STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

NAADSN
North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network
naadsn.ca

February 23, 2023

Beavers and Lions: Comparing Canadian and Norwegian Arctic Narratives

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Abstract: *Narratives are, by their nature, instrumental in how states justify their actions and how they situate events in global politics within their own histories. Taking an ontological security lens provides scholars a way through which to understand how autobiographical narratives influence state behavior in the context of existential anxiety (Mitzen 2006). As two states with distinct Arctic identities, Canada and Norway represent notable cases from which to understand how these autobiographical narratives play out in an Arctic context. In the broader state of anxiousness that these two states experience in the Arctic considering increased global warming and a resurgence of great power competition, understanding how these narratives in the face of uncertainty influence policy matters. In short, if these narratives are present in current Arctic strategies, we can better anticipate Canadian and Norwegian behavior in the Arctic. This research will explore how key ontological Canadian and Norwegian narratives play out in their most recent Arctic strategies (2019 and 2021, respectively) and the extent to which such narratives are a response to anxiety on the world stage.*

Introduction

National Arctic policies are often studied by analyzing their continuity to traditional state priorities and by comparing them to state action both reflexively and on an international basis. However, this focus begs important questions. Where did these policies come from? What type of underlying narratives shape policy priorities? Can we understand national policy as reactions to anxiety on the world stage? In this article, I argue that first, considering national narratives is significant when understanding the origin of a policy and that second, anxiety helps explain why states act the way that they do. It is by using anxiety as an organizing principle that explains a state's propensity to fall back on similar ontological narratives rather than relying on a purely interest-based approach. I propose that differences in reaction to existential anxiety – such as from geopolitical competition – occur in various ways in Norway and Canada due to differences in Arctic geography and cultural history to the Arctic. These autobiographical narratives, whether we speak of national animals such as Canadian beavers or Norwegian moose, the designs on coats of arms such as Canada's lions and unicorn or Norway's lion, or more region-specific Arctic narratives, have explanatory power for policy analysis.

I begin by outlining assumptions and assertions of ontological security studies, specifically discussing what has been written in an Arctic context, which has to this point been primarily studied on a community-level and with reference to Russia. I then propose my content analysis, highlighting why I chose Norway and Canada as two cases and particularly why I interrogate two policies out of many. I then return to the literature on Canadian narratives, describing what scholars have acknowledged is prevalent both on a national Canadian level as well as specific Canadian Arctic narratives. Using that information, I then analyze the Canadian Arctic & Northern Policy Framework (2019), seeking out words that match up to the narratives outlined above. While it is rare to see national Canadian narratives in this document, contextual and specific Arctic narratives are present. By showing these differences in which narratives are present and which are not, I propose that anxiety is a useful framework through which to understand Canadian Arctic policies.

I next review Norwegian narratives both in the Arctic and nationally. With those narratives in hand, I conduct a content analysis of Norway's Arctic policy in 2021 – looking for similarly key words related to Norwegian narratives. I find that it is quite rare to locate many of the themes that were prevalent in Norwegian literature – including call-backs to Norwegian polar explorers, calls for Arctic leadership and strength on the world stage, and themes of independence. By illustrating this dichotomy and difference between these two Arctic nations, I show that anxiety – although coming from the same place – is mediated by various factors, but perhaps most importantly geography. Geography, while certainly discussed in other lenses such as geopolitical theories, may add new insights for ontological security. If anxiety is the ordering principle of international politics and states are anxious beings, this begs important questions on the how such anxiety forms and why the broad existential anxiety states feel – from geopolitical competition – is experienced differently. Here, geography can be the beginning of a conversation about these differences and narratives can lead us there. My findings indicate that considering anxiety as an ordering principle of international relations (IR) can bear significant fruit when studying national policies, highlighting how key narratives play out in discourse.

Literature Review

Narratives are instrumental in how states justify their actions and how they situate events in global politics within their own histories. Somers (1994: 606) argues that "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world." Narratives tell us not only reflections about our place in the world but also who we are within it. These narratives are not only written or spoken but they are embedded in stories, rhetoric, and policies over time. Taking an ontological security lens provides scholars a way through which to understand how autobiographical narratives influence state behavior in the context of existential anxiety (Mitzen 2006). This is important when considering how ontological security narratives influence foreign policy on a case-by-case basis and when thinking about how protecting a sense of biographical continuity deeply matters over time.

Ontological security studies (OSS) relies on the premise that states seek to protect their sense of self and biographical continuity over time (Mitzen 2006). How can we know a sense of self and find hints of biographical continuity? This approach focuses on looking at narratives and finding longstanding patterns of these narratives over time that states use to manage existential anxiety (Mitzen 2018). In other words, taking an ontological security approach to studying state behavior suggests that states constantly live in existential anxiety, whether

from internal anxiety or expressed via exogenous variables like globalization and increased geopolitical dynamics. To manage that anxiety, states engage in predictable patterns of behavior to justify their sense of self and create an idea of biographical continuity over time. While there is internal debate between reflexive and relational approaches to using OSS, this research suggests that a sense of self is created both through relations with other actors as well as using a master autobiographical narrative to understand the world.

