PhD thesis

Win the hearts and minds

Superpower influence on national self-determination

How relations between Greenland and the United States affect Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic

PhD fellow Sara Olsvig
Institute of Social Science, Economics & Journalism
Ilisimatusarfik

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ILISIMATUSARFIK
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Cover photo by Leiff Josefsen: U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken visits Greenland, May, 2021
Photo on this page by Jens Andersen: Demonstration in Nuuk against the U.S., March, 2025
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Qujassutit

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Asasara,

Qujanaq suliaqartarninni tapersersortuaramma, ullaaralaajuppat unnuuppat sulinissara allannissaralu ataqqisarakku, eqqarsaatikkalu suliannut pivallaaraangata ilaqutariinni ataatsimoornissatsinnik eqqaasittuaramma.

Piffimmi nunarsuarmi toqqissiviilliorfioqisumi suliallu imaannaanngitsut ingerlannerini nunamut tutsittuaramma qanilaarnikkullu toqqissitittaramma qujanaq.

Angajoqqaakka, qatanngutikka qitornakkalu - sunik tamanik tapersortuarassinga

qujanaq.

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English summary

Through the methodological approaches of case studies and process tracing analysis, the PhD thesis examines how relations between the United States (U.S.) (a superpower) and Greenland (portrayed in the analysis as a small State-like polity) affects Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic. Employing Putnam's two-level game theory (1998), and action space theories (Mouritzen 2006, Petersen 2005), the three analytical articles of the thesis conclude that Greenland's action space is ambiguous: Greenland has widened its action space in relation to Denmark through deliberate, direct negotiations with the U.S., while the action space is delimited by the greater overall geopolitical conditions affecting the U.S. interests in Greenland, as they change due to the homeland security interests of the U.S.

The thesis examines how and when Greenland's action space is widened or limited by external and internal factors in the trilateral Greenland-Denmark-U.S. relationship. The analysis furthermore discusses how the three parties engage in a new form of interlocking, two-level game, where Greenland and the U.S. engages more directly as opposed to Greenland formerly engaging Denmark from a subnational position. In the interlocking two-level game, Greenland is positioned equally to Denmark and the U.S., and by navigating well-known incentives for bargaining for win-sets, the three parties interlock each other in a

new form of two-level game. This happens as each of their interests at level one (international negotiations) overlap, while each fulfils the interests of their constituents at level two (domestic level), making it possible to sign agreements.

The thesis analyzes the increasingly direct cooperation and relationship between Greenland and the U.S., carved out as Greenland has demanded a greater say towards Denmark on foreign policy, security and defense affairs. The thesis analysis is based on case studies of events taking place from 2014 to 2021, where all three actors are at play in different ways. The analysis employs a rationalist theoretic approach to negotiations between Greenland and the U.S., and in some cases between Greenland, the U.S. and Denmark. The thesis includes a constructivist backdrop in the form of two chapters laying out the historical relationships between Greenland and Denmark, and between Greenland and the U.S. The first background chapter establishes the norms, roles and legitimacy of Greenland as an independent actor, while the second background chapter analyzes the relationship seen through the lens of U.S. securitization acts towards Greenland during the past two centuries.

The empirical as well as theoretical findings of the thesis contribute to a better understanding of how Greenland has navigated its action space in times of increased geopolitical tension in the Arctic. It provides insight into the decision-making processes in Greenland's engagements with the U.S. and Denmark, including the thinking behind its decisions and political aspirations. The process tracing analysis leads to a causal graph displaying the steps needed for Greenland to engage more directly and bilaterally with the U.S., but the question of Denmark's involvement is a paradox in this new relationship because the need for Denmark's involvement is viewed differently by the parties involved from case to case. The thesis concludes that Greenland is balancing a thin line of self-determination by testing its action space, and that Denmark, sometimes deliberately, sometimes not, supports Greenland's wider room for maneuverings.

