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(De)securitizing Discourse and Action in Political Talk and Media Presentation

The Announcement of the Russian Honorary Consul's Appointment in Greenland

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Published in:
Greenland in Arctic Security

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Publication date:
2024

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Klausen, J. Z. (2024). (De)securitizing Discourse and Action in Political Talk and Media Presentation: The Announcement of the Russian Honorary Consul's Appointment in Greenland. In M. Jacobsen, U. Pram Gad, & O. Wæver (Eds.), *Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze* (pp. 149-174). University of Michigan Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.12676130.9>

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University of Michigan Press

Chapter Title: (De)securitizing Discourse and Action in Political Talk and Media
Presentation: The Announcement of the Russian Honorary Consul's Appointment in Greenland

Chapter Author(s): Julia Zhukova Klausen

Book Title: Greenland in Arctic Security

Book Subtitle: (De)securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze

Book Editor(s): Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, Ulrik Pram Gad

Published by: University of Michigan Press. (2024)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.12676130.9>

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The Announcement of the Russian Honorary Consul's Appointment in Greenland

Julia Zhukova Klausen

Geographically, the Russian Federation figures as the largest state actor in the Arctic with more than 60 percent of its territory positioned in the Arctic zone divided into eight constituent units that are home to 20 Indigenous ethnic groups. Politically, in the past two decades, the Arctic has been increasingly occupying one of the focal places in Russian domestic and international affairs. Greenland, however, has seldom come into focus.¹ Internationally, the symbolic act of planting the Russian flag on the geographic North Pole seabed and the scientific and judicial participation in the claims related to the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean have been key events. Also, the Arctic is consistently visible in the diverse aspects of Russian domestic politics, such as in the celebrations of the events historically significant to the Russian Arctic, in many state-supported educational and research projects (McDaniel 2017), in the discursive constructions of the Russian national strategy, and its representations in media and public debates (Mehdiyeva 2018).

Many scholars have noted the strongly emerging strategic role designated to the Arctic in Russian politics and commented on how the Arctic strategy seems to be closely intertwined with the construction of the new Russian national identity that discursively spans the nostalgic accounts of Soviet glory, the revival of national pride, the narratives of international cooperation, Russian Arctic exceptionalism, and Arctic heritage (Khrushcheva and Poberezhskaya 2016; McDaniel 2017).

While the aforementioned discursive political and media constructions take place around a variety of concerns and interests shared by all the Arctic states, such as environmental issues, ethnic rights, and industrial and technological development, they do “not exclude military confrontation” and “reiterate the need to reduce threats to national security and ensure stability” (Mehdiyeva 2018, 7).

Recently, this renewed and intensified Arctic interest began to include and intersect explicitly with the issues related to Greenland, its territory, its diplomatic and cultural ties, and its political alliances. For instance, in 2014, Denmark, together with Greenland and then in 2015 with the Russian Federation, submitted to the United Nations’ Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) their respective—and overlapping—claims to a part of the Arctic Ocean seabed, which has added new questions and new perspectives to the Danish-Russian bilateral agenda (Jacobsen 2020, 179–80). Russian media and political commentators have been closely following the latest developments in U.S.-Greenland relations, such as Donald Trump’s infamous idea of purchasing Greenland followed by the announcement of an economic aid package and the re-opening of the U.S. Consulate in Nuuk (See Jacobsen and Olsvig, chap. 4, this vol.). These events have prompted a variety of reactions spanning from formal diplomatic statements—for example the reaction of the Russian ambassador in Denmark, Vladimir Barbin—to the U.S. economic aid package to Greenland (Barbin 2020) to social media discussions disputing the intentions and consequences of these events for international politics, Arctic relations, and Russia’s position in it. Finally, in October 2020, at a press conference in Moscow, the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov, together with the Danish minister of foreign affairs, Jeppe Kofod, announced the appointment of the Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation in Nuuk (MFA of the Russian Federation 2020).

While many Arctic researchers agree that “there is no state-to-state competition for territory or resources in the Arctic, and no prospect of conflict either” and that “Arctic is becoming a region marked by cooperation” (Byers and Baker 2013, 5), when it comes to Russia, the “narratives about potential Arctic conflict” where Russia figures as the “bad guy” are still very much alive (Rowe and Blakkisrud 2014, 66), prompting anxiety and adoption of the extraordinary measures to prevent the anticipated Russian aggression (Padrtova 2019, 41). Scholarly works that seek to understand Russian Arctic politics and policies often do it from the geopolitical perspective that strives to identify the stakes of

the involved states in the Arctic and relate to their indications of intent for peaceful cooperation or expressions of military capabilities (Byers and Baker 2013; Hubert et al. 2012).

The interests and aims of this study are a bit different. By focusing on the speech and question-and-answers session by the Russian minister of foreign affairs, S. V. Lavrov, and their representation on the official website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or MID.RU (MFA of the Russian Federation 2020), I examine the multimodal discursive mechanisms through which Greenland and its national and international affairs are mobilized in Russian political commentary and media contexts. This study is not concerned with estimating the possibility of military confrontation or political cooperation. Nor will it be engaging in predicting how the appointment of the Russian Honorary Consul in Nuuk might impact, escalate, or waver this possibility or discussing the Russian state's intentions in this regard. Instead, it focuses on a single, irreversible, and observable action (Scollon 2001)—interaction during the press conference—that mediate and project Russian politics in the Arctic in connection with Greenland and Denmark. This entails tracing how this action discursively displaces this aspect of Russian international relations from the security agenda and prefigures desecuritizing measures while still relying on the matters of security, potential risks and threats, and the need to attend to them.