To date, little scholarship has adopted an OSS lens to understand Arctic state-level foreign policy. However, research has been conducted on ontological security on a community level. Dale, Veland, and Hansen (2019) used discourse analysis to understand how particular ideas of oil and gas extraction have varying impacts on ontological security for communities across Alaska, Norway, and Greenland. The authors find that there are tensions between communities as to how they interpret narratives about petroleum as reinforcing or threatening their ontological security. In the case of Russia, researchers have found that Russia's ontological insecurity can be used to understand Russia's turn to the national (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2021). Outside of the Arctic, Subotic's (2016) work on Serbian foreign policy presents an innovative framework for thinking about applying OSS in practice to policy analysis. She analyzes Serbia's policy changes over time and using discourse analysis to propose that this state uses a master autobiographical narrative by selectively activating and deactivating different parts. Because there is literature written on Norwegian and Canadian broad narratives such as influential work by Rob Huebert, Whitney Lackenbauer, Heather Exner-Pirot, Franklyn Griffiths, Andreas Østhagen, Iver Neumann, Benjamin Carvalho, Ingrid Medby, Thomas Eriksen, and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence exploring how these narratives are activated (or not) in the states' Arctic policies, these case studies present a good placement for a research intervention.

Methodology

I explore how key Canadian and Norwegian narratives play out in their most recent Arctic strategies (2019 and 2021 respectively) and the extent to which such narratives are a response to anxiety on the world stage. Focusing on the two latest whole-of-government Arctic policies is important for a few reasons. First, they are the most recent documents that present themselves as from the Norwegian and Canadian governments at large rather than from a particular sector. Second, focusing on just two documents allows me to take a more in-depth look for key words and adopt a stricter methodological approach when seeking out narratives. I begin by discussing some of the key master autobiographical narratives present in existing research on Norway and Canada. I then undertake a content analysis of both states' most recent Arctic strategies, looking for patterns of these narratives within the policies themselves. To achieve this, I utilized specific key words that matched up to each narrative (i.e., Canadian leadership – leadership, Apologism – apology, harm, wrongdoing, etc.) and searched throughout the documents to see how often words appeared and in what context they were used. I selected these specific words based on the historical contextual analysis I conducted on Norwegian and Canadian ontologies and narratives. For example, much of Canadian literature on the idea of Arctic and Canadian identity had to do with apologism, reckoning with historical wrongs, and the idea of multiculturalism. Here I apply a broad brushstroke to finding those themes in the documents. I used a search tool to go through both documents: 1) the Canadian Arctic Northern Policy Framework (2019) and 2) The Norwegian Government's

Arctic Policy: People, Opportunities, and Norwegian Interests in the Arctic, for specific key words that were developed from the literature review.

Canadian Key Words

Collaborate	Comanage	Cooperate	Leadership
Stewardship	Colonialism	Colonial	Apology
Harm	Wrongs	Peace	Human Security
Heritage	History	Past	Peacekeeping
Pluralism	Multicultural	Health	Fragile

Norwegian Key Words

Viking/Norse	Rural	Countryside	Oil
Gas	Independence	Independent	Human Rights
Amundsen	Nansen	Exploration	Legacy
Pioneer	History	Leader	Cooperate
Collaborate	Steward	Environment	Develop

Focusing on a quantitative approach that examine word counts as a first step and then moving to context allows me to mitigate methodological bias that could have entered the research process when coding the documents. I further discuss what types of anxieties could provoke either all-encompassing existential anxiety that all states experience or specific and dramatic instances of ontological insecurity and analyze how and if such policies can or should be attributed to these anxieties.

Canadian Narratives

While much has been written on Canadian narratives and how they are used by the state, it remains difficult to determine their varying degrees of performativity (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020; Medby 2017; Neumann and de Carvalho 2015; Smith and Sjolander 2013; Williams 2011; Thobani 2007; Shadian 2007; Resnick 2005). Some suggest that part of what makes this difficulty even harder is the distinction between a national and post-national identity of Canada (Williams 2011). While national identity refers to a sense of shared 'we-ness' felt by

citizens that is often connected to culture, history, and territory (Anderson 1991), post-national identity refers to a circumpolar sense of belonging that goes beyond the state. In a national sense, the Arctic is a central part of Canada's core myth, defining the country as a unique northern space that is distinct from the United States (Hulan 2002; Shields 1991). Canada's national identity and Arctic sense of self are mutually constitutive (Williams 2011). The Arctic helps to produce Canada's national identity by building the 'North' and enables calls for resource development. Resource development then becomes a key part of nation-building and reinforces Canadian values of resourcefulness and resilience – and emphasizes the importance of the Arctic for Canada's national identity (Østhagen, Sharp and Hilde 2018; Shadian 2007; Grace 2001; West 1991). In contrast, Canada's post-national identity challenges the Westphalian construct of Canada and sees the Arctic as transnational (Keskitalo 2007; Heininen and Nicol 2007; Hønneland and Stokke 2007; West 1991). This more circumpolar Canadian identity is associated with being a good polar citizen, and emphasizes values like ecological and human health, sustainable communities, and circumpolar cooperation.

