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## **‘High North, High Tension?’**

A discourse analysis of how the High North  
shapes Norwegian foreign and security  
policy

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MSc International Relations

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# ‘High North, High Tension?’

A discourse analysis of how the High North shapes Norwegian foreign  
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Ås, 2017

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**Declaration**

I, Maiken Sjøttem Sørensen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree

**Signature**.....

**Date**.....

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## ABSTRACT

The High North has been known as a low-tension area ever since the end of the Cold War, where actors have been able to cooperate despite other conflicts in the international sphere. However, geopolitical tensions are rising in the region, as military investments and exercises are increasing, dialogue among Arctic actors is ‘cooling down’ (especially between Russia and the West) and a growing number of external actors (such as China) are taking an interest in the region due to potential shorter transit routes and resources (fish, petroleum and minerals). Hence, a region known for low tension and cooperation appear to be in a state of change, where power politics and traditional security issues have re-emerged.

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate *how* the Norwegian High North discourse has developed over time to understand the political dynamics in the region, from a Norwegian perspective. The thesis sets out to supplement the already existing debate within International Relations. In order to operationalize the research questions, I have investigated historical Norwegian discourses on the High North, using discourse analysis as a method and theoretical approach. The main analysis is delimited to a twelve-year span from 2005 to 2017, with a focus on the first ten years. An introduction to discourses before, during and immediately after the Cold War is also provided.

It was found that 2005 marks a discursive shift in Norwegian High North discourse, which was the year the Norwegian Government coined the High North Norway’s most important foreign policy area. Since then, the region has taken a great share of Norway’s foreign policy discourse and debate. A mix of liberal and realpolitik narratives have constituted the High North discourse, where military presence, cooperation and dialogue are presumed to be vital to ensure Norwegian sovereignty and interests in the region. The discourse has also experienced a move between securitization and desecuritization, where the process of securitization is argued to reflect political tension or thaw. It was found that after Russia annexed Crimea (2014), the High North has become securitized, and the security and realpolitik discourses have become dominant in the discourse – even though the liberal narrative still has a central position within the discourse. This has proved to have constitutive effects, as Norway’s discourse seem to focus more on security and defence. The study has also revealed Russia’s crucial role in the Norwegian High North discourse, and that its relationship with the West affects Norwegian foreign and security policy in the region.

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## **List of abbreviations**

AC	Arctic Council
AEC	Arctic Economic Council
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
CLCS	The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zones
EU	European Union
IGO	Intergovernmental organisations
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NORDEFKO	Nordic Defence Cooperation
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
MP	Member of Parliament
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
UK	United Kingdom
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas
US/USA	The United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics/Soviet Union



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## 1. Introduction

For centuries, the High North has been a region filled with mystery and fascination due to its remote, resource rich, cold and challenging environment. As a result, resource explorers, adventurers, politicians and scientists have been exploring the region for hundreds of years, many with the hope of gaining sovereignty over Arctic land or at least a share of the potential resource riches the land might offer (Hough 2013). Norway has been a central actor in the High North, due to its long coastal border to the Barents Sea, the large share of its population living above the Arctic Circle and resource interests. Thus, the country has been argued to have a strong Arctic identity, and even though it is considered to be a relatively small state on the global arena, it is a vital and influential actor in this particular region (Brøther 2013). In 2005, the Norwegian Government coined the High North as Norway's *key* strategic focus area (Office of the Prime Minister 2005; Støre 2005), and it has consequently taken a large share of the foreign policy debate ever since.

The High North was attributed high geostrategic importance during the Cold War, due to the short geographical distance between the two super powers, i.e. the US and the Soviet Union (USSR). With its close proximity to the USSR, Norway became an important ally of the Western bloc, which meant Norway could serve both as an observation post for NATO and operational area of potential frontal conflicts (Tamnes 1997). The region was predominantly utilized for military bases, where the two blocs conducted surveillance, military training, and testing of weapons (Hønneland and Rowe 2010). However, with the fall of the Soviet Union marking the end of the Cold War, the High North lost its strategic importance and became an area of low tension, where actors have been able to cooperate despite other conflicts on the international arena. As the security concept broadened in the 1990s, incorporating environmental, political, economic and human securities (Buzan et. al. 1998), the focus moved from military issues, to other soft-political issues in the region, i.e. climate change, sustainable resource management and so on (Åtland 2008). Norway has been actively working to create a cooperative and inclusive environment in the region, where

international law and the maintenance of a safe and sustainable environment have been central aspects in Norway's approach.

However, even though the High North has been known as a low-tension area ever since the end of the Cold War, geopolitical tensions seem to be rising and many argue we are moving towards a 'new Cold War' in the region. Military investments and exercises are increasing and dialogue among Arctic actors is 'cooling down', particularly between Russia and the West. Furthermore, a growing number of non-state actors and non-Arctic states (such as China) have taken a greater interest in the region due to potential shorter transit routes between Asia and the US/EU and regarding resources (fish, petroleum and minerals), and thus trying to influence policy and governance structures (Conley et al. 2016). Hence, a region known for low tension and cooperation seems to be changing, where power politics and traditional security issues have re-emerged (Lindgren and Græger 2017).

Considering the important role the High North plays for Norway, these trends have peaked my interest in analysing *how* the Norwegian High North discourse has developed over the last decade, the role and importance of the High North in Norwegian discourses on foreign and security policy, as well as the role of Russia in the discourse. It is assumed here that Russia play a central role in shaping the discourse. Two research questions will be explored in this thesis:

- *How has the Norwegian High North discourse developed over time, and how has the discourse shaped Norwegian security and foreign policy in the region?*
- *What is Russia's role in the Norwegian High North discourse, and how are changes in the relationship between Russia and the West reflected in the discourse?*

Research on discourses in the High North does exist and is growing, especially within constructivism and post-structuralism in International Relations (IR). However, the way in which the global power shifts over the past few years are affecting today's (European) political climate in the High North, and how it reflects the international political and strategic situation, makes it an important and interesting area of study.

Thus, this thesis sets out to supplement the debate concerning the political developments in the High North region. In order to operationalize the research questions, I will look at historical discourses on the High North, using discourse analysis as a method and theoretical approach. I will delimit my material to the Norwegian discourse and, hence, my thesis is based primarily on Norwegian official governmental texts (speeches, White Papers, parliamentary debates and statements) (see 1.4).

The next sub-sections addresses important historical and factual aspects of the High North in order to give the reader relevant background of the region before the analysis, as well as the concept of ‘region’.

### **1.1 The land of possibilities?**

As noted, the High North has become a region of growing geopolitical importance over the years, due to the amount of natural resources (primarily natural gas, oil and fish), climate change, scientific research, territorial disputes of the continental shelf, international activity and security issues. The ice melting in the region is creating great economic opportunities, as it is opening up for potential trade routes, further extraction of energy resources and substantial areas for fishery. According to Borgerson et al. (2014), the High North is claimed to hold as much as 78 per cent of unexplored natural gas and 22 per cent of unexplored oil resources on a global level. In addition, the ice melting might open up for new trade routes argued to be viable competitors to the Suez Canal<sup>1</sup> (Emmerson 2012).

The High North has been an important region for Norway for years, in particular “the Barents Sea and surrounding land areas” (Rowe 2013:1). According to Foreign Minister, Børge Brende (2015b), “some 80 per cent of our [Norway’s] ocean areas are situated north of the Arctic Circle and almost 90 percent of our [Norway’s] export revenues come from sea-based economic activity and resource”. Furthermore, Norway was given (limited) sovereign right over the Svalbard archipelago through the Svalbard Treaty in 1925 (Rowe and Hønneland 2010), a vital area for scientific

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<sup>1</sup> According to Emmerson (2012), potentially 21 days can be saved by utilizing the Northern Sea Route from Murmansk or Kirkenes to Shanghai, compared to passing through the Suez Canal. The two most cited Arctic sea routes are the Northwest Passage passing through the Canadian Arctic and the Northern Sea Route passing across the Russia’s northern coast (ibid.)

research and natural resources, in particular minerals and fishing resources. Norway's sovereignty has been a source of disputes, especially regarding Norway's Fisheries Protection Zone around the archipelago (ibid.) (see chapter 3 for more).

Norway's interest in the High North is argued to primarily reflect two things, i.e. economic opportunities and its geopolitical position next to Russia (Bekkevold and Offerdal 2014). For example, Norway has been important in creating an understanding of Russian policies in the High North, and its bi-lateral relation with Russia have been central within its High North policy (Lindgren and Græger 2017:108). However, the promising High North has its challenges. According to Lindgren and Græger (2017:111), “[a]nalysts [...] have recently addressed several factors dampening the most optimistic future predictions, [because] [o]perations in the Arctic environment can be complex, difficult [...] and costly”. The richness of resources and economic possibilities in the High North is also a potential source of conflict as disputes can arise over *how* the resources should be distributed and *who* should have judicial authority of these areas (Heier and Kjølberg 2015).

Furthermore, the retreat of the ice is causing concern over the potential effect it has on the global climate and environment. The High North is said to be warming up at the fastest pace on Earth. Between 2007 and 2013, the lowest levels of sea ice since 1979<sup>2</sup> was recorded (Borgerson et. al. 2014), and AMAP (2017) projects that most of the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free by 2030. Scientists and experts argue that these changes in the Arctic contribute to a rise in global sea levels, it influence “weather patterns in lower latitudes”, and, lastly, the thawing of permafrost may play a significant role in green house emissions due to the potentially large share of oil carbon in Arctic soil (ibid. :5). Due to the economic opportunities and effects on the global climate, a great number of external actors have taken a larger interest in the region, including non-Arctic states and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) (such as China and the EU), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs). The growing international interest in the region has been welcomed by the Norwegian Government, and according to Rowe (2013:5), “Norway has achieved a special status in the Arctic as both a key player and as a ‘convenor’

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<sup>2</sup> The monitoring of the level of sea ice began in 1979 (Borgerson et al. 2014)

and bridge builder in Arctic relations” because of its work on bringing together “actors and interests”. In short, Norway is said to be a relatively strong, influential and initiating actor in the High North region (ibid.).

## **1.2 Defining the High North region**

Before analysing the High North further, it is important to discuss what a region is. Considering the purpose of this thesis, only a few vital points of the region-debate will be pointed out, without claiming it is necessarily complete. As with most concepts within social and political sciences, no universal definition of what constitutes a ‘region’ exists. Among the range of definitions, two definitions stand out as particularly suitable for the purpose of the thesis, i.e. the traditional and the social constructivist definition.

The former claims that regions are made up of states sharing “relatively fixed variables, such as geographic proximity, [...] cultural and linguistic features, and a common heritage” (Acharya 2012:21). Consequently, regions are claimed to be something ‘natural’ and ‘physically constant’ (ibid.), such as e.g. ‘Europe’ or ‘the Nordic’. According to Peter Hough (2013), the High North consists of a geographical landscape of sea, ice and land spreading across all time zones and three continents, i.e. Europe, Asia and America. Eight states<sup>3</sup> are included in this definition (the US, Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark (including Greenland), Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland and Russia), which are referred to as the Arctic states or ‘the Arctic 8’. The Arctic states, in addition to six indigenous groups, are the only permanent members of the Arctic Council (AC), which is the most important intergovernmental organisation in the region. However, the primary policy and decision-making actors in Arctic affairs tends to be the US, Denmark, Norway, Canada and Russia, as they are the only littoral states of the Arctic Ocean. As a group, these are commonly referred to as ‘the Arctic 5’ (Wegge 2010).

However, no unified and single definition of the High North region exists, and there are disagreements over how far it expands outwards from the North Pole (Hough

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<sup>3</sup> ‘States’ are “political organisations within a seemingly bounded, given territory” (Medby 2015:315), while nations is used for different communities sharing similar culture, language, heritage and so on, and does not have to be linked within a specific territory. In this thesis, I consistently use ‘state’, as I am referring to the bureaucratic apparatus in which is separate from society (Thomson 1995:220).

2013). This is because “[r]elevant criteria for the delimitation of the region include geographic, climatic or biological factors, as well as political or demographical borders” (Wegge 2010:165). When referring to the High North region, ‘the Arctic’ and ‘the High North’ are often used interchangeably, but in Norwegian, there is a clear distinction between the two terms. As described in Norway’s High North Strategy of 2017, ‘the Arctic’ is utilized when referring to the geographical area (both sea and land) between the Polar Circle and the North Pole, i.e. the whole circumpolar territory (the Norwegian Government 2017). This fits well within a traditional definition of a region, i.e. a geographical and static determination of what the region is and consists of. ‘The High North’ (*nordområdene*), on the other hand, is a broader and less precise concept than ‘the Arctic’, as it is politicised and not limited to the Polar Circle. This indicates that the definition of what is included in the High North is rather subjective, and consequently this term fits better to the social constructivist definition.

The social constructivist definition rejects that the physical and material conditions are the only determining factors of what constitutes a region. Regions are considered to be fluid, with no specific boundaries and they are subject to change. This approach claims that regions are *social constructs* that are given meaning through discourses, imagination, interaction and socialization (Acharya 2012). In other words, “regions are shaped by the collective perception of identities and meanings with blurred and even shifting boundaries” (Väyrynen 2003:27). Furthermore, Acharya (2012) argues that an *idea* of a region have to be present in order for it to exist – it cannot exist solely on the basis of, for example, geographical proximity. The idea of regions may also change over time; hence, regions are not static as the traditionalist definition may imply. The expansion of the EU is an example of how regions are constantly modified. Iver B. Neumann (1994:59), building on the social constructivist (and post-structuralist) approach to regions, argues that “[r]egions are defined in terms of speech acts; they are talked and written into existence”. Regions are thus created through discourse. In this approach, investigating and understanding how and why specific regions have come into existence through discourses is key. Discourses are believed to be politically constitutive, and not just mere reflections of reality. Neumann claims regions only come into existence through political actors who, “as part of some political project, imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity of a

region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others” (ibid. :58). These political actors are known as region-builders (ibid.). In this thesis, the social constructivist definition of regions and the region-building approach are considered best suited to define the High North region, due to the varied definitions of the region.

According to Hough (2013:5), “[c]ountries [...] tend to prefer regional definitions that favour themselves”. The High North is thus, Emmerson (2010:7) holds, “not a single place [...] it is a fractured region, increasingly tied to economic and political interests outside it, in Asia and Europe as well as in the Arctic countries themselves”. In the context of IR, definitions also include reference to governance or sovereignty claims over (parts of) the High North. Based on these arguments, this thesis use ‘the High North’ when referring to this region, which fits well with the assumptions of the social constructivist approach, i.e. regions being fluid, in flux and a result of discourse, dependent on the actors’ own definition of what the region is, and who and what is included in the concept. Hence, the High North is “talked and written into existence” (Neumann 1994:59) and this thesis will focus on the role of Norwegian governmental officials and politicians in this undertaking.

### **1.3 The Approach**

Considering the purpose of this thesis and research questions it addresses, the methods utilized is discourse analysis, which is grounded in discourse *theory*. Discourse analysis and theory are assumed to be intertwined, and commits me [the researcher] to certain epistemological and ontological [i.e. philosophical] premises (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Hence, I have chosen to merge the methods and theory discussions, where theoretical and methodological elements will be discussed in parallel. A discourse analytical approach will allow me to look into assumptions and conflicting views within the High North debates, in addition to show how they are constructed and maintained through discursive ‘work’.

The discourse analysis will draw primarily on Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), Lene Hansen (2006), Iver Neumann (2001) and Nina Græger (2016), who have a post-structuralist take on discourse analysis. They base their writings on prominent scholars



and philosophers, especially Ferdinand de Saussure<sup>4</sup>, Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Norman Fairclough, who have had substantial influence on discourse analyses. It is important to note that the researcher is always positioned within specific discourses, and that may affect the analysis. I thus have to take into account that I [i.e. the researcher] am situated in a specific Norwegian discourse, potentially affecting my analysis and conclusions.

#### **1.4 Material**

When conducting discourse analysis, the delimitation of discourse is vital. Neumann (2001) claims it is important to delimit both what to study and time-span. This means that some material will be excluded, but this is also necessary as it is impossible to use *all* available material on a subject. In this thesis, I decided to delimit the main analysis to a twelve-year span from 2005 to 2017, with a focus on the first ten years. However, discourses in the High North during the Cold War and post-Cold War era have to be included, if not extensively then at least to some degree, in order to set the stage for the main analysis. The discourses are further delimited to those emerging from Norwegian official debates and policies as found in written governmental publications (political debates, White Papers, Propositions and newspapers). Other material, such as scholarly articles and newspapers from both Norwegian and international sources is included to some extent to detect challenging discourses to the otherwise consensus based Norwegian Government's policy towards the High North. Relevant secondary sources are important for the state of the art in this area and may provide interesting insights and ideas to the researcher. I have decided *not* to include debates and White Papers from other Arctic Nations, which would exceed the scope of this thesis. However, a few statements made by relevant Arctic actors available in English or Norwegian are included to see if there are discourses that challenge the dominant Norwegian discourse. Here, it is taken into consideration that translations are re-creations of primary sources and thus meanings may be lost.

According to Hansen (2006:74), primary texts are usually prioritised within discourse analysis, which are for example “presidential statements, speeches, and interviews in the case of foreign policy”. When selecting texts, it is important that they are widely

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<sup>4</sup> De Saussure was a structuralist and seen to be one of the ‘fathers’ of linguistics, in which post-structuralism and discourse analysis builds their assumptions and methods on (Neumann 2001)

read and have some kind of authority or credibility, as this is often where we can locate dominating discourses (Hansen 2006; Neumann 2001). Thus, official statements, Parliamentary debates, White Papers and strategies are chosen in this thesis as primary texts. According to Jensen and Skedsmo (2010:441), these types of primary texts are “[p]owered by their respective roles as institutions or president, the actors have certain authority and power to define how reality should be perceived”. Hence, certain actors are able to act as carriers of specific representations of reality due to their position in society (Buzan et. al. 1998) (see section 2.3.1 about power within discourses). However, locating marginalised discourses is also vital, as these often challenge the dominant representations of reality and reflect that conflicting realities may exist. Hence, a great variety of texts have to be investigated (Neumann 2001).

