This results in an extensive direct combination of causal factors and identified problems, in which three causal sectors are mentioned most frequently. The military sector remains the most mentioned causal sector with a high percentage of 41,86%, followed by the political sector with 30.23% and additionally the environmental sector with 25.58%. Causal actors identified in the military sector are Russia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is mentioned first in the section of analyzing the ‘strategic environment’, implying this country to have the highest priority. The PRC “(...) *is attempting to leverage changing dynamics in the Arctic to pursue greater influence and access, take advantage of Arctic resources, and play a larger role in regional governance*”. The PRC is pursuing this by bolstering its operational expertise and promoting the region as a ‘global commons’ in order to shift Arctic governance in its favor. Subsequently, Russia’s capabilities in the Arctic are articulated as ‘of concern’ because of its potential capabilities to “(...) *hold the U.S. homeland, as well as Allied and partner territory, at risk*”. Additionally, Russia’s ‘demonstrated’ ability and readiness to reorganize its conventional ground forces fuels a sense of urgency to this causal actor. New in respect to the previous Arctic Strategy within the function of ‘cause of stated problem’ is the collaboration between the PRC and Russia. The collaboration between the PRC and Russia is only briefly described, focussing on military cooperation and economic trade. Furthermore, more loosely defined, climate change is marked multiple times as a causal actor in the discussed stated problems. Additional to geopolitical changes “(...) *the increasing effects of climate change herald a new, more dynamic Arctic security environment*”. The changing ecological condition is presented as a cause for DoD infrastructure degradation, changing operational environments, opening significant economic and military sea routes and an overall increasing strategic competition. The latter factor is of great importance. Both negative as positive consequences of climate change are equally mentioned in the document, translating climate change into security risks as well as opportunities like economic gain. Climate change, in this perspective, is articulated as a combination of risk and opportunity, leaving an ambiguous standpoint.

The function of ‘Moral Judgements’ is identified as predominantly belonging to the political sector articulated with a 47.22% occurrence, followed by the military sector with 30.56% . Within this function, the word ‘stable’ is key as it is mentioned up to seven times. Contrary to the prior use of the term ‘rules-based-order’ the word ‘stable’ invokes a relatively less urgent feel, emphasizing maintenance of present-day peaceful structures. This is reinforced by the following example of the use of the word: “*The NSAR states that the United States seeks an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative*”. This specific example accompanies the word ‘stable’ with positive words which constructs a feeling of a secure position that should be preserved as such. The positive approach towards the Arctic Region on the other hand subsequently condemned any intervention of vessels trying to undermine the presented stability. Here, the strength of the function of moral judgements comes forth, as it functions to highlight own positive processes and indirectly denounces those of competitive causal actors. As this function shows to be heavily rooted in the political and military sector, it reinforces a frame of geopolitical tension within the context fueled by accelerating ecological change in the region.

The three previously discussed functions of the framing theory have constructed a particular reality by highlighting specific dynamics. This constructed reality enables the last function of the framing theory, ‘suggestion of remedies’, to be justified. Within analyzing this last function, the military sector is mentioned most frequently with a total of 40.90%, followed by the political sector with a total

of 29,27%. Predominantly linked to threats of geopolitical tensions, the military sector highlights the need for strengthening deterrence against aggression from strategic competitors, while also emphasizing international cooperation to maintain a stable Arctic Region. Additionally, causes of problems from the ecological sector are shown to be designated to kinds of military adaptation. Investments in Arctic awareness, monitoring physical changes and ‘embracing opportunities presented by a changing Arctic’ are key points in this approach. These suggestions to remedies are reflected in the three objectives of the policy, being: ‘enhance the Joint Force’s Arctic capabilities’, ‘engage with our Allies and partners’ and ‘exercise presence in the Arctic’. Within these objectives lies suggestions for power projection to reinforce the positions of the U.S. for global power projection as simultaneously adapting to the Arctic’s changing physical environment and the geopolitical tensions that come with it. In these objectives lies the suggestion for power projection strategies to reinforce U.S. global influence while simultaneously adapting to the Arctic’s changing physical environment and the accompanying geopolitical tensions.

