



# **Securitising Kaliningrad — Security as a Speech Act?**

**Kaliningrad's A2/AD Capabilities: at the heart of NATO's Securitisation Process in the Baltic Sea Region**

by

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## Abstract

This paper aims at analysing discourses over the deployment of Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the Kaliningrad *Oblast* by Russia. This paper seeks to identify instances of securitisation from NATO to challenge the realist assumption that military power are key to define security. An overview of the literature will illustrate contradictory warnings regarding the *Oblast's* A2/AD, allowing to question the extent to which military capabilities are (in)security providers. A discourse analysis of NATO statements and a Swedish technical report will be conducted following the Copenhagen School of Security Studies' framework — Securitisation Theory. The findings demonstrates that NATO securitises A2/AD through an identity rhetoric, thereby influencing security perception in the BSR. This will highlight how the understanding of Baltic military security is shaped by such securitisation. This paper will conclude that conceiving security as a speech acts allows for more depth in understanding NATO-Russia tensions in the BSR than what Realism asserts.

**Keywords:** A2/AD, Kaliningrad, NATO, Copenhagen School's Securitisation Theory, Military security.

## Résumé

Cet article vise à analyser les discours concernant le déploiement des capacités de Dénier d'Accès/Interdiction de Zone (A2/AD) dans l'*Oblast* de Kaliningrad. Ce papier cherche à identifier les processus de sécuritisation de l'OTAN afin de tester la théorie réaliste selon laquelle les capacités militaires priment dans la définition de la sécurité. Un aperçu de la littérature concernant les capacités A2/AD de Kaliningrad révélera des avertissements contradictoires, permettant de questionner la portée des arguments réalistes. Ce dossier effectuera ensuite une analyse de discours de l'OTAN et d'un rapport suédois suivant le cadre théorique de l'École de Copenhague : la théorie de la sécuritisation. Les résultats démontreront que l'OTAN sécuritise A2/AD au travers d'une rhétorique identitaire, influençant ainsi l'appréhension de la sécurité dans la RMB. Il sera conclu que concevoir la sécurité comme acte de langage permet une meilleure compréhension des tensions entre l'OTAN et la Russie, contrairement à la théorie réaliste.

**Mots-clés :** A2/AD, Kaliningrad, OTAN, Théorie de la Sécuritisation de l'École de Copenhague, Sécurité militaire.

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## List of Abbreviations

A2 — Anti-Access

A2/AD — Anti-Access/Area-Denial

AD — Area-Denial

BS — Baltic States

BSR — Baltic Sea Region

BSS — Baltic Sea States

DIP — Defence Investment Pledge

EFP — Enhanced Forward Presence

EU — European Union

FOI — *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut*

GDP — Gross Domestic Product

IR — International Relations

NATO — North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

US — United States

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# Introduction

One often says that a picture is worth a thousand words. While this may be true for paintings, and drawings, it appears also accurate for military security. Indeed, drawing circles on maps has been the latest trend in media and scholar publications — more precisely, circles representing the range of Russian missiles in diverse locations. For instance, Williams (2017) produced an interactive map offering real-time assessment of such capabilities against North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, worries erupted over the latter's ability to seize any territory in its near-abroad (Sukhankin, 2017). These concerns narrowed down on Russia's westernmost region — the Kaliningrad *Oblast* (Kulakov and Pulyaeva, 2016). Indeed, it lies at the crossroad between NATO and Russia and houses various capabilities, such as Iskander-M and S-400 missiles. Scholars present them as Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities set to prevent NATO reinforcement of Baltic States members. A2/AD refers to a strategy combining both the effort to prevent forces from *entering* a certain area — Anti-Access (A2) — and to restrict *freedom of manoeuvre* in that specific area — Area-Denial (AD). This strategy can be implemented by maritime, air or ground capabilities such as Iskander missiles. However, the literature is split regarding such capabilities in Kaliningrad. On the one hand, various researchers stress the deployment of Iskander missiles as NATO's "worst nightmare" (Gao, 2018) and echo realist assumptions that security is related to capabilities. On the other hand, others temper this assessment and suggest the existence of narratives of identity and (in)security revolving around unsustainable missiles. As it leads to wonder whether there may be something more than A2/AD capabilities challenging the regional security environment, this debate parallels the Realism versus Securitisation Theory dispute. While the former holds security as objectively related to military capabilities, the latter regards it as discursively constructed by securitising actors. Besides, as the realist-oriented segment of the literature is itself polarised, these contradictory warnings call the realist ability to address security in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) into question.

This paper aims to analyse securitisation theory as the option out of the debate. In particular, the analysis seeks to question the relevance of the realist assumption that military security rests on capabilities when applied to the Baltic security environment. It also aims to understand how military threats and security are perceived through Self and Othering practices. Thus, this paper intends to study how the key security actors construct security, and to explore the implications of addressing military security through securitisation. Hence, it asks: how are A2/AD capabilities shaping the conception of security in relation to identity-crafting in the BSR?

To answer this question, the paper will investigate the extent to which designating A2/AD capabilities as threats conveys identity dynamics *vis-à-vis* Russia. More specifically, the analysis will focus on NATO's military securitisation regarding Kaliningrad. Also, it will assess the extent to which one might conceive security in a polarised region such as the BSR away from the realist lens. Therefore, the paper seeks to uncover how identity matters in the securitisation of military existential threats. To this end, it will mobilise Hansen's (2006) framework for speech analysis, as it allows to highlight diverging basic discourses influencing securitisation through identity dynamics. The study will examine statements by NATO officials between 2014 and 2018 and a report from a Swedish research agency. It is assumed that analysing various sources will provide more accuracy to the findings and interpretations.

This paper is structured as follows. A background section introduces basic knowledge on the topic. Chapter 1 reviews the existing literature on Kaliningrad's A2/AD capabilities and outlines the research problem. Chapter 2 provides insights on the methodological framework and data-selection process mobilised in the study. Chapter 3 conducts a speech analysis of the selected material and ends with a summary of the findings. Chapter 4 interprets and discusses the results, before briefly tackling the contributions, limitations and advice for future research of the findings. Finally, chapter 5 answers to the research puzzle and provides an overall conclusion.

# Background

## *Military security in the Baltic Sea Region*

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) comprehends the states around the Baltic Sea. It gathers Germany, Poland, Russia, the Nordic States — Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden — and the Baltic States (BS) — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Half of the Baltic Sea States (BSS) are former Soviet Union Republics. Consequently, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) membership polarises the region. Indeed, all BSS except Russia, Finland and Sweden are NATO members. The BS' entry into the Alliance in 2004 invigorated tensions between Russia and the rest of the BSR (McNamara, 2017), as Russia considers NATO a threat (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016: §70).

2014 marked a watershed in the Baltic military security. The annexation of Crimea by Russia prompted the BSS to increase their defence and security readiness (Makarychev and Sergunin, 2017). Overall, military security in the region is conditioned by United States (US)-Russia polarised relations (McNamara, 2017), crystallising around the Kaliningrad *Oblast*.

## *The Kaliningrad Oblast*

The Kaliningrad *Oblast* (or region) refers to a Russian exclave located between Poland and Lithuania.<sup>1</sup> The *Oblast's* main city is also called Kaliningrad. In this paper, 'Kaliningrad' refers to the *Oblast*.

In 1945, it was detached from East Prussia and integrated in the Soviet Union (Furmonavicius, 2003). Soviet citizens were relocated in Kaliningrad, while German dwellers were expelled. Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, neighbouring Lithuania and Poland gained independence, thereby cutting the *Oblast* off from Russia. Given its strategic location, the military capabilities in Kaliningrad are scrutinised by NATO. The *Oblast's* status as a 'geopolitical hostage' (Lopata, 2005) thus suggests a place of tense encounters between NATO and Russia (Żyła, 2019) manifesting themselves around the Anti-Access/Area-Denial capabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> For a map locating Kaliningrad, please refer to [Map 1](#) in Appendix A (p.39).

# Kaliningrad's A2/AD: A Bubble to Burst?

This chapter aims at offering a review of the existing literature on Kaliningrad and its Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. It is divided into four sections. It first highlights two diverging positions concerning A2/AD in the *Oblast*. It then successively relates these accounts to the Realist and Securitisation theories and concludes by evidencing a puzzle.