The analysis presented in this chapter brings together two theories: *a theory of security*, securitization theory, and *a theory of human action*, mediated discourse analysis. What these theories hold in common is a conviction that language and discourse matter, that they matter to how the reality is constructed and made sense of, and that they matter to how individual and collective, institutional, and territorial subjects and affairs are governed. In this chapter, I examine *how exactly they matter* when it comes to the issues of international Arctic politics, Russian-Danish relations, and Russian-Greenlandic relations. I do not start this examination by presuming that there exists a specific type of (de)securitizing act or technique that is at work in association with the representations of Greenland in the Russian media and political contexts. Instead, I follow how the actors make relevant the issues of security, how they orient to them, how they modify and how they avoid them in political and media interaction that addresses the recent developments in Greenland politics and Russian-Danish affairs. This analytical work allows me to capture the relationship between language and security at the level of detail that is not traditionally included in the scope of main-

stream security analyses. In doing so, I demonstrate how both securitizing and desecuritizing agendas extend across discursive frameworks, media, and interactional sites, embedding this agenda into the practices with which these sites are associated. With its focus on how meanings are ascribed and re-ascribed to the questions of international Arctic politics transforming the security agenda and constituting it in time and space, the following close multimodal analysis engages with those directions of securitization research that call for the *iterative* and *extended* conceptualization of securitizing acts (Oren and Solomon 2015; Philipsen 2020).

In December 2020, Miki Brøns, the co-owner of the major Greenlandic business corporation Polar Seafood, was appointed as the Russian honorary consul in Greenland. In the aftermath of the appointment, Mr. Brøns emphasized the apolitical character of the honorary consul's functions and his disconnection from the formal diplomatic and governing structures as well as his upcoming role in strengthening two specific areas of Russian-Greenlandic cooperation, namely commercial fishing and cultural relations anchored in the shared history of Inuit living (Brøns 2021). These two areas of mutual interest and collaboration and their deep historical roots have also been stressed in Ambassador Vladimir Barbin's commentary in connection to the appointment, in line with tourism and sustainable development of the Arctic region and the dialogic approach to dealing with Arctic security (Barbin 2021). The points of the Arctic agenda highlighted above are not exclusive to the appointment of the Russian honorary consul in Greenland but are also linked by academic and political opinion to the upcoming Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council (Gad 2020).

This chapter focuses on the emerging intersection of established Arctic discourse and agenda of Russia with the matters related distinctly to Greenland and its role in the Arctic. More specifically, I examine how S. V. Lavrov and the MID.RU's representation of his speech and interaction with the journalists construct the Russian international Arctic participation by orienting Greenland and Denmark as relevant Arctic state counterparts or by excluding them from this categorization. This is accomplished through a series of complex discursive strategies mobilizing the past and projecting the future of Russian-Greenlandic and Russian-Danish relations, assigning and removing agency and responsibility to account for the present state of these relations and categorizing them toward or away from the security agenda.

Connecting Securitization Theory and the Analysis of Mediated Action

Securitization research is the scholarly direction that focuses on the set issues outlined above, on how the need in “organizing as a *power* towards the external world” is constructed and maintained discursively as the matter of a persistent state and national concern (Kant, as cited in Wæver 1989). Originated in and shaped by the so-called Copenhagen School, this intellectual approach captures how the notion of security is constructed in speech acts through references to the “developments which in a particularly rapid or dramatic way threaten the sovereignty or independence of a state, not just something harming it, but something threatening to deprive the unit of its capacity to manage by itself [. . .] thereby changing the foundation for everything else; undercutting the political order” (Wæver 1989, 4). This theorization of security has in many ways reformed security studies by shifting away from its conventional definition as the positive outcome of national and international military and political strategy that asserts continuous efforts to maximize it and to perfect its form. Instead, by drawing on the analytical and conceptual resources of the speech act theory (Austin 1962), the Copenhagen School proposed a view of security that highlights the rhetorical and linguistic mechanisms through which international and national matters are removed from the operational and administering scope of the “normal” political procedures by being classified as exceptional, urgent, and unprecedented, as well as how in doing so they become subjected to emergency rationale and techniques. This view includes a critical stance toward the consequences of securitizing acts for “normal democratic rules of transparency and accountability” and introduces the notion of desecuritization and desecurity formulated as the binary opposite of securitization/security (Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg 2017, 17–18).

The analysis presented further produces a nuanced account of the relationship between those concepts that uncovers how its rationale and terms of enactment go beyond a simple dichotomy and that demonstrates the discursive mechanisms through which they become interwoven in a variety of ways in political talk and interaction. This analysis is informed by the ability of (de)securitization theory to grasp theoretically the specific conditions of possibility for political actions, international and national apparatuses, and regimes of truths and knowledges through which certain subjects—individual and institu-

tional actors, cultural groups, territories, etc.—are managed and ruled (Foucault 1970, 1981). In line with a number of scholars engaged in securitization research (Oren and Solomon 2015; Philipsen 2020), I argue that in order to employ this ability, we need to allow the (de)securitization analysis to extend beyond the “speech act” understood solely as thematization of a certain issue or problem within the utterance and limited to it, or as a narrative of the “past and historical processes through which events, identities, and actions come to be constructed” (Saint-Georges 2013, 1). Instead, such an analysis should include discourse and discursive practices to shed analytical light on how discursive categories and memberships interact with the discursive and non-linguistic elements outside the immediate context of a specific text or an utterance. This also requires understanding discourse beyond the mere representation and framing of reality and seeing it instead as a social action that has capacity to make this reality by making the ways we think and talk about its specific aspects and futures durable, recognizable, and normalized.

