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# **Regional security interests in the Arctic: Finding an explanation for the Russian attitude in the Arctic through the Regional Security Complex Theory**

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# **Regional security interests in the Arctic**

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the Regional Security Complex Theory

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## **Abstract**

This thesis attempts to offer an explanation for Russia's deviant attitude in the Arctic. Where Russia took a revisionist stance during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This, (however expected) attitude did not materialise in the Arctic region. This is done on the basis of the Regional Security Complex Theory by making use of a most-likely/least-likely case study. This thesis searches for the presence of a security dependency, which indicates the presence of a Regional Security Complex in the Arctic, between Russia, and case countries US and Finland. The conclusion is that significant evidence is found for its presence.

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## 1. Introduction

It is well known that humans have had a major impact on global climate change since the industrial revolution. Global warming since 1880 has occurred at a rate 50 times faster than the 21,000 years preceding that year (Scotese, 2015). In the Arctic region, since 1980, this warming has been twice as fast as in the rest of the world (Npolar, n.d.). However, the consequences of this warming are resulting in great dangers and challenges for life on earth. The melting Arctic ice also offers new opportunities and possibilities. A (partially) ice-free Arctic makes it possible to use the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which in some cases can reduce sailing distances by 40%, saving both time and fuel. In addition, the Arctic contains many rare raw materials, which can now be extracted more easily due to the melting ice (World Economic Forum, 2020).

When looking at the Arctic, it can be seen that five countries border this area: Canada, Denmark (because of Greenland), Norway, Russia, and the United States. These countries are known as the 'Arctic five'. In 1996 the Ottawa Agreement was concluded between the Arctic five and Iceland, Finland, and Sweden, resulting in the creation of the Arctic Council, which together form the 'Arctic eight' (Dreyer, 2021). Russia is by far the largest Arctic power when it comes to the size of its Arctic coastline. But also, in terms of the state of their military Arctic capabilities compared to other Arctic states.

A study of scientific literature on Russia in the Arctic also emphasises this. Scholars mention Russia's superpower status in combination with the previously mentioned opportunities presented by climate change in this area. This is why this area has been receiving increasing attention in recent years. Almost every author mentions that Russia's interest in the Arctic mainly relates to securing its status as an energy superpower. However, it is also stressed that since the beginning of the 21st century, Russia has also been engaged in military territorial delimitation. A much-quoted example is the planting of a Russian flag on the seabed under the North Pole in 2007.

The year 2014 is a turning point in academic literature due to the Russian annexation of Crimea. Many scholars expected as a result of this event that Russia would also turn to

military force in the Arctic region, as would be expected according to the IR theory of Realism. However, this did not happen, and in the following years, Russia generally showed itself to be a reliable partner that was happy to cooperate, as the IR theory of Liberalism prescribes. This different-than-expected attitude raises the question of what the explanation for this is.

This thesis will look at a relatively new theory called The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), developed by Barry Buzan & Ole Waever in 2003. An attempt will be made through this theory to find an explanation for the contradictory attitude of Russia in the Arctic region. The research period is from 2014-to 2021. This results in the following research question: *To what extent can the Russian attitude in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea in the period 2014-2021 be explained by the presence of a regional security complex?* The Russian attitude in the Arctic refers here to the absence of revisionist action in this region after the annexation of Crimea, where Russia did have a revisionist attitude.

This research is socially relevant because, in times of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine, it can provide insight into Russia's different courses of action in each region, in order to better understand Russian attitudes. This research is scientifically relevant because it attempts to explain why Russia is behaving differently in the Arctic region than scholars expected after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This is done through a relatively new theory, the RSCT, which may offer new insights.

In this thesis, a most-likely/least-likely case study will be conducted in which Russian behaviour will be examined and tested against the behaviour of the United States and Finland. The aim is to investigate whether security dependencies can be found between Russia on the one hand and the other two Arctic countries on the other. Three of the five multi-sectoral dimensions described in the theory are tested. In the case of this thesis, these are the military, economic and environmental dimensions. They are examined and tested for the presence of security dependence between Russia and the two case countries. If this is the case, one can speak of a Regional Security Complex in the Arctic. And that would explain the Russian anomalous behaviour in the region. After all, Buzan & Waever write in their

theory that each RSC has its own security dynamics that should be seen separately from other regions (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 44).

The structure of this thesis is as follows. In the second chapter, a comprehensive state of the art of the scientific literature on Russia in the Arctic and the related academic debate is presented. Then a brief explanation of the RSCT is given. The third chapter explains the methods used in this thesis and provides an explanation of the choices made in this research. In chapters four, five and six, the actual research takes place. Whereby the 4th chapter looks at the military dimension, the 5th at the economic dimension and the 6th at the environmental dimension. The thesis concludes with the seventh chapter in which the research question is answered.

## 2. Literature review and the RSCT

This chapter examines the current status of literature regarding Russia in the Arctic. A selection of sources is considered. Subsequently, the similarities and differences in the literature are discussed. The chapter ends with the embedding of this thesis in the academic debate, and with a brief explanation of the theory used in this thesis, the RSCT.

### 2.1 Overview of existing knowledge

When studying the literature on Russia in the Arctic the increasing amount of attention paid to this topic in recent years is impressive. Almost all authors agree and mention that the Arctic region has increasingly become an area of interest in recent years. The effects of global warming are mentioned in many articles as an important reason for this. The melting polar icecaps provide access to the natural resources beneath the Arctic (Dadwal, 2014, p. 813). In addition, it offers the possibility to open up a new 'Northern Sea Route', which will mean that ships no longer need to pass through the Suez or Panama Canal. This reduces the naval transit time between Asia and Europe by about 40% (Nick Pay & Calvo, 2020, p. 106).