## 1.1 A2/AD — Contradictory warnings

Various authors and scholars tackle the question of Kaliningrad's military capabilities in the literature. Frank Tétart (2019), for instance, gives first insights into the topic of strategic perception of the Kaliningrad *Oblast*. His account highlights an instrumentalisation of the *Oblast* by the Russian government. It is exemplified by the recurring deployment of Iskander-M missiles as of 2016 in response to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) deployments in the region (ibid.: 150). His article illustrates the prevalence of Kaliningrad both for Russia and NATO. Indeed, following the fall of the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad's function and representation came to mirror the image of a military stronghold (ibid.: 154). Although demilitarisation took place by the end of the 1990s, the 'outpost' representation pertained both in the West and in the East (ibid.: 157). As a matter of fact, the 2004 NATO expansion towards the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) fuelled the instrumentalisation of the *Oblast* as a military outpost against the NATO-isation of the region and the deployment of Iskander capabilities.

More than simple worries from Tétart, the literature on the *Oblast's* militarisation illustrates growing concerns regarding the topic of military security in the region. United States (US) Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Stueck (2018) sums this tendency well, arguing that Russian President Vladimir Putin regards Kaliningrad "as Russia's western bastion" and that this bears military implications for NATO (ibid.: 11). Indeed, he establishes that NATO lacks a dedicated air power equal to the Russian air force. His choice to tackle Kaliningrad's militarisation as part of his thesis requirements illustrates Kaliningrad's salience at the military level.

Yet, what also appears when one reviews the existing literature on security issues around the *Oblast* is genuine apprehensions over the A2/AD strategic 'bubble'. One of the most comprehensive definition of this strategy comes from Tangredi (2013). He states that A2/AD aims to "prevent the attacker from bringing its operationally superior forces into the contested region or ... from freely operating ... and maximizing its combat power" (ibid.: 1). From this, it appears that the possibility of Russia implementing A2/AD over the BSR from Kaliningrad is established on the prospects of use of the *Oblast's* military capabilities. For instance, Iskander-M missiles are A2/AD capabilities and possess a wide strike area that could hit the Baltic States from Kaliningrad (Stueck, 2018).

Therefore, the literature over Kaliningrad extensively deals with A2/AD capabilities and their implications for NATO. Some scholars question NATO's ability to answer to A2/AD threats, for instance Douris (2016); Lanoszka and Hunzeker (2016); Lasconjarias (2019). Guillaume Lasconjarias' (2019) study can be considered a complete summary of these concerns. He argues that NATO should develop a comprehensive strategy to be perceived a credible deterrent, as Russia's A2/AD challenges collective defence (ibid.: 74). Besides, Lasconjarias highlights that A2/AD poses a triple challenge to the Alliance. First, a political challenge, related to the assurance that NATO's collective defence capabilities will pertain. Second and

third, material and ideational challenges, since enhancing the Alliance's presence forward would risk antagonising Russia (ibid.: 78-79). Increasing NATO's collective defence commitment would represent, for Lasconjarias, a hazardous bet. Regardless of political and ideational challenges, Kaliningrad's A2/AD strategy represents a military trial for the BSR, particularly for the Baltic States (BS) — comprising Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

However, despite the numerous warnings over the military uncertainty of A2/AD capabilities in the *Oblast*, it remains a debated issue within the literature. Indeed, it is striking to observe that scholars and military officials such as Richardson (2016), Majumdar (2016), Lasconjarias and Nagy (2017) or Raitasalo (2018) reject the understanding of A2/AD as a threat. US Admiral Richardson (2016), for instance, urges to ban using the term 'A2/AD'. Likewise, Majumdar (2016) argues that in case of A2/AD establishment over the BSR, NATO would easily burst the bubble by air power, contradicting Stueck (2018). Furthermore, Nielsen (2019) demonstrates that Russia cannot establish and sustain A2/AD in the BSR on the long-term. Yet — and this is interesting — he states that Russia is aware of this and exploits A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad to shift the regional dynamics to deter NATO. He concludes that Western policymakers misunderstand the extent to which Russia can implement A2/AD. Besides, Raitasalo (2018) highlights that the attribution of A2/AD strategy to Russia by the West dates back to 2014, since Western militaries lacked any better concept to frame the annexation of Crimea. Additionally, he warns of the over-use of the term 'A2/AD' regarding Russia's military capabilities. He advances that it may lead to overestimating these capabilities and oversimplifying the logics and motives of Russia's military actions. Ultimately, this term acts as a "buzzword" creating faulty confidence in threat perception (Raitasalo, 2018).

Coupled together, these contradictory warnings — A2/AD as a threat versus a buzzword — can be gathered into one strand of the literature over A2/AD in Kaliningrad. It stresses military capabilities and missiles as (in)security providers and conditioning threat perception in the BSR. Conversely, some scholars — Frühling and Lasconjarias (2016); Sukhankin (2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019) among others — consider security scenarios around A2/AD differently. Sukhankin (2019) adds cognitive elements to the A2/AD dilemma. Kaliningrad's militarisation is linked, according to him, to Russia's peculiar military thinking. Indeed, Russia continuously seeks to identify NATO's weak spots and to implement a corresponding strategy to increase these concerns. He establishes that Russia has perceived NATO's fears over the A2/AD-isation of the *Oblast* (ibid.: 104). To exacerbate these weak spots, Russia has thus implemented the "Iskander diplomacy" (Sukhankin, 2016c) and conducted extensive military exercises. Sukhankin's work illustrates the gamble made by Russia on NATO's threat perceptions. It also elucidates a less traditional approach than a purely military one focused exclusively on material capabilities. Finally, he advances that Moscow strives to create an image of Kaliningrad profoundly exceeding its actual capabilities to convey the impression that NATO is under-equipped (Sukhankin, 2019:105). Hence, with this second segment of literature of A2/AD, the Kaliningrad hurdle appears linked to more than military capabilities.

There are therefore contradictory positions over Kaliningrad's A2/AD in the literature. The first piece of literature focuses on military capabilities and either accentuates or downplays the threat. The second segment stresses a different understanding of security. It implies that there may be something more to A2/AD than military capabilities. Interestingly, these diverging accounts mirror two different conceptions of security from International Relations (IR) theories.

## 1.2 Realism and security as a necessity

Realism is represented by the first segment of literature. It stresses the anarchical nature of the international system since it considers power as what defines the relations between states. The latter continuously seek to increase their power, as their actions are based on the power-seeking flaws of human nature (Morgenthau, 1948). States are understood as the main actors of the international system, being considered as unitary and rational (Glaser, 2013:15). Yet, realism is divided in different trends contending about the factors pushing states to compete.

Structural realism (or neorealism) advances that the anarchical structure of the international environment — and not human nature — drives states into competition (Waltz, 1979). Given the genuine uncertainty about other states' motives, cooperation is risky. Thus, Waltz argues that states can internally or externally balance rising powers to survive to anarchy. Yet, structural realism is divided into sub-strands. Offensive realism is best represented by Mearsheimer (2001). It contends that states strive to attain hegemony through power maximisation — conversely to Waltz (1979), for whom states may recognise the limitations of competition. Offensive realism also holds that states prefer to buck-pass rather than to balance (Glaser, 2013:20). Conversely, defensive realism asserts that given the risks of security dilemma, states may cooperate to ensure security (ibid.: 16-18). Indeed, the security dilemma posits that for one to feel safe, the other will be threatened. It leads to power-maximisation competitions between states and degrades the security environment. Overall, realist scholars stress that states must reach and guarantee security because no other entity will do so. Hence, security becomes an objective necessity that must be fulfilled through military-related measures.

Having flourished between 1945 and the early 1990s, realism is often criticised for having failed to predict the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent changes in the international system. Indeed, new definitions of security became prevalent features, both in world politics and in IR theory. This prompted new theoretical frameworks to emerge, such as Securitisation Theory, with a more critical stance on security.

## 1.3 Securitisation theory and security as a speech act

It was established that some researchers tackling Kaliningrad's A2/AD rejected the emphasis on security as based on power and military capabilities, and focused on more subjective practices. This shift can be related to the Securitisation Theory. It draws its origins from the works of scholars from the Copenhagen School of Security Studies (thereafter Copenhagen School), such as Buzan (1991); Buzan *et al.* (1998), or Wæver (1989, 1995, 2003). The Paris and Aberystwyth Schools also critically tackle securitisation processes. As this paper focuses on more mainstream securitisation instances, the Copenhagen School's securitisation framework will be studied.