For the present (de)securitization analysis, which is concerned with the dynamics of Arctic security and Greenland’s role in it, this means examining rigorously the discursive mechanisms through which threats and *appropriate* (i.e., *realizable* and *desirable*) measures to manage them and their consequences (Wallace 2011, 145) are anticipated and linked to Greenland and its population, to Arctic nations, and their territories. The goal of the analysis is not to generate and to generalize a typology of (de)securitization acts associated with the representations of Greenland in Russian politics and media. Rather the analysis aims to provide a close examination of how the actions categorizing Greenland’s and Russia’s Arctic present and projecting their futures are accomplished discursively in relation to the issues of threat and security.

I take up this theoretical and analytical task by connecting (de)securitization theory with the conceptual and methodological repertoire of mediated discourse analysis. This analytical perspective is interested in how individuals, in the course of interactions with each other and with the diverse technologies and materialities, use multi-modal discursive and semiotic resources to take actions and how the performative and anticipatory affordances of these actions enable them to produce and change the reality (Saint-Georges 2013; Norris and Jones 2017; Scollon 2001; Wallace 2011). In the proposed analytical framework, (de)securitization is viewed as a discursive practice in

the Foucauldian, both archaeological and genealogical, sense (Foucault 1981). This entails that my examination focuses on tracing “the forms of exclusion, of limitation, of appropriation” of truths that render certain problems and subjects as a matter of security and how these forms are exerted and evaded, modified and displaced. This also means that it is equally interested in making visible and discussing how “series of discourses come to be formed” and what norms and procedures they mobilize to render certain strategies for handling the aforementioned problems and subjects as possible or unreasonable (Foucault 1970, 1981).

Thus, I propose an analytical framework that substitutes a speech act, conventionally seen as the primary unit in securitization analysis, with the notion of mediated action, which allows me to shift the focus from a single utterance and its function to the sequentially and the seriality of the securitization strategies. In doing so, the analysis aims to shift the focus away from the indemonstrable (at least within the suggested methodological approach) successfulness or failure of a specific securitizing case in order to uncover its constitutive potential in the interactional- and conversation-analytical sense as well as its complexity and pervasiveness in the genealogical sense (Foucault 1981). The former involves examining how (de)securitization is accomplished through the language-in-use where each utterance both proceeds and projects the further interaction (Schegloff 1986, 1988). While the latter requires analyzing discursive and interdiscursive assemblages that do not only move politics beyond its normal terms into “requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 24) within the framework of a single argument, but also circulate these categorizations of the existential threats, the forms of their recognition, and of the consent to the suggested methods for their management. The proposed conceptual and methodological way of engaging with the securitization theory informs the empirical detailed study revealing how exactly political action and interaction relate security and insecurity, securitization and desecuritization in practice.

As the analytical strategy formulated above makes visible, the presented analysis relies on a number of methods central to discourse analysis such as critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001), mediated discourse analysis (Scollon 2001), conversation analysis (Schegloff 1986) and multimodal discourse analysis (Iedema 2003; Kress and Leeuwen 2006). Within this methodological framework, ‘mediated dis-

course' figures as the organizing concept and the primary analytical unit that grasps how discourses anticipate futures by setting constraints, evaluating and rendering possibilities for actions across time and space. In the following analysis, I examine how the actors orient to Arctic futures in the anticipatory discursive work through both reasoning and generating actions that involve projecting certain events, their outcomes, courses of actions, plans, and agendas (Norris and Jones 2017, 29, 157–158; Saint-Georges 2013). The empirical scope of this study is composed by the elements of visual, written, and interactional genres, such as photography, computer-mediated text, dialogue, and speech. To uncover the ways in which the anticipatory discourses are constructed within the framework of this multimodal material, I employ the strategies of *multimodal discourse analysis*. With this approach, I demonstrate how specific modalities and semiotic resources are mobilized by the actors and how these semiotic choices converge with diverse discourses and practices, which in their turn become 'resemiotized' and begin to figure as 'frozen' actions. That is, I trace analytically the translation of meaning from one semiotic field to another and the mechanisms of its embedment with certain objects and environments (Iedema 2003, 29; Norris and Makboon 2015, 43).

In this aspect, the present analysis contributes to the existing body of securitization research that focuses on the "distinctiveness of visual securitizations" (Hansen 2011, 53) and their role in constituting political interventions, and it expands it by highlighting the interaction between visualities and other mediational means, such as written text and spoken interaction. In order to capture this interaction analytically, I attend to the multiple details of text and interaction. Some of these details are associated with the rules of conversational sequence, such as turn taking, uptake, openings and closings that the interlocutors—Lavrov and the journalists taking part in the press conference—mobilize to generate agency, to propose certain accounts about actions, to produce categorizations and to orient toward them. These devices are the focus of *conversation analysis*, which allows me to trace the ways in which they are being used in a regular manner to negotiate interactionally how risks and threats to Arctic peace and stability are discriminated in terms of different national agendas and international actions. It also enables me to reveal how these accounts prefigure the preferred lines for their organization and control (Sacks 1995, 3–4; Schegloff 1986, 1988).

Other devices, such as metaphor, implicature and intertextuality,

inclusion and exclusion, are examined using the strategies of *critical discourse analysis* in order to examine how the (de)securitizing actions and accounts are rendered not only possible and plausible, but also natural and neutral, as well as how these discursive constructs are challenged and destabilized. This aspect of analysis uncovers the discursive tendencies and tensions that make up the textual relations within the empirical data and link them to the relevant intertextual contexts, to the social practices with which these contexts and their discursive conventions are associated, and to those societal structures, institutional sites, and procedures where these practices are accomplished.

It is by liaising between the close analysis of interactional, textual, and semiotic devices mobilized by the actors and the political and media contexts where the discursive work in focus is taking place that I am able to demonstrate systematically and methodologically how (de)securitizing actions are accomplished. This analytical work is informed by and feeds into the performative direction in securitization studies that is concerned with the ritualized and repetitive constructions of securitized issues and threats enacted by the interlocutors across material and linguistic devices, which circulate and expand the security rationale across political realms and practices (Oren and Solomon 2015; Philipson 2020).