In her seminal work comparing Norway, Iceland, and Canadian Arctic identity narratives, Ingrid Medby (2017) suggests that while Canadian officials try to present an Arctic identity on the world stage in the broader context of Canadian identity, there are significant domestic contrasts coming from a plurality of sub-national identities. This presentation of Canadian identity is frequently connected to the past glories and stories of polar explorers – such as Sir John Franklin and his quest for the Northwest Passage - myths of the frontier, and articulating Arctic state identity based on sovereignty and ownership claims to fulfill Canada's Arctic destiny. However, most Canadians have not visited or experienced the Arctic, and so substitute their Arctic identity with these stories of polar explorers and symbols such as cold, winter, ice, inuksuit, and polar bears. What these polar explorer stories obscure is that many Indigenous People lived in the Canadian North before explorers like Franklin.

Canada's identity in the Arctic and globally are not necessarily one and the same. Petra Dolata (2020) argues that while globally, Canada is associated with multilateralism, peacekeeping, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), human security, and peacekeeping (Smith and Sjolander 2013), in the Arctic, Canada's identity is linked to sovereignty. Canadian national identity markers are often associated with human rights, a policy of internationalism, the "middle power" myth, peacekeeping, and engagement (Østhagen, Sharp, and Hilde 2018; Berdahl and Raney 2010; Thobani 2007; McNally 2006; Resnick 2005; Kymlicka 2004; Razack 2004; Munton and Keating 2001). These narratives are premised on Canadian moral virtue, leadership, and responsibility – which are often expressed through Canadian participation in international fora (Neumann and de Carvalho 2015). More recently, these narratives have integrated pride in Canada's civic ideology and strong social programs as well as a sense of apologism (Hiranandani 2011; Francis 1997).

How Canada discusses and portrays the Arctic seems to be linked to a more traditional security narrative that emphasizes Canadian territorial integrity in the north and is driven by anxiety about sovereignty and control, stewardship, and responsibility (Plouffe 2011; Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer 2011). Importantly, however, security and sovereignty are certainly not the same. While security is associated with continental security – for example, NORAD and concern about Russia – sovereignty is, for some, a nationalist counter narrative about the Arctic that sees the region as one to be defended from American expansionism (Lackenbauer and Kikkert 2011). Others suggest that Arctic policy is driven by the perception that Arctic sovereignty is under threat (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020). Outside of specific security-related identifications, the Arctic for Canada also draws upon

key values of resourcefulness, hard work, nature, the desire to explore, and stewardship. These values reinforce and enable a politics of extraction and assertions of sovereignty (Williams 2007). Combining these types of characteristics with a sovereignty-based mindset helps to explain why the Russian 2007 flag planting was perceived as threat to Canadian sovereignty and why there is such a focus on protecting the jurisdiction over the Northwest Passage. This emphasis on security-related issues tends to reinforce the problematic framing of the North as an artifact of the South, a "snow-covered tabula rasa upon which Canadian writers, thinkers, and artists have presented fanciful southern visions of the North" (Coates and Morrison 2008): 641). These idealized stories focus on Arctic exploration and adventure and values of hardship and resilience, illustrating that although the Arctic is clearly a part of Canadian identity, most Canadians have neither lived in the North nor have even visited (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020). Some scholars suggest that how Canada approaches the Arctic is largely influenced by these notions of national identity, for example, that "'the True North, strong and free' is the refrain from its national anthem complemented by popular associations of Canadian-ness with cold, ruggedness and wilderness" (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020: 141).

The extent to which Canadian Arctic or national identity is integrated in its Arctic policies over time is, however, debatable. Bill Graham, Canada's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, has claimed that "there has always been somewhat of a disconnect between political rhetoric about the importance of the Arctic in Canada's national identity as a northern nation and the resources we have provided to turn that rhetoric into reality" (Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer 2011: p. xv). However, there is some sense that there is continuity in how Canada has narrated the Arctic with a focus on security and sovereignty, sustainable development, environmental protection, and engagement with Indigenous People (Exner-Pirot 2021).

For example, the first threat to Canadian Arctic security emerged during World War 2 when Japanese forces captured the Alaskan islands of Attu and Kiska in 1942. In response, the Americans built the Alaskan Highway through Canadian territory in agreement with the Canada to supply forces (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020; Huebert 2005). The Cold War era was marked by increasing security cooperation with the Americans to deter the threat from the Soviet Union through the construction of the Distant Early Warning Line in 1954 and the beginnings of the NORAD alliance in 1957 (Exner-Pirot 2021; Jockel 1987). The Arctic then was seen as a direct means of attack on North American cities for Soviet bombers (Byers 2010). However, for some Canadians, cooperating with the United States against the Soviet Union left them in a quandary. Many saw the United States as representing a sovereignty threat against Canada – where Canada had to surrender some sovereignty to the United States to receive security against the Soviet Union (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2021; Huebert 2005). This was clear in the sovereignty anxiety triggered by the 1969 voyage of the supertanker SS *Manhattan* and the 1985 voyage of the icebreaker USCG *Polar Sea* through the Northwest Passage leading to Canada enacting the *Arctic Waters Pollution Protection Act* and the Territorial Sea and Fishing Zone (Exner-Pirot and Huebert 2020; Griffiths, Huebert and Lackenbauer 2011).