The thesis includes a discussion of how this analysis contributes to a decolonial approach to International Relations (IR) studies by employing an understanding of Greenland acting as a State-like polity, engaging in negotiations analyzed with a rationalist approach that previously has been applied to sovereign States. It furthermore includes an outlook beyond the timeframe of the study, based on the expressions of U.S. geopolitical interests in Greenland taking place as the thesis was finalized in the spring of 2025.

Introduction

In the fall of 2018, a Statement of Intent (SoI) issued by the U.S. Department of Defense was published on social media. The short text with the headline, “Statement of intent on defense investments in Greenland”, highlighted the “shared interests in strengthening security, improving situational awareness, and maintaining low-tension in the region” between the U.S. and the Kingdom of Denmark. The SoI cited “the changing environment in the Arctic” and continued: “In light of this development and in an effort to strengthen U.S. and NATO capabilities, the U.S. Department of Defense intends to pursue potential strategic investments vigorously, including investments that may serve dual military and civilian purposes” (Rood 2018). Issuing an SoI marked a shift in U.S. policy away from communicating with Greenland indirectly through Denmark to more direct bilateral communication.

The U.S. military presence in Greenland dating back to the 1941 defense agreement has been a source of political contention (Archer 2003, Olesen 2017). Both Denmark and later Greenland have struggled to retain decision-making power over the U.S. desire for military installations, and this has sparked heated debates and persistent efforts by Denmark and Greenland to establish a more equal partnership with the U.S. The most tangible of these developments is the Igaliku Agreement of 2004, from which the trilateral Joint Committee was established to further involve Greenland in decision-making (Ackrén 2019, Takahashi 2019). In recent years, Greenland has sought to secure more significant benefits from the U.S. military presence (Henriksen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017). When the SoI was issued, Greenland’s Inatsisartut (parliament) was debating investments and legislation for a renewed and expanded airport infrastructure. The plan aimed to establish two new international airports and one regional airport, replacing the existing infrastructure built around former U.S. military airfields from the 1950s. A bidding process for the construction included a proposal from a Chinese company, drawing significant attention from both Denmark and the U.S. (Sejersen 2024, Andersson & Zeuthen 2024).

Just ten days before the U.S. Department of Defense issued its SoI, the Danish government announced a substantial investment package to support the airport projects, effectively excluding any involvement from Chinese businesses (Sørensen 2019). This sparked tensions in Greenlandic domestic politics, as internal disagreements within the governing coalition

arose over Denmark's involvement—and, to some extent, its control—of Greenland's new airport infrastructure.

At the time, I was serving as a parliamentarian and a member of the Finance and Fiscal Affairs Committee of Inatsisartut. I was deeply involved in domestic debates about the proposed changes to the airport infrastructure but left my position as an elected official before the final decision was made by parliament. While addressing parliamentary questions about the financial and security implications of the project, I found myself reflecting on the broader geopolitical context as well as the interests expressed by the U.S., leading to several key observations.

First, Greenlandic parliamentarians viewed the decisions about expanding and modernizing the country's airport infrastructure as a domestic matter, to be determined exclusively by Greenlanders. Second, Denmark appeared to have unexpectedly inserted itself into the process, showing significant interest—quite late in the discussions—in who would build the airports, how they would be constructed, and with what funding. Third, the U.S. SoI seemed to emerge abruptly. While it was acknowledged with brief, polite statements by the governments of Denmark and Greenland, it did not appear to prompt further action. Nevertheless, the statement clearly revealed a U.S. security perspective on Greenland's critical infrastructure—a perspective that had been almost absent from the Greenlandic public debate until then.

These observations raised critical questions for me about Greenland's geopolitical position and decision-making powers. Did the U.S. prompt Denmark to intervene directly in Greenland's airport projects to maintain control over Greenland's critical infrastructure and prevent Chinese investment or involvement? This, in turn, led to questions about the extent of Greenland's self-determination when domestic political matters were perceived by Denmark or the U.S. as having broader security implications, and what would happen if and when Greenland asserted its right to self-determination in such matters. These situations revealed jurisdictional grey zones in instances where areas technically under Greenlandic authority may carry security implications and thus be perceived by Denmark as falling under Danish authority. The grey zones were increasing as Greenland was increasingly asserting self-determination.