Tracing Discourses of (De)securitization: Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Official Russian Communication regarding a Representation in Greenland

One of the most important contributions made by securitization theory consists in providing a deeper understanding of the dialectic relationship between securitizing and desecuritizing, that is, of the methods through which issues are shifted and phrased into and out of the emergency mode, into and out of the threat-defense dichotomy. Moreover, securitization theory captures how the movement of the security agenda back into “the ordinary public sphere” reinvents it in wider terms and in the procedures outside the military apparatus (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 29; Wæver 1995). The latter process is examined further in the more recent securitization research, where it is discussed as “a displacement of a controversy” generated “by shifting a policy issue from one technique of government to another” rather than

between the emergency and ‘normal’ politics (Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg 2017, 16). The following analysis demonstrates the complexity of securitization-desecuritization mechanisms and how they are enacted discursively and interactionally around the issues of Russian-Danish and Russian-Greenlandic relations during the press conference with the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov, and the Danish minister of foreign affairs, Jeppe Kofod, in Moscow, on October 9, 2020, and in the presentation of the press conference’s transcript on the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg name one of the most obvious ways to desecuritize, which is “to not talk about issues in terms of security, but to ignore securitization and insist that an issue is non-politics or normal politics” (Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg 2017, 18). A large part of the speech given by Lavrov at the press conference is devoted exactly to that: listing directions and practices of cooperation between Russia and Denmark of an explicitly nonmilitary and nonconfrontational character, such as trade, mutual financial investments, presence of the Danish companies on the Russian market, cultural, humanitarian, and educational projects, and political and diplomatic dialogues. In the speech, these ‘benign’ and nonthreatening aspects of Russian-Danish relations are discursively assigned a temporal dimension. They are constructed as practices that have deep and lasting historical roots:

Excerpt 1

Мы отметили, что отношения между Россией и Данией имеют давние традиции добрососедства, взаимоуважения, никогда не омрачались войнами и конфликтами с той поры, когда в 1493 г. был заключен Договор о любви и братстве. Постоянная российская дипломатическая миссия появилась в Дании еще в 1700 г., а в 1893 г. она была преобразована в посольство. Наверное, это одни из самых долгих дипломатических, договорных отношений, которые есть у Российской Федерации с зарубежными партнерами.

We noted that the relations between Russia and Denmark have long-term traditions of good neighborliness, mutual respect, they have never been clouded by wars and conflicts since the time, when in 1493, there has been signed a Treaty of Love and

Brotherhood. A permanent diplomatic mission was founded in Denmark already in 1700, and in 1893, it was converted into an embassy. It is probably one of the longest diplomatic, agreement-based relationships which the Russian Federation has with foreign partners.

In the example above, any potential of threat or insecurity is removed from the articulation of the bilateral relations in focus by repeatedly highlighting their collaborative quality: “good neighborliness” (*добрососедства*), “mutual respect” (*взаимоуважения*), “diplomatic, agreement-based relationships” (*дипломатических, договорных отношений*). This is also achieved by the recurrent references to the diplomatic procedures and institutions: “Treaty of Love and Brotherhood” (*Договор о любви и братстве*), “diplomatic mission” (*дипломатическая миссия*), “embassy” (*посольство*), “agreement-based relationships [. . .] with foreign partners” (*дипломатических, договорных отношений [. . .] с зарубежными партнерами*). The historical continuity of this collaboration is accomplished through the references to “traditions” and through the use of such attributes as “long-term” (*давние*), “permanent” (*постоянная*) and “long” (*долгих*). This long duration of the relations is further qualified by the superlative form of the latter adjective “one of the longest” (*одни из самых долгих*). These categorizations are made factual through the references to the specific dates when the invoked historical events took place.

Importantly, this desecuritizing articulation of the Russian-Danish past is enacted by contrasting it with the bilateral relations characterized by military threat and insecurity: “wars and conflicts” (*войнами и конфликтами*), which are constructed as an alternative that is both not applicable to and unwanted for Russian-Danish relations: “have never been clouded” (*никогда не омрачались*). This presents one in a series of distinct discursive mechanisms through which security and desecuritization become intertwined in the analyzed political talk.

In constructing the desecuritized present relationship between the two states, Lavrov continues to employ the discursive strategies outlined above. He stresses the continuity of their cooperation (“has not been interrupted,” *не прерывался*) and constructs it as the mutually agreed preferred future (“we were pleased to note,” *с удовлетворением отметили*):

Excerpt 2

С удовлетворением отметили, что диалог между нашими министерствами иностранных дел не прерывался.

We were pleased to note that the dialogue between our ministries of foreign affairs has not been interrupted.

Similarly, he proceeds to validate the extent of the ongoing cooperation by emphasizing its factual character, for example, by listing the names of the Danish companies currently operating in Russia (Carlsberg, Rockwool, Novo Nordic, Danfoss, Grundfoss, and Idavang) and providing the exact number of Russian educational institutions and projects that have ties to Denmark.

What is notable, however, is that none of the listed organizational actors or collaborative practices are specific to Greenland's context. Tourism, sustainability, commercial fishing, issues related to culture and identification of the Arctic Indigenous ethnicities highlighted in Ambassador Vladimir Barbin's (Barbin 2021) exclusive interview to Sermitsiaq in connection with the appointment of the Russian honorary consul in Nuuk are excluded from the categorization of Russian Arctic cooperation. Similarly, Polar Seafood, co-owned by the appointed honorary Russian consul, Miki Brøns, is also absent from the list of the relevant actors. This exclusion stands in contrast to the detail with which the Russian-Danish lines of cooperation are formulated and reiterated, making the choices made in establishing the connections between the speech and the contexts and actors outside it meaningful to the analysis (Fairclough 2003).