With the end of the Cold War came the end of most Canadian Armed Forces activity in the North and rhetoric around the Arctic shifted to the Arctic Council, a mechanism through which Canada could promote Canadian values such as sustainable development, inclusion of Indigenous groups, and human development (Exner-Pirot 2021). Further, it was only in 2000 that Canada put forward a first dedicated Arctic policy 'Northern Dimension of Foreign Policy' (NDFP), even though the Arctic has been an important part of Canada for many decades. The

NDFP had four objectives: 1) enhancing the security and prosperity of Canadians, particularly northerners, 2) asserting and ensuring the preservation of Canadian sovereignty in the North, 3) establishing the circumpolar region as a geopolitical space part of the rules-based international system, and 4) promoting human security and sustainable development (Heininen and Nicol 2007). This was formally followed by the International Policy Statement in 2005, which was the first real acknowledgement that there had been a failure to work on Canadian Arctic security (Huebert 2005). From 2006-2015, the Harper Government adopted a much more sovereignty-forward approach to the Arctic. Using the rhetoric of 'use it or lose it', the Harper government's rhetoric around the Arctic emphasized the need to use and protect Canadian sovereignty. This is visible across documents such as the 2009 Northern Strategy, where Canada's Far North is framed as a fundamental part of Canada (Dean 2022; Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer 2011) as well as symbolic moves such as the 2014 Canadian submission of an extended territorial claim that include the North pole and the Canadian citizenship minister giving Santa Claus a Canadian passport in 2013 (Dolata 2020). However, recent scholarship has suggested that this rhetorical securitization was paired with largely maintaining the status quo of how Canada had previously acted in the region (Dean 2022; Charron 2022; Lackenbauer 2021).

Scholars have suggested that Canada's current 2019 Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF) portrays its interaction with Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian North as existential to Canadian national identity (Dal 2021). By framing Canada's Arctic future as intrinsically linked to its Indigenous Peoples, Canada manages its existential anxiety – particularly considering security ambiguity in the Arctic. Further, a robust study conducted by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence undertook an analysis of Canadian Arctic policies from 2013-2018 to draw out key Canadian Arctic narratives. The report suggests there are a few notable messages that continue to emphasize Canada's inherently Northern character: 1) a traditional emphasis on Canada's deeply engrained historical relationship in the North; 2) framing Canada as the global leader of climate research and responsible steward of the North; 3) drawing upon centuries of Indigenous inhabitation of the Arctic to justify Canada's Arctic identity; 4) sustainable development of natural resources; 5) the Arctic as fragile; and 6) Canada's Arctic policy framework will be co-developed by the Indigenous community.

Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF)

Many of these narratives are present in Canada's ANPF. A whole of government effort, Canada's Arctic policy framework is the result of a long-term plan and promise from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in December 2016 and represented the first time the federal Canadian government worked collaboratively using roundtables and public submissions with both Indigenous representatives and the territorial & provincial governments to create an all-encompassing strategy for Canada's North (Kikkert and Lackenbauer 2019). The ANPF was originally announced in 2016 and specified that the project would include an indigenous component in partnership with Inuit Nunangat to give a stronger voice and agency to Northerners and Indigenous Communities (Dolata 2020). However, the framework has also been criticized for its lack of budget, timeline, or clear plan for action (Kikkert and Lackenbauer 2019). Broadly, the ANPF covers themes that suggest continuity across Canadian Arctic policy such as comprehensive Arctic infrastructure, strong Arctic people and communities, sustainable and diversified Arctic economies, science and Indigenous knowledge, and environmental protection (Exner-Pirot 2021).

While increased collaboration, Canada's leadership in the Arctic, and apologism were overtly apparent, many of the broader Canadian narratives (i.e., peacekeeping, multiculturalism, and civic ideology) are not. There is also some evidence of the Arctic being portrayed as fragile. Perhaps the clearest thread across the ANPF is the theme of collaboration. As this policy framework was overtly published as a collaborative process between Northerners and the Canadian government, it follows expectations that the ANPF does so. The word stem '*Collaborat*-' is used 28 times, '*Cooperat*-' 13 times and 'Co-*management'* once. Even an opening part of the ANPF notes that "In a significant shift, the federal government, Indigenous peoples, Inuit, First Nations and Metis, 6 territorial and provincial governments contributed to this framework together." This emphasis on collaboration may be virtue-signaling, but its prevalence throughout the document indicates that this virtue is important for the Canadian government to project. Second, and equally as relevant throughout this document is the narrative of Canadian leadership. The word '*leadership'* is used 17 times and '*stewardship'* is used thrice across the 77 pages of the ANPF.[1] Phrases such as "restore Canada's place as an international Arctic leader" and "Canada must demonstrate renewed Arctic leadership" are littered throughout the document. Not only does articulating itself as an Arctic leader allow Canada to give itself power on the world stage, but it also reinforces Canadian Arctic sovereignty in the face of geopolitical competition. Moreover, when climate fragility is mentioned, it is often addressed in the context of Canadian global leadership.