Securitisation theorists seek to widen the scope of security studies by incorporating nonmilitary threats to the spectrum (Wæver, 1989, 1995, 2003). They regard security as a particular kind of politics divided into five sectors — military, political, economic, societal and environmental (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:7-8). To prevent losing accuracy over the definition of security, the Copenhagen School created a precise framework to identify and analyse threats. It works through precise elements: *existential threats* compromising the security of a *referent object* — be it military or nonmilitary — must be staged as such by *securitising actors*. The latter become

legitimate to endorse *extraordinary measures*, beyond the reach of “ordinary” political procedures (ibid.: 5). Through this framework, security becomes a “move” that frames a given threat as above politics (ibid.: 23). More precisely, security refers to a “self-referential practice” from the securitising actor (ibid.: 24). This framework is securitisation.

However, securitisation does not simply indicate framing something as an existential threat to a given referent object — this process would only represent a “securitising move” (ibid.). For securitisation to occur, the audience — experts, military officials — must accept this move. Therefore, it is not the implementation of emergency measures that achieves securitisation, but rather the acceptance by the audience that legitimises these measures (ibid.: 24). Security thus becomes a “speech act” between the securitising actor and its audience (ibid.: 26) created through a “grammar of security” (ibid.: 32). Yet, a successful speech act requires “facilitating conditions”(Wæver, 2003:14). These are: a particular security rhetoric, social conditions favouring the acceptance of the securitising attempt, and characteristics of the existential threat making it so that securitisation will be easier (ibid.: 32-33). In the military sector, securitising moves and effective securitisation are often undertaken by officials and military elites securitising the State as a referent object (Buzan et al., 1998:49). Military securitisation depends to a large extent on political relations between different securitising actors (ibid.: 52). Military “senses of threat” are also socially constructed (ibid.: 57). Securitisation theory thus shifts the focus away from objective threats towards social practices of security. Indeed, the success of securitisation moves is genuinely conditioned by their ability to demarcate a community to protect from the ‘Other’. Such move thus often deeply relies on a ‘we’ versus ‘them’ rhetoric outlining how the Self and the Other are understood and constructed (Hansen, 2006).

Conversely to classical realists, securitisation scholars therefore contend that security is subjective. They also advance that security is not intrinsically good. Indeed, security is a particular “language of war” that can depoliticise critical issues by suppressing contestation (Herschinger, 2010:88). Hence, security issues should be desecuritized and brought back into normal politics (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:4). Table 1 summarises the main differences between realist and securitisation scholars regarding security:

<b>Realism</b>	<b>Copenhagen School’s Securitisation Theory</b>
Security is objective (related to objective facts and measures)	Security is subjective, linked to identity
Security is linked to military capabilities	Security relates to speech act (a grammatical practice)
Security means power and survival	Security is not intrinsically positive

Table 1 — Main differences in the understanding of security between securitisation and realist scholars (Source: own compilation)

#### 1.4 Defining the problem

This theoretical dichotomy signals that there seems to be something more than military capabilities at stake when one links it to the previous section. The review of the existing literature demonstrated that the militarisation of the *Oblast* increased NATO and Baltic worries. In turn, NATO’s presence in the BS and Poland amplified Russian concerns over the safety of the *Oblast*. One can equate this to successive cycles of militarisation in Kaliningrad narrowing

down towards A2/AD.<sup>2</sup> Besides, this situation echoes that of a security dilemma (Waltz, 1979), where the safety of one ultimately threatens that of its neighbour, leading to an endless cycle of power-maximisation. It thus emerges that NATO's understanding of security in the BSR regarding Kaliningrad relates to A2/AD capabilities. However, the review established that 'realist-inclined' researchers (first segment of the literature) did not form a monolithic bloc. Thus, realism alone cannot explain this striking dichotomy, for it stresses objective security, survival and power. The second portion of literature highlighted that something else must be considered to apprehend military security in the BSR.

This paper will therefore seek to explain what is occurring regarding A2/AD in the BSR. Indeed, the first segment of literature designates Kaliningrad's capabilities through a military lens. However, researchers from this segment disagree on the subject. Besides, the second segment uses more than military features to designate missiles deployment. The lack of a clear answer explaining the existence of a debate around these capabilities leads to a puzzle. Therefore, how are A2/AD capabilities shaping the conception of security in relation to identity-crafting in the BSR? For security is not related to military capabilities exclusively but also to the subjective depiction of the 'Self'. Therefore, Securitisation Theory may be the key to explore how the establishment of A2/AD as a threat occurs. Indeed, this theory adds subjective elements to the concept of security and studies how specific issues become existential threats.

This chapter reviewed the existing literature on A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad and established a theoretical problem stemming from the review. Solving such puzzle therefore requires a comprehensive analysis. The following chapter elucidates the data and methods necessary to conduct the analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> A timeline of these cycles is provided in [Appendix B \(p.40\)](#).



# Research Design

Building on the conclusions previously established, this chapter deals with the methodological framework, the data selection process and the limitations to the design. It proposes to follow the Copenhagen School's framework to analyse security and threat construction in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) — discourse analysis (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

## 2.1 Methodological framework

Lene Hansen (2006), a prominent securitisation researcher, developed a discourse analysis framework that of interest for this paper for two reasons. First, it sorts securitising attempts into *basic discourses* related to different Selves securitising the same existential threat (ibid.: 3). Indeed, she argues that language generates specific meanings over debated issues, crafts definite identities and influences the implementation of extraordinary measures. Second, Hansen's framework focuses on "key events" (ibid.: 36). These refer to crucial occurrences shaping how discourses will unfold or change. Therefore, key events are essential components of securitisation.

Hansen's focus on identity proves essential for this paper. As the literature review highlighted, Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) in the BSR remains a debated issue. One of the aims of the analysis will be to examine North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) stance on this topic and highlight how security is constructed in the BSR. The analysis will also seek to contrast the realist definition of security through securitisation theory. Consequently, particular attention will be dedicated to grammatical structures denoting shifts in Self and Other perception. This will be realised through speech analysis.

## 2.2 Selecting the data

Conducting a speech analysis requires mobilising texts and statement from relevant security actors in the region. Since the Baltic States (BS) surround Kaliningrad and are NATO members, it appears coherent to observe the Alliance's position on A2/AD. Still, it may also prove useful to study one diverging attitude on A2/AD. Indeed, this will help to qualify NATO's basic discourse and to enrich the analysis. Therefore, text materials from NATO and a Swedish research agency will be selected.<sup>3</sup> These samples will come from official websites. Indeed, the paper aims to analyse open-source and official materials or transcripts to ensure that the analysis remains authentic and that the statements are easy to access for the readers.

Regarding the timeframe, the four-year span between 2014 and 2018 appears at first glance full of events that could have influenced NATO's position towards Russia in the BSR. Indeed, 2014 denotes a pivotal moment with the Ukraine crisis, as it mirrors an upsurge in Russia's expansionist policies in its near-abroad (Averre, 2016). Likewise, 2018 represents a watershed in NATO-Russia relations with the Brussels Summit (Kramer *et al.*, 2018). The selection of NATO material followed a clear pattern illustrated in [Figure 1](#).

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<sup>3</sup> A mapping of these organisations is provided in [Appendix C](#) (p.41).

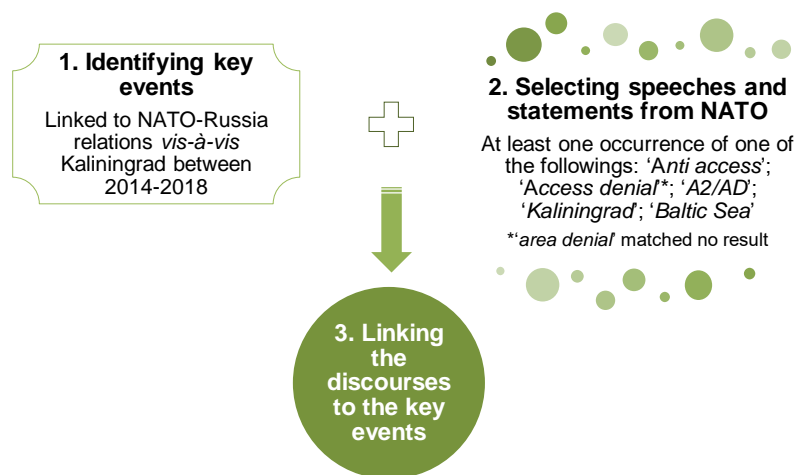


Figure 1 — Initial Selection Pattern (Source: own design)

The key events identified are the 2014 Wales Summit, the 2016 Warsaw Summit and the 2018 Brussels Summit. Given their importance for NATO-Russia relations, the analysis will focus on statements referring to these Summits.

A keyword search was conducted on NATO's website for publications between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2018. Table 2 summarises the results.