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters in total. In chapter two, I introduce and explain the theory and methods, i.e. discourse analysis, used to operationalize the research questions depicted above. Chapter three provides a historical background on High North discourses, discussing High North discourses before, during and immediately after the Cold War, with emphasis on the post-Cold War period. The *sovereignty* and *security* concepts are also further addressed and explained. These concepts play a central position within Norwegian High North discourse, and both are vital for the analysis. Chapter four analyse High North discourse from 2005 and to 2009. Here, focus is put on how the High North is re-framed and the increasing role of Russia in Norwegian discourse. Chapter five focuses on the period from 2009 and until approximately 2017. This chapter focuses on, especially, the role of Russian and also external actors in Norwegian High North discourse. Finally, the thesis is rounded off with a conclusion.

## 2. Discourse analysis – Theory and Methods

This chapter discusses the choice of theory and methods of the thesis, which is *discourse theory* and *analysis*. When conducting a discourse analysis, the researcher commits herself to certain epistemological and ontological [i.e. philosophical] premises, guiding concrete techniques for the analysis. This means that discourse analysis cannot be separated from its methodological and theoretical foundation (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002), and Hopf (2004:31) therefore claims that this is a “political theory as much as a method of inquiry”. Consequently, the decision to merge the theory and methods chapters is considered valid. For reasons of simplicity, both for the reader and myself, I consistently utilize *discourse analysis* when referring to both theory and methods. I decided to do a discourse analysis as this approach allows me to investigate assumptions, conflicts and battles within the Norwegian High North debate, and show how these are constructed and maintained through discourse.

Discourse analysis is based primarily on social constructionist and post-structuralist assumptions. Although there exist a great variety of these approaches, they do share some similar premises, such as the belief that there is no such thing as objective truths and that everything is constructed through social interaction (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Furthermore, there is not one single guide on how to conduct a discourse analysis, even though language is the central element of analysis. For these reasons, it is important to note that the description of what a discourse analysis is and how it is conducted in this thesis should be understood as my own [i.e. the researcher] understanding and construction of it. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:3) argue, “it is possible to create one’s own package by combining elements from different discourse analytical perspectives and, if appropriate, non-discourse analytical perspectives” when conducting a discourse analysis. Consequently, my description of discourse analysis is a mix of different discourse analytical perspectives. Due to limitation of space, some elements of discourse analysis may have been marginalised or sacrificed for other elements considered more important for the purpose of the thesis. Explaining all elements and varieties of theoretical perspectives and methods is an extensive task, and is thus neither relevant nor feasible here. Also, my subjective position has to be taken into account by the reader.

The next section will briefly introduce what discourses and discourse analysis is. The subsequent four sections will discuss central concepts within discourse analysis, i.e. language, meaning, intertextuality, power, representations, framing, nodal points and metaphors. The final sub-section compare discourse analysis to positivist approaches to illustrate why I consider discourse analysis to be best fit for the thesis.

## 2.1 What is discourse and discourse analysis?

Definitions of what discourses are vary, as it depends on the type of study you are conducting (Neumann 2001). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:2) define discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”. However, this thesis takes ground in Neumann’s (2001:18) definition on discourse, as he expands the definition:

A discourse is a system for generating a set of statements and practices that, by being incorporated into institutions<sup>5</sup> and thus appear as more or less normal, are constructs of reality for its carriers and have a degree of regularity in a set of social relations<sup>6</sup>.

This definition is understood to first describe discourses as a recourse base for what we say and how we act, and, second, by giving discourses a ‘solid shape’ as established values (i.e. institutions), it sets premises for how we understands the world around us. Finally, if discourses have “a degree of regularity”, it is regarded as a system in which is reproduced and maintained in the social (Bratberg 2014). Hence, discourse is understood here not just as a mere linguistic reflection of an external reality, but rather as a constitutive factor of realities and categories creating the social world (Græger 2016b:38). In this thesis, I adhere to Neumann’s view of discourse being both a linguistic and a material phenomenon (Neumann 2001).

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<sup>5</sup> The definition of institutions is subject to some confusion, as the term “may refer to [both] a general pattern or categorization of activity or to a particular human-constructed arrangement, formally or informally organized” (Keohane 1988:383). Guzzini (2002) distinguish between the two by referring to the former as ‘primary institutions’ and the latter as ‘secondary institutions’. Secondary institutions are ‘material’ organisations such as the United Nations (UN) (Guzzini 2002). However, ‘institutions’ in the definition provided above refers to primary institutions, which are socially constructed entities and set of values, such as ‘sovereignty’ and ‘neutrality’ (Guzzini 2002; Keohane 1988). According to Keohane (1988:382), institutions “reflect the preferences and power of units constituting them” and “shape those preferences and power. Institutions are therefore *constitutive* of actors as well as vice versa”.

<sup>6</sup> This is my direct translation of: ”En diskurs er et system for frembringelse av et sett utsagn og praksiser som, ved å innskripe seg i institusjoner og fremstå som mer eller mindre normale, er virkelighetskonstituerende for sine bærere og har en viss grad av regularitet i et sett sosiale relasjoner” (Neumann 2001:18)

By conducting a discourse analysis, you commit yourself to certain epistemological and ontological premises. The ontological premise within discourse analysis is based on social constructivist thought that reality, or what the world is made of, is constructed through social interaction and is thus in flux. This indicates that material and social facts are merely products of “human interaction in the social world” (Fierke 2013:188), which means that the world and what it consists of is what actors make of it (Wendt 1992). Yet, this does not mean that material facts do not exist, but rather that material facts do not serve any *meaning* until encountering human interaction. However, Neumann (2001:14) argues, “it would make no sense to claim that the world consists of this or the other without specifying *how* this came about, *how* this representation of ‘reality’ is maintained, and *how* this representation is challenged”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, a discourse analyst emphasizes *why* and *how* things appear as they do, which are *epistemological* questions. Epistemology is the study of knowledge, i.e. how we can have knowledge of the world, and is the *primary concern* for a discourse analyst (Ibid.). The epistemological concerns are grounded in post-structuralist theory, where “representation and interpretation” are seen as central for “understanding international politics” (Campbell 2013:223).

By questioning why and how things have become what they are, discourse analysis is said to have a critical perspective (Græger 2016b:31), which belongs to the constructivist branch. According to Shapiro (1989:320), such an approach “questions the privileged forms of representation whose dominance has led to the unproblematic acceptance of subjects, objects, acts and themes through which the political world is constructed”. This unquestioned acceptance of specific discourses and practices is termed “*doxa*”. *Doxa* can act as a cushion preventing other, usually marginalised, representations to gain recognition, and consequently, change is averted (Græger 2016b:31). In Norwegian High North discourse, for example, the military has been framed as a *necessity* to safeguard Norwegian interests and sovereignty in the area,

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<sup>7</sup> This is my translation of Neumann (2001:14): ”Det gir ingen mening å si at verden består av dette eller hint uten å spesifisere hvorledes det ble slik, hvorledes denne verdenen opprettholdes, og hvorledes den utfordres av andre muligheter”.

both hard- and soft-political<sup>8</sup> interests. It is argued in this thesis that this represents the doxa, as this is unquestioned and accepted, and hence the discussion in terms of military presence only concerns how the Government is investing in military capacity in the High North, never whether it is necessary or not. A discourse analysis will thus allow me to study how discourses of the High North have developed and emerged and which is the dominating and the marginalised discourses.

## **2.2 Language, meaning and intertextuality**

The main purpose of discourse analysis is to analyse production of *meaning* and how specific meanings have been presented over time. The production and re-presentation of meaning creates certain ways of understanding the world, and, a key discourse analytical assumption is that meaning is created through language (Græger 2016b:31; Neumann 2001:38). Language has consequently an ontologically important position in discourse analysis, as it is through language we have “access to ‘reality’” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:9). Hence, language is the central element of analysis, and Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:9) explain:

[w]ith language, we create representations of reality that are never mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality. That does not mean that reality itself does not exist. Meanings and representations are real. Physical objects also exist, but they only gain meaning through discourse.

Meaning is created through social convention of words and the discursive juxtaposition between signs. The former indicate that the social convention of e.g. ‘pig’ has taught us to think of a pink, four-legged farm animal when hearing and using this word<sup>9</sup>. The latter point indicate how signs gain meaning by being differentiated to other signs, e.g. a ‘woman’ can only be meaningful when differentiated to ‘man’ (Hansen 2006; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Consequently, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:26) claim, “language use is a social phenomenon: it is through conventions, negotiations and conflicts in social contexts that structures of meaning are fixed and challenged”. Hence, language is considered to be an open

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<sup>8</sup> When speaking of international politics, it is usually divided between “hard” and “soft” politics, where hard politics refers to traditional military security, while soft politics focus on a range of different issues such as economic wealth, human security, social issues and climate change

<sup>9</sup> However, it also depends on the context in which the word is used. For example, ‘pig’ can be used as an insult, such as when saying “You’re such a pig!”, indicating that the person is dirty or mean.

system where definitions of words are flexible and not subject to one or more definitions (ibid.).

In addition, language is reckoned to be political. It is political in the sense that it is in language production and reproduction of specific *identities* and subjects occur (Hansen 2006; Jørgensen and Philips 2002). For example, in the Norwegian High North discourse, the way Russia is continuously represented as Norway's most important *and* demanding neighbour in the North has a constitutive effect on how Norway behave towards Russia on High North matters. Thus, discourse is the determining factor of identity formation (Hansen 2006), and, according to Neumann (2001:56), identities are *relational* and *process*. Identities are relational as they are established through social interaction. It is through interaction subjects juxtapose and define their identities against other subjects (Hansen 2006; Howarth 2013). For example, national identity can only be constructed "through a simultaneous delineation of something which is different or Other" (Hansen 2006:17). Norway's national identity as 'rich' and 'small' cannot serve any purpose if we do not have something opposite (other) to compare it to, e.g. 'poorer' or 'larger' nations (ibid.). However, "identity [is also] constructed through a series of signs that are linked to each other to constitute relations of sameness" (Ibid. :37). Hansen calls this the process of *differentiation* and *linking*. When referring to identity as process, Neumann (2001:56) refers to the developments of identities in a historical perspective. When actors, for example, re-produce an identity of Russia as an aggressive super power, it effectively builds on history from the Soviet era. It is important to note that even though identity is considered entirely social and positioned within discourses, this does not take away agency. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), agents continuously produce new discourses in which affect the social. In addition, discourses limit the freedom of agents as it sets boundaries for innovation and behaviour. Hence, "language users act as both discursive products and producers in the reproduction and transformation of discourses and thereby in social and cultural change" (ibid. :17).

As illustrated above, discourse analysis draws on history, and it is assumed that words and language are re-presentations of historical material. This is known as *intertextuality*, and intertextuality is a central concept within discourses analysis.

According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:73), “[o]ne cannot avoid using words and phrases that others have used before”. This means that no discourse can start from the beginning, as signs of language will always build on or have links to the past (Græger 2016b; Hansen 2006; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Neumann 2001). Fairclough (cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002) claimed that intertextuality could be seen as both continuity (stability) and change (instability). It creates change by re-producing old texts in the present and consequently creates new meaning, but already established power relations within discourses sets boundaries for change (see section 2.3.1). As will be shown in the analysis, the re-presentation of older texts in the High North discourse is particularly evident, as Cold War rhetoric is used to legitimate and frame specific behaviour. For example, central actors in the High North discourse frame Russian economic development and growing presence in the High North in the mid-2000s as a potential threat to Norway’s sovereignty and interests in region. Hence, they link Russia’s behaviour to how the USSR behaved during the Cold War period, and consequently represent a ‘stronger’ Russia as a potential threat. Consequently, the Norwegian Government’s decision to invest in military build-up and initiate the ‘Core Area Initiative’ in NATO is legitimized. According to Hansen (2006), drawing on other texts is a way to generate legitimacy of own texts, and consequently for both identity and foreign policy construction.

The main source of analysis when doing a discourse analysis is text, which includes both written and spoken language. However, language does not have to be verbal (Hansen 2006), meaning social *practice* is also under scrutiny. According to Græger (2016b:33), when practices and incidents are explained, they are given meaning, and thus serves as discursive elements. Hence, nothing can exist outside of discourse (Campbell 2013). Norwegian military exercises are given meaning in the Norwegian official discourse when they are represented as a necessity for Norwegian and foreign troops to get familiar to Norwegian conditions. However, alternative voices, especially from Russia, frames these exercises close to Russian borders as threatening towards Russian sovereign territory. Hence, Russia creates a different meaning of the exercises, and they act accordingly. According to Campbell (2013:235), post-structuralists understand discourses as “*performative*. Performative means that discourses constitute the objects of which they speak. [...] Discourse is thus not something that subjects use in order to describe objects; it is that which constitutes



both subjects and objects”. Campbell (2013) makes an excellent illustration of how a range of discursive practices, e.g. military, bureaucratic structures and immigration police, has made the idea of ‘states’ possible, demonstrating how discourses are performative. What is more, Græger (2016b:19) claims that external incidents do not have direct influence on discourses *per se*, but the way these incidents are interpreted, conveyed and made relevant by central actors may influence specific discourses. Russia’s actions in Georgia and Ukraine have been interpreted and re-produced in High North discourse, as central actors have framed Russia as a more unpredictable neighbour in the High North due to these incidents, and consequently arguing the High North is in a tense or vulnerable state. This will be elaborated on further in the analysis.

As you cannot step outside of discourses, the objective of discourse analysis is not to claim which statements of the world are true or false. A discourse analyst would never attempt to find ‘the true purpose’ of a statement, as it is impossible to go behind discourses and inside of people’s heads (Neumann 2001:38). Instead, “the analyst has to work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:21). The attention is thus moved from analysing motivations and intentions to discourses where prerequisites for statements can be found (Græger 2016b:34), meaning discourse analysis study language *directly* and by itself.

## **2.3 Methods**

How do we identify a specific discourse? What is important to look for? As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, there is no universal guide on how to conduct a discourse analysis. However, there are a few concepts and elements in which are important in order to be able to locate dominating and marginalised discourses, and this can help guide the analysis. In this section, representations, power, framing and a couple of key signifiers will be discussed.

### **2.3.1 Locating representations and power**

According to Neumann (2001:33), discourses produce socially constructed facts in which determine how we understand the world around us. These socially constructed

facts are called *representations*. Representations are the way ‘things’ and ‘phenomena’ are presented to us through language, categories etc., and is thus the “most important collection of reality construction in which discourses rely on” (ibid. :33). There is a constant battle between representations, where representations are either re-represented or challenged. The increasing interest in the High North region by external actors, such as the EU and China, has been represented as an opportunity for Norway and hence been welcomed by the Norwegian Government. However, critical voices have also represented this as a potential threat to Norway’s governance regime in the region, as these actors may want to influence decision-making in their favour. Here we see a battle between representations. Thus, it is *essential* to locate main, marginal and challenging representations within a discourse when conducting a discourse analysis. In this thesis, locating representations is the main method I will utilize.

According to Græger (2016b:33), “the representations that are accepted as part of discourse defines the discourse’s limits and is absorbed by carriers”<sup>10</sup>. The carriers (i.e. individuals/groups) of specific representations constitute a specific *position* within the discourse when they are institutionalised, i.e. appear as a group (Græger 2016b:39; Neumann 2001:33). This thesis supports Græger’s (2016b:39) argument that single individuals are able to act as carrier for specific representations and positions. This is primarily due to these individuals’ current or previous occupation and/or position within society, as this gives leverage within the discourse. For example, state overheads will be able to act as carriers for certain representation of High North politics due to his/her occupation giving a degree of legitimacy in society. Neumann (2001:117) argues that it is important to investigate *who* is conducting the *speech act*, because this often has more implications on the acceptance of specific representation than *what* has actually been said. Speech act is understood here to be performative, which means that by uttering words it ‘does things’. Hence, it is not merely a description of certain realities (Balzacq 2011). When the Norwegian Government, with former Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre at the forefront, framed the High North as *the* most important strategic foreign policy area for Norway in 2005, for example, it was rather easily accepted in the Norwegian population and

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<sup>10</sup> This is my translation of: ”Hvilke representasjoner som aksepteres som en del av diskursen, definerer diskursens grenser og trekkes opp av diskursens bærere”.

public debate. Hence, the idea of the High North being crucial for Norway's security and development was normalised.

The points made above indicate that *power* will always exist within discourses, and consequently power is a key concept within discourse analysis. Power is central within most political and social sciences, but the understanding of the concept varies. For rationalist theories, for example, power is determined primarily by material factors, e.g. military capabilities, within the international system. Those with the largest military forces are thus the most powerful on the international arena (Mearsheimer 2013). This assumption of power does not, however, allow us to investigate why some representations are accepted over others within the Norwegian High North debate. In discourse analysis, power lies with those who are able to make other actors hold assumptions about the world in specific ways, i.e. to make specific 'realities' appear as 'normal' (Græger 2016b; Guzzini 2000; Neumann 2001). There is a constant battle between different discourses<sup>11</sup> to gain dominance or *hegemony* within the discursive field, i.e. *discursive struggle* (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Hegemony appears when specific representations are taken for granted and is thus considered to be something 'natural' or 'normal'. This hegemonic position has to be maintained through constant discursive work, i.e. continuous representation and reproduction of statements and practices (Neumann 2001). This creates, to some degree, discursive stability, however, the movements in the social make it impossible to maintain this stability over time. Attempting to create stability through hegemony is a political struggle in which never ends (ibid.). For example, ever since 2005, the High North discourse has been rather stable in the official debate, where the High North has been considered a stable and peaceful area ever since the Cold War. Here, Norwegian governmental officials have continuously worked to maintain their discursive hegemony, i.e. normalising the representation of the High North as stable and peaceful.<sup>12</sup> However, challenging discourses have emerged on several occasions, where the High North has been represented as an area of escalating conflict and instability. This will be elaborated on further in the analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> Discourses have to be viewed in a *pluralist* way, such as "military discourse" or "feminist discourse". However, the difference between the discourses is not necessarily definite, as the identification of different discourses is based on subjective interpretations (Bjørkheim 2013).