What is also interesting is that, in the speech, this construction of the collaborative present is closely intertwined with the indication of factors that impair them and threaten their viability, thereby making the desecuritized version of Russian-Danish affairs precarious and contingent:

Excerpt 3

. . . контакты между различными ведомствами, которые сейчас тоже, по сути дела, «подморожены», и не только по причине коронавирусной инфекции.

. . . contacts between different institutions, which are now also, in reality, “slightly frozen,” and not only because of the coronavirus infection.

Excerpt 4

У нас достаточно серьезный товарооборот, но, начиная с прошлого года, он сокращается. В этом году добавились причины, связанные с коронавирусной инфекцией.

We have quite serious trade turnover, but starting from the last year, it has been reducing. This year, reasons related to coronavirus were added.

In the examples above, the stagnation (“slightly frozen,” *подморожены*) and deterioration (“has been reducing,” *сокращается*) of the bilateral relations are attributed to two types of risk factors. One of them is stated explicitly—the ongoing pandemic—which illustrates the moldable quality of the security agenda and shows how it is expanded to include the most recent risks and risks not related to warfare. The other type of threat remains implicit. The implicature is performed through indicating that coronavirus is not the exclusive (“not only because of,” *не только по причине*) and not the single (“reasons [. . .] have been added,” *добавились причины*) threat to cooperation. Despite the implied character of the indicated threats, the metaphor “slightly frozen,” *подморожены*, recognizable as a part of the Cold War discursive repertoire, alludes to a set of security issues associated with this period in Soviet-Western affairs, such as the arms race and nuclear war threat, thereby embedding them into the desecuritization strategy demonstrated in the analysis above. This attests to the fact that proposing desecuritized alternatives does not erase the conventional security agenda and shows how these international scenarios are intertwined in political genre.

The analysis of excerpt 5 verifies how security and desecurity are made to rely on each other by uncovering yet another strategy through which they are being accomplished. This strategy mobilizes the anticipatory capacity of discourse and the organizing function of sequentiality.

Excerpt 5

В 2021 г. к России переходит председательство в Арктическом совете. Мы уделили большое внимание проблематике этого нашего общего региона.

In 2021, the chairmanship of the Arctic Council transfers to Russia. We have paid much attention to the problematics of this, our shared region.

In the example above, the future of Russian-Danish affairs is prefigured and specified by intertwining it with the future of Arctic governance, the functioning and leadership of the Arctic Council. In projecting this future, Lavrov, on the one hand, problematizes it by referring to “problematics” (*проблематике*), while on the other hand, he preempts the indicated set of problems and risks by placing focus on the shared ownership and responsibility for the Arctic region. This is enacted by constructing the common agency through the use of the first person plural pronouns “we” (*мы*) and “our” (*нашего*) and the attribute “shared” (*общего*) as well as by articulating an action with which the problems in the Arctic will be anticipated and dealt with: “have paid much attention” (*Мы уделили большое внимание*), which is an idiomatic phrase used in political talk to denote placing an issue on the international or political agenda. While Lavrov does not say against what exactly the international preventive measures are being initiated in relation to the Arctic region, referring to the abstract state of a problem (“problematics,” *проблематике*), the very next sentence in his speech invokes “questions of security in the Baltic region” (*вопросах безопасности в регионе Балтийского моря*). The rest of the presentation is devoted to matters of national and international security, such as NATO activity close to the Russian state borders and the situation in Ukraine. This sequential proximity of securitizing talk connects it to the indicated Arctic problematics intertwining once again desecuritization discourse that highlights cooperation with the risk of military confrontation and the need to deal with it.

The following analysis uncovers how (de)securitization is enacted when Lavrov begins to address issues related to Greenland. Some of the mechanisms involved in this discursive work are parallel to the ones uncovered in the analysis above in relation to the matters of Russian-Danish relations. More specifically, this includes the projec-

tion of the collaborative present and future through the mobilization of the shared past as well as through the positively charged articulation and normalization of this category. But the analysis also reveals a number of new desecuritizing strategies that are associated with the interactional and visual genres of discourse.

The central position in the composition of the speech is devoted to the appointment of an honorary consul of the Russian Federation in Greenland.

Excerpt 6

Признательны нашим датским коллегам за согласие учредить пост почетного консула Российской Федерации на Гренландии. Кандидатура согласована. Сейчас мы занимаемся завершением бюрократических формальностей.

We are appreciative of our Danish colleagues agreeing to found a post of an honorary consul of the Russian Federation on Greenland. The candidature is agreed upon. Now we are working on completing the bureaucratic formalities.

Noteworthy, while this is the first formal announcement made regarding the appointment of the honorary consul, discursively it is not assigned novelty or news characteristics. On the contrary, the discursive work demonstrated in the analysis of excerpts 1 and 2 weaves the announcement into the already constructed diplomatic and collaborative past and present of the Russian-Danish and Russian Arctic relations, so that it figures as an expected diplomatic act and ‘natural’ measure that would deal with the indicated security risks (excerpt 4). Similarly, while the post of the honorary consul is only to be established, it is discursively constructed as an accomplished act both semantically, through the positively charged terms of agreement and evaluation.