In conclusion, analysing the four functions of the framing theory present in this document, some interesting developments occur. Geopolitical tensions as drivers of problems and the associated causal actors, The PRC and Russia, remain primary focuses within this Arctic Strategy of 2024. The language used to construct this certain frame differs from that of the 2019 document, using a more formal and discrete language which diminishes the feel of urgency. Therefore, this frame deploys a frame more focused on geopolitical tension instead of stress. Alongside the problems of geopolitical tension is the occurrence of climate change as a security risk as well as an opportunistic notion. The changing physical area of the Arctic region presents new national security challenges while simultaneously presenting some new opportunities for economic and political gain. Climate change is presented as both an opportunity as the changing Arctic Region presents new shipping lanes and overall territory while simultaneously posing risks. This specific dynamic therefore poses a ‘riskportunity’ frame, emphasizing a simultaneously riskful and opportunistic feel. Analyzing an overall frame, this thesis concludes the Arctic Strategy of 2024 to embrace an ‘Geopolitical Tension an Ecological Riskportunity’ frame on the Arctic region.

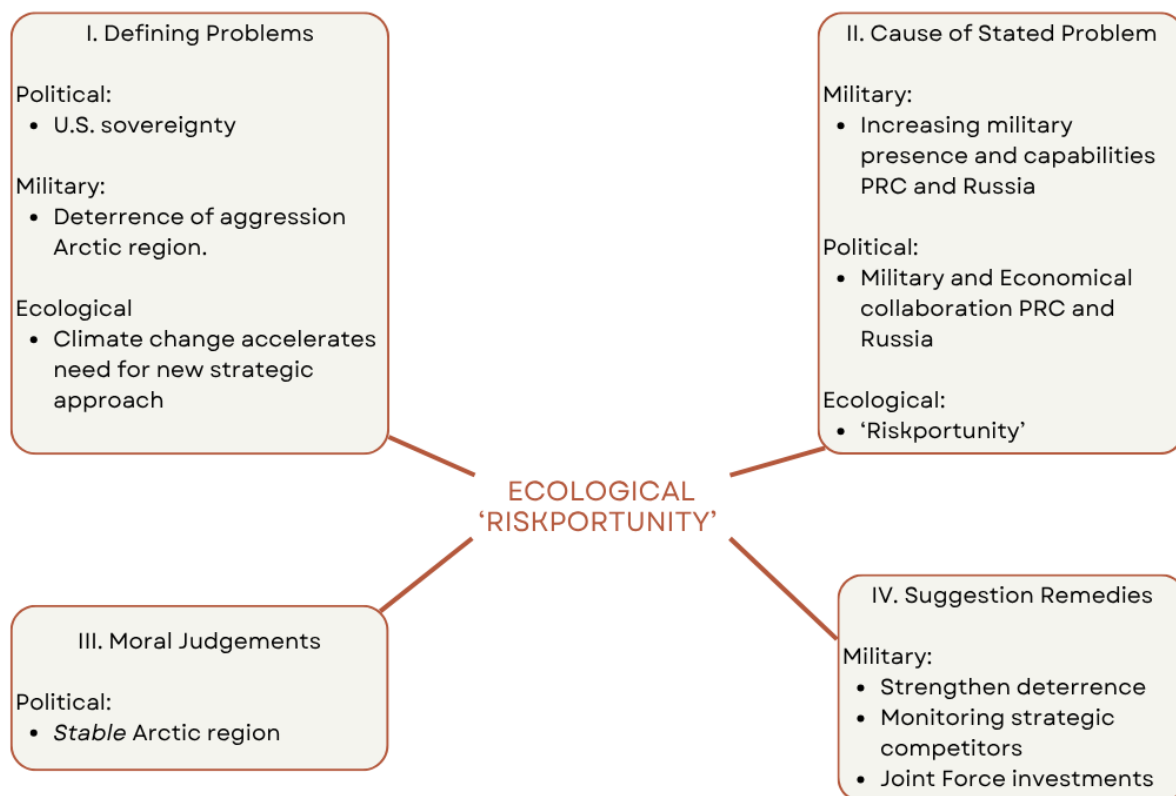


Figure 2: Overview Framing Theory Interpretation Arctic Strategy 2019.