Entry	Number of results proposed
'Access denial'	23
'Anti access'	43
'A2/AD'	3
'Baltic Sea'	282
'Kaliningrad'	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>377</b>

Table 2 — Entries between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2018 (Source: own compilation)

To further reduce the range of results, entries with at least three of the keywords were manually identified. Five documents were selected — two in 2015, one in 2016, one in 2017 and one in 2018. There is no material from 2014, as no relevant entry was evidenced. Still, given the crucial role of 2014 for NATO, this year is included in the time range.

To enrich the analysis, it was decided to search for a report from a non-NATO member state. A technical report from *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut* (FOI) — Swedish Defence Research Agency — was thus selected on FOI's website. This research agency can be classified into the category of *functional actor* shaping security without being the referent object or the securitising actor (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:35).

Regarding the selection of material, the same keywords were typed on FOI's website to select a study conducted between 2014 and 2018. Two reports, respectively published in 2016 and 2019, were evidenced. The second was selected, since it was the re-edition of the first report

and therefore provided up-to-date elements. Although it was published in 2019, the study was conducted during 2018. The report therefore fits in the selected timeframe.

Produced by Dalsjö *et al.* (2019), this report was commanded in 2018 by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. Since Sweden is not a NATO member, this report is valuable for critically assessing the Alliance's statements and actions. Some may consider the report as less likely to be as accurate as NATO's statements, since Sweden is not a NATO member. However, one must note that the missiles stockpiled in the *Oblast* could threaten Sweden.<sup>4</sup> This report is thus significant to contrast NATO's perception of A2/AD.

### 2.3 Framework limitations

A fully comprehensive study of A2/AD would have required coupling the present analysis to the study of desecuritisation discourses. Widening the number of materials and the timeframe would have improved the generalisation of the implications. It was chosen not to do so, given the degree of expertise this would have required. Besides, with regards to the research goals and the methodology, a narrow sample allows for deeper insights than a quantitative analysis coupled to some coding.

This chapter established the research design. The analysis will consist of a two-track discourse analysis with a focus on identity, to understand how security materialises in the BSR. The following chapter will analyse the selected material and summarise the findings.

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<sup>4</sup> This is illustrated by [Map 2](#), provided in [Appendix A](#) (p.39).

# Securitising A2/AD?

As explained in the previous chapter, this paper conducts a speech analysis focused on the representation of Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in Kaliningrad through identity-building. This paper aims at answering how A2/AD capabilities shape the conception of security in relation to identity in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). This chapter proceeds into the analysis of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) statements regarding A2/AD, before analysing a report from non-NATO experts. The remainder of this chapter summarises the main findings.

## 3.1 *Outlining the first Basic discourse — A2/AD as a threat*

The first position — or *basic discourse* — analysed here can be designated 'A2/AD as threat'. This section aims at highlighting common patterns and differences in A2/AD designation by NATO officials between 2014 and 2018. Each sub-section starts by conceptualising the material selected in relation to the key event, before tackling the position on A2/AD and identity through Self and Othering dynamics.

### *2015 Joint Press Conference*

NATO Member States gathered at the Wales Summit between September 4 and 5, 2014. This Summit enabled the Alliance to react to the aftermaths of the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in early 2014. Accordingly, the *Wales Summit Declaration* affirmed the Alliance's commitment to provide reassurance to its Allies — especially to its Eastern members located in Russia's near-abroad (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2014: §30).

A year later, the topic of A2/AD in the BSR was evoked for the first time following the Summit in October 2015, during a joint press conference. The latter was held in Italy on the occasion of the Alliance's 2015 Trident Juncture Exercise — the largest exercise since 2002 (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2015). It gathered Generals Breedlove (then NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe), Pavel (then Chairman NATO Military Committee), Graziano (then Italy's Chief of Defence Staff) and Mercier (then NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation).

General Breedlove started by stressing that "any attempt to violate the sovereignty of one NATO nation [would] result in a decisive military engagement with all 28 Allied nations" (Breedlove *et al.*, 2015: §5). This initial point demonstrates that NATO considers collective defence as a key principle. Following a question from a reporter, General Breedlove designated A2/AD as "a problem ... [NATO was] addressing ... and looking at those capabilities and capacities [it needed] to either enhance or develop to better be able to address these growing concerns" (*ibid.*: §9). A2/AD becomes an existential threat "NATO command and commanders are focused on" (*ibid.*). This sentence shows that NATO officials are thus aware of A2/AD in the BSR. This goes in line with the Alliance's commitment to the Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) following the Wales Summit. The DIP aims to increase the Allies' defence spending up to 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to dedicate 20% of this investment to equipment on a yearly basis (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2014: §14).

However, not all Generals agree to Breedlove's answer. Indeed, General Mercier called for caution, arguing that A2/AD was ultimately more defensive than offensive. He tempered his

colleagues' calls for concern, as he stressed that "we have to be aware of it, we have to include it in our planning but it's not the threat as such." (Breedlove *et al.*, 2015: §10)

This official statement thus brings two elements to the analysis: (i) NATO is genuinely concerned about A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad, (ii) but this concern should remain muzzled. One must note that Breedlove *et al.*'s (2015) statement does not explicitly convey Self and Other perceptions. Still, it establishes the foundations of NATO's response to A2/AD bubbles — (re)assurance, deterrence and collaboration. Moreover, one can note that all Generals used the collective pronouns 'we' and 'our' and often addressed NATO as 'the Alliance'. This gives a sense of 'we-ness' and collectiveness, therefore reinforcing their aim to stress NATO's commitment in addressing A2/AD over the long term.

This press conference established NATO's elementary position regarding A2/AD in the region. This view was then developed by Stoltenberg (2015) through a comprehensive description of the Alliance's answer to the A2/AD military build-up in Kaliningrad.

### *2015 Doorstep Statement*

In his December 2015 speech *Doorstep Statement*, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg addressed the challenges NATO was facing at the global level and how they influenced the security environment. Then, he specified NATO's future response to these challenges. His speech was followed by a press conference.

First, Stoltenberg (2015) argued that NATO sought to re-establish predictable relations with Russia. He added that NATO aspired to "work on transparency and risk reductions ... to avoid incidents and accidents spiralling out of control" (*ibid.*: §13). This part of the statement constructs Russia as an unpredictable Other, conversely to the hard-working and transparent Self.

As reporters asked about NATO's concerns over the Russian deployments in Kaliningrad, Stoltenberg stressed that these had been addressed by NATO since "a long period of time" (*ibid.*: §35). He advanced that they was "part of a pattern ... called anti access and area denial" present "especially in Kaliningrad" (*ibid.*). Stoltenberg then extensively developed on what NATO had done to answer to A2/AD. Indeed, he stated that A2/AD represented:

"the reason why we have increased the readiness and the preparedness of our forces. That is one of the reason we have increased our military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. And that is reason also why we are now addressing how we can develop and strengthen our deterrence and continue to adapt our military capabilities to a *more assertive Russia*." [SIC] (*ibid.*, italics added)

In shifting from the impersonal 'NATO' to the more inclusive 'we', Stoltenberg's rhetoric highlights a dedicated commitment in responding to A2/AD. Furthermore, this speech uncovers a crucial point for Self and Other identification. Indeed, Stoltenberg highlighted that Russia had significantly "deployed modern military capabilities" next to NATO's Eastern borders (*ibid.*). With this answer, Stoltenberg presents Russia as an aggressive Other imposing a "new security environment" characterised by military deployments (*ibid.*). Therefore, Kaliningrad's A2/AD capabilities tests NATO's commitment to its eastern members, as the build-up threatens the BS. NATO's identity is articulated as an "assessor" carefully watching Russia's moves in Kaliningrad (*ibid.*). Stoltenberg explicitly paralleled NATO's identity by designating Russia as bellicose and striving to modernise its military capabilities.

Not directly naming Russia, but addressing it with the pronoun 'a' — “a more assertive Russia”, “a Russia which has deployed modern military capabilities” (ibid.; italics added) reinforces this tone. It reminds of a naming-and-shaming process whereby one explicitly point at the Other. This clear demarcation is reinforced by Vershbow (2016) following the Warsaw Summit.

### *2016 NATO Post-Warsaw*

The second key event of this analysis is the 2016 Warsaw Summit held in between July 8 and 9, 2016. This Summit addressed the security reinforcement post-2014 through of the '3Ds' approach — defence, deterrence, dialogue (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2016: §39). Besides, the *Warsaw Summit Communiqué* announced the implementation of an “enhanced forward presence” (EFP) in the Baltic States (BS) and Poland. The EFP's goal is to “unambiguously demonstrate, as part of our overall posture, Allies' solidarity, determination, and ability to act by triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression.” (ibid.: §40) This relates to NATO's adaptation to the post-Crimean security environment, in the continuity of the Wales Summit.