The founding of the post has been approved by the Danish government (“agreeing to found,” *согласие учредить*); the approval has been positively assessed by the Russian government (“we are appreciative,” *признательны*); and syntactically, through the use of an attributive verb in a contracted present perfect form, “the candidature is agreed upon,” *Кандидатура согласована*. Moreover, the scope of the remaining procedures is downplayed by assigning it to the secondary, less

important category of “bureaucratic formalities,” *бюрократических формальностей*, and even those are articulated as being in the active state of completion (“working on completing,” *занимаемся завершением*). This discursive projection of a future diplomatic act into present international affairs becomes even more meaningful if we consider that the announcement is made in the aftermath of the opening of the U.S. Consulate in Nuuk as it brings both events into temporal proximity, hence enabling certain parallelism or symmetry between them.

The uncovered above naturalization of the Russian-Greenlandic diplomatic present and collaborative future becomes challenged when the press conference shifts into the question-and-answer format.

Excerpt 7

Вопрос (перевод с английского): Как бы Вы могли прокомментировать просьбу относительно почетного консульства в Нууке?

С.В.Лавров: Чем объясняется наша просьба к датскому руководству дать согласие на назначение Почетного консула России на Гренландии, для меня странный вопрос.

Мы соседи. Мы хотим сотрудничать. У нас есть достаточно устойчивые экономические, культурные связи с Фарерскими островами и Гренландией. Датское руководство об этом прекрасно осведомлено. И тот факт, что наше обращение с просьбой поддержать кандидатуру Почетного консула на Гренландии была достаточно оперативно поддержана, говорит о том, что в Копенгагене заинтересованы в том, чтобы наши отношения развивались. Мы это ценим.

Question (translation from English): Could you please comment on the request regarding the honorary consulate in Nuuk?

S. V. Lavrov: How our request to the Danish government to approve the appointment of the honorary consul of Russian on Greenland is explained, to me is a strange question.

We are neighbours. We want to cooperate. We have fairly stable economic, cultural ties with the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Danish government is perfectly aware of that. And the fact that our request to support the candidate for the honorary consul on Greenland has been fairly promptly supported, says that

in Copenhagen, they are interested in the development of our relations. We appreciate that.

The shift from a monologue to conversational genre entails that the speaker needs to orient to the action accomplished in the question, so that the meaning-making practices become distributed across interactional turns and interlocutors. The question addressing the appointment of the honorary consul categorizes it as a “request,” *просьбу*, thereby negating its categorization as an accomplished act, proposed by Lavrov earlier. The commenting action prompted by the question (“could you please comment,” *как бы вы могли прокомментировать*) displaces it from the previously constructed position of a natural and expected threat-preventing measure by proposing it as an accountable and requiring account category.

In his reply, Lavrov orients to the aforementioned actions. In paraphrasing the question, he uncovers the request to comment as a euphemism for providing the reasons for the consul’s appointment: “how our request [. . .] is explained,” *чем объясняется наша просьба*, thereby making visible the implication made by the journalist that there can be another agenda at work in relation to the appointment besides the desecuritized collaborative version proposed by Lavrov. He then subsequently dismisses the implication by questioning the very sanity of it: “to me is a strange question,” *для меня странный вопрос* and then shifting back to the same discursive strategy as he extensively employed in the opening speech—the emphasis of the long-term, stable, nonmilitary, risk-free forms of collaboration. This is enacted through the same semantic choices as earlier in the speech, such as the neighbor metaphor and references to economic and cultural ties. Similarly, Lavrov reiterates and upgrades the positive assessment of the request made by the Danish government by assigning attributes stressing its quality and rate: “perfectly,” *прекрасно*, “fairly promptly,” *достаточно оперативно*. The repetition and upgrade of this discursive strategy validates the benign, nonthreatening character of the founded honorary consul post proposed earlier in the speech. What is also interesting in Lavrov’s reply is the repeated use of the first person, plural pronoun “we,” *мы, у нас*. These parallel structures open and close Lavrov’s interactional turn highlighting the agency of the Russian state constructed in relation to Greenland’s desecuritized present and future.

The uncovered anticipatory strategies of spoken discourse mobilized to project the desecuritized version of the Arctic present and

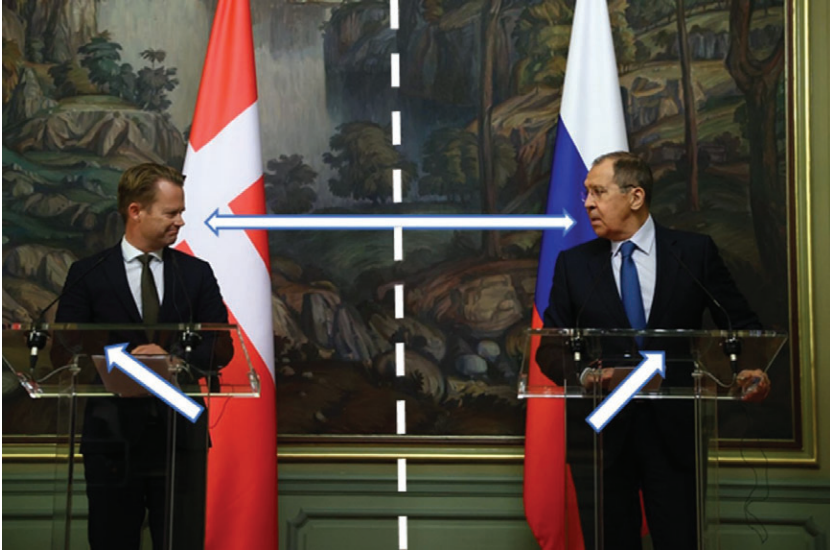


Fig. 5.1. Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov (*right*) and Jeppe Kofod at the bilateral press conference in Moscow, October 9, 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2020).

future are anchored in the visual elements of the Russian Foreign Ministry's presentation of the press conference.