<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that this is not necessarily something these actors do consciously, i.e. working actively to maintain its discursive hegemony

Moreover, *framing* is an important concept within discourse analysis, as it “has political effects” (Hansen 2006). The way specific issue areas, phenomena or questions are framed is vital in terms of how arguments and representations are accepted and thus normalised within discourses – and consequently what is rejected. Hence, framing decides what is normal, creates the limits of discourse and additionally controls challenging discourses. It is the carriers who “control the framing of an issue” who also “control how the issue should be dealt with and, consequently, its outcome” (Græger 2010:86). For example, the Norwegian Government has framed the High North as a political space by incorporating it into the national and foreign policy discourse, and has consequently legitimized political action in the region (Rowe 2012). According to Græger (2016b:40), creating doubt around other positions by framing them as e.g. insignificant or ignorant are effective tools to marginalise or exclude challenging and alternative representations. For example, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Støre, claims oppositional voices are using Cold War rhetoric when representing Russian economic development and growing presence on the international arena as a potential threat to Norway’s position in the High North. By claiming these statements are rhetorical, he is reducing the legitimacy of these statements and increasing the validity of his own representation.

Discourse analysis is considered in this thesis to be a usable tool to locate power relations, as it “can reveal how events and phenomena are reconstructed (re-presented) in ways to make it compatible with the memories and narratives that constitute a special tradition, way to think or identity”<sup>13</sup> (Græger 2016b:35). For example, this is illustrated in the way Norwegian discourse creates an image of Russia similar to the way the Soviet Union was portrayed during the Cold War, where the actions in Ukraine are linked to memories and narratives of Russia attempting to regain its territory and power similar to that of the USSR. And this could potentially make the High North a region of geostrategic importance once again. Additionally, Norway’s refocus on the High North is also built on a narrative that Norway is best suited to take a leading position in the region, due to its historical background as a

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<sup>13</sup> This is my translation of: Diskursanalyse kan også avkle hvordan begivenheter og fenomener rekonstrueres (re-representeres) på en måte som gjør det forenlig med de minnene og fortellingene (“narratives”) som konstituerer en spesiell tradisjon, måte å tenke på eller identitet (Græger 2016b:35)

pioneering nation when it comes to explorations in the High North, and due to its morally and peaceful identity in general (see Leira et al. 2007).

### **2.3.2 Key signifiers: metaphors and nodal points**

As mentioned above, when conducting a discourse analysis, it is useful to locate specific signifiers within discourses. Here, *metaphors* and *nodal points* are highlighted, as these will be utilized in the analysis, however to lesser degree than representations. These signifiers are seen to be relevant elements in the creation of narratives about ‘reality’, and consequently allowing certain discourses to gain hegemony. When using metaphors, the agent is referring to a specific phenomenon by using other phenomena, not necessarily linked to the phenomenon in question. For example, Russia has often been referred to as ‘the Bear’ by Western media. By using ‘the Bear’ when talking about Russia, we automatically give Russia specific traits such as ‘aggressive’, ‘animal-like’, ‘dangerous’, ‘unpredictable’ and ‘large’ (Hansen 2006; Neumann 2001). By locating specific metaphors, we are thus able to identify narratives constructing specific realities and consequently marginalising other representations of reality.

Moreover, in order to locate the dominant discourses in the High North, it is useful to locate the discursive nodal points in which the High North discourse evolve around (Jensen and Skedsmo 2010). According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:50), nodal points are what “organise discourses”, and the number of nodal points within a discourse depends on your study (Hansen 2006). The nodal points are considered to be privileged signs or referent points within a discourse, where the other signs gain meaning only through their relation to the nodal point. Consequently, nodal points “bind together a particular system of meaning or ‘sign of signification’” (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000:8), and “a discourse is [therefore] formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain *nodal points*” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:26). ‘Sovereignty’ is a nodal point, where signs such as ‘territory’ are linked for it to serve any meaning (ibid.). Within the High North debate, key nodal points are found to be ‘sovereignty’, ‘the environment’, ‘cooperation’ ‘security’, ‘energy/petroleum’, ‘military’, and ‘economy’. Hence, High North discourse and debate usually evolve around these nodal points. By identifying and investigating how nodal points are emphasized within discourses, I will be able to shed light on how developments in the High North

discourse has evolved and how this has affected the political context in the region. For example, during the post-Cold War era, the ‘plus-sum’ and ‘peace’ was central nodal points in the High North discourse, and thus shaped behaviour and policy formation. For example, Arctic actors focus on demilitarizing the area and a range of intergovernmental forums were established to create a space for dialogue and cooperation.

## **2.4 A note on alternative approaches**

Even though I argue here that discourse analysis is considered best suited for the purpose of this thesis, other theoretical perspectives could potentially also be fruitful for addressing the questions asked in this thesis. Indeed, post-positivist approaches have faced criticism. For example, Keohane (1988:392) criticize the post-positivists for being unable to establish a “clear reflective research program”, and they have also faced critique from the positivist branch for focusing on the unobservable, such as norms and interests. The post-structuralist approach has for example been claimed to be merely a meta-theory (i.e. theory about theory), and thus disregarded as “meta-babble” (Campbell 2013). And, discourse analysis in particular has been subject to critique for the notion that there is no ‘truth’ out there, only interpretations and representations of the world through language use. Hence, many argue this indicate “there are no constraints and regularities in social life” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:6). However, even though identities and knowledge are considered to be fluctuating within discourse analysis, for example, they are restricted and rather inflexible in specific contexts, and thus, regularities do exist (ibid.).

In view of the critique, and to justify my choice of theory and methods, I will attempt to demonstrate why I consider discourse analysis to be better suited than a positivist approach to operationalize the research questions. Some argue theories cannot be compared, “because either the ground for their knowledge claims are so different, or they see different worlds” (Wight 1996 cited in Kurki and Wight 2013:31). As it is too complex to discuss all the different positivist approaches<sup>14</sup>, I will only highlight a few

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<sup>14</sup> The different varieties of positivism differ on the epistemological, ontological and methodological level, but within IR, it has been a tendency “to use the term in very free and easy ways, unaware of the depths of the philosophical waters involved” (Smith 1996:32) For example, Smith (1996) differ between *empiricism*, *rationalism* and *pragmatism*. However, this is acknowledged, but a free and easy use of the concept is utilized in this thesis for simplicity, meaning I use a simple generalization of the term.

essential, general points within positivism, and focus primarily on rationalist approaches, specifically neo-realism and neo-liberalism. These are reckoned to be the mainstream theories within the IR discipline and, in addition, neo-realist and neo-liberal narratives have been central within the High North discourse.

Discourse analysis falls under the post-positivist approach, sometimes also called *reflectivist* approaches (Keohane 1988). The post-positivist term comprise many different approaches, e.g. critical theory, constructivism, feminism and poststructuralism, and even though they are distinct on many levels, all of them are linked through the fact that they “reject positivism as a valid approach to the study of social processes” (Kurki and Wight 2013:22). This is primarily due to positivists’ “belief in the unity of science” (Smith 1996:16), meaning the same epistemology and methodology is considered suitable for both natural and social sciences. Consequently, positivists assume that there exists a real, external world in which the researcher is able to investigate through fact checking and falsification (hypothesis-testing). These approaches narrow down “the ontological complexity of the social world to those aspects of it that can be observed and measured” (Kurki and Wight 2013:20), and through “agreed upon research criteria” researchers are able to limit value-biased evaluations (ibid. :29). They are thus “claiming secure grounds of judging knowledge claims<sup>15</sup>” (Smith 1996:23).

For a post-structuralist discourse analyst, the assumptions made above are problematic. First of all, discourse analysis is based on the assumption that “social knowledge is ‘situated knowledge’”, and hence knowledge claims are always situated within specific discourses (Kurki and Wight 2013:30). Thus, by claiming to have ‘discovered’ a specific ‘truth’ about the social, the actors construct a specific reality. In other words, knowledge claims and ‘facts’ are discursive representations of the world (see section 2.3.1 on representations and power within discourses). Furthermore, for discourse analysts, the unity of science is also awkward, because for them, humans are considered contingent and constitutive of the social, and identity and interests are socially constructed, discursively dependent, fragmented and constantly in flux

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<sup>15</sup>This is known as foundational epistemology, which is “ideas of grounding thought on universal rules that exist independently of the observer” (Campbell 2013:233)

(Campbell 2013; Smith 1996). Hence, as rationalist approaches have a static view on agents and structure in the international sphere, in addition to overemphasizing structure over agents, Keohane (1988:392) argue they “seem only to deal with one dimension of a multidimensional reality. [...] They do not enable us to understand how interests change” and consequently they are ahistorical (Keohane 1988; Kurki and Wight 2013; Smith 1996).

Positivist approaches also tend to separate theory and practice and attempt to, for example, validate theory by detecting patterns of behaviour through observation. However, for discourse analysts, theory and practice are inseparable, as theory affects the way we perceive the world and consequently behave (Kurki and Wight 2013). A discourse analyst would argue that neo-realism and neo-liberalism are merely narratives, or framings, of the world, with constitutive effects. The neo-realist approach within IR, for example, has a certain way of reading the world into concepts such as material power, relative gains, security dilemma etc., and this restricts the political room to the military sector. This was evident during the Cold War, and these narratives have seen a re-emergence in the region.

Discourse analysis therefore, as mentioned in section 2.2, draws on history (intertextuality) and attempts to understand *how* things have become as they are, in order to understand *why* specific actions have taken place, rather than making generalizations about the social and predictions about the future. Hence, discourse analysis is considered the best suitable theory and methods for me to operationalize my research questions, allowing me to investigate *how* assumptions, discursive battles, and hegemonic discourses within the High North debate have come about, who have carried them, and *how* this has shaped discourses and policies.



### **3. Early High North discourses**

To set the scene for the main analysis, this chapter starts out by briefly looking at some of the early historical High North discourses, before exploring the discourses during the Cold War and in the early post-Cold War era. These latter periods stand out as particularly important for understanding the analysis in the subsequent chapters (four and five). During these periods, two key concepts, i.e. *security* and *sovereignty*, play into the discourse and they will therefore receive special attention in the chapter. Also, the concepts and processes of securitization and desecuritization, which have dominated the discourse in the High North region before and today, will be discussed.

#### **3.1 Sovereignty discourse in the historical High North**

As mentioned in the introduction, the High North has been a region of great interest for centuries. It is believed that some of the High North areas have been inhabited since around 5000 BC (i.e. the Russian Arctic by the Paleo-Siberian peoples), and stories about expeditions since the 1500s are manifold (Hough 2013). However, it was not until the 1800s that the far north “became a major goal of exploration” (Emmerson 2010:15). Since then explorations and sovereign claims over land in the High North have evolved, where businesses and nation-states have attempted to gain from potential riches Arctic land might offer (Hough 2013).

In the 1800s and early 1900s, sovereignty and resource discourses dominated the High North discourse, where a race of being the first to explore High North areas in order to claim ownership of the land was evident. According to Emmerson (2010:17), the Norwegian adventurer Fridtjof Nansen became “the very symbol of the Arctic at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”, after conducting a range of polar expeditions in the area. Nansen was a pioneer in characterising the Arctic resources “as a source of future prosperity” (ibid. :19), and he “challenged the traditional view of Arctic marginality, placing the North at the core of [his] visions of human development and progress” (ibid.:16-17). Furthermore, another Norwegian adventurer, Roald Amundsen, was the first to transit the Northwest Passage and has also been a central High North explorer. According to Emmerson (ibid. :21), these High North explorations have “placed Norway as the key country in mankind’s Arctic endeavours” and, hence, the High North is both a source of wealth for Norway and of

importance for Norway's nation-building process. It is argued here that Nansen, and Amundsen were carriers of a discourse where the High North region was framed as a prosperous region and of great importance to Norway. Furthermore, the way in which Nansen and Amundsen's High North endeavours have been framed has contributed to legitimizing Norway's sovereignty claims in the High North.

Sovereignty<sup>16</sup> defines and is an important concept in the High North discourse. It is also a key feature of the international system, and “[t]heoretical traditions that agree on little else all seem to concur that the defining feature of the modern international system is the division of the world into sovereign states” (Barkin and Cronin 1994:107). In this thesis, when speaking of sovereignty, I am referring to *state* sovereignty<sup>17</sup>, as my focus is on state policies and how areas of the High North are distributed between, but also contested, by states. Arctic states do claim sovereignty over geographical areas in order to expand their authority of the continental shelf, which provides them the right to extract natural resources and regulate activity in those areas. The concept of sovereignty is understood here as “a product of an intersubjective consensus among state leaders” (Thomson 1995:218), and I concur with Ruggie's (1983:280) claim that the concept “shape, condition and constrain social behaviour”. Hence, sovereignty is a way to *frame* an issue, where actors use sovereignty in order to legitimize authority and control over territory. This is particularly evident in the High North, where the sovereignty concept is utilized by the Norwegian Government to stress the importance of the High North for Norwegian security and national interests. Consequently, certain policies, such as the surveillance of marine areas under Norway's jurisdiction are considered legitimate, necessary and ‘normal’, at least in Norwegian eyes.

During the 1900s, several attempts were made to create a framework for dividing the areas in and regulating access to the High North region, but most land areas were put under sovereign rule by states after rounds of negotiations. For example, the Jan Mayen islands were claimed by both Norway and the Soviet in the 1920s, but

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<sup>16</sup> The understanding of the concept still draws on assumptions from the Westphalian Myth, i.e. sovereignty relates to the state and its authority of territorial boundaries, the political and the people living within these boundaries (Thomson 1995)

<sup>17</sup> Sovereignty does not only relate to state sovereignty, and many argue that the process of globalization for example is eroding the concept of state sovereignty due to the free market, the growth of non-governmental actors and intergovernmental organisations, etc. (Barkin and Cronin 1994).

Norway's claim triumphed. Greenland was another disputed area, as Norway did not accept Denmark's claim over East Greenland. Despite months of negotiations, this disagreement was resolved in the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1933, providing Denmark the sovereign right of the area (Emmerson 2010). However, sovereign claims in the region have not necessarily been recognised by the international society, and there are still areas considered to be *terra nullius*, i.e. no one's land, such as the North Pole (ibid.; Hough 2013). It was not until the end of the 1900s that the international society found a suitable framework for regulating sovereign claims of sea areas, and, consequently, the High North. This was the United Nations Convention on Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) (Emmerson 2010), and will be elaborated on further in section 3.2.2.

From the year of Norway's independence, i.e. 1905, and up until the Second World War, Norway's High North policy focused primarily on sovereignty questions related to the Spitsbergen archipelago, later called Svalbard (Hønneland and Rowe 2010). The archipelago, considered as a *terra nullius* up until the early 1900s, holds a large amount of mineral resources (particularly coal). Additionally, Arctic ice melting the past decade has opened up large areas for commercial fishing of cod and haddock. Svalbard is also vital for environmental research, as effects from climate change are easily detected here (SNL 2017). In 1920, the Svalbard Treaty was created, granting Norway the sovereign right over the Svalbard archipelago after rounds of negotiations (the Treaty came into force in 1925) (ibid.). Conley et al. (2016) claim the Treaty served as a compensation for Norway's losses during World War One. However, the Treaty provides "signatory states nonexclusive economic rights to the Svalbard archipelago and its surrounding waters" (ibid.:2), indicating that Norway has actually agreed to limit its sovereignty. There are over 40 treaty signatories today, and several of these have had research centres at Svalbard for years. The Treaty declares that the signatory parties have to adhere to Norwegian rules and regulations, and that Norway is not allowed to discriminate against companies or nationals from the signatory parties. Additionally, Norway has certain restrictions regarding taxation, and the archipelago is to be a military free zone (Ministry of Justice and Public Services 2008-2009; SNL 2017).

Even though the Treaty gives Norway the right to regulate activity in and around Svalbard, disagreements with signatory governments “over economic developments of the region, specifically fishing rights” (Conley et al. 2016:2) have occurred and some are still unresolved (see below). According to Hough (2013), the Svalbard islands were merely utilized for operating weather stations by the Germans during the Second World War, because the British had evacuated the islands in order to limit the use of them, despite Norwegian resistance. Hence, up until the Cold War, sovereign claims, resource extraction and research on the climate, the environment and species were in focus in the High North discourse, not security policy.

### **3.2 Cold War discourses: Security and Sovereignty at the centre**

According to Hønneland and Rowe (2010:10), “security policy and sovereignty claims over sea areas” dominated the discourses in the High North in the Cold War era. Security is thus important for understanding the politics of and discourse on the High North, where the degree of securitization and desecuritization has swung over the years. The concept of security has to do with survival, meaning it draws attention to the survival of something under threat, i.e. a referent object. Hence, security “is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object” (Buzan et al. 1998:21), and it tends to create a feeling of fear and urgency. When something is framed as a security issue, the use of extraordinary measures is justified. This means that it sets the issue above all else allowing specific governmental and political actors to act outside of ‘normal’ procedures and rules, for example restricting freedom of speech (Græger 1996). This provides them a sense of legitimacy, even though it is not to say that they have unlimited power to do whatever they want (Buzan et al. 1998; Hansen 2006).

For mainstream approaches within IR, security threats are primarily related to “military issues and the use of force” (Buzan et al. 1998:1), and they tend “to explain insecurity by identifying an objective situation as threatening to an objective entity” (Balzacq 2011:xiii). The objective entity (or reference object) is primarily the ‘state’, because states are assumed to create and uphold the security of its population and territory. Hence, traditional security is primarily concerned with threats against a state’s territory or sovereignty, and central societal values (Kjølberg 2015:27). This

realist narrative of security (and survival) was particularly prominent in the international discourse up until the end of the Cold War, and was especially evident in the High North. During the Cold War<sup>18</sup>, security was narrowly represented as “the balance of power played out with the threat of nuclear force” (Gjørsv et al. 2014:2), with the tensions between the US and the Soviet in focus. Other perceptions of security were, as a consequence, neglected, particularly in the High North region (ibid.). However, the realist understanding of security has great limitations, as it constantly overlooks different types of security issues, and, additionally, is unable to explain *how* things become securitized.

Hence, this thesis utilizes the post-structuralist version of the *securitization* theory by Buzan and Wæver (1998), and Lene Hansen (2006), as they created a “conceptual framework for studying how and why certain issues become security issues” through the study of language (Åtland and Pedersen 2014:19). According to Buzan et al (1998:25):

[t] he exact definition and criteria of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects. [...] The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations: When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed? If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.