Most articles emphasise that Russia is by far the biggest player in this region. Due to its large northern coastline, it can make the largest territorial claims in the Arctic (1.2million square kilometres in total) (Fenenko, 2012, p. 8). Among other things, huge amounts of oil and gas can be found. This is one of the reasons why many scientific articles look at Russia's role in the Arctic from the perspective of energy interests. Since Russia is a major player when it comes to selling oil and gas and their main source of economic development is in this sector. It is very important for Moscow to strengthen this sector (Piskunova, 2010, p. 853; Nicoll & Delany, 2012, p. 6). As a result of obsolete oil fields that are declining in production, Russia will have to look for new sources so that it can continue its production level at the present extent. And this is where the Arctic importance for Russia comes into existence (Dadwal, 2014, pp. 814-815). Besides natural resources, much is written about the importance for Russia of the aforementioned opening of the NSR and the economic opportunities that this could potentially bring (Roi, 2010, pp. 562–563; Nicoll & Delany, 2012, p.6).

What is striking is that the annexation of Crimea leads to an increase in scientific interest in Russia's role in the Arctic. Scholars have certain expectations of Russia's stance in this region and expect that the sanctions might also have an impact there. These scholars then often explain Russia's stance on the basis of the classic IR theories of Realism and Liberalism. Russia has traditionally been seen as the classic example of a 'Realist-power' (Nick Pay & Calvo, 2020, p. 108). Signs of realistic behaviour are seen by some scholars in the increase of Russia's Arctic military capacity since 2007 (ibid, 2020). Other examples include the planting of a Russian flag at the bottom of the Arctic and the resumption of naval and strategic bomber patrols in the Arctic since 2007. These are seen by some as signs of a revisionist and aggressive stance by Russia in the Arctic (Konyshev & Sergunin, 2014, p. 323). When it comes to military and technological capacity, Russia is the biggest power in the Arctic. They have by far the largest Arctic military fleet, and their (nuclear) icebreaker capacity far outstrips that of other Arctic nations (Marshall, 2016, pp. 272–287).

However, most scholars agree that Russia is paradoxically guided by considerations of Liberalism. A theory that, in contrast to Realism, thinks that international conflicts can be solved through cooperation in state-based international organisations. So they believe in a global society that exists alongside nation-states (Jørgensen, 2022, p. 119; Nye & Welch, 2013, pp. 12-13) In the Arctic, it follows the Rules of the Game. Russia is an active supporter of the Arctic Council (AC) and behaves like a good partner towards the other members. In addition, it adheres to agreements made in the UN context regarding the Arctic, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea(UNCLOS), which was signed by the Soviet Union in 1982 (Staun, 2017, p. 314).

Other scholars add that Russia can also be driven by Constructivist considerations, in which identity plays an important role. The identity crisis Russia is going through after the fall of the Soviet empire then offers an explanation for the symbolic importance of the North Pole for Russia (Nick Pay & Calvo, 2020, pp. 125-128). Some scholars then explain that in addition to economic interests, Russia is so active in the region because it has a desire to be seen as a superpower (Ananyeva, 2019, p. 86).

A closer look at the literature reveals a common conclusion that Russia, despite an increase in military capacity, is focusing primarily on the use of peaceful, diplomatic methods, rather than military confrontation in the Arctic (Konyshev & Sergunin, 2014, p. 333). Thus it does not behave in this region as a 'Revisionist' power as was thought by many scholars after the annexation of Crimea. This is mainly explained by Russian economic interests in this region, and that it now sees cooperation in this field as the wisest tack to secure these interests (Staun, 2017, p. 328).

## 2.2 Academic debate

The articles that have been studied agree on a number of issues. For example, every scholar emphasises that Russia has an important role to play in the Arctic. This role stems from the fact that, because of its large territory, it can also make the largest territorial claims in the area. It is also often mentioned that Russia is the largest military power in the area. In the scientific debate, this region is a hot topic and certainly after the annexation of Crimea, there was an increased interest in Russia's role there. The consequences of climate change present challenges as well as opportunities in the Arctic. Scholars agree that Russia is guided primarily by economic interests in order to secure its status as an 'energy superpower' in the future.

Russia's increasing militarisation in the Arctic is also often mentioned. Almost every article noticed the planting of the Russian flag at the North Pole in 2007. It also mentions the size of Russia's military capacity and technology. However, most scholars agree that despite its traditional status as a Realist power, Russia does not behave like a revisionist power in the Arctic. Rather, it is behaving like a good cooperation partner. This can be explained through the perspective of Liberalism. In addition, some scholars mention that the Arctic also has great symbolic value for Russia and it is trying to regain its superpower status in this region. This is explained in some articles through the IR theory of Constructivism.

Whereas in the literature it was expected that after the annexation of Crimea, Russia would take an aggressive stance in the Arctic as well, this expected attitude has not materialised so

far. Most scholars emphasise that Russian behaviour in the Arctic corresponds to the expectations of the theory of Liberalism.

Although Russia's behaviour does indeed fit the expectations of Liberalism. This does not explain why Russia's behaviour in the Arctic is so different from what was expected. And so different from her behaviour in the case of the Crimean annexation.

This thesis attempts to explain this aberrant behaviour by using a theory developed in 2003 called the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. To see if this can explain the Russian unexpected behaviour in the Arctic by focussing on the presence of regional dynamics. This theory will now be explained further.