### *Comparative Analysis Environmental Security Frames 2019 and 2024*

In this section, a comparative analysis is conducted on the analyzed 'Arctic Strategy' documents of the years 2019 and 2024. By conducting the comparative analysis of both cases, this study offers insights into the evolving concept of 'Environmental Security' and the changing security environment in the Arctic region affected by it.

#### Use of language

Both Arctic Strategy documents show differentiating use of language to conclude their perspective on security in the Arctic region. For one, this could be attributed to the political standpoint and expressions of the sitting president and his administration. Within the Arctic Strategy of 2019 a more urgent use of language is presented in which the function of 'Moral Judgement' plays a significant role. 'Buzzterms' such as 'Era of Strategic Competition' or choices for portraying the Arctic region as *increasingly* unstable constructs a reality in which the Arctic is displayed as fragile to foreign hostile powers. The Arctic Strategy of 2024 moves away from using 'buzzterms', instead using more formal language creating a more distant feel from urgency. Where the 2019 document emphasizes more on direct uncertainties and risk, the 2024 policy articulates these same problems with words such as 'engage'. This thesis takes this consideration into account, while simultaneously analysing the used language as a subtle shift in the use of frames towards the security environment of the Arctic region.

#### Frames

A comparison of the individual framing analyses of the two Arctic Security documents reveals both differences and similarities in the application of the four framing functions. This section will examine

the parallels and contrasts in the frames and analyze them in relation to the literature review to provide a concise conclusion on the development of the concept of ‘Environmental Security’. The most significant similarity shown in the use of frames across the two Arctic Strategy documents is the perspectives of the Arctic region being a site of geopolitical tension and strategic importance. The first two functions of framing theory predominantly shape this reality by associating the defined problems with the specific actors held accountable. Both documents show a predominance of the military and political sector being appointed to the functions of ‘Defining Problems’ and ‘Cause of Stated Problem’. Linking both the problem as well as its causal actors to the political and military sectors, as analyzed in the individual frame analysis, a reality is constructed in which the Arctic region is framed as a site of strategic competition and vulnerability to geopolitical spillover. However differentiating in choice of language, an overall overlap in the essence of the involved sectors presents three key objectives: safeguarding of the U.S. homeland, deterrence of aggressors in the Arctic region and the maintenance of favorable positions of power. Safeguarding the U.S. homeland involves affirming its status as an Arctic nation, preserving sovereignty, and addressing the growing long-range military capabilities of China and Russia. The second key objective aligns with this view, by deterring aggressors in the Arctic region the U.S. reinforces safeguarding of both the homeland as well as their position of power. The third key aspect, maintaining a favorable position of power, serves as an implicit deterrent to potential aggressors via indirect power projection, while simultaneously strengthening the security regarding Arctic Sea Routes essential to the nation’s economy. Combining these key security objectives, the U.S. presents a significant geopolitical focus on the Arctic region and its own role in it.