The quote indicates that securitization is reckoned to be socially constructed through an *intersubjective* process. Thus, “security (as with all politics) ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* subjects” (Balzacq 2011:31). This means that the “definition of security [is] dependent on its successful construction in discourse” (Hansen 2000:288). Security and security interests are therefore not

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<sup>18</sup> The Cold War refers to the high-tension period between the US and the USSR from 1945 to 1990<sup>18</sup> (Tvedt and Tjelmeland 2016). The two super powers never engaged in a direct confrontation with each other (even though it was close at times), but the period is characterised by proxy wars outside of Europe, military armament, opposing military alliances (e.g. NATO and the Warsaw Pact), ideological conflicts (i.e. communism vs. liberal democracy), and nuclear threats (ibid.).

something objective outside of human consciousness, and what is considered to be under threat depends on how the '*securitizing actor*' defines the referent object, and they are consequently politically and historically situated (Buzan et al. 1998; Jensen 2014). According to Buzan et al. (1998:21), "[w]e are not dealing here with a universal standard based in some sense on what threatens individual human life". The nature of an existential threat differs across both sectors and level of analysis, and consequently Buzan and Wæver included several sectors in the study of security, such as the political, economic and social (ibid.).

Consequently, the securitization in the High North takes place in what can be understood as a constant *discursive struggle* over how to *understand* security. This leads to specific consequences as the dominant security discourse sets premises for possible political actions and decisions (Jensen 2014:12). For example, during the Cold War, *realpolitik* and zero-sum constituted the dominant discursive narrative in the High North, restricting the political room to the military sector (shaping behaviour and policy formation in the region) (ibid.). Yet, security should be regarded as a negative, because it indicates that it is not possible to deal with the issue through normal politics (Buzan et al. 1998). Therefore, *desecuritization* is considered to be the ultimate goal, which means to move issues considered to be "threats against which we have countermeasures" from the security sphere and back "into the ordinary public sphere" (Wæver 1995 cited in Buzan et al. 1998:29).

The securitization process occurs primarily through *speech act*<sup>19</sup> by the securitizing actor. An important point is that uttering the word *security* is not necessary for securitizing an object. According to Hansen (2006:30), it usually "involves a mobilization of discursively important 'sub-security concepts,' such as 'strategic interests' and 'national interests'". For example, when Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli (1975:1) said in 1975, "Norway is placed in a strategically important and vulnerable area", he represented the North as a securitized area. However, the speech act is merely a *securitizing move*, because an issue will not be securitized until a significant

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<sup>19</sup> The theory of speech act has faced some criticism, such as not being able to incorporate 'silent security', i.e. those voices in society in which cannot utter the security threats they are facing, as the utterance may worsen their situation. This is particularly evident for marginalised groups in society (Hansen 2000). However, as this discussion is not relevant for the purpose of the thesis, space will not be utilized for this discussion. See Hansen's (2000) article *The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School* for an extensive discussion on just this problem

audience accepts it. The size of the audience varies, as it depends on what type of threat the securitizing actor is referring to (Buzan et al. 1998). In Norway, there is reason to believe that a large degree of the population accepted the securitization – the demanding threats - of the High North (see e.g. Tamnes 1997; Græger 2016b). Furthermore, Hansen (2006) claims security is ontologically important for states, because a state's identity formation is dependent on threats. As mentioned in chapter two, identities are created through juxtapositions against other subjects, hence, states constitute identity when establishing and differentiating itself to some threatening 'Other'. During the Cold War, we can argue that Norway created an even stronger 'Western' self-image or identity, as the USSR and the Communist ideology were framed as the main threats against Norway's freedom, sovereignty and democracy (Sverdrup 1996:293-294).

### **3.2.1 Military driven discourse: “deterrence and reassurance”**

During the Cold War, the High North was also given great geostrategic importance in the discourse, because of the short geographical distance between the two super powers. The short geographical distance across the North Pole made it possible to reach enemy territory with short distance missiles, which were cheaper than long distance missiles. What is more, in the 1960s, the USSR invested heavily in military capability in the High North region, where it deployed the Northern Fleet. The Kola Peninsula was soon referred to as “the world's most militarized area”, with the Novaja Zemlja Island operating as the Soviet theatre for testing of nuclear bombs (Hønneland and Rowe 2010:11). The Western alliance invested militarily in the High North as well, not least in Norway, emphasizing the importance of military and security concerns in the High North discourse.

Due to Norway's geographical location, sharing a long border with Russia in the North, the country became an important ally for the Western bloc. Norway was in a unique position to provide intelligence information to the US, which the super power would not have acquired otherwise. According to Skogrand (1998:8), Norway “could be a direct springboard for offensive operations of tactical or strategic nature”<sup>20</sup>, American bombers passed through Norwegian territory, and Norway could serve as a

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<sup>20</sup> Translated from: ”For det tredje kunne Skandinavia, og særlig Norge, i seg selv være et direkte springbrett for offensive operasjoner av taktisk eller strategisk karakter” (Skogrand 1998:8).

landing station for the bombers and a base for fighter planes and military equipment, with certain self-imposed restrictions (see below). Furthermore, Norway had a large merchant fleet in which could be useful in a potential conflict (Knutsen 2010). Consequently, Norway became what Rolf Tamnes (1997) called “a watchtower” in the north for the US and NATO, and this became Norway’s most important contribution to the Western alliance. External support and reinforcement from Western super powers have been crucial for Norwegian defence policy throughout its history, and Article 5 under NATO has served as an additional reassurance in terms of assistance from the US in times of need (Græger 2016b).

In 1949, however, Norway established its self-imposed restrictions preventing foreign troops and military equipment on Norwegian territory during times of peace and it further restricted military exercises in 1960. This was an attempt to take its relationship with the USSR into account, in a combination of ‘deterrence and reassurance’. Deterrence was provided by NATO, and hence Norway’s attempt to direct NATO’s attention to the High North, to make the USSR understand that the costs of attacking Norway would be much higher than the gains. Reassurance implied that the military presence of the alliance was limited to avoid provoking the USSR (Kjølberg 2015:32). Hence, it wanted the “the help to close, but the helper distant” (ibid. :31). The ‘deterrence and reassurance’ strategy was a distinctive feature of Norway’s foreign and security policy during the Cold War. As Prime Minister Bratteli (1975:1) said: “We [Norway] are allies with one of the World’s super powers and neighbour with the other. Norway has thus a direct interest in developments that can reduce the tension and contribute to détente”.

### **3.2.2 Sovereignty driven discourse: UNCLOS and Svalbard**

Even though the Cold War era was characterised as a high-tension period, some developments in terms of international cooperation occurred, in particular the framework regulating and protecting sea areas (Hønneland and Rowe 2010). The High North area lacked a framework for regulating and dividing High North areas up until the early years of the Cold War. For centuries, the ocean was considered to be free for all, where no one could claim authority. However, in the mid-1900s, “there was an impetus to extend national claims over offshore resources”, and concern of environmental damages and pollution grew (DOALOS 2012). Furthermore,



“maritime powers were competing to maintain presence across the globe on the surface waters and even under the sea” (ibid.). Consequently, in 1982, the UNCLOS was adopted, after nine years of negotiations among over 160 sovereign states. It came into force in 1994, a year after the 60<sup>th</sup> state, Guinea, signed the Convention (ibid.). The UNCLOS gives states exclusive right, known as exclusive economic zones (EEZ), to an area of up to 200 nautical miles from their seashore. Yet, if a state can provide evidence that its continental shelf expand even further than anticipated, it can claim a larger area of the sea (The Guardian 2010). According to Conley et al. (2016:10), the UNCLOS has become the High North’s “principal governance framework”. Today, all Arctic states have ratified the declaration, except the US – even though the country claim to adhere to the Declaration’s principles (Nøstvik 2012). The US is thus not allowed to make any claim for extending its continental shelf (Groenning 2017). While this shows the existence of a non-military discourse in the High North, it remained marginal during the Cold War.

Svalbard remained central in Norway’s concerns and policies regarding sovereignty. In 1977, when the UNCLOS was still under negotiation, “Norway established a 200-miles Fisheries Protection Zone around Svalbard” (Conley et al. 2016:18). This zone has caused disputes between actors in the region, and Norway has consequently had several conflicts with other states’ fishery vessels, in particular the USSR (and later Russia) (Emmerson 2010). Norway also found itself in a political conflict with Spain in 1986 over fishing quotas, which almost led to a “cod war”. These actors disagreed with Norway’s interpretation of the Svalbard Treaty and UNCLOS, and claimed the nonexclusive economic rights should apply around the archipelago as well. Norway on the other hand, “asserted that, as sovereign, it would take responsibility for sustainable management of the fishery resources in an attempt to dissuade other parties from invoking their economic interests under the Svalbard Treaty” (Conley et al. 2016:18). Norway also invested heavily in civilian infrastructure at Svalbard in order to strengthen its sovereignty claim of the area. Hence, the sovereignty concept was utilized by Norway to legitimize its authority and policy making, demonstrating the constitutive effect of the concept.

As this section has demonstrated, the realist narrative of security was dominant in High North discourse during the Cold War. While military armament and sovereignty concerns were central during this period, this changed in the post-Cold War era.

### **3.3 Early Post-Cold War discourses: Cooperation and desecuritization**

The High North discourse took a new turn after the end of the Cold War, moving from securitization to desecuritization. In 1987, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev initiated political change, also affecting the High North, with his famous Murmansk Speech. In his speech, Gorbachev focused on the *demilitarization* of the region and the importance of *cooperation* among Arctic states on “soft” politics issues, such as climate change, resource extraction, human security and scientific research (Åtland 2008). Gorbachev conducted a speech act, redefined security issues in the High North, and instead framed the region as a demilitarized and cooperative area, here carrying a peaceful and cooperative representation of the High North. Hence, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the framing of the High North changed from high-tension region to a region of peace and cooperation.

As a result of the end of the Cold War, conceptualisations of security were in a state of change in the 1990s. Non-military issues were incorporated into the security concept, such as the environment, economics, crime, human security, diseases and so on. Hence, traditional, military threats were no longer seen as the only security issue, and states were no longer the only focal point of analysis (Buzan et al. 1998). As noted by Buzan et al. (1998), people now became the reference object of security. Hence, in the High North, non-military threats were now framed as the biggest security threats in the region, not territorial invasion or frontal conflicts among states. Gradually, cooperation and dialogue became the norm in the post-Cold War era in the High North, as this was considered the best way to ensure economic, environmental and human security in the region. For example, in 1993 Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg initiated the establishment of the Barents cooperation, a political forum “for developing cooperation between Russia” and Nordic countries (The Norwegian Government 2015). The Barents cooperation is claimed to be a “cornerstone of regional cooperation in the far north of Europe” (ibid.), and the aim of the forum is to ensure stability, “reduce possible tension” and “sustainable

development” (Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation n.d.). From the establishment of the Barents cooperation and up until the beginning of the new millennium, the Norwegian High North policy focused on a range of cooperative measures through the Barents cooperation, with special focus on environmental issues (e.g. nuclear safety), health issues (e.g. stopping the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS from North-Western Russia) and business developments on both sides of the east-western border (Hønneland and Jensen 2008).

Furthermore, Norway and Russia established a close bilateral relationship, especially on fishery management and military (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). They have cooperated militarily in terms of search and rescue missions and military training, with a focus on direct dialogue between military head quarters in order to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to crisis or conflict (Kjølberg 2015). After the Cold War, Russia was in deep economic crisis, and was regularly framed in Norwegian discourse as poor and a underdeveloped, in particular the North-Western Russia. Hence, Norway’s foreign policies in the north focused on development strategies across the border in terms of health and economic development, in order to reduce the threat the underdeveloped Russia posed to Norwegian society, i.e. the spread of diseases and crime. The economic downturn for Russia made the situation ‘easier’ for Norway at Svalbard, as Russian presence diminished. According to Conley et al. (2016:20), “[i]n the geopolitically favourable post-Cold War environment, Norway became more assertive in its management of fisheries in the Fisheries Protection Zone”. This unleashed reactions from other actors in the 1990s, though, and an Icelandic trawler came in direct conflict with the Norwegian Coast Guard in 1994 (ibid.).

However, towards the end of the 1990s, the representation of Russia as ‘poor’ and ‘underdeveloped’ changed as the country began experiencing rapid economic growth, primarily due to increasing oil prices and export of oil and gas (Hønneland and Jensen 2008). This also affected the Svalbard dynamic, as “Russia reasserted itself as the main challenger to Norway’s management in the Fisheries Protection Zone” (Conley et al. 2016:20). Even though the majority of Russian vessels adhered to Norwegian regulations in the area, certain episodes or disagreements occurred between the Norwegian Coast Guard and Russian vessels in the late 1990s. Hence, the sovereignty

discourse has remained stable in the High North in the early post-Cold War era as well, particularly in relation to Svalbard.

As we have seen above, the High North discourse have revolved around nodal points such as ‘exploration’, ‘research’ and ‘sovereignty’, as well as ‘environmental security’, ‘sustainability’, ‘health issues’, ‘indigenous people’, ‘human security’, ‘business and industry’ and ‘cooperation’, including ‘people to people’ cooperation. The environment entered the High North discourse after the Brundtland Commission<sup>21</sup> launched the report *Our Common Future* on sustainable development and environmental and economic global challenges in 1987, and kept a central position in the first decade after the Cold War (Græger 1996; Ingebritsen 2002). Furthermore, the petroleum discourse became more prominent in the Norwegian High North discourse, especially in the debates concerning exploration and extraction of petroleum in the vulnerable Lofoten-Vesterålen area. A discursive struggle between those who oppose further extraction of petroleum in the High North and Barents Sea area and those who support it has been visible for quite some time. The most critical voices, who point out that such activity, especially outside of Lofoten-Vesterålen Lofoten would harm the vulnerable environment, came from the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party, and environmental groups (Norsk Olje og Gass 2017; Ryggvik and Sander 2017).

### **3.3.1 Militarised discourse?**

Despite focus on peace and cooperation, the military aspect still lured in the background (Åtland and Pedersen 2014). The threat of an invasion from the east was not excluded from Norwegian defence concept until 1998, and an invasion was still not wholly excluded (Græger 2009:354). Hence, Russia continued to be a central element in Norwegian defence and security policy in the High North. Russia is the only Arctic state that is not part of the Western security community, which means that Russia will continue to have security political relevance for Norway in the High North (Kjølberg 2015). However, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Norway’s foreign and security policy was primarily focused on international operations, where Norway has been a contributor to ‘Out of Area’ operations under NATO (e.g. International

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<sup>21</sup> The Commission was led by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (Ingebritsen 2002)

Security Assistance Force, ISAF) and UN missions (e.g. Operation Enduring Freedom) (Græger 2016b). Norway has also worked actively as a peace mediator in the international sphere, such as with the Oslo Accords (Ingebritsen 2002). The High North and Norway's vicinity areas were thus partially neglected in the foreign and security policy debate. As Hønneland and Jensen (2008) argue, discussing extraction of petroleum's resources and security issues in the High North was something that only a few pensioned military generals cared about. The 'unstable south', on the other hand, was considered to be a much better investment for the future and the modernisation of the armed forces, and took consequently a larger share of the foreign and security discourse in Norway (Græger 2011). In the alternative discourse in terms of NATO-membership, the Socialist Left Party was especially critical to Norway's international military contributions to NATO as this removed focus away from national security. National security and especially the navy was emphasized as central for safeguarding Norway's sovereignty and security in the vast areas in the High North, i.e. Norway's vicinity (ibid.).

### **3.4 Securitization followed by desecuritization**

Based on the analysis in this chapter, the High North area was important in Norway's nation-building process from the mid-1800s and up until the Cold War. A race of discovering and making sovereign claims in the High North occurred, with particular focus on gaining sovereignty over the Svalbard archipelago. Hence, in the early 1900s, sovereignty and resource debates dominated the Norwegian High North discourse, where the endeavours of Amundsen and Nansen were important in the Government's framing of the High North as an area of vital interest for Norway.

During the Cold War, however, the High North discourse was mainly concerned with territorial claims and sovereignty disputes, military armament and deterrence. A language of conflict and "hard" political issues primarily dominated the region and *realpolitik* and zero-sum thinking were at the forefront. Consequently, other discourses, such as on cooperation, indigenous people and environmental security, were marginalised. In other words, *traditional security* (see above) was the predominant geopolitical concern for the actors involved in the High North and the outside world. Accordingly, the High North experienced a process of securitization.

For Norway, the Svalbard archipelago remained a sovereignty issue during the Cold War, with tough disputes over Norway's claim of sovereignty in the 200-mile area around the archipelago. Thus, the High North discourse was securitized and militarized.

In the 1990s, the security concept was in a state of change. President Gorbachev's famous Murmansk Speech marked the end of the Cold War and sparked a change in the High North discourse. Gorbachev conveyed a new representation of the High North as a low-tension area, and performed a speech act that started a process of *demilitarization* and *desecuritization* of the region. Hence, the focus on strategic concerns and military means was gradually replaced by a focus on cooperation on soft-political issues in the High North. As a consequence, a range of cooperative measures was established in the 1990s, including the Arctic Council and the Barents cooperation. In Norwegian security policy, international operations and peace negotiations were the main activity, not planning for military operations in the High North. Hence, the High North discourse experienced a period of desecuritization, where the liberal institutionalist narrative on peace and cooperation dominated. To conclude, in the periods studied in this chapter, the degree of securitization in the High North discourse has mainly reflected the international political tensions or thaw.

## 4. High North Discourses: 2005 to 2009

This chapter sets out to answer both research questions of the thesis: *How has the Norwegian High North discourse developed over time, and how has the discourse shaped Norwegian security and foreign policy in the region? What is Russia's role in the Norwegian High North discourse, and how are changes in the relationship between Russia and the West reflected in these discourse?* This chapter looks explores the period from 2005 to 2009, where a discursive change took place in the Norwegian High North discourse (see below).

This chapter analyses local representations of the High North carried by certain groups in the official debate, i.e. primarily Norwegian politicians, bureaucrats, academics and military officers. Alternative representations of the High North tend to be voiced by the media/journalists, researchers/academics and some international politicians. The media and academia also recreate hegemonic representations and other marginal or challenging representations (Græger 2005). As shown in chapter two, for a representation to be considered 'normal', *who* is performing the speech act is important. Furthermore, having the power to frame an issue also empowers "how the issue should be dealt with and, consequently, its outcome" (Græger 2016b:86). This is why focus is put on governmental officials, as they have a powerful and influential position in the society and consequently have the ability to frame issues in specific ways.