The third most prevalent narrative across the ANPF is a combination of some key Canadian Arctic narratives: an emphasis on Canada's deeply engrained historical relationship with the Arctic with a focus on apologism, drawing upon centuries of Indigenous habitation of the Arctic. Words like '*colonialism,'* '*colonial,'* '*apology,'* '*harm,'* and '*wrongs'* are used around two-to-three times each throughout the ANPF, all addressing a sense that Canada has not dealt with the Arctic and its Indigenous Peoples in a good way. Consider phrases like "The deep and ongoing impact on Indigenous people of the residential school experience and the broader colonial legacy…" and "the impacts of colonialism in the Arctic and the North affected Indigenous People in many ways…" Alongside this sense of apologism, however, the ANPF draws on centuries of Indigenous habitation in the Arctic to connect to Canada today, suggesting that Canada's Arctic sovereignty is premised on Indigenous habitation – "for thousands of years, the Inuit have lived on, traveled across, and hunted, fished, and trapped in the Canadian Arctic." This combination of reckoning with the past while also using it to shore of claims of sovereignty and historic title is akin to walking a tightrope. Canada must reconcile with its past colonial behavior while also using that same connection to further drive the sense of Canadian Arctic identity.

Many of the broader Canadian narratives are not, however, really present in the ANPF. While '*peace'* appears 5 time and '*human security'* appears twice across the document, when the ANPF notes the importance of the rules-based international order, the idea of peacekeeping does not appear. Multiculturalism is also not used. Instead, the ANPF highlights cooperation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Northern groups to promote Canada as a country that values collaboration as its raison d'etre, not multiculturalism. One broad narrative that presents another interesting case is that of pride in a strong social safety net such as universal healthcare and other liberal institutions. Instead of pride, the ANPF brings attention to how Northerners really lack that same social safety net that the rest of Canada has. Addressing a lack of housing, low education levels, high rates of unemployment, food insecurity and incarceration are all key portions of the document – perhaps indicating that this lack of a social net is ontologically problematic for Canada, which normally prides itself on such institutions.

Why do some Canadian Arctic narratives play out on the page and other broader narratives do not? Here it is important to consider the political context at the time that the ANPF was published in 2019, after the annexation of Crimea and in the broader context of increased focus on the Arctic. Growing evidence of geopolitical rivalry alongside interest by China in the resources of the Arctic may trigger Canadian existential anxiety. Thus, in the face of increased attention on the Arctic, Canada reacted and managed this growing anxiety by 1) asserting its leadership; and 2) providing more evidence that Canada is a key Arctic player based on its history and Northern identity. Reinforcing Canada's Arctic identity due to anxiety is by no means a new strategy for Canadian political leadership, as evidenced by fears of losing sovereignty to the United States as a necessary balance for security protection against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Harper years 'use it or lose it' rhetoric, and the Canadian government's responses to the 1989 *Polar Sea* and 1969 *USS Manhattan* jurisdictional incidents in the Northwest Passage. The ANPF very clearly shows this intention through focusing on Canada's role as an Arctic leader and harkening back to its past. However, beyond this international anxiety, there is domestic ontological insecurity in Canada as well during this time – particularly coming from moral injury and ethical anxiety of the discovery of residential school graves (Subotic and Steele 2018). As a state that has based much of its broad narratives on peace and multiculturalism, the continual discovery and reckoning with its harmful colonial past causes Canada to double down on this idea of apologism, which has been prevalent across Canadian politics since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1991. Thus, it makes sense for scholars to see in the ANPF such a sense of apologism and huge focus on collaboration to address this moral injury and ontological insecurity.

Norwegian Narratives

Much work on Norwegian identity and the narratives that underpin it exists throughout different literatures (Greaves 2021; Østhagen 2021a; Østhagen, Sharp, and Hilde 2018). Importantly, there are conflicting and different identities that exist within and throughout Norwegian identities, the extent to which Arctic identity is Norwegian identity, and what discrepancies – if any – lie between the two (Medby 2015). While some study Norwegian identity in contrast to the question of European integration (Skinner 2012; Tanil 2003), others link Norwegian narratives to Norway's history of peasants and rural farmers (Ragan 2021; Thorkildsen 2014; Ostergard 1992). Relatedly, scholars have addressed Norwegian identity in the context of the rapid rise of immigration and rising Islamophobia in Norway (Eriksen 2013), as well as through the lens of education (Eriksen 2018; Osler and Lybaek 2014). Others study specifically Norway's Arctic identity (Medby 2017; Medby 2014; Medby 2015).