These considerations led me to conduct a research project further analyzing the mechanisms behind these events. I knew that the interests of the U.S. would potentially affect the self-determination of Greenland, and that the external factors as well as internal factors would potentially play a role in the way in which the U.S. would pursue its interest in Greenlandic matters.

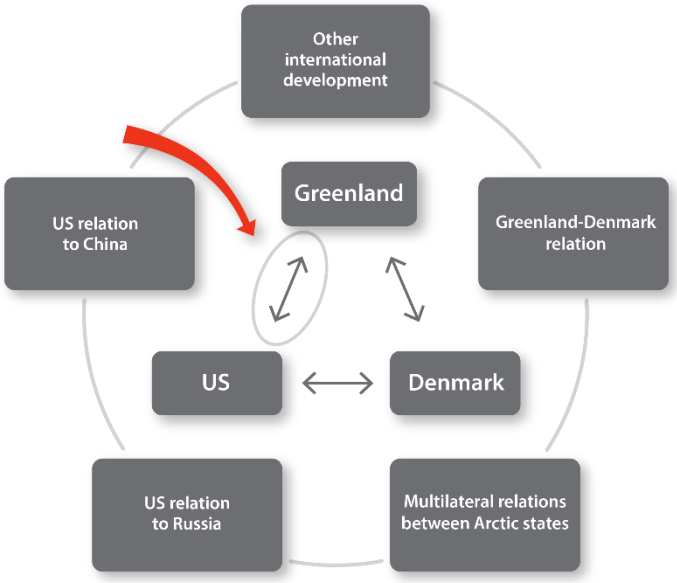

Figure 1: The geopolitical context of the study

I drew up Figure 1 to better explain the external factors potentially affecting U.S. incentives to further pursue influence in Greenland. These include U.S. relations with China and Russia, multilateral cooperation in the Arctic, international development in general, and the Greenland-Denmark relationship. I placed the trilateral relationship between Greenland, Denmark and the U.S. within the bigger circle, expecting them to be interrelated and to some extent interdependent. Finally, I placed a circle around the specific U.S.-Greenland relation to remind myself to keep focus on this relationship in this project. I then designed the study with this focus.

Since the decisions on the new airport structure of Greenland were made in 2018, scholars and media have analyzed that event, and we know today that there was a U.S. push for Denmark to act on the Chinese interests in constructing the Greenlandic airports (Sørensen 2021, Andersson & Zeuthen 2024). However, it quickly became clear that this was not the only example to draw from. A similar situation had occurred when the Danish military left the old naval base Kangilinnguit in Southwest Greenland, but later returned to use the installations after a Chinese company had expressed interests in buying the abandoned base (Bislev, Gad & Zeuthen 2018, Hinshaw and Page 2019, Sejersen 2024). We also now know that Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands on a governmental level have attempted to embrace and deal with these areas of grey zones within the self-government arrangements of

the Realm.[1] This was done by forming a new trilateral Contact Committee, with the task of "information sharing, coordination and dialogue on foreign policy, security and defense policy issues with particular relevance for the Faroe Islands and Greenland" (Frederiksen, Nielsen & Egede 2021, own translation).

It was clear to me that Greenland, Denmark and the U.S. each had different views of what role Denmark played or was to play in the further development of U.S.-Greenland relations. Questions of *if* and *how* these security related issues change Greenland's positions within the realm, or towards the U.S. thus arose and I continuously asked myself how relations between Greenland and the U.S. affected Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic. Related to these questions, I wanted to further understand whether there would be a change in how Greenland *de facto* and *de jure* conducted its self-determination.

Main research question

Based on the above considerations, I chose to formulate my research question around the specific U.S-Greenland relationship:

How do relations between Greenland and the U.S. affect Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic?