Although the problem statement frame remains largely consistent across both Arctic Security documents, the ecological sector gains significantly increased focus in the most recent version. The 2019 document mentions the ecological sector only twice; once in relation to potential economic benefits and once concerning risks to Department of Defense infrastructure. Both dynamics find resonance in the 2024 Arctic Strategy, which repeatedly highlights economic opportunities arising from geospatial changes driven by climate change, while simultaneously emphasizing the risks posed to DoD infrastructure. These resulting policy frames align with the existing literature as discussed in the section ‘Military and Environmental Security’ in which, for instance, Vogler (2024) identifies risks to military infrastructure as a key concern regarding the impact of climate change on the military. However the Arctic Strategy policy of 2019 connects climate change merely with these identified dynamics, the 2024 Arctic Strategy greatly extends this connection. As discussed in the frame analysis of the Arctic Strategy of 2024, the document directly connects climate change to national (security) interests and strategic considerations, actively constructing a connection between climate change and geopolitical considerations. Including climate change both as a defined problem as well as a causal actor within the constructed frame directly contributes to the core concept of this thesis: Environmental Security. As demonstrated in the frame analysis of the specific 2024 document, climate change is no longer portrayed as a minor process with a limited role in the security field; it is now framed as one of the key dynamics that must be accounted for as it performs as a geopolitical ‘threat multiplier’.

The identification of climate change both as a ‘problem’ and as a causal factor aligns with the concept of ‘environmental security’ outlined in the literature review. In the Arctic Security policy of 2024 climate change is articulated to ‘(...) *drive the need for a new strategic approach to the Arctic region*’. Throughout the framing analysis conducted on the 2024 document, the direct connection made between climate change and geopolitical considerations concludes to the frame of ‘Ecological Riskportunity’. Climate change is shown to be framed in this specific document as accelerating present geopolitical concerns, reflecting the ‘threat multiplier’ perspective of environmental security. Interestingly, the referent objects in the literature review and the referent object identified in the framing analysis in this thesis overlap only partly. Recalling the definition of environmental security given by Dalby (2008, 182): ‘the natural resources and habitable environment of a country in a way that threatens

the economic, political, and social stability of a country’, this definition reflects the findings of this thesis to some extent. Dalby’s interpretation of the ‘environmental security’ concept leans heavily on the perspective in which climate change propels food shortages and accelerates social unrest. The findings of this thesis, on the other hand, point towards an acceleration of geopolitical competition. In this case, the ‘threat multiplier’ perspective is verified but shows interesting new insights in the difference of the involved sectors.

### Suggestion Remedies

Both analyzed frames of the Arctic Strategy documents present the military and political sectors as the proposed remedies in the final function, ‘Suggesting Remedies’ of the framing theory. Military suggestions include strengthening deterrence of strategic competitors and increased military presence to create power projection in the region. Politically driven suggestions likewise focus on favorable positions of power, strongly emphasizing regional cooperation and a reinforcement of an order based on international laws.

By proposing military and politically driven responses, the remedies presented in the frames of the Arctic Security policies are inherently geopolitical. Framing climate change as a political stressor, the DoD Arctic Strategy documents suggest geopolitical remedies to deter the identified geopolitical problems. By actively constructing climate change to be perceived as a ‘threat’ towards geopolitical stability, climate change becomes a securitized process. In this instance, climate change is not regarded as a neutral ecological process, but a force driving geopolitical uncertainty. The findings from analyzing the DoD Arctic Strategy documents resonate with existing theory on the securitization of climate change and the integration of non-traditional security concerns into conventional security frameworks through governmentality. Geopolitical suggestion proposed to function as remedies to counter climate change conceptualised as ‘threat multiplier’ contributes directly to this concept proposed by Foucault. Notably, the suggested geopolitical responses reflect the practice-based and discursive security perspective of the Paris School, demonstrated by the Arctic Strategy’s emphasis on expanding military presence.

### Conclusion Comparative Analysis

The analysis of the Arctic Security policies of the year 2019 and 2024 provide an insight in the rise of the concept of Environmental Security. Whereas the 2019 document mentioned climate change twice superficially, the 2024 document explicitly identifies it as a substantial threat to national security and national interests. This significant shift toward viewing climate change as a risk and threat demonstrates the increased influence of the ‘threat multiplier’ perspective over the researched timeframe of 2019 to 2024.