As with all countries, understanding Norwegian identity and the narratives used is inextricably linked to its history. Scholars have noted that the Norwegian national consciousness is based on claims of ancient ancestry, specifically Viking mythology, and is informed by a history of human rights and the Enlightenment (Eriksen 2013). This search for Norwegian national consciousness, however, began broadly in the 1930s. Norwegians sought to connect the new nation with ancient Norway, describing the heroic history of the nation as one that was based on a society of free men and equal rights and, importantly, was superior to Denmark and Sweden. Literature explored folk legends, fairy tales, and literary language to create an idealized version of culture that survived 400 years of oppression by Denmark (Thorkildsen 2014). Scholars utilized narratives such as the

creation of a founding myth, the golden age of splendor, and a corresponding period of inner decay. Today, Leira (2015) suggests that Norway seeks status globally but does so by presenting itself as a 'good' power desiring peace and through a policy of involvement through mediation, UN peacekeeping, and expressions of moral authority such as the Nobel Peace Prize and its history of environmental engagement.

Beyond claims of Viking ancestry and human rights, Norway's historical experience with occupation (i.e., independence from Sweden only in 1905; German occupation 1940-1945) has also been influential in propelling anxiety that Norway today might be sieged by foreigners (Eriksen 2013). This history of foreign rule, struggle for independence, along with other financial considerations such as the size of Norway's sovereign wealth fund has also had a serious impact on Norway's Euroscepticism as Norway sees its independence as so valuable that it takes priority over everything else (Skinner 2012). This struggle for independence persists across Norwegian self-perception (Medby 2017; Eriksen and Neumann 2011). Broadly, scholars have also noted that Norwegian identity is rooted in the romanticization of peasantry and the countryside, deeply embedded in a homogenous understanding of what Norway is, often leaving out the Sami or implying their assimilation (Eriksen 2018; Skinner 2012; Brochmann 2003; Eriksen 2002; Burgess 2001). This romanticization is often paired with the idea of the 'oil fairytale' – that the discovery of oil in the North Sea allowed Norway to transform from an impoverished rural country to one of the world's wealthiest oil exporters (Medby 2017; Kristoffersen and Young 2010).

Others have argued that Norwegian identity and the narratives at play cannot be separated from its Arctic identity and ontology. Medby (2017) argues that Norway's Arctic coastal spatiality anchors its Arctic identity through a Norwegian narrative, the Arctic is temporally understood through a backwards gaze that focuses on polar explorers and Norwegian Arctic exploration. Here, polar explorers such as Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen are particularly important because they not only represent Norwegian Arctic identity and sovereignty, but also in their placement across Norwegian institutions such as airplanes, stamps, and statues, remind Norwegians that of their Arctic legitimacy (Greaves 2021; Medby 2015; Medby 2014). Beyond the important role of polar explorers, scholars have noted that Norway's ocean areas are particularly key to Norway's Arctic identity – that it is based on the ocean rather than land masses (Medby 2017).

Situating this Arctic identity within Norwegian Arctic policy helps to illustrate the inability to separate the two. Discourse of Norway's High North - 'nordomradene' in Norwegian – entered the public sphere in the 1980s and was a hugely important part of Norwegian foreign policy (Østhagen 2021a). The Arctic for Norway was shaped by the Cold War and represented a balancing act by the Nordic states to avoid conflict in the region. In the wake of the Cold War, Norway's primary focus on the Arctic was about desecuritizing Russian relations. Rather than concern about predicable Soviet aggression, there was worry that Russian state weakness would lead to increasing environmental hazards and the spillover of ethnic conflict. Thus, Norway's Arctic policy emphasized stabilizing relations with Russia, normalizing Arctic affairs, and regionalizing the region through the creation of effective organizations (Greaves 2021). The 2000s brought significant focus to the High North with the release of the Mot Nord 2003 Expert Commission, where Foreign Minister Støre called for Norway to 'Go North'. Throughout the early 2000s, the region was constructed as one of cooperation and built on pragmatism in the region on issues of economic development, climate, and multilateralism, particularly evidenced by the 2010 settlement of a boundary dispute between Russia and Norway (Østhagen 2021a). However, as Russia began to

change its approach to the Arctic by restarting sovereignty flights, so too did Norway begin to modernize its military and construct the High North as a key region for the defence of Norway. Across the changing structural differences for Norway in the Arctic, there is some degree of continuity in how Norway makes Arctic policy. The primary foci are 1) keeping Russians out of Norway's Arctic territory, and 2) extracting natural resources as they are central to Norwegian national interests (Greaves 2021). Not only is oil revenue framed as important to Norway's welfare state, but it is connected to defending against energy dependence on Russia.

All the above indicators of Norwegian Arctic identity, policy, and the narratives at play allow Norway's government to position Norway as a particularly salient actor in the region (Medby 2014). This, of course, does not mean that there are not differences in how different sub-populations of Norway understand the Arctic. For example, while government policies (as evidenced below) attempt to promote the national identity of the Arctic (i.e., 'the High North' strategy), there are different narratives of sub-national, national, and international understandings of where Norway fits in the Arctic that also exist (Medby 2014). Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, for example, describes Norway's affinity to the Arctic as originating from its geography, history, cultural heritage, economics, and the legacy of polar explorers (Stoltenberg 2013). Considering these differences, the Norwegian government seeks leadership in the North, particularly based around strategic science, concerns of sovereignty and security, and natural resources. Thus, Norway's Arctic political practice is often characterized by its participation in international fora and through promoting environmental stewardship and consciousness across the Arctic (Medby 2017).[2] Beyond just participating, Norway also seeks recognition and influence as a small state to punch above its weight (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015). It does this via multilateral organizations as well such as NATO, the bilateral relationship with the United States, and multilateral cooperation in the region through the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council (Østhagen 2021c; Østhagen, Sharp, and Hilde 2018). This recognition is sought through the performativity of acting like a mediator state – through working closely with Russia on fisheries agreement, as one example. Thus, Norway appears to have existential anxiety linked to being a small state and needing to prove its influence.