### 2.3 Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)

Buzan and Waever claim in their book *Regions and Powers the Structure of International Security* that with the end of the cold war, the regional level of security has come to play a greater role in international politics. With the end of the bipolar world, there is more room for regional powers (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 3). The RSCT offers the possibility of understanding this post-Cold War structure. Whereas older IR theories mainly looked at the global level, the RSCT distinguishes between the system level of global powers and the subsystem of interplay. *"The central idea in RSCT is that, since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters: security complexes"* (ibid, p. 4).

Their definition of an RSC is: *"a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another"* (ibid, p. 44). *"To determine an RSC, durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence are considered"* (ibid, p. 45).

An RSCT cannot simply be applied to any group of countries. A group of countries or entities must have a certain degree of security dependence in order to establish itself while distinguishing itself from the surrounding security regions (ibid, pp. 47-48).

According to Buzan and Waever, there are five multisectoral conceptions that define an RSC: military, political, societal, environmental, and economic (ibid, pp. 45-46). Their theory also makes a distinction between referent objects (that which must be securitised and desecuritised) and the securitising actors (those who make claims about this security) "*A security issue is posited (by a securitising actor) as a threat to the survival of some referent object*" (ibid, p.71). The opposite occurs when a reference object is no longer under threat and is therefore no longer part of the security agenda. This is called desecuritisation.

Based on the definition of an RSC provided earlier by Buzan and Waever, it is thus determined on the basis of an examination of securitisation and desecuritisation processes of countries and/or entities in the five mentioned multisectoral conceptions.

This means that if a topic from one of the five multi-sectoral conceptions is securitised by a country, and other countries from the region respond to this act, this is an indication of the presence of an RSC. The opposite is true for the process of desecuritisation of a particular topic. This is discussed in more detail in the methodological justification of this thesis.

It is important to understand that desecuritisation does not mean that there is no security dependency. On the contrary, desecuritisation processes are examples of the presence of a security region. An example of this is the European Union, which according to Buzan and Waever is a unique region built on desecuritisation and thus forms a regional security complex (ibid, pp. 374-376). This is discussed in more detail in the methodological justification of this thesis.

### 3. Methodological justification

This chapter discusses the methodology of the thesis. This serves as a basis for the actual research and also ensures the reproducibility and replicability of the research. This is partly to ensure the reliability of the research. This chapter also explains why certain choices were made.

#### 3.1 Most-likely/least-likely case study design

In this thesis, a case study on Russian behaviour in the Arctic has been conducted. This was done on the basis of a research question: *To what extent can the Russian attitude in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea in the period 2014-2021 be explained by the presence of a regional security complex?*

The Russian attitude in the Arctic refers here to the absence of revisionist action in this region after the annexation of Crimea, where Russia did have a revisionist attitude.

A case study in the general sense “examines a small number of cases, which is expected to provide greater insight into the larger population of similar cases” (Gerring, 2006, p. 86). This particular thesis uses a most-likely/least-likely case study design. This falls under the category of crucial cases, and “are most-likely or least-likely to exhibit a given outcome” (ibid, 2006, p.89). The most-likely case serves the role of a disconfirmatory case here. If the theory does not fit in this case, it will most likely not fit in other similar cases either (Gerring, 2006, pp. 120-121). The possibility of generalising then falls away. The least-likely case serves here the role of confirmatory case. This is the 'Sinatra effect': “If I can make it here, I can make it anywhere”. (Gerring, 2006, p. 119). If the theory turns out to fit this case, strong evidence has been found and this increases the possibility of generalising. In the practice of this thesis, this means that the behaviour of Russia is investigated and tested by means of two other cases.

The aim is to observe patterns of security dependency between Russia and the two other countries. If this can be demonstrated, it indicates the presence of an RSC in the Arctic. In that case, the different attitude of Russia in the Arctic region than in the case of Crimea can

be explained. After all, when this is demonstrated, the security issues in the Arctic take place within its own unique RSC and thus require a different approach from Russia than is the case for Crimea, which falls outside this RSC.

The first case (most-likely) is the United States. This was chosen because I expect that of all the Arctic countries, the United States is the most likely to respond to the securitisation and desecuritisation of various topics by Russia. This is because the US and Russia have traditionally been ideological opponents. This increases the fear of each other, which on the one hand makes securitisation more likely, but also increases the need for desecuritisation. In addition both countries are comparable on the basis of their large population and large territory. This means in practice that in this thesis, the presence of a security interdependency, indicating the presence of an RSC, between Russia and the United States is most expected.

The second case (least-likely) is Finland, this was chosen because I expect that of all the Arctic countries, Finland is the least likely to respond to securitisation and desecuritisation of various topics by Russia. This is because Finland was neutral during the Cold War and also did not become a NATO member after this war (Tornudd, 2005, p. 44). This makes the fear between the two countries less present and therefore securitisation less likely, but also desecuritisation less necessary. In addition, the countries have no similarities in terms of territory and population. This means in practice that in this thesis, the presence of a security interdependency, indicating the presence of an RSC, between Russia and Finland is least expected.

### 3.2 Choices and justification

As can be seen from the research question, the research period 2014-2021 was chosen. The starting year 2014 was chosen because this year marks the annexation of Crimea. Several scholars were surprised at the fact that Russia did not become more aggressive in the Arctic after this act. This thesis tries to explain that fact by seeing if Russia's behaviour can be understood in the presence of an Arctic RSC. This makes 2014 a logical starting year for

research. The end year 2021 is chosen for the simple reason that the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 will change many things for Russia in its attitude towards other countries, and vice versa. And possibly this will also affect the dynamics in the Arctic region. Just as was expected after the annexation of Crimea. Thus, the research period of this thesis covers 7 years.