Outlined by sectorialising the ‘threat multiplier’ perspective of Environmental Security, climate change is framed in the researched documents to propel geopolitical tensions. The 2019 document gives limited attention to climate change, whereas the 2024 document highlights clear direct and indirect connections between climate change and geopolitical tensions. Notably, the analysis indicates that the ‘threat multiplier’ framing of climate change is predominantly confined to the military and political sectors, with minimal connections to others. This outcome is likely a reflection of the documents’ origin, as they are policies instructed by the Department of Defense. At the same time, the documents’ origin highlights an interesting development, namely, the integration of climate change as a non-traditional security issue within a traditionally state-centric security framework.

The Department of Defense frames the Arctic as a region marked by uncertainty and heightened geopolitical tensions due to climate change, thereby legitimizing its increased focus through the lens of a redefined security agenda. The emphasis on a redefined security agenda for the Arctic region incorporates the concept of environmental security. The Department of Defense’s increased focus on

Environmental Security accelerates governmentality in the Arctic region, as it legitimizes intervention by traditional securitizing actors on the basis of climate change as a threat multiplier. For the Arctic region, the growing incorporation of Environmental Security perspectives translates into increased focus on the area, potentially including an increased military presence. Paradoxically, an increased military focus and presence may accelerate militarization in the region, potentially invoking renewed Cold War paradigms, as mentioned in the introduction.

## IX. Conclusion

This thesis seeks to answer the main research question; 'In what ways has the United States framed climate change as a security threat through its Arctic security agenda from 2019 to 2024, and how has this framing influenced the region's security discourse'. Through a detailed frame analysis of two Arctic security documents, accompanied by a comparative analysis, it becomes evident that the Department of Defense constructed a frame positioning climate change as a geopolitical threat multiplier in the Arctic region. By positioning the Arctic region within the framework of Environmental Security, the area becomes subject to heightened governmentality.

Between 2019 and 2024, climate change was increasingly framed as a threat through the lens of the 'threat multiplier' perspective. While the 2019 document showed little to no evidence to conclude that climate change was perceived as a threat, the 2024 document demonstrated clear direct connections which framed climate change as a significant security threat. Within the intensified frames, climate change was often identified to be the stated problem as well as being a causal factor of the stated

problem. Climate change is presented as a core driver of geospatial changes, thereby serving as the rationale for a renewed strategic approach. This thesis has identified that climate change is framed as an emerging ‘riskopportunity’; a causal factor that simultaneously presents both risks and opportunities. Opportunities are framed in terms of economic benefit, stemming from geospatial changes such as the opening of new sea routes and the potential exploitation of newly exposed land and resources. At the same time, climate change–induced geospatial changes in the Arctic region are perceived as risks to the national security of the United States. The threatening nature of climate change is constructed as ‘risk’, not directly posing an existential threat, but one that could increase in the future. Climate change is viewed as a risk that gradually intensifies in its threatening nature; it is not yet considered an existential threat.

The findings of this thesis confirm that climate change is regarded as a ‘threat multiplier,’ reflecting the concept of Environmental Security and highlighting its relevance. This thesis finds that climate change is primarily framed as a ‘threat multiplier’ in the military and political sectors. The sectoral approach to the threat multiplier aspect of Environmental Security has shown climate change to be framed as catalyzing geopolitical tensions. The Department of Defense translates this notion into renewed security risks arising from geospatial changes, including increased foreign vessel activity, enhanced capabilities for long-range armament deployment, and intensified geopolitical competition. As becomes apparent, these perceived threats are not regarded as existential but as accelerating risks.

The implicit incorporation of the environmental security perspective by the Department of Defense in the 2024 Arctic Security document demonstrates the integration of non-traditional security issues into their traditional security framework. Framing climate change as a geopolitical catalyst, intervention in this process is justified. By, for example, increasing investments in the Joint Force to adapt to climate change and investing in surveillance in the Arctic region, the Department of Defence implements remedies to intervene in the process of climate change in the Arctic region. These proposed remedies reflect an interesting development that aligns with the concept of governmentality, namely by the proliferation of traditionalist actors institutionalising non-traditional security issues. This development reflects the socially constructed nature of security; by framing climate change as a geopolitical catalyst through the lens of environmental security, a new security reality is constructed.