### 4.1 The High North's re-emergence in Norwegian Foreign Policy discourse

In 2005, a new coalition government consisting of the Labour Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*), the Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*) and the Socialist Left Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) came into office, here referred to as 'the Red-Green Government'. This Government declared the High North (*nordområdene*) as *the* most important strategic area in its foreign policy (Office of the Prime Minister 2005), and it launched its first High North Strategy in 2006. It the first of the Arctic states to launch such a strategy, and the other Arctic states and non-Arctic actors, such as the EU, followed suit in subsequent years (Bekkevold and Offerdal 2014). This marked the shift of a discursive change in the Norwegian High North discourse, where the High North was represented as *the key strategic area* in Norwegian foreign policy, and will be

illustrated further below. Recalling from chapter three, the High North was partially neglected in the foreign policy discourse in the 1990s and up until the turn of the millennium. International operations and southern areas were dominating foreign policy, and considered important for Norway's security interests and for maintaining good relations with its allies (Hønneland and Jensen 2008; Græger 2016b).

The High North had begun taking a larger place in official debates already in 2003, when an expert group (Orheim-group) was mandated to write a report identifying Norway's possibilities and challenges in the North (NOU 2003:32). This was followed up by a White Paper about a year later, which was a revised version of the Orheim referenced report, created by the Foreign Ministry of Bondevik's Second Cabinet<sup>22</sup> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004-2005). According to Foreign Minister Jan Petersen (2005a), this was the first white paper discussing the situation in the High North after the Cold War. Hønneland and Jensen (2008) claim that influential forces in the Northern parts of Norway took advantage of this re-focusing to the north by representing a narrative that 'it is happening in the North' and 'it is happening *now*' (Jensen and Hønneland 2011:44). The High North also became a central element in the election campaign in 2005, especially for the Labour Party, and the number of times the High North was mentioned in Norwegian media increased by a fivefold from 2004 to 2005 (Hønneland and Jensen 2008:94).

The discursive change in the High North discourse can also be linked to developments on the international arena and within energy politics. After a decade of investing heavily in international operations under NATO and the UN, and in the midst of a seemingly unsuccessful operation in Afghanistan, the need to focus on Norwegian vicinities and interests became more attractive (Hønneland and Jensen 2008). A range of voices critical of Norway's focus on international operations, such as former Commodore Jacob Børresen (2005) and the Socialist Party, also became visible, as they expressed a concern over lack of defence investments in Norway's own vicinity and thus ability to protect its sovereignty and territory. Furthermore, petroleum resources under the Russian shelf were considered to be significant, and as the US and others wanted to reduce their dependence on oil from the Middle East, their interest in

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<sup>22</sup> The Foreign Ministry of Kjell Magne Bondevik's Second Cabinet was a minority government consisting of the Conservative Party, Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party (The Norwegian Government 2013).



Russian petroleum rose (Hønneland and Jensen 2008). Hence, an urgency to take part in the developments in the High North energy sector grew.

#### **4.2 Norway's most important 'strategic focus area'?**

In early 2005, Foreign Minister Petersen (2005b) represented the High North as *the* area of possibilities, in which the Norwegian Government urgently had to take advantage of. More importantly, “the High North was no longer merely a security policy area” (ibid.). However, it was only when the new ‘Red-Green Government’ took office that the High North became the new ‘flagship’ Norwegian foreign policy. As Hønneland and Rowe (2010) argue, the Bondevik Government did not put the report into practice, and Petersen’s representation of the High North was considered to be slightly dull (Gjerde and Fjæstad 2013).

During their time in office, the ‘Red-Green Government’ worked actively to place the High North region back on both the national and international map. The Government framed it as strategically important for the nation as a whole, and the High North was consequently incorporated into the Norwegian *national discourse*. As a Christian Democratic Party representative said in a parliamentary debate on the High North, “placing Finnmark and the Barents Sea at the centre of political activity is more than district politics. It is a question of securing the interest of the whole country” (Innst. S. 2004-2005:2914). Due to Norway’s geographical placement and the potential richness of resources in the High North, the region was framed as *crucial* to ensure Norwegian prosperity. In addition, the increasing international interest in the High North, natural resources and climate change was framed as potential opportunities, as well as challenges. Hence, the main focus of the High North Strategy was to safeguard Norwegian *interests* and *sovereignty* in the region, and to ensure the region remained stable and peaceful (Innst. S. 2004-2005; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004-2005; 2006).

The Government’s Soria Moria-declaration presented its political platform for the coalition government for 2005-2009, and one of the main goals was “to define the High North as Norway’s *main* strategic interest” (Office of the Prime Minister 2005:6). The Soria-Moria declaration claims

the High North areas have gone from a security policy to an energy policy power centre and an area of major environmental policy challenges. This has changed the focus of other states in the region, and thus safeguarding Norwegian economic, environmental and security interests in this region will be highly prioritized and seen in close conjunction (Office of the Prime Minister 2005:6).

In order to achieve this, the declaration listed a range of measures, where strengthening cooperation with different actors in the region was emphasized, in particular with Russia. The focus of the High North thus revolved around resource politics more than security policy, but by incorporating it into the national discourse, the High North was automatically absorbed into the discourse of all sectors in Norwegian politics, i.e. everything from defence to business discourses (Innst. S. 2004-2005). The High North discourse revolved mostly around a few central nodal points, i.e. 'environmental security', 'energy security' and 'extraction', 'fishery', 'sovereignty', 'cooperation' and 'Russia'. As the High North Strategy (2006) focus on cooperation and dialogue on soft-political issues, it can be seen as an attempt to desecuritize the region. The main priorities of the strategy was to safeguard Norwegian sovereignty by exercising authority in a credible, consistent and predictable way; be a leading Arctic actor in term of knowledge creation, competence and sustainable management (particularly in the petroleum industry); safeguard the indigenous peoples' livelihoods, industries, history and culture; develop stronger people-to-people cooperation; and, finally, strengthen the relationship with Russia even further (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). The representation of the High North as *the* most important strategic and foreign policy area for Norway can be said to reflect the doxa. This representation of the High North has been unquestioned and repeated by representatives from all parties in parliamentary debates, speeches and White Papers in the time period from 2005 to 2017 (see e.g. Innst. S. 2004-2005, Innst. S. 2007-2008, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004-2005, 2011-2012, 2014, S. tid. 2009 to 2017, and the Norwegian Government 2017).

Referring back to chapter two, individuals can act as carriers of certain representations, and their position in society provide leverage in the discourse. Hence, Foreign Minister Støre had the legitimacy to frame the High North as Norway's most important focus area. Støre's persona and competence were also vital for the success

of this specific construction of the High North in Norwegian discourse (Gjerde and Fjæstad 2013). There was a sense of High North ‘euphoria’ in the mid-2000s, where the High North was represented as a land of possibilities, that there was an urgency to look to the High North *now* (Jensen and Hønneland 2011), and it was depicted as the vicinity experiencing “the most rapid development”, which Norway could not miss out on (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006:5). According to Hønneland and Jensen (2008), critical voices towards the High North euphoria were met with harsh critique. Only chants applauding the new High North focus were accepted. For example, Hønneland and his colleague, Jørgensen, wrote an article questioning whether Norway really needed a comprehensive the High North policy in the Norwegian newspaper ‘Nordlys’ (*Northern Lights*) based in Tromsø (ibid.). ‘Nordlys’ replied to Hønneland and Jørgensen’s comments with an editorial, where their arguments were represented as wrong, and the editorial further claimed “the request for an active Norwegian policy in the High North is only based on facts and figures [...] [and] Norway’s foreign policy have to take base in our interests as a coastal states in Europe’s northern areas to a greater extent” (Nordlys 2005).

As part of the High North Strategy, several reports, White Papers and updated strategies have been launched, including *the Barents 2020 (2006)*, *New Building Blocks in the North (2009)*, *High North Strategy status report (2010)*, *the High North: visions and strategies (white paper nr. 7, 2011-2012)*, and *the High North Strategy (2017)*. The aim has been to concretize High North goals and tasks, in what can be seen as an attempt to re-produce and continuously represent the High North as a crucial area for Norwegian foreign policy. Hence, it is part of the constant discursive struggle, attempting to preserve the hegemonic representation of the High North in Norwegian foreign policy. According to Jensen and Hønneland (2011:37), before ‘the Red-Green Government’ took office in 2005, “few raised questions about the division of resources and security in relation to the Barents sea region”. Although, there was no immediate military threat in the region after the fall of the Soviet Union, exploration of natural oil and gas was not much deliberated on, and the Norwegian-Russian collaboration over fishery resources was going well. Furthermore, as mentioned, Norway had been preoccupied pursuing a foreign policy focused on international operations, e.g. NATO’s ‘Out of Area’ operations, and paid little attention and resources to the High North (Græger 2016b).

### 4.3 ‘Moral guardian’ of the High North?

The Norwegian Government has over the years re-represented the High North as a *stable, peaceful, and cooperative* region, just like it was during the 1990s to early 2000s, i.e. the aftermath of the Cold War (intertextuality). Foreign Minister Støre also adopted the famous slogan “High North, Low Tension”, and this has become the main characteristics of the High North region ever since, in both the Norwegian and international discourses (Bekkevold and Offerdal 2014). It is argued here that this representation has had a constitutive effect on policy formation in the region, for both Arctic and external actors. The persistent way Norwegian government officials have framed the High North, and continuously representing it as a peaceful and stable region has most likely affected the way stakeholders perceive of and behave in the area, too. As claimed by Rowe (2013:3), Norway has been acclaimed to be “an international relations entrepreneur” in the High North. Political actions corresponding to this stable and peaceful environment have been legitimized and normalised, such as the strengthening of cooperative measures, investments in scientific research and technology, and so on.

The Norwegian Government represents Norway as a *responsible, knowledgeable and morally good* actor in the High North region, and, consequently, Norway is responsible for ensuring that all activity in the High North is done in a manner that safeguards the vulnerable environment in the region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). In a parliamentary debate in 2005, a Liberal Party representative claimed that “Norwegian presence in the North is a better alternative than President Putin and President Bush creating rules and standards” for the region, in relation to the petroleum industry (Innst. S. 2004-2005:2917). Furthermore, a Socialist Left Party MP said in the same debate,

As a responsible nation, we also have the responsibility at an international level, not least to help our neighbours. We can continue to discuss why we continue cutting up nuclear submarines, while Russia continue to build new ones. There are many dilemmas here, but as a nation – what to call it – which might become an ‘environmental nation’ [*miljønasjon*], we have to take issues across the border into consideration (Innst. S. 2004-2005:2914)

As the quote above demonstrates, the Socialist Left Party utilizes articulation, as he represents Norway as an environmentally friendly nation cleaning up Russia's mess, and consequently Russia is represented as not environmentally friendly (see chapter 2). In the discourse, the Norwegian Government constructed an image of Norway as more environmentally friendly than its neighbours, and a more trust-worthy leader than both the US and Russia in the High North (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004-2005; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). This 'morally good' representation is a common representation of Norway by the Norwegian Government on a range of foreign and security policy issues (see Leira et al. 2007).

#### **4.4 Europe's petroleum province?**

As mentioned in chapter three, up until the mid-2000s, the energy debate in Norway was primarily concerned with whether exploration and extraction of petroleum resources should be conducted in the Barents Sea, but this was mainly within the domestic discourse. However, with the renewed focus on the High North, energy security and politics became central in Norway's foreign policy, and the High North was framed as a potential "European petroleum province" by Norwegian politicians and governmental officials in parliamentary debates, in official documents and in the media (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006; Innst. S. 2004-2005). Norway was also represented as an "attractive partner for European importers" (Støre 2007a:1878), due to the amount of energy resources in the Norwegian continental Shelf and because of Norway's reputation as a reliable and predictable partner. Støre (2007a:1878) further represented Norway's continental shelf as "the most energy effective and environmentally friendly" area for petroleum extraction, due to Norwegian technological innovations (see section 4.3 on Norway's 'moral' identity). The potential petroleum resources in the High North are also framed as strategic interest for Norway (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006), because "energy resources are becoming a greater source of power on the international arena with the growing demand" (Innst. S. 2005-2006:2779).

Gradually, the region and its energy resources were becoming securitised, by referring to it as a 'national strategic interest' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). The large energy resources in Russian jurisdiction were also incorporated into the Norwegian

High North discourse and debate. These resources were portrayed as an opportunity for Norwegian industry, in terms of providing technology, capital and knowledge (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006; Innst. S. 2004 – 2005). A Conservative Party representative argued that Norway *had* to be part of the Russian developments in the Barents Sea in order to have a hand on the steering wheel regarding the petroleum activity in the High North (Innst. S. 2004-2005). However, Russia's growing economy was also considered a potential threat to Norway's political position in the Arctic. As claimed by a Christian Democratic Party representative, "Russian power and influence grows in parallel with the oil and gas demand, and we thus have to draw attention to our view on exploitation of resources" (Innst. S. 2004-2005:2914). Another pessimistic view on energy resources was the fear that Norway could be sacrificed in a potential conflict with Russia, due to the US' dependence on Russian energy resources (Græger 2005). Hence, in the discourse, Russia was framed as an unpredictable actor and a threat both to Norway's supremacy in terms of resource management in the region *and* Norway's relation to the US.

Furthermore, alternative discourses in the energy discourse, i.e. the Socialist Left Party and Centre Party, did not want an offensive energy policy, or any petroleum exploration in the Barents Sea, due to the environmental damages the extraction of petroleum could cause in the vulnerable High North (Innst. S. 2004-2005). With the 'Red-Green Government' in office, the oppositional parties, in particular the Progressive Party, were critical to the Socialist Left Party's position within the energy discourse. For example, in a parliamentary debate in 2006, Progressive Party representatives said: "[...] but it is the oil industry in which becomes a victim when the Socialist Left Party is to gain any victories in this case" (Innst. S. 2005-2006:2781), "The Socialist Left Party, with its politics, has unfortunately gained hold in this particular case, and this indicates that we have a weak policy towards the High North" (ibid. :2809). Here we can detect different positions within the energy discourse in the High North, both in terms of Russian petroleum activity and how and if Norway's energy policy should be conducted.

#### 4.5 Russia in Norwegian High North discourse

One of the main priorities of Norwegian politics in the High North is closer bilateral collaboration with Russia. In addition to being a great power and Norway's largest neighbour in the north (the largest of the Arctic states), Norway and Russia also shares responsibility for the Barents Sea. The Barents Sea holds a large fishing stock, which is a vital resource for the two countries. Consequently, a main priority in the High North Strategy was to strengthen the Barents cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Norway's relation with Russia is "the central two-sided dimension in the High North policy" (ibid. :15), and thus Russia is a central part of the High North discourse where cooperation with Russia on all aspects is framed as *vital* to maintain a peaceful and stable environment in the region. Norway and Russia have consequently collaborated on a range of issue areas, such as the extraction of petroleum, search and rescue missions, and even military activities (ibid.). As Foreign Minister Støre (2006:1215) claimed, "Norway's relationship with Russia has developed and is now more comprehensive than it has ever been. The good political dialogue is something I appreciate". Russia was represented as a 'partner', 'collaborator' and 'crucial actor' in the High North by Norway, where the Norwegian Government welcomes Russia's focus outwards (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Hence, a particular image of Russia was constructed, and Russian behaviour and identity was given meaning based on how the USSR was during the Cold War and Norway's relationship with Russia over the years (intertextuality).

Even though Russia was not considered to be an immediate security threat in traditional security terms (i.e. invasion of Norwegian sovereign territory) in this period, Russia remained central in Norway's foreign and security policy in the region. The only threats in relation to Russia at this time were illegal exploitation of resources in areas under Norwegian jurisdiction, especially fishery resources, and nuclear weapons and waste close to Norwegian borders. Safeguarding Norwegian sovereignty in the High North was thus central in the High North discourse (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006; Innst. S. 2004-2005). In 2005, the Russian trawler 'Elektron' was caught fishing illegally in the Fishery Protection Zone around the Svalbard archipelago and it returned to Russian territory with two Norwegian Coast Guard officials on board (Åtland and ven Bruusgaard 2009). In the security discourse on the

High North, this incident was framed as a reason for strengthening the focus on military cooperation and dialogue with Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006).

Unresolved delineation of territories was also framed as a source for potential conflicts of interest between Norway and Arctic actors, which could lead to severe disputes. Two agreements over disputed areas were reached in 2006, and these were presented as important victories by Foreign Minister Støre (2007a:1878). These were the agreement over the border of the continental shelf and 200-neautical miles between Svalbard and Greenland, and the agreement with Iceland and Denmark/the Faroe Islands over the delineation of the continental shelf outside of the ‘Smutthavet’ in the Norwegian Sea (ibid.). However, the unresolved delineation of an area of the Barents Sea between Russia and Norway was framed as a particular danger due to conflict of interests (a delineation agreement was signed in 2010) (Innst. S. 2004-2005; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). This area “is of great strategic importance to Russia (cf. the strategic and tactical nuclear weapons based on the Kola Peninsula) and of great economic importance to both countries (oil, gas, fish resources in the Barents Sea)” (Græger 2005:88; see also Jensen 2011). Hence, economic resources and geopolitics are re-represented as main threats in relation to the High North and Russia (Græger 2005).

Moreover, in the High North discourse, the military was framed as necessary not for deterrence, but to safeguard Norwegian sovereignty from violations of rules in areas under Norwegian jurisdiction, in addition to search and rescue and the protection of environment (Innst. S. 2004-2005). Hence, the region was ‘desecuritized’; even though actors did not necessarily take peace for granted. Even though there was a consensus over most of the High North politics, a representative from the Conservative Party questioned the “weak presence of security and defence policy in the High North Strategy” (S. tid. 2007:2702). In view of Russia’s growing economy and re-emergence as a superpower, the Conservative Party believed, security and defence policy should be part of the High North debate. Russian domestic development towards a more autocratic regime, where the Russian Government showed less respect to the freedom of speech and democracy, was framed as a potential threat to the High North region, because this made Russia an unpredictable actor (S. tid. 2007). Here, we see a clear case of intertextuality and identity



construction, where the Conservative Party representative drew on history and discourses from the Cold War, and he drew linkages between the USSR and Russia. Hence, an alternative and critical discourse in the High North debate is evident.

However, Foreign Minister Støre disagreed that defence and security policy was neglected in the High North Strategy, “because security and defence policy anno 2007 is much more. It contains many – and other – dimensions than simply defence budget, military capability and winter exercises in the north” (S.tid. 2007:2703). He argued that security issues in the High North revolved around a range of sectors, such as the environment, and thus, “engagement from more sectors than the Defence is necessary” (ibid. :2703). He also claimed the Conservative Party representative was using a Cold War rhetoric when arguing that Russia’s growing economy and presence on the international scene should be considered a security threat. Støre rather framed Russia’s growing economy as something positive, in which the European continent should see as a resource and possibility in terms of business and stability (S.tid. 2007:2703). Here, Støre dismissed and marginalised the interpellant’s arguments, and presented his own arguments as ‘more true’ than the alternative voice, demonstrating Støre’s power within and aim to re-produce his dominant representation in the discourse (see chapter 2). A discursive struggle was thus evident, between the oppositional parties and the ruling party over both the framing of Russia in the High North and the reading of the High North Strategy.