Following the Summit, then NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow delivered the speech *NATO Post-Warsaw: Strengthening Security in a Tough Neighbourhood* in August 2016. Vershbow (2016) first pointed out that NATO was facing renewed challenges from Russia that had “re-shaped our view of our own security” (ibid.: §7), notably through capabilities modernisation and Iskander deployments in the *Oblast*. He stressed that “for NATO Allies, one of the most pressing issues coming from this modernisation programme [was] Russia's A2/AD posture.” (ibid.: §11) Vershbow's statement explicitly posits A2/AD as an area of worries for the Alliance, reminding an existential threat rhetoric.

In his statement, Vershbow defined A2/AD as “the ability, through military capabilities ... to prevent *Allied forces* from moving freely within international waters and airspace to reinforce *our own territory*” (ibid., italics added). Instead of using a generic definition of A2/AD, Vershbow directly defines A2/AD from the point of view of NATO. This confers to Russia's build-up a geographical identity previous statements lacked. Indeed, A2/AD is defined in direct relation to NATO's territory. Besides, coupling A2/AD to restricting the Alliance's movements on its territory differentiates a law-violating Other from a law-abiding Self that seeks to maintain its territorial integrity and boundaries. The mention of free movement within “international waters and airspaces” (ibid.) conveys a legal facet to NATO's actions in the BSR and near the Russian borders. It implies that Russia violates these principles and establishes no-go bubbles on NATO's territory. Vershbow added that “while we will *always* seek constructive relations with Russia, it is impossible to deny that its actions have *fundamentally* changed our relationship” (ibid.: §12; italics added). This speech precisely constructs and blames a Russian Other implementing unlawful actions to restrict the freedom of the law-abiding Self that continues to willingly communicate with this Other.

This feeling was increased by the portion of Vershbow's speech dealing with the Alliance's response to Russia. Vershbow mobilised a temporal dimension: “once more, the world has changed, and once more, NATO Allies have had to adapt” (ibid.: §16). He talked about the 2014 Wales Summit as having enacted the Alliance's “initial response” (ibid.) under the form of increased investment on defence capabilities — represented by the BS' commitment of 2% of their GDP to NATO. Yet, Vershbow highlighted that these measures were only the beginning of NATO's mobilisation towards A2/AD and Russia, since the 2016 Warsaw Summit

marked NATO's "long-term strategy" (ibid.: §21). This sentence establishes that spending and reinforcement alone are hardly sufficient to counter the "growing A2/AD capability" (ibid.: §22). Therefore, this speech echoes some ideas from the Warsaw Summit that called for the implementation of more drastic measures. Additionally, Vershbow warned:

"should any country decide to act aggressively against a NATO ally, they would immediately be in a situation where they faced troops from across the Alliance ... rather than just the national forces of a particular Ally." [SIC] (ibid.)

This part of the statement reinforces global commitment to its members. Yet, Vershbow insisted that all measures were defensive and "in line with our international commitments, including the NATO-Russia Founding Act" (ibid.: §25). This defensive identity appears as a referent object to protect, despite the necessity to act in front of the existential threat.

Directly addressing Russia, Vershbow established that "there is a wide gulf between NATO and Russia in the way we view the world" (ibid.: §26). This sentence posits a Self-Other dichotomy. The Self sees a "world of free, sovereign, independent nation states, ... with respect for borders and for the right of every state to choose its security arrangements" (ibid.), whereas the Other "looks to a new version of the 1945 Yalta agreement, in which the major powers agree to divide Europe into spheres of influence and dominion, and where the big powers dictate the fate of their neighbours." (ibid.) He added "[t]hese worldviews are, clearly, incompatible." (ibid.) It suggests a sharp Self-Other dichotomy opposing an intimidating Russia to an open NATO striving to dialogue to reduce the likelihood of incidents. That is why, Vershbow continued, "[w]e cannot ease up. Maintaining the momentum is vital" (ibid.: §38), and one can assume that this action would require extraordinary measures. This sentence illustrates that NATO remains committed to monitoring in the BSR and entails long-term measures to enhance the Alliance's forward presence in Eastern Europe.

### *2017 Adapting NATO*

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2017, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg issued another speech, *Adapting NATO in an Unpredictable World* at the French *École Militaire de Paris*. This speech develops NATO's answer to A2/AD following the Warsaw Summit and Vershbow's (2016) statement.

Stoltenberg (2017) first stressed that NATO had committed itself to adapt, since "the world changed again" following Russia's actions in 2014 (§17). He described this adaptation as the implementation of "the largest reinforcement of our deterrence and defence since the Cold War" (ibid.: §21). Still, he reminded that NATO's answer remained strictly defensive — "our aim is not to provoke conflict, but to prevent conflict" (ibid.: §29). Indeed, he maintained "we do not want a new Cold War" (ibid.: §30, italics added). This statement suggests a differentiation between Russia and NATO. It mobilises a 'white knight' rationale with the Self striving to prevent the Other's bellicose actions as much as possible.

Besides, Stoltenberg's speech provides new insights on the Self. Addressing NATO-European Union (EU) cooperation regarding the Eastern and Southern borders of NATO, he described it "a formidable force *for good*." (ibid.: §49, italics added) One can see that describing NATO and the EU as 'good' players on the world scene antagonises Russia as the dangerous Other. Hence, this sentence is paramount in Self and Othering processes, as Stoltenberg highlights

a new aspect of NATO response to A2/AD — cooperation with the EU. It brings forth another facet of NATO adaptation to A2/AD in the BSR.

Finally, Stoltenberg addressed specific extraordinary measures relating to the Alliance's adaptation to A2/AD during the question-and-answer session following the speech. He answered to a question regarding what more could NATO implement in the BSR against A2/AD capabilities. He stated that as the BS would soon dedicate 2% of their GDP on defence funding, NATO still required additional efforts such as investing 20% of this spending in capabilities modernisation. Stoltenberg therefore deeply stressed NATO's adaption to the new security environment — epitomised by the title of his speech. It remains to see how the 2018 Brussels Summit shaped NATO's understanding of security in the BSR.

### *2018 Pre-ministerial press conference*

The Brussels Summit from July 11 to 12, 2018 is the third key event of the present analysis. It represents a pivotal moment for NATO-Russia relations, with the joint EU-NATO declaration signed ahead of the Summit on July 10 (Stoltenberg *et al.*, 2018). The Summit also established the Alliance's Command Structure Reform to improve the movement of troops in Europe. NATO also indicated its will to establish a Multinational Divisional Headquarters in the BSR to "further strengthen the command and control" regionally (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2018a: §30). Besides, the *Brussels Summit Declaration* expressively stated "[w]e will not accept to be constrained by any potential adversary as regards the freedom of movement of Allied forces by land, air, or sea to and within any part of Alliance territory." (ibid.: §15)

In October 2018, Secretary-General Stoltenberg gave a pre-ministerial press conference before the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels, Belgium. His speech established the Alliance's pledge to its renewed partnership with the EU, and signalled an ever-stronger deterrent and defensive posture *vis-à-vis* Russia (Stoltenberg, 2018: §35). Answering a question on what NATO was doing to counter A2/AD, Stoltenberg (ibid.: §23) stated that the Alliance "[was] implementing the biggest adaptation of [its] collective defence since the end of the Cold War". He added "it's obvious that NATO is able to deal with this" (ibid.). This implies that NATO's adaptation to the new security environment has been successful, at least regarding A2/AD in the *Oblast*. Stoltenberg therefore closes the loop Breedlove *et al.*'s (2015) speech opened. While the latter pointed out that NATO was in the process of addressing the modernisation and adaptation of its capabilities, the former established that NATO had adapted and is now on equal footing with Russia regarding the *Oblast*.

These NATO speeches form the first basic discourse. They highlight growing concerns regarding A2/AD and construct a specific Self related to a particular Other. However, a competing basic discourse arose with time, based on factual evaluation of the Russian capabilities in the *Oblast*.

### *3.2 Outlining the second Basic discourse — Downplaying the threat*

The less ostensible discourse tackling Kaliningrad's A2/AD can be named 'A2/AD as governable'. It appears when one recollects technical reports mobilising more scientific expertise than the identity-based NATO discourse. While the Other remains the same, the identity of the Self changes. Indeed, the report was produced by Dalsjö *et al.* (2019), experts from a Swedish research agency, *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut* (FOI). The latter



corresponds to a functional actor from a non-NATO member, and this bears implications for the second basic discourse.