## Appendix

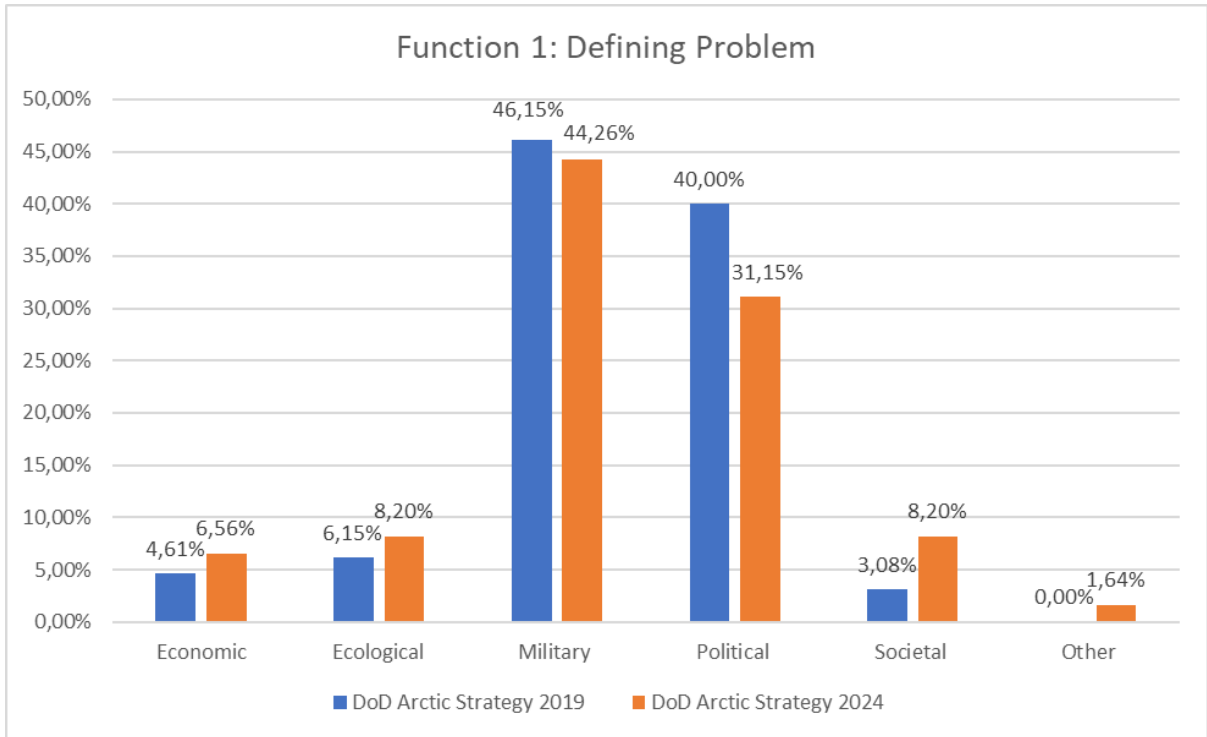


Chart 1: Percentages of Sector Occurrences per Frame Function ‘Defining Problem’.