With this research question at hand, I further investigated which additional events in the time around the 2018 U.S. SoI would shed light on the developing U.S.-Greenland relationship. This led me to choose the cases laid out in the research design, to design a process-tracing analysis, and to my choices of theoretical analysis presented and discussed in this thesis. Before presenting this information, though, I will provide an introduction to and historical context for the relationships between Greenland, Denmark and the U.S. These relationships are further elaborated upon in two background chapters included in the thesis.

[1] I use the term Realm for Greenland, Denmark and Faroe Islands. Other terms often used are a commonwealth or the Kingdom of Denmark, the latter being the official name.

Greenland, Denmark and the U.S.

The relationship between Greenland and the U.S. goes back two centuries. The U.S. first expressed interest in purchasing Greenland as early as 1832, and throughout the 1800s and first half of the 1900s, U.S. polar explorers frequently visited Greenland to map its resources and territory. The cornerstones of the security related relationship between the U.S. and Greenland include the defense agreements of 1941 and 1951. The 1941 agreement was signed as Denmark was occupied by the Germans during WWII and spoke of being in place for the "defense of Greenland against attacks by a non-American power" (Kaufmann & Hull 1941). The 1951 agreement followed up on NATO requirements for Denmark and the U.S. to "develop their collective capacity to resist armed attack (…) in accordance with NATO plan" (United States of Amerika and the Kingdom of Denmark 1951). The latter agreement included wording that the U.S. was to assist Denmark in defending Greenland, but Greenland also served as an integral part of U.S. wider strategic defense planning (Archer 1988, Petersen 2011). U.S. interests in Greenland are deeply rooted in the great powers' efforts to secure military bases as well as mineral resources. Greenland's gradual implementation of self-determination has changed the conditions under which the U.S.–Greenland relationship is built and developed. Greenland's relationship with Denmark also plays a key role in the way the trilateral and bilateral relationships have changed over the past decades. Based on the cases analyzed, this thesis describes some of these changes. In the following, insights into the key elements that influenced these changes are provided.

Introduction of the thesis background chapters

To reach a deeper understanding of the historical context of Greenland-U.S. relations, the first two publications form background chapters looking back in time.[2] The chapters draw on constructivist theories in mapping Greenland and the U.S. respectively as agents in this field.

In the first chapter, co-written with senior researcher Ulrik Pram Gad, the question of how Greenland gained a place in international politics and what the tensions were within the Kingdom of Denmark in relation to foreign and security policy is explored (Olsvig & Gad 2021a). In the analysis, a constructivist approach from within sociological theories is applied

[2] The first background chapter titled *"Grønland som udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitisk aktør"* was written and published in Danish in 2021. An English translation is included in the submitted thesis.

in analyzing how Greenland and Denmark produced legitimacy–or failed to produce legitimacy - relative to the sets of norms and roles they played as actors on that arena (Finnemore 1996). In the chapter, we specifically analyze how foreign policy and security-related matters were dealt with within the Realm. The analysis is based on three social 'rooms' or 'societies': the international society, the Realm, and the parliamentarian system.

With this analysis, we present the complexities of decision-making within a Realm of three nations, where a long list of jurisdictional areas is taken over by the self-governing nation (Greenland), and discuss how this complexity played out in practical terms, continuously pushing and challenging the State-centered understanding of being 'one State' with coordinated opinions and actions. We show how Greenland increasingly widened its room for maneuvering within foreign policy, and concluded that it is not possible to draw a clear line between what is security policy according to the Danish Constitution (and thus a matter for the Danish authorities), and what is a domestic issue under Greenlandic jurisdiction. We also conclude that the priorities pursued by Greenland under the Self-Government Agreement are often not aligned with those of Denmark, undermining Denmark's ability to develop a coherent foreign policy on behalf of the whole Kingdom. In other words, Greenland's increased self-determination brings with it decisions that lie within areas of Danish jurisdiction because they implicate security and defense matters - and this is legitimate.

The analysis centers on Greenland's relationship with the U.S., as this partnership played a pivotal role in shaping the norms governing Greenland's foreign and security policy. Moreover, the U.S.-Greenland dynamic has been predominantly defined through a security lens—an area of foreign policy where established norms has historically imposed the greatest limitations on Greenland's self-government.