Even though the High North discourse generally frame Russia and Norway as partners with aligned, peaceful interests in the region, this dominant discourse has been challenged over the years.

#### **4.6 An offensive Russian Foreign Policy?**

Since the end of the Cold War the High North was framed as a stable and peaceful region, and this has been the hegemonic discourse. However, incidents and discourses from 2007 have challenged this representation. This sub-section focus on how this change in the view on Russia from around 2007 has affected the High North discourse.

Defence and security discourses began taking a dominant position in the High North debate from around 2007 and onwards, leading to a process of securitization. In the mid-2000s, Russia invested heavily in military capacity on the Kola Peninsula, increased number of military exercises, re-opened old military bases, and Russian air and marine forces began operating at a regular basis in the Northern Atlantic Ocean – which it had not done in 15 years (Lindgren and Græger 2017; Ministry of Defence 2007-2008). This created a resurgence of a type of ‘New Cold War’ rhetoric, particularly in the media discourse and marginal oppositional discourses in the official debate. For example, in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, Rauland and Godal (2007) wrote: “Russia is a Threat”, and argued Norway was naïve and reckless not to invest in military in its vicinity and assume Russia would not invade Norwegian territory<sup>23</sup>.

Consequently, Russian behaviour gained more attention in the High North debate, especially after the planting of the Russian flag on the North Pole Sea Bed by Russian explorers in 2007. The media and international politicians framed this incident as an offensive act by Russia, where it supposedly claimed sovereignty over Arctic land considered to be terra nullius. Following this incident, Canadian Foreign Minister, Peter MacKay, said “[t]his isn’t the 15<sup>th</sup> century. You can’t go around the world and just plant flags and say ‘We’re claiming this territory’” (Reuters 2007). As a consequence to the flag planting, Canada shortly after announced its plans to invest in eight patrol ships, costing over 40 billion NOK, in Arctic territory to protect areas under their jurisdiction (Aftenposten 2007a). The media and analysts claimed this to be a show-off to demonstrate Russian re-emergence as a super power, and to claim jurisdiction over sea area potentially holding large amounts of petroleum resources. The flag-planting incident was framed by international media as an offensive act by Russia, where it built on Cold War discourses linking the behaviour to the Soviet Union (intertextuality). Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, on the other hand, claimed this was not a land grab, but it was done in order to show that Russia’s continental shelf reach all the way to the North Pole (Reuters 2007).

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<sup>23</sup> For thorough overview of the turn in Norway’s security discourse on Russia, see Græger 2016b, chapter 10.

Following this flag planting and increasing Russian military activity, in particular the air forces patrolling in around the Norwegian Sea, the media and some official actors framed Russia as a threat to Norwegian interests and sovereignty in the High North (Dragnes 2007). Hence, a worrisome and nervous discourse challenged the hegemonic discourse, which framed the area as stable and the bilateral relation between Norway and Russia to be good. The flag planting was represented as a leap in the “energy rush” towards the High North, and as an even greater potential source of conflict in the area, in particular between the US and Russia. Furthermore, according to a EU report, the ‘scramble of the Arctic’ could potentially have severe effects on the international environment as a whole (Aftenposten 2008; The Guardian 2008). The ‘scramble of the Arctic’ metaphor, that flourished in varying degrees since then, constructs a picture of the High North as an area of power politics (over natural resources), which could trigger undesirable behaviour and responses in the region.

In Norwegian public discourse, the scepticism and distrust towards Russia in the north grew in 2007, in addition to the worry over NATO’s lack of interest towards the North. As noted by a representative from the Labour Party in a parliamentary debate on Norway’s defence strategy in 2008:

After the Cold War, NATO has concentrated less and less on the High North area, and Norway has, simultaneously, developed its role in international operations. Now, however, we see that the need to focus on the north has changed, and is changing, and NATO has its focus other places. Norway therefore has a rising need and responsibility to safeguard security, surveillance and sovereignty in the north (Innst. S. 2007-2008:3886).

The anxious tone in the discourse was particularly evident with Chief of Defence Sverre Diesen claiming Norway cannot rely on help from NATO during a serious conflict between Norway and Russia. Further, Diesen said to the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* in 2007 that “Norway must prepare for limited military conflicts with Russia in the High North” (Aftenposten 2007b). Norwegian analysts also supported these statements. As noted by the Ministry of Defence, a multilateral framework was necessary to safeguard Norway’s basic security needs, also in the High North. Hence, “allied presence on Norwegian soil is important” (Ministry of Defence 2007-2008:37). This represents the hegemony in the discourse. The main

challenging voices in terms of Norway's relation with NATO appear from the Socialist Left Party, then in government, which argued that Norway should cut its ties with NATO and be more self-sufficient in security and defence policy, or rather create alliances with other northern states (Innst. S. 2004-2005; S.tid. 2007). The Conservative Party and the Progressive Party questioned the persistency of the 'Red-Green Government', due to the different internal political stances on NATO membership and oil extraction (S. tid. 2007).

#### **4.6.1 The re-production of external events in the discourse**

The tension in the High North discourse rose after the Georgian War and Ukraine gas conflict in 2008. Russia was framed as unpredictable, and the violation of Norwegian sovereignty in the High North was represented as a greater possibility (Strøm-Erichsen 2007). Jens Ulltveit-Moe (2008) wrote in *Aftenposten* that the Georgian War was both a political and military challenge for Norway, because of the dominant presence of Russians at Svalbard and the unresolved delineation of the Barents Sea area. A Progressive Party representative also expressed his worry in a Parliamentary debate, where he said: "After the military conflict in Georgia and the gas conflict with Ukraine, a greater insecurity over Russia's future path is created, and this is unsettling" (S. tid. 2009:1990). Furthermore, in a White Paper on Norwegian Foreign Policy in 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008-2009:11) claimed:

[t]he High North and Norway's relationship with Russia is central and will have growing importance for Norwegian Foreign Policy in the years ahead. Energy security and climate challenges give the High North more visibility and gravity. The Georgia war and its aftermath have shown that Russia's potential for power and vulnerability, and Russia's unpredictable future in the light of the financial crisis. The development underlines the importance of combining neighbourhood politics with Russia and the anchorage in the Euro-Atlantic cooperation

The Defence plan adopted in 2009 could be seen as a response to the military build-up in the High North and Russian behaviour on the international arena. The Plan established a new operative headquarter in Northern Norway, moved army officers and stationed maritime helicopters in the Northern parts of Norway, in order to strengthen Norway's military presence in the High North (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009).

The Georgian war and Ukraine gas conflict were re-produced in the High North discourse and made relevant for High North politics. Russian ‘aggressive’ and ‘law-violating’ behaviour in these contexts were linked directly to how Russia acted and could act in the High North. This demonstrates, as Græger (2016b:19) argues, how external incidents are interpreted, conveyed and made relevant by central actors in the discourse (see section 2.2). The Ilulissat Declaration 2008 and the non-paper on NATO’s Core Area Initiative in 2008 can be seen as responses to the rise of tension in the High North in the mid-2000s (these incidents will be discussed in chapter five). The oppositional parties criticised the government for investing and focusing too little on security and defence policy in the region (S. tid. 2007; S. tid. 2009).

Former Commodore Jacob Børresen also criticised the Government’s choice to “tie Norway’s defence policy so strongly to NATO in a time when the Alliance’s security guarantee is reduced” (Børresen 2005:85-86). According to Børresen, Norway needed more military capacity in the High North – which he re-represented as the most vulnerable and important area for Norway (ibid.). When he claimed that the increasing Russian military activity in the region is a normal and positive outcome (Aftenposten 2007c), we can imply that his attempt to ‘normalise’ Russian behaviour is a way to highlight what he had been saying all along; i.e. Norway had to stop focus on international operations and focus on Norway’s own vicinity (see Græger 2016b). In other words, he seemed to have an agenda to support his own arguments that Norway should invest more in military capability in the north. Furthermore, he performed a speech act when attempting to securitize the area by representing it as the most vulnerable area for Norway, needing a stronger military and security focus.

#### **4.7 Simply normal super power behaviour?**

Even though there was a trend from 2007 to frame the High North as more vulnerable to conflict, especially due to Russia’s more ‘forward-leaning’ foreign policy, the official Norwegian discourse continued to frame the High North as peaceful and a place for cooperative measures (discursive struggle). This was further reassured by representing Russian actions ‘normal’ behaviour for an old super power: “For a nation of the size of Russia, these actions should be considered as normalising and upgrading, from a relatively low level in the 1990s” (intertextuality) (Ministry of

Defence 2007-2008:30). Støre was also central in the discursive struggle toning down the framing of Russian behaviour as a threat. For example, Støre (2007b) claimed the flag planting to be merely ‘show business’ by the Russians and a ‘symbolic act’ (VG 2007). The Norwegian Government focused on the fact that this had *no* juridical significance, and that Russia demonstrated they, as all the other Arctic states, were adhering to international law and following the framework of the UNCLOS (Støre 2007b). However, Støre (2007b) did argue, “we [Norway] are – and should be – realist when it comes to Russia’s developments. We don’t want to go back to the turbulent 90s”. Hence, the Government emphasized a firm and concise relation with Russia, by showing how Norway did not appreciate its actions in Georgia; while at the same time continue its good dialogue and bilateral relation with its neighbour in the High North (Støre 2009; S. tid. 2009). “Isolating this large and historically proud country should not be in anyone’s interest. It should not be old opposites, but a broad spectre of dependence in which motivates a further development of our relationship with Russia”, Støre (2009) said. This was seen as vital to maintain the peaceful environment in the region.

Although the main challenges in the High North were represented as relating to resources management of marine and energy resources, transportation and the environment, “Norway’s overall challenges in the High North underline the importance of military presence in the years ahead. Absence of such a presence would be interpreted as a lack of Norwegian ambitions in the region” according to State Secretary Espen Barth Eide (2007). The Coast Guard and the Navy have been represented as crucial for safeguarding Norway’s sovereignty and security in its vicinities, especially the High North (Innst. S. 2007-2008; Ministry of Defence 2007-2008). As Bjørn Jacobsen (Socialist Left representative) said in a Parliamentary debate in 2008:

[...] the Coast Guard is a symbol. It is not just a symbol working practically at sea, but it also symbolizes the balanced politics we [Norway] have in the High North. We are present with a civil element, i.e. the Coast Guard, in which is operated by the military, and then we have the Navy as an extra muscle laying there as a reserve, far back, never too visible, but available, without being the one operating and handling the High North at a daily basis. This is Norwegian defence policy in a long, red line (Innst. S. 2007-2008:3866)

## 4.8 Gradual securitization

As mentioned, the Norwegian Government framed the High North as *the* most important strategic and foreign policy area for Norway in 2005. It is argued here that this marks a discursive change in Norwegian High North discourse, legitimizing increased investments and enhanced focus on the High North within all sectors. The High North was framed as the land of possibilities and vital for Norwegian prosperity, and it was argued to be more than domestic politics and also more than foreign policy. The High North strategy from 2006 was an attempt by the Norwegian Government to desecuritize the area, by emphasizing soft-political issues and cooperative measures. Furthermore, the discourse on Norway and Russia's relationship in the High North was framed as good, and they were consistently referred to as 'partners'.

However, in 2007, with Russia re-emerging as a super power, its military build up in the region and flag planting on the North Pole seabed increased the tension and the security discourse became more visible in the High North. Furthermore, the Georgian War and Russian conflict with Ukraine over gas resources were reproduced in the High North discourse and made relevant to the region. The Cold War rhetoric gradually re-emerged, with headlines and statements such as "Russia is a threat", "scramble of the Arctic" and "Norway have to prepare for limited conflicts with Russia". However, the Norwegian Government, with Støre at the forefront, attempted to contain and tone down these voices and continued to frame the area as stable and cooperative, where the relation between Norway and Russia was good.

Nevertheless, the change in Russian foreign policy and military build up did have an effect on Norwegian High North discourse and, consequently, policies in the area. The High North security discourse gained a stronger hold in the area, and military presence and activity took a larger share of the debate, through the Coast Guard and the establishment of the new military headquarters in the northern parts of Norway. Hence, the High North discourse experienced a degree of securitization from 2007/2008 onwards.

## **5. High North Discourses: 2009 to 2017**

This chapter sets out to discuss High North discourses in the period from 2008/9 to 2017. As with chapter four, this chapter will focus on the dominant discourse and carriers, such as Norwegian politicians and bureaucrats, academics, officers and other actors. Alternative views mainly found in the media, oppositional parties and academic journals will be represented as well, but to a lesser degree. Although discursive struggles can be detected within this time period, the High North discourse seem to be rather stable, at least up until 2014. This chapter argues that the High North discourse has undergone a high degree of securitization after the Ukraine crisis escalated in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea.

The chapter will first discuss different incidents in which can be seen as a response to Russia's foreign policy in the mid- to late-2000s, i.e. the creation of the Ilulissat Declaration and the initiation of the 'Core Area Initiative'. The chapter will also discuss what policies Norway has pursued towards non-Arctic actors. Norway has continuously pursued an inclusive policy when it comes to external actors in the High North, as the inclusion of them is represented as the best way to ensure Norwegian interests are safeguarded in the region. Lastly, the chapter will discuss how Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 has been sparking current 'Cold War' rhetoric also in the High North.

### **5.1 A response to Russian behaviour**

In 2008, two incidents can be interpreted as a response to the geopolitical shift and the 'offensive turn' in Russian Foreign Policy, i.e. the Norwegian 'Core Area Initiative' and the signing of the Ilulissat Declaration. With the geopolitical shifts and military build up in the High North, NATO's lack of focus on the North worried Norway even more. Former Minister of Defence, Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen (2007), argued that Russia's military build up and the High North's strategic significance illustrated "the continued relevance of NATO to the stability in the North". Norway thus created the 'Core Area Initiative', i.e. a non-paper put forward under an informal NATO ministerial meeting in 2008 (Græger 2011). With the non-paper,

Norway proposed that NATO should focus more on its core tasks, as well as on the challenges in the NATO periphery. The idea was to re-activate certain



aspects of NATO's previous military practices that have lain dormant because of the challenges in conducting international operations and in combating international terrorism. A return to such practices would involve, for example, continual surveillance ('situational awareness') of developments in the near abroad, as well as ensuring better information about these areas in relevant NATO commands (ibid. :15).

This was Norway's main contribution to NATO's Strategic Concept launched in 2010; an official document outlining NATO's core tasks and purpose updated every tenth year (NATO 2010). The initiative represented the main representation within Norway's defence discourse at this time (Græger 2016b:281), and marked the start of a return to the 'deterrence and reassurance' debate from the Cold War in High North discourse (intertextuality). Even the Socialist Left Party welcomed the 'Core Area Initiative': "NATO is, and should be, a defence alliance and not an offensive power. And, the Minister of Defence's focus on working for NATO's new Strategic Concept to place greater emphasis on threats in the core areas (*nærområdene*) is both important and desirable" (S. tid. 2010:1733). Hence, the need for an initiative such as the 'Core Area Initiative' picked up on a traditional hegemonic discourse on the High North.

It was a coincidence that Norway initiated the 'Core Area Initiative' about one month after Russia's invasion in Georgia, and although it "was known in NATO circles also prior to the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008, the conflict imbued the thrust of the 'non-paper' with added relevance" (Græger 2011:15). Consequently, many members of the Alliance welcomed the 'Core Area Initiative' (Hilde and Widerberg 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008-2009). The Strategic Concept launched in 2010 demonstrated a slight move back to the Alliance's core purpose, as more focus was put on defending the members' core areas after a decade of operations out of NATO's vicinities (NATO 2010).

The Ilulissat Declaration, on the other hand, can be seen as a desecuritizing move, where the five littoral Arctic states, i.e. the US, Norway, Canada, Russia and Denmark/Greenland, signed an agreement where the parties promised to uphold the law of the seas, i.e. the UNCLOS (Ilulissat Declaration 2008). The meeting was initiated by Denmark and Greenland, but according to Foreign Minister Støre (2009),

it was actually Norway who “took the first initiative for the five Arctic littoral states [...] to find an agreement over the legal framework for the Arctic Ocean” in 2007. This was “followed up by a ministerial meeting in Ilulissat in Greenland in May 2008” leading to the Ilulissat Declaration (ibid.). Hence, Støre frames Norway to be an entrepreneur in Arctic affairs, a claim which is also supported by scholars (Rowe 2013). The Ilulissat Declaration (2008:1) states:

Notably, the law of the sea provides for important rights and obligations concerning the delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf, the protection of the marine environment, including ice-covered areas, freedom of navigation, marine scientific research, and other uses of the sea. We remain committed to this legal framework and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims.

Hence, as the five littoral states argued they were able to cooperate on challenges and possibilities in the region, there was no need to create a new regulative framework (Nøstvik 2012). Also, Norway and Russia finally reached an agreement over the 40-year old disputed area in the Barents Sea in 2010, dividing the 175 000 squared kilometre area between the two (Jensen 2011). This agreement has been applauded and represented as a “milestone” in High North relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). It was presented as “a clear signal that the Arctic is a region where disagreements can be solved in a peaceful way between neighbours” (Støre 2011:2396), strengthening Norway’s representation of the High North as a stable and cooperative area. Consequently, the Declaration set a ‘soft-political’ tone in the High North discourse, and according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011-2012:13), it “corrected the idea that the Arctic is an unregulated area where an open conflict over natural resources should be expected”. Hence, the High North has experienced a period of desecuritization after 2008, as sovereignty issues are either resolved or removed from the security sphere and placed back into the “ordinary public sphere”, where the Ilulissat Declaration and the UNCLOS will be used to solve territorial disputes. However, the Ilulissat Declaration has faced some criticism, as it is claimed to “freeze out” other actors in the region. China and the EU, who have called for an international regime in the High North, are the main carriers of this alternative representation. According to Nøstvik (2012:23), “Chinese experts have supposedly

gone as far as to argue China has the right to apply for sovereignty over both the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage”.