Dalsjö *et al.* proposed a different depiction of A2/AD than NATO officials. Their report started with a review of existing works on A2/AD in the *Oblast*, before stating its aim to “undertake a more sober and realistic assessment of Russia’s A2/AD-capabilities and their implications for the region, for NATO, and for Sweden.” (ibid.: 9) The use of words such as “sober” and “realistic” (ibid.) illustrates a certain scepticism with regards to past assessments and NATO’s discourses. Indeed, the report labelled them as “rather alarmist accounts of Russia’s A2/AD-capabilities ... based on uncritical acceptance of Russian claims.” (ibid.: 10) More precisely, these discourses were presented as having committed “cardinal sins” — confusing the theoretical and practical ranges of some missiles and disregarding target-hitting problems (ibid.). This first entry thus critically contrasts with NATO’s position.

Through figures, the report conducted an in-depth study of A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad. For instance, it tackled the effective range of Iskander-M missiles, advancing that the “threat to ground targets from Iskander-M pales in comparison to the threat from cruise missiles.” (ibid.: 11) The experts reached the same conclusion regarding the range of the S-400 air defence system. The report highlighted that while many concerns existed regarding its 400-kilometres (km) nominal range, its effective span was lower — down to 20 km for precise target-hitting (ibid.: 17).

The report then advanced that NATO’s “uncritical acceptance and dissemination of far-reaching claims” could amplify the reach and impact of the “Russian narratives” (ibid.: 20). While the report does not imply Self and Othering practices, this changes with the critical assessment of NATO as following the Other’s narratives. This follows Hansen’s (2006:60) concept of *narrative form of knowledge* — based on the inclusivity of identity perceptions in the text — different from the *scientific (or factual)* one — based on factual evaluation through data and figures. It thus implies the differentiation of two Selves and a novel perception of the Other. It transpires that for Dalsjö *et al.* (2019) NATO follows “many widely-disseminated accounts” of an “impenetrable 400-km bubble” (ibid.: 43). Conversely, Dalsjö *et al.* critically assess the Other’s claims. In turn, the Other loses its prevalently military aggressive features and acts as a psychologically destabilising force that implements menacing narratives.

Finally, the report separately studies the sustainability of the Anti-Access (A2) and Area-Denial (AD) capabilities stockpiled in Kaliningrad. It established that while “Russia does not currently ... have the full capability for A2 ... [but] [i]t does however have a capability for AD” (ibid.: 44). This point indicates that denying access to NATO forces in the BSR is hardly sustainable while preventing NATO to remain in the operational zone is achievable. In sum, Dalsjö *et al.* present A2 as less hazardous than AD.

The authors of the report summed their findings by arguing that Russia’s ‘bubble’ capabilities “pose a *significant threat* but are *entirely burstable*” (ibid.: 65; italics added). They advanced that thanks to their “deep technical know-how” and use of “open-source data”, their study produced a “more realistic assessment of capabilities ... debunking myths that are based on propaganda and marketing statements.” (ibid.: 79). Here, Dalsjö *et al.* established that the usual depiction of A2/AD missiles are the product of myths and narratives.

To sum up, the analysis highlights two positions on A2/AD capabilities. NATO officials extensively tackle this topic, while Dalsjö *et al.* conduct a technical expertise of A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad. The following section summarises the main findings.

### 3.3 Findings

This section highlights the main findings of the analysis. These are key in explaining how A2/AD capabilities influence the conceptualisation of security in the BSR, in relation to identity. The goal of this paper is to explain how A2/AD turns out to be considered as a threat by some while others refute this assumption.

The analysis of the first basic discourse pointed out that NATO officials securitise Kaliningrad's A2/AD as an existential threat to the territorial integrity of the BS — and ultimately of NATO. There were mentions of extraordinary measures that had been implemented or were going to be. The 2015 Trident Juncture Exercise can be regarded as such, given its scope and massive organisation, although it did not exclusively deal with A2/AD. Different depictions of A2/AD and of the Other were made, while some common patterns remained — the prevalence of adaptation, a new security environment, deterrence, collective defence. Overall, Self-Other dichotomies were frequent and explicitly stated. Table 3 summarises the key points of NATO's position *vis-à-vis* Kaliningrad's A2/AD capabilities.

Key element Speech	How A2/AD is posited	NATO's response	The Self	The Other	Changing world and security environment
Breedlove et al. (2015)	"Growing concerns"; Tempering	Adaptation via collective defence, deterrence.	Collectiveness and 'we-ness'	-*	-*
Stoltenberg (2015)	Patterns	Adapting through deterrence	'We-ness' and transparency	"Assertive"	A new security environment
Vershbow (2016)	Pressing issue	Still adapting	Respects sovereignty and conventions	Different from the Self, unlawful, aggressive	The Other changed the Self's understanding of security
Stoltenberg (2017)	-*	Still adapting to through deterrence	'We' includes the EU. Strives to avoid a "new Cold War"	Altered the world	The world changed
Stoltenberg (2018)	-*	Adapted though collective defence and deterrence	'We' includes the EU; Can deal with A2/AD	Created this new security environment	The world changed

\* no relevant mention in the related speech.

Table 3 — Key findings of each speech (Source: own compilation)

Dalsjö *et al.* (2019) took a different perspective on the topic. This created the second basic discourse. They stated that A2/AD capabilities were less threatening than what NATO advanced, and AD less dangerous than A2. Their contribution allowed to establish the idea of A2/AD and missile deployments as part of Russian destabilising narratives.

The two basic discourses thus extensively differ. While the forms of knowledge mobilised were different, the notion of existential threat and the Self and Other depictions also diverged. This determined how A2/AD was evaluated. Table 4 summarises the key differences in both basic discourses.

<b>Discourse</b>	<b>Basic discourse one — NATO (securitising actor)</b>	<b>Basic discourse two — FOI (functional actor)</b>
<b>Securitising feature</b>		
<b>Form of knowledge</b>	Narrative form of knowledge	Scientific/Factual form of knowledge
<b>Existential threat</b>	A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad	None
<b>Referent object(s)</b>	The Baltic States, NATO	Sweden, the Baltic States, NATO
<b>Audience</b>	NATO officers, journalists, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the wider public	Swedish Ministry of Defence, Security experts, the wider public
<b>Depiction of the NATO Self</b>	Committed to its Baltic members, abiding to international norms	Uncritically follows the Other's narratives
<b>Depiction of the Other</b>	Aggressive, violating international norms, modernising	Destabilising the Self through narratives
<b>Assessment of Russia's capabilities</b>	No specific data used — threatening	Factual — not as efficient as assumed

Table 4 — Key differences between NATO and FOI discourses (Source: own compilation)

To summarise the findings, NATO speeches mobilised several patterns to address A2/AD and the Alliance's answer to it. Self and Other identities were also present. Dalsjö *et al.*'s report took a different lens and produced a very distinctive depiction of A2/AD. Having highlighted this paper's key findings, it comes now to interpret these findings and discuss the wider implications of such results.

## Discussion — from military reality to speech act

This chapter discusses the relevance of the results for the perception of Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and of security more generally. The chapter first interprets the results and discusses the general implications of the findings. It then turns to the limitations of this paper and ends by briefly addressing future research.

### 4.1 Interpretation of the results

From Table 3, a gradual increase in the voicing of how North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) addressed A2/AD over time appears. Where the Generals regarded A2/AD as “growing concerns” (Breedlove *et al.*, 2015: §9), Stoltenberg (2015) addressed most systematic “patterns” of threat to NATO (§35). Furthermore, Vershbow’s (2016: §11) choice of wording differed from the previous statements, with A2/AD representing “the most pressing issue” for NATO. While Stoltenberg (2017; 2018) did not mobilise a particular account of A2/AD capabilities, Vershbow (2016) illustrated an increase in concerns over the *Oblast* since 2014. Besides, the year 2017 appeared pivotal regarding the perception of A2/AD. Indeed, the rhetoric changed with the inclusion of the European Union (EU) in NATO’s answer to A2/AD (Stoltenberg, 2017; 2018). Furthermore, Stoltenberg (2018) implied that the principles of the Wales and Warsaw Summits were fruitful. Indeed, he indicated that NATO had successfully reinforced deterrence and collective defence in its Eastern flank. This implies that following the Warsaw Summit, NATO’s position shifted and came to regard A2/AD less as a direct threat. Indeed, Stoltenberg specified that the extensive modernisation required by NATO in 2016 and re-emphasised in 2018, was effective in reassuring the Baltic Allies. This can be regarded an example of successful implementation of an extraordinary measure.