The second analytical background chapter, written together with associate professor Marc Jacobsen as main author, sought to give an overview of the U.S. securitization attempts directed at Greenland through time. The chapter draws on a different constructivist theory than the first background chapter, as the Copenhagen School's analytical apparatus within securitization theories was employed with specific interest to scales, audiences, and cascading effects (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). Asking the questions of why the United States has securitized Greenland, how securitizations have been received and with what consequences, we concluded that U.S. securitizations of Greenland had all been connected to

security developments outside the Arctic region and entangled with securitizations at higher scales. The securitization attempts happened depending on the historical context and who the relevant audience of that time. We further conclude that Greenland's changed status from inactive spectator to acknowledged audience influenced how securitizations have been carried out.

The historical overview of the chapter shares how U.S. geopolitical interests in Greenland goes back almost 200 years, as the then U.S. president Andrew Jackson already in 1832 was reported to have floated the idea of buying Greenland. In addition, a comprehensive report mapping Greenland's living and non-living resources published in 1868 brought with it debates within the U.S. administration of taking over Greenland (Seward 1868). The first clear securitization attempt happened in 1916 when U.S. polar explorer Robert E. Peary referred to the Monroe Doctrine, which had been established by U.S. President Monroe following his speech in 1923 stipulating any attempt to interfere in the U.S. interest-sphere as dangerous to U.S. peace and safety (Monroe 1923). Peary pleaded that "in the hands of hostile interests [Greenland] could be a serious menace" (Jacobsen & Olsvig 2024, cf. Peary 1916). Peary's campaign targeted, among others, U.S. elite decision-makers, and tried to convince them not to acknowledge Denmark's sovereignty over Greenland. This happened during the U.S.-Denmark negotiations leading to the U.S. purchase of the Danish West Indies. The negotiations led to the U.S. recognizing Denmark's sovereignty over all of Greenland, and the attempt at securitization was rejected. However, Peary's predictions materialized during the interwar period when Greenland became strategically important to the U.S. as a refueling stop *en route* to Europe, a source of meteorological data, and a supplier of cryolite essential for aluminum production in the military aviation industry (ibid.).

In 1941 the Monroe Doctrine was for the first time activated in relation to Greenland, as the defense agreement between Denmark and the U.S. was signed citing the "Defense of Greenland against attack by a non-American power" as "essential to the preservation of the peace and security of the American Continent and is a subject of vital concern to the United States of America and also to the Kingdom of Denmark" (Kauffmann and Hull 1941). The agreement paved the way for extensive militarization of Greenland and in 1951, a new defense agreement re-confirmed the securitization of Greenland, giving the U.S. a "quite free hand" regarding its access to the territory for military use (cf. Villaume 1995, 851). This

thesis analyzes the recent developments in Greenland-U.S. relations against this historical backdrop.

The thesis analysis is laid out in three single-authored articles and with the two background chapters, the thesis thus includes five publications, all peer-reviewed. The three articles were published in two different journals and one yearbook, and examine key aspects of Greenland's evolving foreign relations, particularly in its interactions with the U.S. and Denmark in the years 2014 to 2021. The two background chapters about a) Greenland's foreign policy and b) Greenland's relations with the U.S., serve as a constructivist backdrop for the rationalist analysis, and are published in anthologies.

The first article applies process-tracing methods to analyze the 2014 diplomatic crisis over the Pituffik Space Base, where Greenland lost potential income due to an American choice of a U.S.-based company instead of the previous Greenlandic-Danish company to hold the maintenance contract.[3] The 'loss of the base maintenance contract', as the crisis was dubbed in Greenland, led to negotiations between Greenland and the U.S., resulting in two Memoranda of Understanding and an economic growth package. The analysis explores why Greenland and the U.S. chose to deepen their direct cooperation and how their relationship has changed over the past two decades.