Nordic cooperation also began taking a larger share of the High North discourse and debate in Norway at the time. In 2008, Thorvald Stoltenberg was asked by the Nordic foreign ministers to write a report on closer Nordic cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy. The report was launched in 2009 and included 13 proposals for closer collaboration between the Nordic countries, which included peace building efforts, air surveillance, maritime monitoring and Arctic issues, societal security, foreign services, military cooperation and declaration of solidarity (Stoltenberg 2009). The report was welcomed by Norwegian officials and in parliament:

I want to praise Stoltenberg for his report [...] I think there are many reasons for why we should continue to intensify our work in the Nordic areas on the security policy areas. Possibly the most important reason for this is that we are stronger together than by ourselves, and we can face challenges better together than by ourselves – if this is in the High North or in the military sector in general (Labour Party representative S. tid. 2009:1995-1996).

Furthermore, in an op-ed in ‘Nordlys’, Editor in Chief Hans Kristian Amundsen (2009) argued that the Stoltenberg report was a “Nordic step northward” and “a ground-breaking piece of work”. The report also became an important contribution to the establishment of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) in 2009, which aimed “to strengthen the participating nations’ national defence, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions” (NORDEFECO n.d.). Although the Nordic cooperation is not an alternative to Norway’s collaboration with NATO and the EU, it supplements it (S. tid. 2009). The impetus in Nordic cooperation could be seen as a response to the representation of Russia as a larger security threat in the north, and also for NATO’s weak interest in the region.

The answer to securing Norway’s interests in a seemingly vulnerable position was thus closer collaboration with allies and neighbours, but also multilateral or bilateral frameworks. Multilateral cooperation and dialogue have a hegemonic position within the Norwegian High North discourse, where all parties at in Parliament agreed that

this was the best option in order to preserve Norway's interests and the peace in the region (a liberal narrative) (S. tid. 2009).

## **5.2 The Liberal narrative: External actors' role**

From a theoretical perspective, small states are argued to benefit from a multilateral system, as IGOs, treaties/declarations and multilateral forums create platforms for smaller states to convey their interests and persuade other, usually more powerful, actors to adhere to their ideas (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006). Consequently, engaging external actors have been central in the official Norwegian discourse and High North policy. Foreign Minister Støre said in a speech on Arctic matters:

We see an increased interest in the Arctic. Countries like China, Japan and South Korea are showing increasing engagement in Arctic affairs. This is a development I very much welcome. Because only through cooperation and joint action can we ensure sustainable development of this region (Støre 2011b).

This quote demonstrates how the Norwegian Government framed the increasing external interest in the region as a positive and desired development for Norway. Several non-Arctic actors have applied to become permanent AC observers, including the EU and the "Asia 5" (i.e. China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and India). According to Bekkevold and Offerdal (2014), the applications have met mixed signals from Arctic actors, where Canada and Russia have shown particular scepticism to the inclusion of the EU and Asian actors. Norway, on the other hand, has welcomed these applications (ibid.). The EU has not yet gained permanent observer status, but is allowed to observe proceedings within the AC until a decision has been made. The Asian 5, however, gained observer status in 2013 (Arctic Council 2017b). These external actors are important trading partners for Norway, as they are some of the largest importers of Norwegian petroleum and fishery resources, and vital partners in terms of technological developments and scientific research (Bekkevold and Offerdal 2014). Consequently, the inclusion of these actors have been crucial for Norway to create good dialogue over High North matters, and to safeguard Norwegian interests. As Keohane and Martin (1995:45-46) argue, "institutions can facilitate cooperation by helping to settle distributional conflicts and by assuring states that gains are evenly divided time, for example by disclosing information about the military expenditures

and capacities of alliance members”. This liberal institutionalist narrative is also evident in Norway’s main representation of cooperating with Russia, where military dialogue is highlighted.

Norway has been central in the Barents cooperation and in strengthening the AC’s mandate. Hence, Norway welcomed the very first legally binding agreement signed under the auspices of the AC in 2011, an agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (Arctic Council 2017a). What is more, in 2011, it was decided to establish a permanent AC secretariat in Tromsø, Norway – an idea initiated by Norway. The secretariat was operative in 2013 (Innst. S. 2011-2012). This development was applauded in Norwegian official discourse, as a Labour Party representative argued in 2012, “the Arctic Council is in an exciting phase with a lot of changes happening” (ibid.:2999). The Norwegian Government continuously framed the increasing interest in the region and inclusion of external actors in the AC as vital for securing Norwegian interests. Norway also assumes that dialogue with external actors will make it ‘easier’ for Norway to set the conditions and steer developments in the High North in Norway’s favour (Bekkevold and Offerdal 2014). Representatives from both the Progressive and Labour Party argue that the growing number of observers and interest in the AC should not be considered a threat, but as a sign of the Council’s relevance and the growing importance of the High North (Innst. S. 2011-2012).

Even though the increasing interest by external actors were framed as opportunities in the hegemonic High North discourse, critical voices were also present, in particular regarding the EU and China. This was because the increasing demand for resources could potentially challenge Norway’s governance regime (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008-2009). As a representative from the Conservative Party argued:

When we see China's footprints on Svalbard, Nyålesund, and the desire to build a satellite, China's ‘divide and rule politics’ in Denmark, Greenland, and the building of a giant embassy in Reykjavik – and which is likely to gain a foothold on Svalbard [...] - it's hardly possible to regard it as completely problem free. Therefore, our Northern areas and Arctic politics must have a greater degree of consultation and attention. We know that the activity is increasing dramatically. [...] This is an area that requires the entire Storting's

[Parliament's] attention - first and foremost the executive function via the Foreign Minister (S. tid. 2013:2301).

China's interest in the High North was also represented in a critical way in the media, for instance *Aftenposten* wrote that "China researches and flirts its way to influence in the Arctic" (*Aftenposten* 2012), and "The Chinese hunts for resources at Svalbard and in the Arctic" (*Aftenposten* 2015b). Furthermore, the annual assessment report (Focus) by the Norwegian Intelligence Service in 2012, included a sub-section concerning China's interests in the High North. Here it was claimed that even though China has no military interests in the region at this time, its energy and resource interests compiled with its super power ambitions could potentially create tensions between China and the other super powers in the region. Hence, China's activities in the High North are framed both as an opportunity and potential threat (Norwegian Intelligence Service 2012). Thus, a move towards a stronger geopolitical discourse was evident in the late 2000s, and external dynamics were re-produced in the High North discourse and made relevant for the High North. A Centre Party representative illustrated this by saying "in terms of security and foreign policy, the High North has gone from being a geographical periphery to becoming almost a glaring geopolitical centrum" (Innst. S. 2011-2012:2992).

### **5.3 Soft-politics and normalization of military presence**

Despite increased Russian military activity and build-up, the Norwegian Government has continuously framed the High North as stable and peaceful up until the beginning of the millennium. In Norwegian discourse, the High North focus was on cooperation on "soft-political" issues, such as human security, environment and climate change and resource extraction. "The situation in the region is characterised today [2011] with stability and cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011-2012:30). Furthermore, Norway remained "committed to engaging Russia through its so-called 'dual policy' tradition" (Lindgren and Græger 2017:106), because Russia was continuously framed as the most important element in the High North and, at the same time, Norway's most challenging neighbour.

There was also continuity in Norwegian High North discourse in terms of framing the region as Norway's *key* strategic and foreign policy area, also after the new Solberg

Cabinet<sup>24</sup> took office in 2013 (Nordlys 2014), displaying a high degree of political consensus. The euphoria over potential resources and the ability of Arctic states to cooperate remained central in the discourse, as well (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009), and consequently, over 11 billion NOK of the State budget was allocated for High North purposes in 2011 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011-2012). Large oil and gas fields were also discovered in the Barents Sea in 2011, e.g. by Statoil and Total, and petroleum activities were framed as vital opportunities for employment and development, particularly in the northern areas. The High North discourse and politics thus included a range of political areas, i.e. regional, infrastructure, business and industry, environmental protection, indigenous, fishery, petroleum discourses and policy, and so on (ibid. 2011-2012).

However, the militarization of the region has experienced a steady increase, with military activity from both 'blocs'. For example, in the 2013 budget proposal, the Ministry of Defence suggested approximately 940 million NOK for the Northern parts of Norway. Minister of Defence, Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen, argued, "the Government is committed to the defence sector in terms of activity, presence, and investments in future-oriented infrastructure in the North" because "the High North is the Government's foremost strategic focus area" (Ministry of Defence 2013). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011-2012) also focused on the necessity for surveillance and control, and for safeguarding Norwegian sovereignty. It framed the military presence as normal and a permanent part of the situation in the High North, *not* directed towards specific nation-states, and that stability was promoted through visible, consistent and predictable military presence (ibid. :64). Hence, the militarization was presented as normal and was in a sense unquestioned, which reflects the *doxa* in the discourse. Ever since the Westphalia myth, military means have been seen as a vital in order to maintain and safeguard a state's sovereign territory (Buzan et al. 1998). The situation and representation of the High North can be seen in the light of this, where the belief that military was presumed key to maintaining Norway's sovereignty and interests in the region – even though it was not supposed to act in a 'traditional military way', but conduct surveillance, control, and rescue missions because of its compatible capabilities (even though it was meant to

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<sup>24</sup> The Solberg Cabinet from 2013 to 2017 was a coalition of the Conservative Party and the Progressive Party, with the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party acting as supporting parties (Græger 2016b:294).

act in traditional sense if necessary). The sovereignty concept thus legitimizes military presence and build up, referring to the constitutive effect of the concept.

As demonstrated above, both the liberal and realpolitik narratives were present in the Norwegian High North discourse. Norway's prime interest in safeguarding *territorial sovereignty* and *self-interests* refers to two main concepts within realpolitik. On the other hand, the liberalist discourse where the belief that institutions, international law and cooperation can contribute to sustained peace and development was also key (Dunne et al. 2013), as well as environmental protection, extraction of resources, human security and employment.

#### **5.4 Post-annexation of Crimea: securitization of High North discourse**

The 2014 Russian annexation of the Crimea Peninsula seriously worsened the relationship between Russia and the West. Yet, there was consensus among the parties at the Storting (Parliament) that the relation with Russia has to be good, and Norway has to work actively to have a transparent, firm and clear dialogue with Russia on High North issues, despite other conflicts (S. tid. 2014; S. tid. 2015; S. tid. 2016; S. tid. 2017). As Foreign Minister Børge Brende (2014) pointed out,

This crisis [annexation of Crimea] affects us all, but it is still not a bilateral question between Norway and Russia. It is in Norway's interest to keep cooperating with Russia on issues we can only solve in companionship, within responsible resource management, environmental protection and economic issues. Norway wants to continue the already existing good relation and dialogue between our people.

This was the main representation in the High North discourse, as all parties in the Storting continuously repeated the importance of having a good relationship with Russia. However, the repercussions of the Crimea incident has been re-produced within and made relevant for the High North discourse, and consequently affecting Norway and Russia's relationship. In an interview with CNN in 2015, the Minister of Defence, Ine Søreide Eriksen, said "Western relations with Russia will never be the same after the war in Ukraine" (CNN 2015). This was met with a lot of critique, as formulated by a Labour Party representative: "We should think through how we speak



about our future relationship with Russia. Russia is a large neighbour that we have to cooperate with. Thus, it is important to maintain this dialogue” (S. tid. 2015:2340).

The political dialogue with Russia also came to a halt when Norway decided to join the EU-sanctions towards Russia, affecting the High North as well. Even though it was consensus in Parliament to join the EU sanctions, alternative discourses appeared. In 2014, Secretary General of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, Rune Rafaelsen, argued Norway should *not* sanction against Russia (Aftenposten 2014). “Norway has *one* real Foreign Policy challenge, and that is Russia. It would be stupidity to base this collaboration on uniforms. We are the civil preparedness. [...] I believe our answer to this crisis should be more collaboration. More integration”, Rafaelsen said about sanctioning the cooperative environment with Russia (Aftenposten 2014). Other alternative voices from the Socialist Left and Progressive Party argued that the sanctions would make it harder to do business across the border and potentially make severe harm to the cooperative relationship between Norway and Russia, especially in the High North (NRK Finnmark 2016a; Aftenposten 2017b). The critique from the Progressive Party representative illustrates the inconsistency in policy formation, as the Progressive Party is part of the Stoltenberg Cabinet. Russia and Norway had a political freeze for four years between 2013 and 2017 due to the sanctions on Russia (Aftenposten 2017a) – even though cooperation and dialogue on people-to-people issues in the High North continued (S. tid. 2014; S. tid. 2015; S. tid. 2016; S. tid. 2017). In April 2017, Minister of Trade and Industry, Monica Mæland, met with Russia’s Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Sergey Donskoy, which was the first meeting in the Government Commission regarding economic cooperation since 2013 between the two countries. Additionally, Norway’s Foreign Minister, Brende, visited Russia for the first time since 2014 when he attended a Conference on Arctic matters in Arkhangelsk in March 2017 (Aftenposten 2017b; NRK Urix 2017b). As Brende argued, “Despite the disagreements over Ukraine, it is still important to continue the bilateral relationship with Russia. [...] I believe this is the right time to come to Russia” (Brende cited in NRK Urix 2017a).

#### **5.4.1 Growing military presence and activity**

There was also a freeze in Norway and Russia’s relationship regarding military cooperation (S.tid. 2014). According to Brende (2015a:2296), “a good and extensive

partnership requires mutual respect for basic rules of the game and democratic values. Thus, the security and defence collaboration [with Russia] is put on hold”. Nevertheless, dialogue between military headquarters has remained, in order to reduce the conflict potential related to misunderstandings (Søreide 2015).

According to Græger (2016b:277), “the annexation of Crimea and political destabilization of Ukraine has dominated the Norwegian defence discourse since 2014”. As the High North has a central position within Norwegian security and defence policy, the Ukraine crisis has affected High North discourse and policy. The Ukraine crisis and continued Russian military build-up in High North areas, such as the Kola Peninsula and the Northern Fleet, have contributed to the scepticism and mistrust towards Russia in the North (S. tid. 2014; S. tid. 2015; S. tid. 2016; S. tid. 2017). In a statement by the Norwegian Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Norway encouraged the Alliance to focus more on the north: “We are worried over the signals Putin sends with the Russian military build-up in the High North. It is a new strategic and security policy picture in the North in which NATO should focus on” (Helleraker (Conservative Party) cited in Stortinget 2015).

During the NATO summit in Wales, 2014, a range of measures to strengthen NATO’s preparedness and mobility, including the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), were created. The RAP is, according to NATO’s web site, “the most significant reinforcement of NATO’s collective defence since the end of the Cold War” (NATO 2017). The plan is made up “of two pillars: immediate ‘assurance and measures’ and longer-term ‘adaptation measures’” (Lindgren and Græger 2017:104). At the Wales summit, the Alliance also decided to increase military exercises, both in number and frequency. According to Græger (2016b:288), “in Norwegian defence discourse, NATO-exercises on Norwegian soil is considered central for NATO’s collective defence”, because this provides combat experience under Norwegian conditions. In 2015, Norway held its first national military exercise (Joint Viking) in Finnmark since 1967. A Labour Party representative expressed in a Parliamentary debate: “As a Finnmarking myself, I have to say I am happy that exercises are also conducted in

Finnmark” (S. tid. 2015:2343)<sup>25</sup>. In 2017, a new Joint Viking military exercise was conducted in Finnmark, but this time with the company of the US and the UK: “Norwegian forces have winter training with Brits and Americans there [Finnmark], i.e. our most important allies. It is absolutely essential to ensure necessary force when the situation requires it” (Conservative Party MP S. tid. 2017:2467).

The military exercises close to Russian border has faced critique, and have been interpreted by some as an offensive act, especially by Russia. According to the Russian Press Attaché by the Russian Embassy in Norway, “this exercise will not have a stabilizing effect”, and “Russia cannot avoid being worried over the growing NATO activity close to Russian borders” (NRK Finnmark 2016b). Russian military exercises conducted shortly after have been represented as a response to the last Joint Viking exercise (Græger 2016b; NRK Finnmark 2016b). Here, the security dilemma narrative is evident. Security dilemma is a central concept within neorealist thought, and the essence of the security dilemma is that “measures that enhance one states’ security typically diminish that of others. [...] Hence a state that is amassing instruments of war, even for its own defensive, is cast by others as a threat requiring response” (Waltz 1988:619).

Besides a growing number of military exercises, over 300 American Marines were deployed in Norway in 2017 and Norway has upgraded its military capacity, including a new spy ship (Marjata), “new submarines, new Coast Guard vessels, maritime surveillance aircrafts, and F-35 combat aircrafts” (S. tid. 2017:2467). The deployment of US Marines in Værnes has been met with a great deal of critique, from both Norwegian and Russian actors. The Government claim this is on a rotating basis, where the aim is for American Marines to become familiar with Norwegian environment and conditions, and has thus discarded concerns over Russian response as irrelevant (Græger 2016a). However, the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party and representatives from the Progressive Party have expressed their discontent with this decision. After the decision was announced, Tybring-Gjedde said “we must rather contribute to calming down the Russian Bear” (NRK 2016). Here, Tybring-Gjedde is using the metaphor ‘Russian Bear’, where he is effectively creating an identity of

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of Finnmark’s return to the Norwegian security and High North discourse, see Græger (2016b:291-293).

Russia as ‘aggressive’ and ‘unpredictable’ in which Norway have to contain and avoid provoking. This may serve as a technique to strengthen the position of his representation in the discourse. This also illustrates a discursive turmoil within the Government, as Tybring-Gjedde is a member of the Progressive Party. The decision has also been claimed to be a break with Norway’s base politics of not allowing foreign troops on Norwegian soil during times of peace (Græger 2016a). This representation was dismissed by Minister of Defence Søreide, as she claimed the marines are deployed in Norway on a rotating basis, thus they are not permanent (Ine Eriksen Søreide cited in NRK 2016), and, according to Græger (2016a), the Ministry of Defence emphasized that the increasing activity in the area is in line with Norway’s foreign policy and practice. The Socialist Left Party has been central in the alternative discourse on the deployment of US Marines in Norway. For example, in a speech during the Election Campaign in 2017, the Socialist Left leader Audun Lysbakken argued if they won election, sending the American Marines home would be a crucial goal for the Party (Lysbakken 2017).