The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy: People, Opportunities, and Norwegian Interests in the Arctic

Some of the above narratives surrounding Norwegian identity were reflected in the Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy (2021).[3] Co-developed by the office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Fisheries and Seafood, and the Ministry of Regional Development and Digitalisation, Norway's Arctic policy is the first of its kind since 2011. The paper's emphasis is to bring together general issues of the High North such as regional development, foreign policy, and domestic politics to show Norwegian action in a region growing in popularity. Like the Canadian analysis above, the most common narrative and language found is that of cooperation and collaboration followed closely by an emphasis on development. However, narratives and key words that focused on Norwegian history, rural identity, and independence are not as prevalent as expected, suggesting that Norwegian anxiety in the face of climate change and growing geopolitical competition is not as acute.

The clearest trend across this document is twofold: cooperation and development. '*Cooperat-*' is used 71 times and '*collab-*' is used once. This overarching focus on cooperation lines up with scholars who have noted that Norwegian Arctic political practice is characterized by its participation in international fora (Medby 2017). Although this emphasis on collaboration is likely partially virtue-signaling, its heavy presence throughout the document clearly illustrates its importance to how Norway presents itself on the world stage. The document's opening phrase states that "Norway's Arctic policy revolves around security, stability, and interest-based international cooperation," thus clearly showing the centrality of cooperation to how Norway presents itself in the Arctic. Development is also a not insignificantly used term with '*develop'* being used 54 times throughout the document. It is certainly notable that the idea of development is so prevalent in Arctic policy and suggests that Norway sees the Arctic as an area that requires some type of work to advance.

Considering development, this begs the question of whether oil and gas development is what Norway means. However, oil and gas are only mentioned five times with respect to vessel requirements for oil resource development and the IMO's ban on heavy fuel. For example, "oil and gas activities and development projects on the continental shelf will open up major opportunities for companies and the industry on the mainland" and "government preparedness and response systems for acute pollution is designed to prevent and limit environmental damage in the event of oil spills." Given that some scholars note that Norway prefaces its history on this idea of an 'oil fairytale' – it is surprising that there is not as much language focusing on that important history, no mention of '*rural'* or '*countryside'* or anxiety expressed about a potential moratorium on oil and gas extraction from the European Union (Medby 2017; Kristoffersen and Young 2010).

Perhaps the most surprising finding is the lack of language on Norwegian history. Not only is '*Viking'* or *'Norse'* not used at any point throughout the document, but words like '*Amundsen'*, '*Nansen'*, '*exploration'*, '*independence'*, '*legacy'*, and '*pioneer'* are also not used. Given Norwegian emphasis not only on re-finding Norwegian identity after Swedish occupation, but also on its history of fighting against occupation, this is surprising. While those words are not mentioned, the document itself has framing that used ideas of defense, which may explain the lack of words on fighting against occupation and maintaining a sense of independence. For example, the policy has sections focused on NATO, Norway's military capabilities, Russian militarization, the role of the Norwegian Armed Forces, the Norwegian police, the Security Service, the Norwegian National Security Authority, and a section on the US military alliance. Further, while specific historical references are not used, '*history'* is used four times, such as "Raising awareness of the history of North Norway as part of our cultural heritage, from antiquity to thousand-year-old, coastal trading routes to the Second World War and the post-war reconstruction years, is an important part of our work." This and other references tend to reference the role of Sami history and promoting deeper knowledge about Norwegian history to Norwegian youth. One additional note regarding history is Norway's focus on the ocean and coast as an important geographic characteristic to itself in the literature. It is difficult to use content analysis to study this aspect and thus it largely lies outside the scope of this analysis, but it is interesting that there were specific parts of this policy that explicitly outlined Norway's 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the Norwegian continental shelf and its maritime delimitation.

Considering Arctic specific narratives, the literature suggested that the policy should express content that Norway has a specific place in the Arctic and that Norway seeks leadership in the Arctic in particular ways such

as through cooperation and by promoting itself as an environmental steward. As referenced above, it is certainly true that ideas of cooperation and collaboration are highlighted in the document. However, '*environment'* is also used 16 times referencing environmentally friendly towns, research, protection, assessments, and conventions. '*Leadership'* is used once, and '*steward'* is not used at all. Thus, while the explicit focus on leadership as seen in Canada's framework isn't seen in this content analysis, the references to environment, where Norway is considered a leader globally, suggest that it may be implied. Interestingly, when it comes to considering Norway has having a special place in the Arctic, it is notable that the policy has a whole section on domestic issues – there is no emphasis on foreign versus domestic – they are one and the same, reinforcing the idea that Norwegian and Arctic issues are not separate.