As mentioned earlier, there are five multi-sectoral dimensions that define an RSCT. In this thesis, three of the five dimensions were examined. These are, successively, the military dimension, the economic dimension and the environmental dimension. The choice to leave out two dimensions is related to the word limit of the thesis. The military dimension was chosen because an increasing amount of academic literature indicates that Russia has become more militarily active in the region in the last years. The economic aspect was chosen because much of the literature also points to the economic interests of the region, especially for Russia. Finally, the environmental dimension was chosen because melting ice is often cited in the literature as the reason for new opportunities in the Arctic.

It should be noted that the military dimension mainly examined the perception of military security dependence in the narratives of the Arctic strategies and to a lesser extent actual militarisation in material practice.

This thesis is qualitative in nature. Primarily primary sources are used, occasionally supplemented by secondary sources. The main sources are the countries Arctic strategies. In addition, joint statements by countries or press releases from conferences between the countries under investigation have been used, in some cases. The secondary sources used in this thesis come, among others, from think tanks. Examples are Clingendael, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Egmont Institute. In addition to the use of English-language sources, a number of Russian-language sources were also used in this thesis.

The Arctic strategies that have been examined are the following. Russia one that covers the period 2013-2020 and one from 2020-2035. Of course, it is understood that the first period falls just before the starting point of this study in 2014. However, this Arctic strategy was

used as it covers most of the period under consideration. The second Russian Arctic strategy was written in 2022, and although it applies to a much longer period than the one examined in this thesis, it still gives a clear picture of the Russian status quo in the year 2020 when the strategy was written. For the US, two Department of Defence (DOD) Arctic Strategies fall within the study period, those of 2016 and 2019. Therefore, both were examined.

Two Arctic strategies from Finland have been set against those of Russia, in order to observe potential military security dynamics between those countries: those of 2013-2021 and those of 2021-2030. Also, in this case, it is known that both strategies partially exceed the research period of this thesis. This is especially true for the latter period, but it is assumed that a strategy written in 2021 will at least expose the status quo, potentially also in military relations with Russia. For practical reasons, therefore, it was decided to include both strategies in this research.

#### 4. Security dependency in the Arctic: The Military

In the following chapter the empirical research takes place. Does Russian securitisation and desecuritisation in the military dimension take place provoke a counter-reaction from the US and Finland? The aim is thus to identify security dependencies between these countries that indicate the presence of an RSC in the Arctic. This research will first look at the most-likely case of the US and then the least-likely case of Finland. The focus is mainly on military security dependence in the rhetoric of narratives, and to a lesser extent on militarisation in practice.

##### 4.1 Russia/US: Military

The annexation of Crimea has resulted in the decline of military contacts between Russia and the West. For example, Russia has been thrown out of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR). Although it was later suggested that Russia be invited back, Russia itself has indicated that it prefers to discuss military matters with the Chiefs of Defence Staff and no longer in the context of the ASFR (Clingendael, 2019).

Upon closer examination of the most recent Arctic strategy of the two countries, within the research period of this thesis, the following stand out. Russia indicates that it wants to "*ensure international peace, security and stability*" in the Arctic region (Pravitel'stvo Rossii, 2013). And the US emphasises that the Arctic region should remain primarily an area of cooperation (Department of Defense, 2016, p.6). Thus, both countries mention the importance of maintaining peace in the region. This stance can, according to the RSCT, be seen as an act of desecuritisation of both countries.

However, an increasing degree of militarisation of the region is also visible. The Russian military objectives for the period 2013-2022 are the expansion of combat units and military infrastructure. The strengthening of military power in the region serves primarily as a deterrent but the goal is also that Moscow must be able to repel attacks in the event of conflict (Pravitel'stvo Rossii, 2013).

The US DOD mentions that there are friction points in the region with Russia. As a result of Russia's violation of sovereignty in other countries such as Ukraine, the US is concerned about a potential conflict with Russia in the Arctic region. They mention the increasing Russian commitment to deterrence in the area and conclude that the US should increase military exercises in the Arctic (Department of Defense, 2016).

In the latest version of the Arctic Strategies of both countries, the increased militarisation in the area is striking. Russia emphasises that the number of modern weapons has gone from 41% in 2014, to 59% in 2019. And it states that in the coming years it wants to focus even more on the presence and improvement of its military in the region (Prezident Rossii, 2020b). However, it does not elaborate on what these modern weapons and improvements are. In its 2019 Arctic strategy, the US states that Russia sees itself as an Arctic superpower, and that Russia has increasingly militarised the region since 2014. One of the US objectives is "*compete when necessary to maintain favourable regional balances of power*" (Department of Defense, 2019, p.6). Russian militarisation in the region is an act of securitisation according to the theory of Buzan & Waever. The US Arctic strategies show that they too recognise this militarisation and plan to address it adequately by increasing their own military capabilities in the region. Although at the moment there is no real proof that the US is actually making extra military investments in this area.

This study also looked at the annual speeches of the Russian and American presidents. For Russia, all 'Addresses to the Nation' from 2014-2021 were examined, and for the US, all 'State of the Unions' in the same period. However, no evidence for the presence of an RSCT in the Arctic could be found. Only in Putin's Address to the Nation in 2018 is it stated that the Russian Arctic Fleet is and will remain the most powerful. In addition, it is cited that the US has put new missile systems in Alaska (Prezident Rossii, 2018a). In contrast, the US 'State of the Unions' does not mention the Arctic once in all the years under review.