Overall, NATO’s basic discourse strongly mirrors Article V of the NATO Charter. This article holds that “an armed attack against one [member]” represents an attack against all (NATO, 1949:Art. 5). It means that every member of the Alliance will help the attacked member(s) by “taking forthwith [...] such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.” (ibid.) Likewise, Vershbow stated that “should any country ... act aggressively against a NATO ally, they would immediately be in a situation where they faced troops from across the Alliance” [SIC] (2016: §22). He thus explicitly signalled to Russia that Article V ruled out any decision of the Alliance regarding the Baltic integrity. This acts as a warning against the implementation of new extraordinary measures, should Russia not stop A2/AD deployment.

NATO’s depiction of Russia strongly mobilises a Self-Other identity discourse. Indeed, most speeches refer to a *new change* in the security environment following 2014. The previous change was caused by the end of the Cold War in 1991. Thus, talking about a new change in security and aggressive Russian actions brings forth references to the Cold War with different worldviews — ‘us versus them’ — and areas of influence. Further, the speeches portray Russia as striving to extend its sphere of influence over the BSR by trespassing borders and restricting freedom of movement. This aim is reified through A2/AD and presented as an existential threat. This Cold War rhetoric present in Vershbow (2016) and Stoltenberg (2017) thus strengthens the understanding of security threats linked to military capabilities, but also to identity. One can consider NATO’s focus on identity as a “facilitating condition” (Wæver,

2003:14) that allows NATO to deliver a smooth securitising by appeal to Self and Other dichotomies.

NATO's identity perspective is contrasted by Dalsjö *et al.*'s (2019) technical report. As illustrated by Table 4, the assessment of Kaliningrad's military capabilities is more critical when identity is present than when it is absent. Indeed, the expert's report diverged from NATO's concerns in several dimensions. First, they rejected the common perception of an impenetrable A2/AD bubble — or Kaliningrad fortress. They thus downplayed the threat it posed to the region. Second, Dalsjö *et al.* raised an interesting argument that NATO officials did not address. While NATO studies A2 and AD together, they examined both strategies as two different faces of the same coin. They thus mobilise a different vision on the topic and step back from the Realist assumption of military capabilities and power as security, since they report that A2 does not pose a threat as such.

Finally, Dalsjö *et al.* argued that their analysis had the potential to debunk myths and uncritical assumptions about A2/AD in Kaliningrad. It suggests a direct criticism of members of the Western community such as NATO uncritically worrying over the *Oblasť*'s capabilities. Hence, for FOI experts, A2/AD missiles became buzzwords mobilised by the Other to destabilise the Self. This contrasts with NATO's establishment of A2/AD capabilities as material threats. This dichotomy is reminiscent of Hansen's (2016) division between *factual* and *narrative*, or *identity*, forms of knowledge. Here, the *factual* lens minimised NATO's *identity* perception of the same threat. It is possible to associate the factual element to Realism and the narrative/identity element to Securitisation Theory. Indeed, Realism relates security to power and material capabilities and thus to objective features. Conversely, Securitisation is centred on subjectivity and speech acts, thus on 'Self' versus 'Other' dynamics. The chief element to take away from this is that the actor that conducted an in-depth material study of the missiles ended up downplaying this very threat. As striking as it may be for realist-oriented scholars, this point goes in the sense of the Copenhagen School's understanding of security.

Going back to the debate highlighted in Chapter 2, it appears that the findings link the two segments of literature. Realist-oriented scholars stressed the importance of Kaliningrad's military capabilities, while other researchers stressed the importance of a clear assessment of such capabilities and the heavy role of narratives. This paper highlighted that insecurity over A2/AD capabilities in the BSR is linked to: (i) extensive missile deployments next to NATO's borders and (ii) NATO's discursive constructions of these capabilities. By mobilising both ends of the spectrum, the analysis highlighted that the divide in the research field stems from divergent theoretical positions regarding security. While coupling identity to objective capabilities increases the consequences of the deployments in Kaliningrad, it also helps to understand the roots of this debate. For it appeared that the identity element projected onto the missiles often superseded a critical assessment of the threat. Conversely, with Dalsjö *et al.*'s report, it emerged that factually investigating the capabilities supplanted the identity rhetoric conveyed by NATO. Therefore, the debate appears intractable, unless one adds Securitisation to the equation and establishes that subjective meanings are conferred to objective capabilities, regardless of the latter's ability to target the BSR.

To sum up, NATO officials structured their statements around clear patterns. Examining these patterns confirms that NATO's understanding of security is linked to subjectivity. The wording and grammar mobilised by NATO officials reveal a securitising move generated through a sense of urgency and references to Self and Other. This move refers to A2/AD as an existential

threat to the territorial integrity of the Baltic States (BS) — and ultimately to NATO. This process appears complete, since extraordinary measures — deterrence, reassurance, increased defence spending — are implemented. It follows that military security in the BSR regarding A2/AD appears more related to the Copenhagen School than to Realism. This holds theoretical and practical implications.

#### 4.2 Theoretical implications

Critics may argue that this paper does not deliver fresh inputs on Kaliningrad and security. Still, it contributes to International Relations (IR) theory in that it questions Realist assumptions on their own grounds. It is not innovative to establish that military insecurity in the BSR emerges in the NATO-Russia encounter at strategic locations such as Kaliningrad or the Suwałki Gap (Grigas, 2016). But by bringing in the importance of *ideational* factors in *military* security, this paper explains that such factors matter greatly in the region. Identity thus matters in shaping security, as 'Self' and 'Other' narratives can supersede capabilities in military security assessment. Some may argue that it is plainly manifest that identity influences the threat perception of a given issue. However, when reflecting on the findings, one can realise that Kaliningrad's A2/AD may pose a threat to NATO's global identity. The recent establishments of Russian bubbles close to the Alliance's borders demonstrated that A2/AD is part of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy (Erdogan, 2018). Thus, such proliferation may destabilise global trust in the Alliance's commitment to collective defence over the long-term, should it fail to adapt to this pattern.

Finally, one can observe that NATO officials came to mention A2/AD more frequently during press conferences than in the speeches. This demonstrates concerns from the audience, as the topic is brought in the discussion by the reporters. This active presence goes farther than the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of the audience. Indeed, the latter is presented as being only able to accept or reject the securitising move. The theoretical role of the audience thus appears limited to this single instance. This paper highlights *active* participation from the audience — and this contrasts with the Copenhagen School's *passive* position. This paper follows Balzacq (2005), who argues that securitisation is not a one-direction speech act. He argues that it stems from the interaction between securitising actors and their audience. Furthermore, Buzan *et al.* (1998) argue that the chief securitising actors regarding military security are the states. This paper highlighted that military securitisation can well be issued by organisations above state level. This echoes Bigo (2002), who considers that studies of securitisation should focus to a greater extent on the role of security experts and non-state organisations. Didier Bigo and Thierry Balzacq are members of the Paris School of Securitisation (Wæver, 2004). This School challenges the Copenhagen School in that it contests the predominant focus of securitisation on the discursive element of the speech act. It thus brings back governmentality and management technologies in the securitisation process (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). Therefore, the findings can bridge the Copenhagen and Paris Schools to some extent.

This paper brought a fresh perspective on security in the BSR and may thus contribute to the study of securitisation processes in the region. It also proposed a stronger emphasis on the role of the audience regarding A2/AD. The following section addresses the limitations.

### 4.3 Limitations

With its focus on identity, this paper may have overlooked a rational study of Kaliningrad's material capabilities. However, leaving apart military-oriented features helped to counter the realist argument. Besides, this paper has taken for granted Dalsjö *et al.*'s (2019) assumption that Russia may purposefully establish capabilities in the *Oblast* to destabilise NATO. This argument should have been inferred or confirmed by a study of Russia's statements on the matter. Still, as established in the research design, language limitations, expertise and time would have lacked. In proposing a one-sided account of the securitisation of A2/AD, the analysis allowed to tackle NATO perspective and identity-crafting in a better way than had both sides been studied. Besides, this paper should have focused on desecuritisation practices too, since the Copenhagen researchers link securitisation to desecuritisation. However, in focusing on securitisation processes only, the study provided deeper insights. It is also considered that since the chosen timeframe is narrow, the study of desecuritisation would not have been relevant nor would have led to meaningful contributions. Highlighting these limitations allows to consider some guidelines for future research on the topic.