As mentioned, NATO has been the corner stone of Norwegian defence- and security discourses ever since it gained membership of the alliance. This represents the doxa in Norwegian security and defence discourses (Græger 2016b), hence alternative representations, such as the Social Left Party, has faced challenges when uttering their voice. For example, in a parliamentary debate in 2015, a Conservative Party representative said:

That the Socialist Left Party, which established its NATO-resistance in the 1960s, suggests weakening our NATO-affiliation is not surprising. The Socialist Left Party has in all these years pursued a different line. Besides: this is very bad timing. In a time when we, from a Norwegian point of view, have a need to gain attention and support from our alliance partners on our interests in the North, we cannot create doubt over Norway’s will and ability to follow NATO’s resolution, NATO’s concept, and at the same time expect that we will get help. That would be the same as playing roulette with our security (S.tid. 2015:2333).

According to a Conservative Party (S. tid. 2017:2467), “Norway is NATO in the North. We are NATO’s eyes and ears in the enormous ocean areas, and we have a responsibility to secure sufficient control and understanding of the situation. This is

our most important task in the Alliance”. This metaphorical phrase represents Norway as a *vital* actor and geographical space for the Alliance, and can be seen to use Cold War history as pretext (intertextuality), where Norway served as a base for surveillance for the Western bloc. Also by constructing an image of Norway as an important geographical space and actor for the Alliance, the Government’s initiatives to increase NATO’s presence and interest in the High North, as well as Norway’s own military build up, is legitimized.

#### **5.4.2 “Soft-politics” and liberal discourses post- Crimea**

Despite the fact that the High North has experienced a degree of securitization after the annexation of Crimea, the soft political and liberalist discourses are still evident, particularly related to business and industry, the environment, society and sovereignty claims. In 2014, the Solberg Cabinet launched the Norway’s Arctic Policy (*Nordkloden*) report, which was a building block for the New High North Strategy launched in 2017. The report focuses on five priority areas, and i.e. international cooperation, business and industry, knowledge creation, infrastructure and environmental protection, safety and preparedness (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). Hence, soft-political issues were emphasised in the report, and the High North was represented as an “economic driving force” for the country (Erna Solberg cited in High North News 2014). The new Government also announced that it would spend approximately three billion NOK on High North measures in 2015, which was an increase of half a billion from the year before (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014; Nordlys 2014). The High North Strategy launched in 2017 focused on the overarching goals of creating peace, stability and predictability; a comprehensive and eco-system based management; and, international cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017b), and, as mentioned, Russia and Norway have maintained a rather stable cooperative relationship on a people-to-people level. The people-to-people dialogue has thus been represented as a victory and vital in all Foreign Policy debates in Parliament ever since 2014 (see S. tid. 2014; S. tid. 2015; S. tid. 2016; S. tid. 2017).

Cooperative measures have continued in the High North, despite conflicts on the international arena, hence, the plus-sum narrative is still central in High North discourse. For example, in 2015, the ‘Arctic 5’ signed a declaration aiming to regulate fishing activities in the Arctic Ocean and strengthen research cooperation on how

climate change affects fishing stocks. This has been an important contribution to ensure the prohibition of unregulated fishing in international waters (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Furthermore, the High North is still represented as a stable and peaceful place. As Mayor in Bodø, Ida Pinnerød (2017), wrote in *High North News* (a newspaper based in Bodø, Norway):

[i]n a troubled world where political extremes take a larger space, and dialogue is constantly fading, a greater responsibility rests on us. The Arctic, or the North, is an arena where the geopolitics does not hijack the dialogue and people are at the centre. [...] Our spot on the Earth is the peaceful part of the World.

Arctic littoral states have also remained truthful to the UNCLOS when they have presented their sovereign claims in High North areas. Norway submitted their claim in 2006, and was the first Arctic coastal state to receive recommendations from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in 2009, providing Norway with an extension of 235 000 km<sup>2</sup> of its continental shelf (The Norwegian Government 2017). Denmark submitted its claim in 2014, Russia did the same in 2015, and Canada, who submitted a partial claim in 2013, is expected to submit a full claim in 2018 (Groenning 2017). If the CLCS decides the claims overlap, the parties have to solve the delineation of the overlapping areas in another forum (ibid.). Despite possible overlapping claims, scientists, authorities and the media has represented these sovereign claims a positive development in the High North, because it has served as a signal that Russia aims to uphold the UNCLOS framework, regardless of other conflict with the West (Aftenposten 2015a). However, critical voices are sceptical to the conflict-free representation of possible overlapping claims. For example, Helene Skjeggstad (2015), a commentator in Aftenposten, wrote

The Russian claim of the North Pole becomes a serious issue when we look at Russian politics over the last years. [...] The Arctic is important for Putin. This year, many warnings over just how important have emerged. It is time we look to the North. A battle over the Arctic will come. It is just a question over when and how dramatic it will be.

Here we see that Skjeggstad has a very different representation and interpretation of the sovereignty claims. The Norwegian Intelligence Service (2015:21) also mentioned the overlapping claims in the 2015 Focus report as a potential source of tension in the

region, even though “it will probably not lead to any confrontation or conflict”. Hence, it represented a milder representation of the situation.

### **5.5 Desecuritizing moves and processes of securitization**

The degree of securitization and desecuritization has been swinging since the signing of the Ilulissat Declaration and launch of the Core Area initiative, indicating political thaw or tension. The Ilulissat Declaration and the strengthening of the AC’s mandate, among other cooperative measures, are considered to have had a desecuritizing effect on the area. The Norwegian discourse and High North policy is based primarily on dialogue and diplomacy, where a multilateral framework is considered the best and most effective tool for maintaining the stable and peaceful environment. Besides different interests in the region, there seems to be a clear desire from all Arctic actors to cooperate in the region. Hence, the liberal institutionalist narrative is claimed to have a strong position in the High North discourse.

However, as mentioned above, the region is experiencing a degree of militarization, and the presence of the military is framed as necessary to safeguard Norwegian interests and sovereignty. This serves as doxa, whereby the military presence is rather unquestioned in the High North discourse. Nevertheless, regardless of the fact that the discourse saw a slight desecuritizing turn in the early 2010s, the realpolitik narrative have gradually re-emerged as dominant in the discourse after Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Even though continued cooperation and dialogue with Russia is considered vital in the High North, particularly on the people-to-people level, military cooperation has stopped and the political dialogue saw a freeze from 2013 and up until 2017. Furthermore, NATO’s Readiness Action Plan, NATO presence on Norwegian soil and Norwegian military build up, in addition to Russian further military build-up, has intensified the Cold War rhetoric between both sides of the border. Thus, the realpolitik and security dilemma narratives have become stronger in the Norwegian High North discourse, where territorial security has become prominent. Thus, it is argued here that the High North has experienced processes of securitization after the annexation of Crimea.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate developments in Norwegian High North discourse, the role and importance of the High North in Norwegian discourses on foreign and security policy, as well as Norway's relationship with Russia in the High North over time. It was assumed that changes in the relationship between Russia and the West, and especially NATO, are reflected not only in the general Norwegian foreign and security policy discourses, but also in the policies and discourses on the High North region.

The thesis set out to answer the following two research questions:

- *How has the Norwegian High North discourse developed over time, and how has this discourse shaped Norwegian security and foreign policy in the region?*
- *What is Russia's role in the Norwegian High North discourse, and how are changes in the relationship between Russia and the West reflected in this discourse?*

The research questions have been operationalized by studying discourses emerging from Norwegian public debates and official policies as found in White Papers and Propositions from the Government, public speeches and political debates, and newspapers. Using discourse analysis as a theoretical framework and method, I have identified and investigated dominant and alternative representations and discursive battles within the High North debate, as well as markers of political change. The discourse analysis has demonstrated how external events have been represented and re-produced by carriers within the discourse, legitimizing certain policy formation and actions over others, with important foreign and security policy repercussions in the region. I also found that governmental actors, such as Foreign Ministers (especially Jonas Gahr Støre), have special leverage within the High North discourse to perform speech acts and frame the region in specific ways. Furthermore, both realist and liberalist narratives have been dominant in the discourse during various time periods, shaping policies and behaviour in the High North. Consequently, the discourse has experienced periods of both securitization and desecuritization, where the degree of



securitization reflects global as well as regional political thaw or tension. Even though cooperation and soft-political issues have dominated the discourses on the region historically, sovereignty claims have been clearly present. The analysis has confirmed the assumption that Russia has played a central role within the Norwegian High North discourse over the years and continues to shape it to a large extent. In Norwegian discourse, Russia is framed as Norway's most important *and* challenging neighbour in the north, and its relationship with the West affects Norwegian foreign and security policy in the region.

The following sections provide a summary of the argument made in the empirical analysis and response to the research questions, as well as some concluding remarks about the discourse and politics of the High North.

### **6.1 Summary of empirical chapters**

Up until the Cold War, exploration of the High North areas and sovereignty claims dominated the discourse. The region itself and the Svalbard archipelago in particular have been considered as vital interests for Norway and important in the country's nation-building process, and safeguarding Norway's sovereignty in the region has been a prime goal of the Government. In 2009, Norway's application for extending its Continental shelf by 235 000 km<sup>2</sup> was approved within the UNCLOS (Groenning 2017).

During the Cold War, *realpolitik* constituted the dominant narrative in the discourse, with an emphasis on existential threats, military armament and territorial concerns involving the two opposing blocs, the USSR and the US. The High North was consequently highly securitized. However, when the Cold War ended, a discursive change took place where demilitarization and desecuritization gained hegemony in the discourse. The liberalist narrative focusing on openness and cooperation gradually became dominant in the discourse, marginalizing the traditional *realpolitik* security discourse. Furthermore, Norway's security policy from the mid-1990s onwards was directed towards the 'unstable south' where contributions to NATO-, UN- or US-led international operations in the Balkans in particular, and the war on terror in Afghanistan and the Middle East were considered a better investment for future security as well as for Norway's international position (Græger 2015, 2016b). Thus,

the High North was played down in the Norwegian security and foreign policy discourse, and the region experienced a period of desecuritization and lack of security policy attention. Alternative voices, such as retired officers and the Socialist Left Party, nevertheless argued that Norway should become less dependent on NATO and the US and instead focus on its security and foreign policy interests in its own vicinities, i.e. the High North.

The year 2005 marked a discursive change when the High North again was placed at the centre of the Norwegian foreign policy agenda, effectively incorporating the region into Norway's national discourse. The Norwegian 'Red-Green Government' lifted the High North as a prosperous area and potential 'energy province', thus Norway *had* to take a leading position in the region. Foreign Minister Støre was central in carrying this representation, which was warmly welcomed in the Northern parts of Norway. The 2006 High North strategy focused on "soft-political" issues and cooperation with other Arctic and non-Arctic actors, in particular Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks were represented as the best way to safeguard Norwegian sovereignty and resource interests in the region, and both the High North strategy and subsequent White Papers, reports and strategies framed the region as a desecuritized and cooperative area. This clearly reflects that the liberal narrative gained discursive hegemony, and it has remained central in the Norwegian High North discourse ever since.

The realpolitik narrative nevertheless re-emerged in the discourse in 2007/08, due to Russia's re-discovery of the High North with symbolic acts, such as the flag planting on the North Pole Sea Bed and, more importantly, general military build-up on the Kola Peninsula and new 'offensive' foreign policy (the Georgian War). This sparked recognizable Cold War rhetoric in the High North discourse, where president Putin's Russia was framed as an aggressive actor with super power ambitions, similarly to those of the USSR (intertextuality). Norwegian newspapers represented Russia as a potential threat not only to Norway's interests but also sovereignty, and military leaders warned that Norway had to be prepared for limited military conflict with Russia. However, the Norwegian Government, especially Foreign Minister Støre, attempted to tone down the Cold War rhetoric in the discourse. He framed Russian behaviour as 'normal' and focused on how Russia after all adhered to international

law and regulations in the High North (i.e. the UNCLOS) – even though he ensured that Russian developments would be carefully watched. As a response to Russia's change of behaviour and NATO's generally weak interest in the High North, Norway launched the 'Core Area Initiative' in NATO in 2008, which aimed at drawing the allies' attention to the north. The return to security as the main theme in the High North discourse from 2007 onwards indicates that the region again was securitized, mainly as a result of incidents and developments external to the region, but also Russia's regional activity.

The signing of the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008 can be seen as a desecuritizing move, also in response to the growing tension in the High North. The Declaration demonstrated that Arctic states could meet political conflicts on a diplomatic level and uphold international frameworks. Hence, the representation of the region as peaceful, cooperative and stable was strengthened, confirming the existence of a liberal narrative, despite growing realpolitik rhetoric. But, already at the turn of the millennium did Norway work actively to strengthen the AC's mandate and to continue to involve external actors. As argued in chapter five, Norway considers IGOs and multilateral forums vital for safeguarding its interests, because they create platforms for conveying Norway's interests and for persuading other, usually more powerful, actors to adhere to liberal principles as well as its ideas (Neumann and Gsthöl 2006). There has been consensus in the Norwegian discourse to include and promote dialogue with external actors on cooperation efforts and soft-political issues – even though the military build-up has been steadily increasing. As chapter five also shows, military capabilities are seen as crucial in order to maintain a peaceful environment, for conducting search and rescue missions but also for environmental protection. It is doxa in the Norwegian discourse that the military is *not* used for traditional security purposes but for stabilization and surveillance purposes. The sovereignty concept has been consistently utilized by the Norwegian Government to legitimize military presence and build up in the High North, reflecting the concept's constitutive effect.

Undoubtedly, the High North discourse has been subject to a high degree of securitization, especially after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and the security dilemma narrative and Cold War rhetoric have gradually re-emerged in the discourse.

Furthermore, the Arctic ice melting and growing international interest have also nourished the territorial security discourse, where ‘the scramble of the Arctic’ metaphor has projected an image of an on-going race in the Arctic. Domestically, Norway has emphasized the need to take on a leading position in the region to safeguard its sovereignty and security concerns. Despite an enhanced military presence, investments in soft-political areas and multilateral cooperation with both external and internal Arctic actors are considered vital ingredients in a comprehensive High North strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006, 2017), which demonstrate that the liberal narrative is still present in the discourse. Despite the current global strategic uncertainties and political turmoil between the West and Russia the past years, where e.g. Norway’s Minister of Defence stated that “Western relations with Russia will never be the same after the Ukraine war” (CNN 2015), Norway and Russia have gradually been able to cooperate on low-politics issues in the High North. There is consensus in the Norwegian High North discourse to maintain a good dialogue with Russia, cooperate on several low-politics issues (e.g. a people-to-people level), and keep the direct ‘hot-line’ between the military Commanders on both the Norwegian and Russian side (NRK Urix 2017a; Søreide 2015). Hence, regardless of the political freeze and realist rhetoric between 2014 and 2017, the liberalist narrative in the discourse and, especially, in practical policy indicate that international law, cooperation and institutions are vital for sustained peace and development in the region.

## **6.2 Contribution of study and reflections on further research**

The thesis has sought to contribute to the on-going debate within International Relations about how dynamics within discourses shape policy and behaviour, by studying the political debates about security, sovereignty, multilateral cooperation, Russia and Norway in the High North. Examining language use, representations and framings in the High North discourse has demonstrated the important role the region plays for Norway, and how internal regional but also external developments and dynamics are constantly made relevant for the High North. The West and Russia’s relationship is and will continue to be central in Norway’s foreign policy and security discourses, and as Norway is considered a small state on the international arena, geopolitical shifts and great-power politics will greatly affect Norwegian debates.

The study also opens up for further research on the subject, where other aspects of the topic can and should be studied. Globally, there is still high tension between Russia and the US, where allegedly Russian involvement in the 2016 US election is under scrutiny and the two super powers support different sides in various international conflicts, such as in Syria. This is likely to continue to affect Norwegian discourse and policy formation towards Russia, also in the High North. Furthermore, the Trump Administration's belief that climate change is not human-made and has withdrawn the US from the Paris Agreement, also affects High North politics. The administration has cut severely in its budget for research on both foreign policy and climate change, including in the Arctic, leading to worries among Arctic states and actors (High North News 2017).

As shown in chapter five, in 2017, Norway and Russia met on a political level for the first time after four years of political freeze, and Norway's Foreign Minister, Børge Brende, visited Russia for the first time since 2014 (Aftenposten 2017a; NRK Urix 2017a). Even though Norway and Russia gradually are re-opening their political dialogue, their bilateral relationship in the region continues to be tense. In early 2017, the Russian Embassy in Oslo claimed the relationship with Norway was unbearable, due to the freeze in political dialogue, Western sanctions on Russia and, supposedly, 'anti-Russian' propaganda (NRK 2017). Furthermore, the decision to host a NATO Parliamentary Assembly seminar at Svalbard and Norway's decision to join NATO's defence missile defence system have provoked Russia. According to the Russian Embassy in Oslo, these actions are violating the demilitarized nature of the area (Klassekampen 2017; NRK Urix 2017b). And in October 2017, the Independent Barents Observer (2017) referred to a Russian Defence Ministry report that listed "Norway's Svalbard policy as potential risk of war". These aspects, as well as the crucial role Svalbard plays in Norwegian High North politics would be interesting to include in future studies of the High North discourse.

Finally, external developments, such as Brexit and China's emergence as a super power, could potentially affect the High North region. Both continued Arctic Ice melting and the opening of transport routes from Asia and resource extraction are important in this regard. The Norwegian Intelligence Service (2015) framed China's super power ambitions and demand for resources as a likely source of conflict in the

High North in the long term, as they may clash with those of other super powers in the region. Additionally, as one of Norway's most important trading partners and allies, it would be interesting to investigate how Brexit may affect Britain's foreign policy and interest in the High North.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

On a final note, any study has its limitations. Regarding the situation of the researcher, as a Norwegian, my own position within the Norwegian discourse has potentially affected the analysis. Additionally, as I am relatively new to discourse analysis, vital aspects may have been overlooked or neglected. Although the lack of a specific framework can be a disadvantage when you are not familiar with this type of methods, I have attempted to utilize a range of sources to strengthen intersubjectivity and the likelihood of including as many sources as possible. However, lack of time and access to certain material did not allow me to read everything, or the original texts of Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, and Fairclough.

However, despite the limitations, the theory and methods has allowed me to see how interpretations and representations of reality affect policy formation and political dynamics, as well as the power of language. Therefore, I believe the thesis has provided a thorough analysis of Norwegian High North discourse, and consequently contributed to the debate and understanding of High North politics.

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