During the research period of this thesis two Russia-US summits took place, in 2018 and in 2021. A closer look at both summits reveals a clear difference. During the meeting between Putin and Trump in 2018, the Arctic was not discussed, while it was an important topic at the

2021 summit between Putin and Biden. A month before the summit, Biden called the US an "Arctic nation". A day later, foreign minister Blinken said he hoped "*that the Arctic remains a conflict-free zone, but that he has reservations about Russian military activities in the region*" (Seethi, 2021). At the summit itself, Putin addressed this by saying that the proximity of Russia and the US in the Arctic should lead to joint efforts. He added that US concerns about Russian military efforts were absolutely ungrounded.

The Russian Embassy in Washington spoke out just after the summit, saying it was concerned about military Arctic exercises in which the US was also taking part. They are considered provocative and counterproductive for the peaceful and sustainable development of the region. In addition, according to the Russians, NATO (in which the US is by far the largest member) reconnaissance flights doubled in the first three months of 2021 compared to the previous year (ibid, 2021).

On the basis of this study, the following conclusion can be drawn: in the military dimension, there is a presence of security dependency between Russia and the US. Both countries repeatedly try to desecuritize the region by mentioning the importance of cooperation and a conflict-free Arctic. However, in recent years, both countries have grown increasingly fearful of each other, which has resulted in the further militarisation of the area, from the Russian side, which is noted by the US, which says it wants to counterbalance it.

#### 4.2 Russia/Finland: Military

Finland has maintained good contact with Russia even after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This is partly due to the fact that the country is not a member of NATO. Based on information from the Kremlin website, it can be read that between 2014 and 2021, 24 telephone conversations took place between the presidents of the two countries. In addition, both presidents met physically nine times during this period (Rossii, 2022).

In January 2015, the Russian Ministry of Defence issued a press release announcing the inspection of an old military base where the Arctic Motorised Brigade of the Northern Fleet was to be based (Ministerstvo oborony Rossijskoj Federacii, 2015). This base was located about 50 kilometres from the Finnish border in Alakurtti, a town that belonged to Finland

until 1940. In October of that year, a delegation from the Finnish defence force paid a three-day visit to this base (The Barents Observer, 2015). Although the opening of this base could be seen as a securitisation act on the part of Russia, no official Finnish documents mention anything about it.

In the two Russian Arctic strategies examined, Finland is not mentioned once. Earlier in the comparison with the US, we had already mentioned Russia's military objectives in the Arctic. In the Finnish Arctic strategy of 2013-2021, it references the Russian Arctic strategy of 2013. However, in military terms, it only mentions that Russia aims to "*ensure Russian military security and protect its Arctic borders*" (Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2013, p. 20). But nothing is said about a sense of threat or concern about Russia, and it is emphasised that Finland is prepared for further bilateral cooperation with Arctic countries, including Russia (ibid, p.15).

The Finnish Arctic strategy of 2021 places a clear emphasis on the militarisation of the Arctic. They mention that the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has resulted in increased tensions in the Arctic. As a result of Russian militarisation with the aim of securing their economic interests in the region, the US and other NATO countries have also increased their military presence. Finland further mentioned that its own defence forces conduct training in the North, both nationally and with international partners (Finnish Government Helsinki, 2021, pp. 18-19). Finland itself stresses that it prefers bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation with Russia, the US and Canada (ibid, p.22).

No clear securitisation or desecuritisation processes can be discerned in either of Finland's strategies. In a general sense, Finland recognises the increased militarisation of the Arctic but this does not focus solely on Russia. It also mentions the need for cooperation in the Arctic region. Since there is no personal reference to Finland in Russia's Arctic strategies, it is not possible to establish a clear presence of a security dependency between the two countries on the basis of these documents.

Information from the joint statements and press moments following the meetings between the Russian and Finnish leaders was also considered. It is only in the year 2017 that the

Arctic is mentioned as a topic, but only on the subject of climate change. At the joint press conference after the meeting between Vladimir Putin and his Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinistö, the Arctic is again mentioned. Putin mentions that "*the problems of the Arctic have been discussed as a result of the upcoming Finnish presidency of the Arctic Council. And that these were very substantive and will contribute to further bilateral relations*" (Prezident Rossii, 2018c). This indicates a willingness to cooperate but it is not made clear to what extent this concerns the military issue. The times when the Finnish president mentions the Arctic, it only concerns cooperation on climate issues. (ibid, 2018c).

During the 2019 meeting, a journalist asks Putin a question regarding a nuclear incident in Severodvinsk, a Russian city on the Arctic coast (Lewls, 2019). The journalist mentioned that Finland is concerned about the incident 400 kilometres from the Finnish border, and wondered whether there was no need to improve the lines of communication between the two countries in the event of such an incident. Putin indicates in his reply that those lines of communication are working properly (Prezident Rossii, 2019). Subsequently, this incident does not come up again, nor does the Finnish president give any attention to it. In the meeting between the two presidents in 2021, it is only briefly mentioned that Russia is taking over Finland's presidency in the Arctic Council and both countries hope to continue their cooperation in the Arctic (Prezident Rossii, 2021).

On the basis of this study, the following conclusion can be drawn: in the military dimension, there is no security dependency between Russia and Finland. Based on the documents examined, there is little discussion of military matters in the Arctic between the two countries. They mainly focus on continuing their cooperation in other areas and seem to want to avoid the military topic in their words.

## 5. Security dependency in the Arctic: Economy

This fifth chapter focuses specifically on the economic dimension. It looks at what the economic plans of the countries under investigation are for the Arctic and to what extent this results in a counter-reaction from the other country. Either by securitisation of a subject or by desecuritisation, for example through economic cooperation.