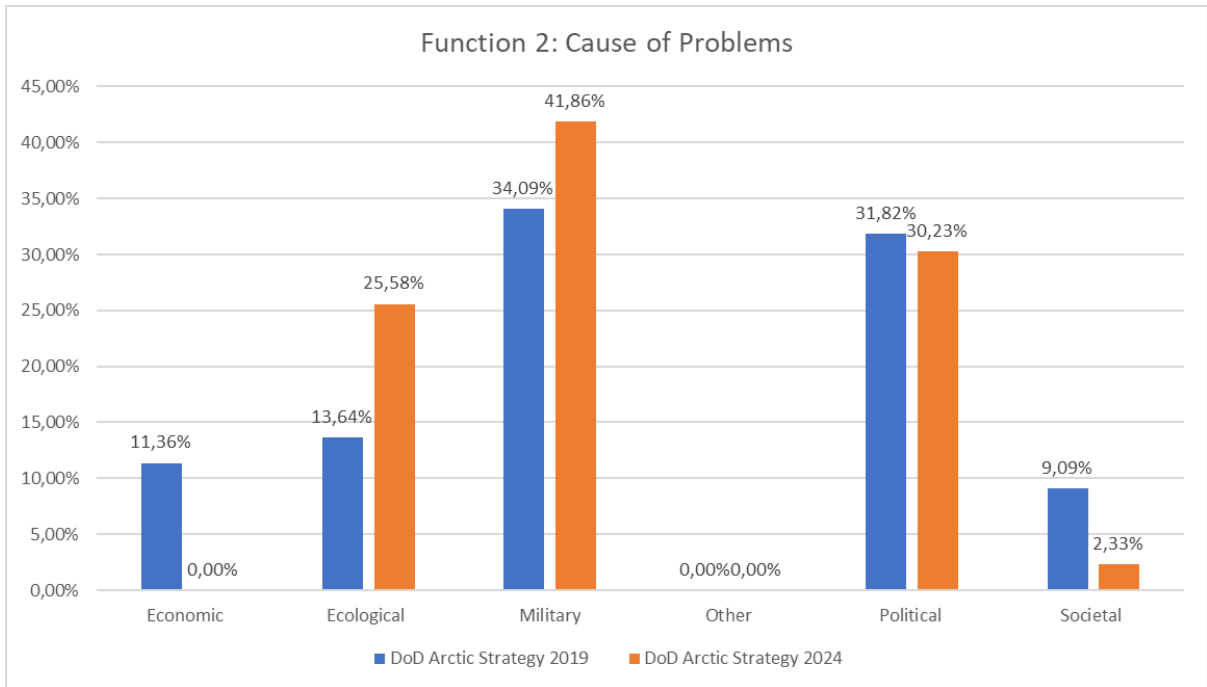


Chart 2: Percentages of Sector Occurrences per Frame Function ‘Cause of Problem’.