### 4.4 Further research

Future research may tackle more extensively the critical role identity plays in securitisation processes around Kaliningrad and A2/AD in the BSR. While some space was given for identity and Othering practices in this paper, dedicating deeper focus on identity may help develop the analytical tools provided by the Copenhagen School. Furthermore, the literature review highlighted that few researchers had mobilised the securitisation framework to study Kaliningrad. Further research needs to be conducted for better understanding of the implications of these findings, since this paper only brushed a few elements of military securitisation in the BSR. The role of the EU regarding military security in Kaliningrad also remains under-studied. Studying this subject would add a fresh perspective to the NATO-Russia relations, as many BSS are both EU and NATO members.

This chapter discussed the value of the findings and highlighted theoretical contributions. By addressing this paper's limitations, it sought to provide recommendations for future research. Next chapter will therefore summarise and conclude this study.

## Conclusion

This dissertation investigated how Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities and identity in the Kaliningrad *Oblast* shape the understanding of military security in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). By tackling how researchers addressed A2/AD, the literature review highlighted two different positions on the subject. One stressed the prevalence of military capabilities but remained divided on the extent to which they represented a threat. The other added a subjective element to the debate with the introduction of identity narratives. This debate raised the problem of how A2/AD capabilities shaped the understanding of security in the region. To address how A2/AD capabilities shape the understanding of security and threats in the BSR and lead to the debate, this dissertation employed the Copenhagen School Securitisation Theory, that holds security as a speech act constructed by securitising actors labelling specific issues as existential threats (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). This paper mobilised Lene Hansen's (2006) speech analysis framework. Indeed, it stresses the role of identity in securitisation, highlights competing basic discourses and considers key events influencing the outcome of securitisation. These basic discourses were identified employing several sources — five statements from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) officials and one technical report produced by Dalsjö *et al.* (2019) from the Swedish Defence Research Agency *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut* (FOI). These were analysed in relation to three key events — the 2014 Wales Summit, the 2016 Warsaw Summit and the 2018 Brussels Summit. The two-track speech analysis focused on how specific discursive patterns addressed A2/AD capabilities and designated Russia as a threatening 'Other'. It also investigated how Self and Othering practices influenced the labelling of A2/AD as an existential threat and empowered the securitising actor to call for extraordinary measures.

The findings revealed a dichotomy between the two basic discourses. While NATO securitised A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad, FOI experts strongly downplayed the threat. By tackling this contradiction, the analysis established that threat perception in the BSR revolved around security constructions and speech acts by NATO. Coupled to 'Self' and 'Other' identity-crafting, the securitisation of A2/AD generated an environment favourable to the implementation of extraordinary measures. Besides, the analysis used Dalsjö *et al.*'s suggestion that Russia conveyed narratives to destabilise the Alliance that the latter uncritically accepted. What matters is not that these capabilities are threatening or not, but that their discursive labelling creates this sense of threat. This explains the dichotomy highlighted in the literature review and refutes the realist assumption that military security is exclusively linked to capabilities. It enabled to establish that security in the BSR did not solely rely on material capabilities but on the perception securitising actors projected of it. Security is thus socially constructed to the extent that projecting a specific identity narrative ends up supporting extraordinary measures to implement. Thus, A2/AD capabilities shape the conception of security by being securitised by NATO through an identity rhetoric. This held theoretical implications. More than challenging Realism on its own ground, this paper called for greater emphasis on the role of the audience than what the Copenhagen School argued.

However, the analysis faced limitations. Given the small number of sources and the narrow time range, the generalisation of the findings lacked precision. Besides, studies of securitisation should also analyse desecuritisation practices. This paper missed this element and did not provide a comprehensive account of desecuritisation practices in the BSR. Given these shortcomings, guidance for future research was provided — broader application of the



securitisation framework to research on Kaliningrad and more focus on identity dynamics regarding Baltic military security.

Finally, one must remember that future research must consider the new United States (US) presidential administration. Indeed, the US is the largest contributor to NATO, having dedicated 3.73% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defence expenditure in 2020 (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2021:3) and possessing powerful leverage on NATO's 'foreign policy' (McNamara, 2017). Accordingly, the recent American sanctions against Russia risk increasing already tense relations. Linked to this paper's focus on identity, military security in the BSR may be soon exposed to increased tensions. Consequently, the trend of drawing circles is likely to persist. As one picture is worth a thousand words, these may complement speech acts. The question of A2/AD capabilities is thus hardly expected to return to the realm of normal politics soon.

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# Appendix A. Maps

## A Russian Exclave: Kaliningrad



Map 1 — “A Russian Exclave: Kaliningrad” (Lineback and Lineback-Gritzner, 2014)



Map 2 — “Range of Iskander-M missiles from Kaliningrad” (Dalsjö et al., 2019, p. 39)



## Appendix B. Timeline

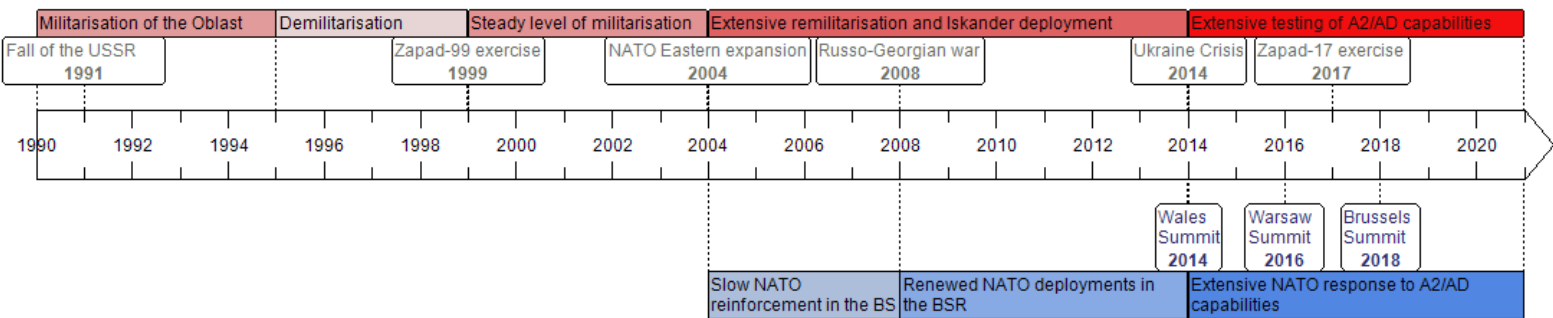


Figure 2 — Cycles of (de)militarisation in Kaliningrad and NATO's answer to these (Source: own compilation)

From top to bottom:

- The varying shades of red illustrate different degree of (de)militarisation of the Oblast.
- The grey boxes represent important moments influencing both the course of missiles deployment and NATO's answer to it.
- The events in dark blue are the key events mentioned in the analysis.
- The shades of blue illustrate different degrees of NATO deployment and answer to the deployment of A2/AD capabilities in the Oblast.

## Appendix C. Mapping the key actors of the securitisation process

### *NATO*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a defence organisation comprising 29 member states from North America and Europe. Its key principle of the principle of 'collective defence', established by Article V of its Charter (NATO, 1949: Art.V). Founded in 1949, NATO defines itself as seeking to "protect the people and territory of its members" (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2018b: §1). The Alliance was a crucial actor in the Cold War dynamics. Indeed, it was established to contain the Soviet Union and mirrored the latter's Warsaw Pact.

The end of the Cold War in 1991 led to a readjustment of its scope and to a recalibration of its collective defence commitment. With the emergence of multipolarity, the Alliance's aims shifted towards new objectives, such as dealing with global crises and fighting terrorism. To this end, NATO works in close cooperation with 40 partner countries and several organisations, such as the European Union (EU), the United Nations or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (ibid.: §4).

### *FOI*

The *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut* (FOI) — or the Swedish Defence Research Agency — is a research institute in defence and security. Its activities and research assignments are conducted under government authority, delivered by the Swedish Ministry of Defence (FOI, 2019). It produces various research reports and defence and security publications, notably for the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. These governmental organisations usually commission FOI on specific assignments — area-focused research, analysis or military experiment (ibid.).

Its main aim is to deliver research-based expertise on various defence topics and to assist the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Ministry of Defence in meeting their defence requirements. Thus, FOI disposes of five units of experts, specialised in various security and defence areas. It also regularly partakes in EU defence projects (ibid.)