### 5.1 Russia/US: Economy

As can be seen from the literature review, many scholars stress the economic importance of the Arctic region, especially for Russia. The two most important economic issues in the Arctic are the natural resources and the Northern Sea Route. Again, the Arctic strategies of both countries during the period under review were used.

Russia sets itself clear goals in its Arctic strategy aimed at securing its energy interests in the region. It is important to ensure the country's energy security even well beyond 2020. In order to achieve all this, exploration studies are proposed, reserve funds are established and efforts are made to expand infrastructure in the Arctic (Pravitel'stvo Rossii, 2013). The development of the NSR is an important component of this. Russia has set itself the goal of *"improving the regulatory framework of the Russian Federation in the field of state regulation of NSR navigation"* (ibid, 2013). This includes tariff regulation for the use of icebreakers and the provision of other services in the Arctic.

Another important objective of Russia is the expansion of their continental shelf through the UNCLOS treaty. This UN treaty stipulates that each country's territorial waters extend 200 nautical miles beyond its coastline. When countries make certain claims on territory beyond 200 nautical miles, they must submit a claim to this UN body (United Nations, n.d.).

The 2016 US Arctic strategy mentions that Russia is adhering to the UNCLOS guidelines in its attempt to expand the continental shelf. It is also stated that the expansion that Russia wants is not in conflict with the territory that the US wants in the future (Department of Defense, 2016, p. 7). The US does express its concerns about the developments surrounding the NSR: *"Russia requires permits for ships wishing to pass through the NSR, and the US*

*considers this to be in conflict with international law"* (ibid, p. 6). The US expects that the countries will continue to disagree among themselves on this. However, the US itself speaks mainly in general terms when it comes to economic development in the region. The 2016 US strategy fails to set actual goals.

Russia's subsequent 2020 strategy for the Arctic shows Russia's economic plans to an even greater extent. It says that since 2014, Russian economic development in the Arctic has increased dramatically. For example, freight traffic in the NSR has increased from 4 million tonnes in 2014 to 31.5 million tonnes in 2019 (Prezident Rossii, 2020b). It does not even mention the US once on the subject of the economy. And so, no securitisation point from the Russian side can be found in the Russian Arctic strategies.

In the US Arctic strategy 2019, again no economic strategy can be deduced. However, the US emphasises its concerns regarding the NSR and mentions this time that "Russia has threatened ships with violence that did not want to comply with Russian rules" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 4). It is also noteworthy that in addition to Russia, this US strategy also mentions China as an emerging threat in the Arctic, although the US emphasises that it does not recognise China as an Arctic country (ibid, 2019, pp. 4-5).

The fact that the US does not set clear economic goals in either strategy, whereas Russia does, indicates an absence of a clear economic balance of power between the two countries in the Arctic. Especially in recent years, Russia has been investing more and more in the Arctic while the US has lagged behind. As recently as 2018, Putin mentioned that he wanted to increase cargo traffic in the NSR to 80 million tonnes by 2024 (Prezident Rossii, 2018b). And in a 2020 conversation between Putin and Rosneft director Igor Sechin, the main topic was the "Vostok Oil project" in the Arctic. This, according to Sechin, would cause an annual growth of Russia's GDP by 2% and would create a hundred thousand jobs (Prezident Rossii, 2020a). This all is about Russia's intention to increase economic activity, which can be seen as an act of securitisation. The US, on the other hand, lags behind and there are no clear US investment figures in the Arctic. This is also confirmed by think tanks that state that the Arctic is not yet sufficiently important to the US in terms of investment (Kochis, 2021).

On the basis of this study, the following conclusion can be drawn: in the economic dimension, there is no security dependency between Russia and the US. Russia's growing economic interest in the Arctic region, endorsed through investments, could be seen as a securitisation act. However, there is no counter-reaction from the US that would indicate an interaction between the two countries under the heading of a security dependency, which in turn could indicate the presence of an RSC.

## 5.2 Russia/Finland: Economy

The previous sub-chapter made it clear what Russia's economic plans are in the Arctic region. Again, the two Arctic strategies which fall within the research period of this thesis in Finland, have been examined and considered.

While Russia makes no mention of Finland in either Arctic strategy, the reverse is true for Finland. The Finnish strategies speak a lot about economic cooperation with the other Arctic countries including Russia. Also, unlike the US, Finland elaborates on its economic plans and opportunities in the Arctic. Since 2010, Russia and Finland have been in a bilateral Arctic partnership where they cooperate closely on economic issues in the region (Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2013, p. 15). Finland's Arctic strategies mention this cooperation. And this cooperation continued even after the annexation of Crimea.

Another important (economic) cooperation involving Russia and Finland is the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), which has existed since 1993 (The Barents Euro-Arctic Council, 2022). It includes working groups that deal with economic development in the region.

The Finnish strategy of 2013 is full of economic opportunities that Finland can gain from cooperation with Russia. Russia's aforementioned plans for the development of energy projects and the development of the NSR are desecuritized by Finland. They do this by demonstrating the importance for other countries of cooperation with Finland. For example, the strategy states that with the expansion of mining and oil activities in the North, there will also be a need for cross-border transport possibilities in which Finland would like to play a role (Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2013, p. 9).

It also mentions the importance of the Finnish maritime sector, on which many other Arctic states depend. The increasing competition in this sector between Arctic countries requires continuous technological improvements for Finland but also offers opportunities where good contact with the other governments is important (ibid, 2013, p. 29). The fact that Finland recognises Russia's ambitions in the region and adapts to them can be seen as a desecuritisation act of Finland.