Although the literature on Norwegian identity and history led me to hypothesize that Norway would be anxious about assuring its place as an Arctic nation and ensuring its future as an oil producer, such trends and language were not found in its 2021 policy paper. As discussed above, references to past Norwegian explorers, past occupation of Norway, and its Viking history are not present. Interestingly, while words are not used to discuss strong concerns about occupation, the document has large sections dedicated to defense – including on Norway's military capabilities and its alliances along with a focus on Russian militarization. This may indicate that, while in other ways Norway may have anxieties about independence and occupation, that theme translated into a focus on defense in this strict content analysis. Further, anxieties about not producing oil in the wake of climate change are not visible in this policy. Interestingly, anxieties in the literature about Norwegian Arctic history are also not present in the Policy – suggesting that Norway may not be as anxious in today's world about its perceived place in the Arctic. What was clearly present in the document was references to cooperation, environment, and development. These ideas come back to Norway's pursuit of leadership in the Arctic, promoting itself through the three ideas outlined above. This may indicate that Norway is slightly anxious about its place as a small state, but that anxiety is not expressed through a focus on reinforcing its history, but instead through its actions through relationships with NATO, the US, and other organizations, strengths, and combination of Norwegian and Arctic identity. When considering the role of anxiety as an ordering principle with this approach, it may indicate that while Norway is dealing with existential anxiety as all states do, there is little evidence to suggest ontological insecurity.

Discussion

Using an ontological security lens to explore the role of autobiographical narratives in the two most recent Canadian and Norwegian Arctic policies adds nuance to our understandings of how anxiety plays an important role in the formation of Arctic politics. Not only was it notable how much more Canadian anxieties played out on the page compared to Norway, but such an analysis highlighted the importance of considering these anxieties in a specific geographic context. Larger causes of anxiety on the world stage such as global warming and the resurgence of great power competition, for example, clearly play out differently across different states. This comes back to the question of perceived anxiety, instead of that there are material problems in the world that states are reacting to. Both Canada and Norway are experiencing the consequences of both global issues – however, they perceive and thus react to anxiety in different ways. For example, Canada seems to be reacting quite strongly to anxiety by asserting its Canadian Arctic history and leadership, providing evidence that Canada

is a key Arctic player, and conveying a sense of apologism throughout the ANPF. In contrast, while the literature suggested that Norway would suffer from wanting to be seen as a key Arctic player, its 2021 policy does not reflect this anxiety. Not only were calls back to polar explorers and Norwegian Arctic identity not highlighted in Norway's Arctic policy but concerns about the dominance of oil and gas in Norwegian history and narrative were similarly not addressed. If anxiety was conveyed in the document, it perhaps is only done so in highlighting Norwegian leadership on questions of environment and a focus on defense issues. Both Canadian and Norwegian anxiety will, likely, change in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and it remains to be seen how such autobiographical narratives will be utilized in that rhetorical approach.

However, the differences between states may also have to do with their place in the world. The role of geography is clearly key in considering the difference in how states had broad or Arctic-specific narratives at play in their policies. In Canada, for example, the Arctic covers a large portion of the country, but most citizens live in the south, leading to disconnect between larger ontological narratives and particular Arctic policies. In Norway, by contrast, it was difficult to draw those distinctions. Further, in reacting to these anxieties on the world stage – particularly as they relate to Russia as an always dangerous neighbor whose cooperation was necessary to develop. Thus, changes in Norwegian Arctic policy to geopolitical change are less connected to particular events, but rather are a continuation of the status quo. This empirically supports the work of other scholars who have written about sub-regions of the Arctic, suggesting that it is not just conceptually that the North American Arctic and European Arctic that have different security implications, but such differences are expressed discursively in national policy (Greaves 2019; Østhagen 2021b). While some OSS scholars do discuss geography, it merits further discussion on how overall ontological anxiety or specific instances of ontological insecurity manifest in different national contexts.

This strict content analysis of two documents leaves out a more nuanced historical analysis of how identity markers change over time and throughout different types of Arctic policy. While there are conclusions regarding the role of geography and how states interpret anxiety in different ways, this analysis highlights the importance of studying policies in combination with state actions. Moreover, it illustrates how written policies may be quite performative in nature, portraying only what states want – which makes it more interesting how much anxiety is present within Canadian formal Arctic documents and how little was present in Norway's. Future research should more thoroughly investigate the role of different cultures within an ontological security framework, particularly focusing on how observing different variables such as geography or culture may indicate whether such narratives – either regional or broadly national – come up in national policy, and the extent to which they emerge in state action.

Notes

[1] Note, when the ANPF was printed off the Canadian government website, it came to 77 pages in what appears to size 16 font.
[2] Norway claims leadership for environmental stewardship as the Norwegian PM Brundtland led the UN 1987 Report coining the term.
[3] Note, when this policy was printed off the Norwegian government website, the policy came to 42 pages in what appears to size 14 font.

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