A photograph depicting the two ministers at the press conference (figure 5.1) is placed at the top of the web page preceding the transcript. The photograph employs a number of semiotic resources that construct visually the collaborative character of Russian-Danish relations anticipating the discursive work presented in the transcript. For instance, the gaze trajectory and the positioning of the governments' representatives as facing each other project the connection and cooperation which Lavrov systematically mobilizes in addressing Russia's relations with Denmark and Greenland. Kofod's smiling facial expression echoes the approval and positive assessment by the Danish government that Lavrov repeatedly invokes in connection to the founding of the Russian honorary consul post. The symmetrical use of the layout visible in the positioning of the actors in the middle ground as well as of the prompts on the background and on the foreground conveys equality and balance in relation to how the three mediated practices are executed:

- a. the bilateral relations between the two states symbolically represented by the Danish and Russian national flags on the background of the photograph;
- b. the communication between the governments portrayed by their two representatives placed on the middle ground; and
- c. the media and political genre of press conference, which is marked through the foregrounded speakers' tables that also extend the space captured in the photograph toward the audience, indicating implicitly their presence and participation in the interaction.

The analysis above demonstrates how political and media talk as well as material objects (such as tables and flags), which embed "frozen actions" (Norris and Makboon 2015) converging with the practices and discourses of national sovereignty and international politics, become resemiotized into different genres (photography and written transcript) and different media format (web page). The resemiotization distributes the discursive mechanisms of (de)securitization across institutional contexts and practices as well as the physical and computer-mediated spaces associated with them.

What is remarkable, however, is that Greenland is excluded from this disposition. In the paradigmatic relations constructed in the image through the resemiotized symbolic act of flagging, Greenland is absent as a relevant actor. This absence is semiotically and relationally significant, as it is marked by the inclusion of the Danish and Russian flags, which turns it into a meaningful act of discursive deselection (Fairclough 2003).

What is also noteworthy is that throughout his speech and responses to the journalists' questions, Lavrov systematically refers to the appointment of the Honorary Consul "on Greenland," *на Гренландии* (excerpts 6 and 7). In the Russian language, the spatial preposition "on," *на*, is used with the geographical names that denote a region or a geographical unit, such as an island or a continent. In contrast, preposition "in," *в*, is used with the names of the cities and countries. Through this repeated syntactical choice, Greenland is classified as a geographical and regional entity rather than a self-determined political actor. The classification paired with the semiotic exclusion addressed earlier reduces the role assigned to Greenland in the diplomatic and cooperation scenarios with Russia that are formulated in the context of the analyzed political and media event.

In the speech as well as in Lavrov's answers during the press conference, the desecuritized presence and future of Danish-Russian relations is not articulated as given. The following analysis makes visible how they are being constructed as conditioned by Denmark's and Western active participation in their execution. This is enacted through a two-part discursive structure that is systematically employed throughout the whole conference and in which the speaker first introduces a desecuritized measure initiated or exercised by the Russian Federation, then formulates a condition for its success or a factor that impairs it, attributing those to Denmark or other Western actors (e.g. NATO). Table 5.1 illustrates this structure by collecting some examples where it is at work in relation to Russian relations to Denmark and Greenland.

In excerpts 8 and 9 (table 5.1), Lavrov names a number of desecuritized measures aimed at both prevention of a military confrontation (maritime and space incidents prevention treaties) between the states and at the promotion of antimilitary alternative (an expansion of collaboration). In doing so, he highlights the active role and the agency of the Russian state (referred to by the pronoun "we," *мы*) by emphasizing how committed the Russian Federation is to the successful application of these measures ("we are ready," *мы готовы*; "we have been suggesting," *мы [. . .] предлагаем*), the extent and the length of this commitment ("in all the directions," *на всех направлениях*; "multiple times" *множественно*; "for a long time," *давно*). These measures then become constructed as either limited or determined by Danish participation ("along which our Danish colleagues are open for it," *на которых наши датские коллеги к этому открыты*), or dependent on it ("we count on that [. . .] Denmark will consider," *рассчитываем, что, [. . .] Дания рассмотрит это наше предложение*), or is hindered by it ("are still thinking," *все еще думают*). This discursive work attributes to Denmark an agency which stands in contrast to the one assigned to Russia: e.g. the persistence of the Russian state is being juxtaposed to Denmark's sluggishness ("are still thinking," *все еще думают*) and the long-term Russian initiative is contrasted to the prospective character of Danish participation ("will consider," *рассмотрит*). Moreover, it is also compared and contrasted to the conduct of the other international actors ("just as our other neighbors with whom we have such treaties," *как и другие наши соседи, с которыми у нас есть такие соглашения*), thereby categorizing Denmark's response, or lack of such, to the proposed measures as irregular and noticeable in the international arena.

TABLE 5.1. Discursive Construction of Agency and Responsibility in Desecuritizing Russian Relations to Denmark and Greenland

	Desecuritizing measure initiated or exercised by the Russian Federation	Condition for the success of the introduced desecuritizing measure or a factor that impairs it
Excerpt 8	<p><i>В целом мы готовы продвигать сотрудничество на всех направлениях,</i></p> <p>In general, we are ready to expand the cooperation in all directions</p>	<p><i>на которых наши датские коллеги к этому открыты.</i></p> <p>along which our Danish colleagues are open for it.</p>
Excerpt 9	<p><i>. . . мы давно предлагаем заключить с ними двустороннее межправительственное соглашение об избежании непреднамеренных инцидентов в морском пространстве между нашими странами и в воздушном пространстве над этими водами.</i></p> <p>. . . we have been suggesting for a long time to sign with them a bilateral agreement between governments on the avoidance of the unintended incidents in the sea area between our countries and in the space above these waters</p> <p><i>Дании мы делали такое предложение многократно.</i></p> <p>We have been making this suggestion multiple times.</p>	<p><i>Рассчитываем, что, как и другие наши соседи, с которыми у нас есть такие соглашения, Дания рассмотрит это наше предложение.</i></p> <p>We count on that just as our other neighbors with whom we have such treaties, Denmark will consider our said suggestion.</p> <p><i>Наши датские коллеги все еще думают.</i></p> <p>Our Danish colleagues are still thinking.</p>

The analysis above demonstrates how the potential of discourse to assign and distribute agency, power, and responsibility is at work in the practices of international Arctic politics. It also reveals how this potential is applied to highlight the enthusiastic and effective character of Russia's approach to organizing its collaboration with Denmark and to contrast it to Denmark's participation, which is marked as lacking initiative and engagement.