Finland's 2021 strategy emphasises that much has changed since the previous strategy in 2013, especially when it comes to Russian interests in the Arctic. Finland also recognises the importance of the NSR for Russia and tries to promote its interests regarding the NSR through good cooperation (Finnish Government Helsinki, 2021, pp.17-19). It also stresses the need for continued bilateral (economic) cooperation (ibid, p. 22).

Another important economic cooperation between Russia and Finland in the Arctic concerns icebreakers. Russia has by far the largest icebreaker fleet in the world. In 2019, it owned 40 icebreakers, whereas the US, for example, owns only one (Mason, 2019). Finland itself had the second-largest icebreaker fleet after Russia in 2018 with eight which are also active in the Arctic (Standish, 2018; Finne, 2018). Although the size of an icebreaker fleet is not the only variable of interest, the number of icebreakers owned by a country does say something about its ambitions in the North. In addition, icebreakers are of great importance in the development of the NSR in order to keep the route ice-free all year round. 60% of all icebreakers worldwide are made by Finnish companies, many of which are sold to Russia. In its Arctic strategies, Russia has indicated that it wants to focus on the development of the NSR, among other things. The fact that Finland is a major player in the construction of icebreakers offers an opportunity for desecuritisation of the NSR issue. After all, there is a reason for cooperation for both countries.

On the basis of this study, the following conclusion can be drawn: In the economic dimension, there is a security dependency between Russia and Finland. It has been shown that desecuritisation occurs, certainly on the Finnish side. This takes place in the form of

economic cooperation and is also evident from the importance that Finland, despite the changing world after 2014, places on Arctic economic cooperation.

## 6. Security dependency in the Arctic: Environmental

This sixth chapter focuses specifically on the environmental dimension. As described in the literature review, the Arctic is experiencing accelerated effects of climate change. This section looks at the extent to which there is securitisation on this issue, or whether countries are prepared to desecuritize.

### 6.1 Russia/US: Environmental

In addition to economic opportunities brought about by climate change in the Arctic region. Its consequences will also result in dangers and excesses that all Arctic states will have to deal with. A closer look at Russia's and the US' Arctic strategies also reveals this. For example, both countries call for cooperation to protect the ecosystem and minimise the harmful effects of military and economic activities on the climate (Department of Defense, 2016, p.7; Pravitel'stvo Rossii, 2013). Also, in the most recent versions of the Arctic Strategies, the issue of climate change emerges as a topic that requires cooperation (Department of Defense, 2019; Prezident Rossii, 2020b). The fact that Russia and the US are raising this topic and naming the importance of battling environmental problems is, according to Buzan & Waever, the securitisation of a problem. After all, the subject is placed on the security agenda. The observation by both countries that they must work together to tackle the environmental problem is then an attempt to desecuritize the problem.

There are several examples of successful cooperation on the environmental dimension in the Arctic. An example of this is the 'Declaration Concerning the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean' signed by the Arctic Five countries in 2015. The declaration states that countries will not fish for commercial purposes in the Arctic beyond their territorial waters. In addition, they are establishing a joint programme for scientific research into the ecosystems in these northern waters (Regjeringen.no, 2015). Another important actor dealing with Arctic cooperation on climate issues is the Arctic Council, of which Russia and the US are both members. This council has existed since 1996 and works with the special purpose of protecting the Arctic climate and promoting sustainable development. Examples of climate cooperation between the two countries in this council

include the 'Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic', better known as the MOSPA agreement, signed in 2013 and entered into force in 2016, and the 'Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation' signed in 2017 (Arctic Council, n.d; EPPR, n.d.).

However, climate cooperation in the Arctic Council was disrupted in the year 2017 when Donald Trump became the US President. This resulted in 2019 that at the Arctic Council ministerial meeting, for the first time in history no joint statement was made. This was because the countries could not agree on the use of words in the declaration. The US refused to sign anything containing the word 'climate change' (The Barents Observer, 2019). With the arrival of President Biden in 2021, the US interest in climate change in the Arctic returned. The US Arctic envoy Jim de Hart indicated in 2021 ahead of a new Arctic council meeting, that what happened in 2019 will not happen again. He proclaimed: *"it's about action on climate change and good science, and keeping the region peaceful"* (Balmforth & Pamuk, 2021). This was also endorsed at the council's ministerial meeting by US foreign minister Blinken, who stated that it is important to work together peacefully on environmental issues, among others (Seethi, 2021).

In addition, there is also some bilateral cooperation between Russia and the US on environmental matters. For example, the Russian Federal Security Bureau (FSB) and the US Coast Guard cooperate on illegal pollution or illegal or unreported fishing in the Bering Strait (CSIS, 2020, p.17).

On the basis of this study, the following conclusion can be drawn, in the environmental dimension, there is a security dependency between Russia and the US. In the Arctic strategies, both countries put the topic on the security agenda, thus securitising it. Subsequently, both countries call for desecuritisation through cooperation. Several examples have been given of successful cooperation between the two countries in an attempt to desecuritize the issue. All these are clear examples of securitisation and desecuritisation processes in this dimension.

## 6.2 Russia/Finland: Environmental

In addition to Russia, Finland also stresses the importance of climate cooperation in the Arctic in its Arctic strategies. In their 2013 strategy, Finland calls on the Arctic states to dialogue on this issue and also emphasises the responsibility that the Arctic states have collectively in the fight against this problem (Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2013, p. 13). In the most recent version of the Finnish Arctic strategy 2021, "*Climate change, mitigation and adaptation*" is even named Finland's priority 1 in the Arctic (Finnish Government Helsinki, 2021, p.26). Just like between Russia and the US, the fact that Finland also recognises this problem, alongside Russia, puts the issue on the security agenda. This is an example of the securitisation of a subject according to Buzan & Waever. The call for cooperation and resolution of this problem from the Finnish (and Russian) perspective is then again an attempt to desecuritize the problem.