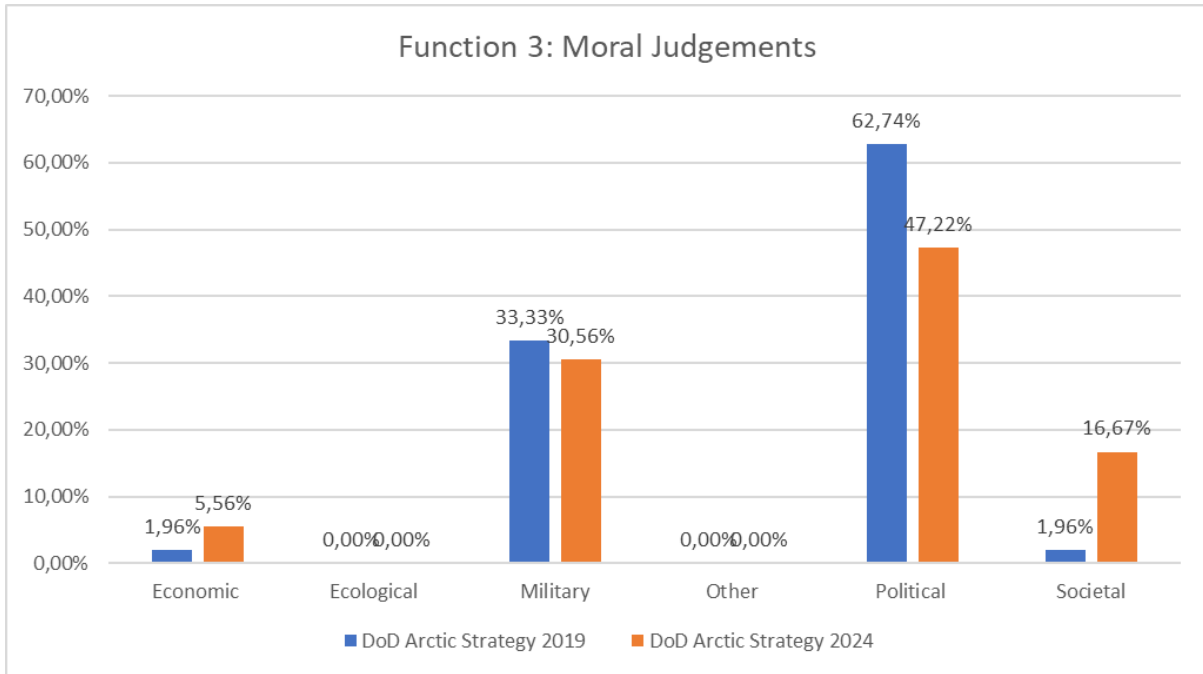


Chart 3: Percentages of Sector Occurrences per Frame Function ‘Moral Judgements’.

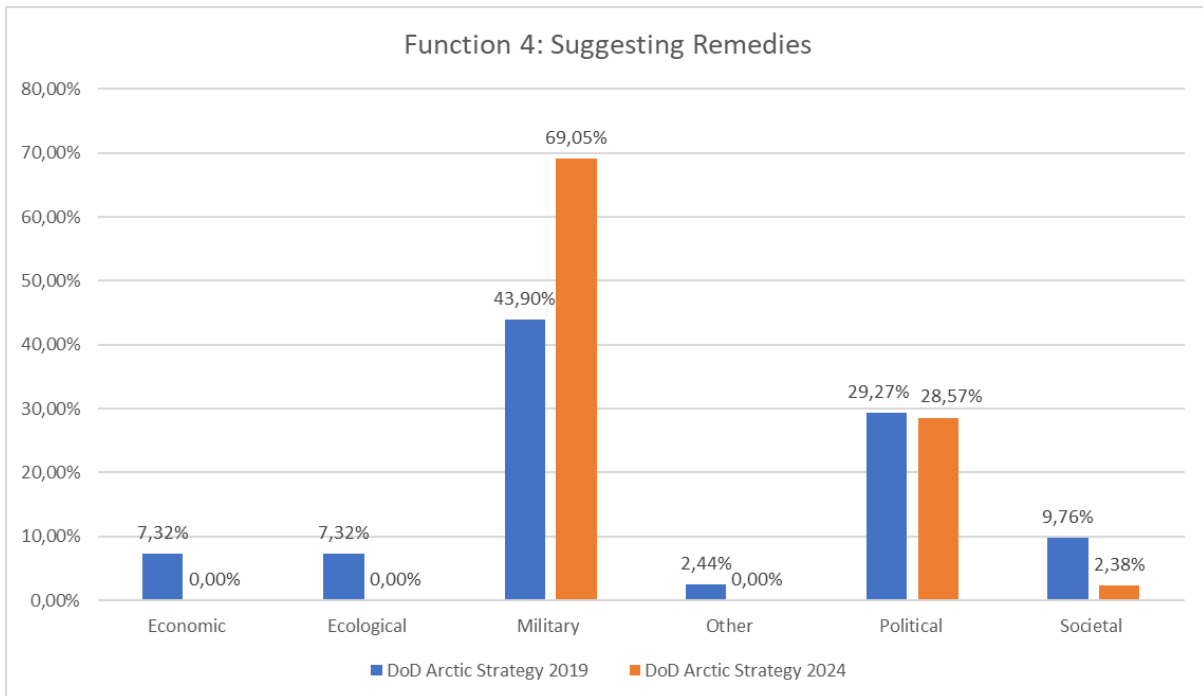


Chart 4: Percentages of Sector Occurrences per Frame Function ‘Suggesting Remedies’.

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