Conclusion

The analysis above made visible the complexity of the dialectic relationship between *securitizing* and *desecuritizing* strategies and demonstrated how they discursively rely on each other when enacted by the actors. The analysis allowed me to provide the empirically generated evidence for the theorization of desecuritization associated with the Copenhagen School. This theorization is distinct not only from the notion of *security*, as a security problem treated with relevant measures, but also from the concepts of *insecurity*, that is, unaddressed (or inadequately addressed) security issues, and of *asecurity*, the situations when security rationale and discourse are irrelevant to the conditions of possibility shaping the problem (Wæver 1995, 1998).

In this chapter, I demonstrate how this distinction and desecuritizing category are enacted discursively in political talk. This analytical work made visible how a desecuritized future of the Russian-Danish and Russian-Greenlandic relations are systematically and repeatedly made conditioned by the course of the Western Arctic participation and Denmark's will to make use of the desecuritizing, nonmilitary potential of cooperation strategies proposed by the Russian government. Another important observation involves showing how the production of (de)securitized accounts is distributed across the past, the present, and the future of Arctic politics. The ability of discourse practice to converge and compress the time-space scales and relations within the scope of a single mediated action is realized in connection with the appointment of the Russian honorary consul in Nuuk. In Lavrov's announcement and during the press conference, this development in Russian-Greenlandic relations is naturalized and enacted as an anticipated measure based on the continuity and persistence of the collaborative tradition defining the *past* of the Russian-Danish relations. At the same time it is mobilized to naturalize and anticipate the *future* of these relations away from the security vocabulary and rationale. Finally, the chapter demonstrated how within its empirical scope the desecuritizing action is never mediated separately from the security agenda and how such devices as metaphor, sequentiality, and contrast are employed to connect the matters of security, risk, and threat to the categories, procedures, and practices associated with the other political and organizing techniques. Moreover, the analysis showed how this also takes place across temporal lines where the past and the current risks, such as the Cold War agenda and the Covid-19 pandemic, are linked to highlight the precarity of the desecuritized futures.

These uncovered aspects of desecuritizing strategies contribute to shaping a more analytically informed and nuanced understanding of (de)securitizing mechanisms by showcasing a variety of ways in which the security agenda and repertoire are made durable and expanded to new areas of political and societal engagement even when it is accomplished through the actions where the security is unmarked or explicitly marked irrelevant through the proposals of alternative, desecuritizing, and cooperation-based accounts.

The use of the Russian honorary consul in Greenland, opening in the mediation of the naturalized desecuritized accounts of the Arctic past and prefiguring its futures away from the security agenda, demonstrates how this diplomatic act is assigned an instrumental role of defining the course and the manner of Russian-Danish, and more broadly, Russian Arctic relations.

The reduced role assigned to Greenland is also maintained through syntactical choices that attribute it to a regional and geographical area rather than to a sovereign national and political category. This discursive categorization echoes the debates in relation to the use of prepositions “on” and “in” to spatially refer to Ukraine and, thereby, its articulation as either an autonomous country or “a *kraina* (‘borderlands’) of Greater Russia” (Popescu 2014, 223). These highly intense debates have been part of an ongoing political confrontation between Russia and Ukraine flagging the power of discourse to position the state actors on the international arena and highlighting that nation-states recognize this power. Thus when in the formal announcement of the honorary consul appointment, Greenland is being discursively assigned a regional or geographical status, it proposes a specific configuration of Russian-Greenlandic bilateral relations where Greenland does not figure as an autonomous partner. It also mobilizes patterns of language use that have been challenged in other political contexts as “imperial models” (Danylenko and Naienko 2019).

The positioning of the Greenland-related development as peripheral to the other aspects of Russian Arctic affairs is fortified by the so-called “significant absences” in the data of Greenland agency and representation (Fairclough 2003, 37). As the analysis makes visible, this exclusion of Greenland from the paradigmatic relations established in the text, such as between the symbolic representations of state and nationhood through flagging or the practices and actors listed in categorizing the Russian Arctic participation, is systematic and, thereby, marked and meaningful.

I do not in any way assert that the identified patterns and strategies of

Russia's positioning and representation of Greenland are defining or generalizable aspects of how Russian government and politics approach the present and envision the future of its relations with Greenland. Nor am I interested in making such projections. I do however argue that in the analyzed material, Russian connections to Greenland are predominantly formulated through the prism of Russian-Danish relations. I claim as well that the mechanisms through which this is being accomplished are certainly meaningful to the concrete mediated actions, actors, and contexts associated with the international and political developments in focus. In addition, I argue that the presented detailed empirical analysis and the strategies it revealed are important for understanding the preferred lines of discursive construction and semiotic signification for which the actors reach in a regular and recognizable manner when they assign meaning to these developments and propose how it would be appropriate and possible to make sense of them. This understanding would enrich and be useful to the research that is interested in examining how Russian-Greenland relations are enacted in other contexts and in relation to other practices and how it compares to the ways in which other international actors organize their communication and cooperation with Greenland.

NOTE

1. Similarly, Russia is given almost no attention in Greenland's foreign policy (Jacobsen and Gad 2018, 16).

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