Finland specifically emphasises Russia as a party that is paying increasing attention to "*resource efficiency and the improvement of energy efficiency*" (Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2013, p. 34). Something Finland also claims to have good quality expertise in. For example, in the areas of "*sustainable mining, cleaning up the Arctic environment, and ensuring the efficiency of production facilities and a low level of emissions*". Expertise that, as Finland emphasises, is mainly recognised in Russia (ibid, 2013, p.34).

As an Arctic nation, Finland is a member of the Arctic Council. And thus also signed the MOSPA agreement in 2013 and the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation in 2017 (Arctic Council, n.d; EPPR, n.d.). Furthermore, Finland cooperates with Russia and the other Arctic states in working groups of the Arctic Council. An example of successful cooperation in this area is the 'Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane' (Arctic Council, 2021). Resulting in a 20% reduction in black carbon by 2018 compared to 2013 and are on track to meet the 25-33% emission reduction target by 2025. However, it should be noted that methane emissions have increased by several per cent (ibid, 2021).

Furthermore, Finland and Russia are also cooperating in the BEAC regarding climate change in the Arctic. In 2013, a climate change action plan was set up for the period 2013-2015 and then updated in 2017 for the period 2017-2020. In 2021 another update of the action plan was published (Barents Cooperation, n.d.).

Another important bilateral cooperation took place on 29 November 2021 in Moscow. Where a conference was held under the name 'Russian-Finnish Cooperation in the Field of Sustainable Development in the Arctic Region' (Roskongress, 2021b). The report of this conference highlights further cooperation between the two countries in the field of climate change. For example, since 2021 both countries are leading a project called 'Biosecurity in the Arctic', there is also another project called 'Advancing Arctic Resilience: Information, Capacity, and Networks for Navigating Impacts of Permafrost Thaw' where both countries are cooperating with the US and Iceland to protect the Arctic environment (Roskongress, 2021a, p.18). It also says that despite the sanctions, both countries continue to maintain a bilateral dialogue. According to Vladimir Putin, *"the position of both countries on the issue of climate change is equal"* (ibid, 2021, p.13).

On the basis of this study the following conclusion can be drawn, in the environmental dimension, there is a security dependency between Russia and Finland. As can be seen from the Arctic strategies of both countries, the topic of the Arctic environment is placed on the security agenda and thus securitised. Subsequently, both countries call for the desecuritisation of the topic. Several examples have been given of how this has led to cooperation between the two countries, sometimes successfully. All these are clear examples of securitisation and desecuritisation processes in this dimension.

## 7. Conclusion

This thesis attempted to explain Russia's aberrant behaviour in the Arctic. This was done by addressing the following research question: *To what extent can the Russian attitude in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea in the period 2014-2021 be explained by the presence of a regional security complex?* Whereby the Russian attitude is understood as the absence of revisionist behaviour in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, whereas Russia did show revisionist behaviour.

An attempt has been made to answer this research question using Buzan and Waever's Regional Security Complex Theory. It was examined whether processes of securitisation and desecuritisation could be found between Russia and two case countries, the US and Finland. Processes that, according to the theory under investigation, indicate the presence of an RSC. Which then offers an explanation for Russia's deviant attitude in the Arctic.

Three of the five dimensions of the RSCT were tested, in this case, the military, economic and environmental dimensions. In the case of the most-likely US, the following conclusion is reached. Two of the three dimensions examined, the military and environmental, demonstrate the presence of securitisation and desecuritisation processes between the two countries. This is not the case for the economic dimension. In the case of the US, these processes were expected to take place. Research has shown this to be the case in two of the three dimensions.

In the case of least-likely Finland, the following conclusion is reached. Two of the three dimensions examined, the economic and the environmental, show the presence of securitisation and desecuritisation processes between the two countries. This is not the case for the military. In the case of Finland, it was less expected that these processes would take place. However, research has shown that in two of the three dimensions this is the case. Since this case had the role of confirmatory, strong evidence was found for the presence of an RSC in the Arctic.

Thus, the research question is answered as follows. Both cases have provided evidence for the presence of an RSC in two of the three dimensions. In the case of the USA, this was

expected, but in the case of Finland, it was least-likely. Nevertheless, this case also provides evidence for the presence of an RSC in two of the dimensions examined. This means that there is considerable evidence for an Arctic RSC. A unique regional security zone that requires a unique approach from the countries in that zone. This explains the deviant Russian posture in the Arctic after the annexation of Crimea in the period 2014-2021. Understanding this contributes to a different perspective on Russian regional behaviour. In order to predict and understand Russia's behaviour, one must look at the potential uniqueness of the region in which it operates. Where, if an RSC is present, unique regional policies fit in.

However, I am aware that this research can be challenged on a number of grounds. There are five more Arctic countries that have not been studied in their interaction with Russia. Possibly, more extensive follow-up research on security dependencies between Russia and these five other Arctic countries could provide other results that either support or reject the findings of this thesis. In addition, three of the five dimensions from the RSCT were tested. Another recommendation for follow-up research concerns the remaining dimensions: political and societal, that may offer new insights. During the research on Arctic strategies, I found out that it was mainly the societal dimension that emerged as an issue of concern to the Arctic states. For example, when it comes to indigenous peoples living in the Arctic, with whom the countries share common problems and challenges. Thus, specific follow-up research on this dimension would be recommended.

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