The second article takes a rationalist theoretical approach to Greenland's action space, assessing how the self-governing nation strategically navigated its relationships with Denmark, the U.S., and major global powers like China and Russia. Through an analysis of official documents, media sources, and interviews, the article demonstrates how Greenland leveraged its ambiguous position within power structures to influence policies and expand its autonomy. The third article employs an interlocked two-level game framework to analyze the 2020 negotiations over the Pituffik Space Base, investigating how Greenland, Denmark, and the U.S. positioned themselves throughout the process and in the final agreements. Based on key interviews and media coverage, it argues that these negotiations marked a turning point in Greenland's relationship with the U.S., shifting it toward more direct bilateral engagement. Together, these articles offer a multifaceted understanding of Greenland's evolving

[3] The U.S. base in Norther Greenland Thule Air Force Base was renamed Pituffik Space Base in 2023. Pituffik Space Base is used throughout the thesis except in quotes from official documents of the time before the name change, and in the publications published prior to the official renaming.

geopolitical role, highlighting its growing agency in foreign affairs and the complex dynamics shaping its relations with Denmark, the U.S., and global powers.

The relationships between the five publications will be discussed following a literature review, that will position this thesis in the existing scholarly work and identify gaps this thesis contributes to closing.

Literature review

Scholars have extensively analyzed Greenland's foreign policy positions and actions. This thesis focuses on Greenland's relationship with the United States, using selected cases to illustrate how this relationship has shaped Greenland's strategic action space—or how Greenland has, in turn, shaped its action space around this relationship. To provide context, the review begins with an overview of International Relations (IR) approaches to the Arctic as a field of inquiry.

The literature review will then examine Greenland's past actions and strategies in foreign relations, including its engagement with the EU, Nordic countries, and its efforts to establish relations and markets in East Asia, the EU, the U.S., and Canada. It will then broaden the scope to position these perspectives within a general IR framework that considers Arctic developments and the spillover effects of great power rivalry on the region. Finally, the review will briefly explore literature on the dynamics of very small states in international relations.

The Arctic in IR

The Arctic has often have been analyzed focusing on the relationship between competing, rival great powers, and through the lens of neo-realism within IR (Waltz 1979). This has been further reiterated through focus on the U.S., China, and Russia, the so-called "Arctic strategic triangle" (Huebert 2019, Pincus 2020). A good portion of Nordic and North American scholars have contributed to a wider understanding and analysis of how both smaller and larger states, Indigenous Peoples, and self-governing nations interact and make up Arctic governance (Young 2010, Østerud & Hønneland 2014, Olsen & Shadian 2017). Further analysis of the overspill of great power rivalry into self-governing nations such as Greenland

and their relations to the colonial states has shown that the Arctic is impacted by events that take place outside of the Arctic. Chinese and Russian aspirations and actions affect Greenland, just like the U.S. approaches have direct and indirect implications for Greenland (Sørensen 2018, Olesen et al 2020, Kjærgaard 2021, Sørensen 2021, Nielsen 2021).

Greenland in IR

The publications used as background chapters and in this thesis are published in two anthologies on North Atlantic and Arctic geopolitical developments (Olsvig & Gad 2021a, Jacobsen & Olsvig 2024). Although a slowly growing body of literature has been produced over the past few years, academia seldomly focuses on the agency and influence of small State-like entities such as self-governing nations in general, or of Greenland specifically. This thesis aims to contribute to this growing body of literature.

The thesis focuses on the U.S-Greenland relationship during the period 2014 to 2021, when the parties sought to develop a more direct and bilateral relationship as opposed to the earlier trilateral relationship that included Denmark. I have chosen to look at what was already written about U.S.-Greenland relations within IR, and how a new perspective based on recent developments would change these analyses.

The thesis deep dives into a few of the political issues showcasing the developing U.S.-Greenland relationship, specifically focusing on Greenland's actions through an IR lens. This contributes to the academic understanding of how self-government arrangements can work, and what its possibilities and limitations are, particularly when a self-governing nation deepens its relationship with a neighboring great power. My analysis employs the perspective, that rather than self-determination being *granted* by Denmark to Greenland, Greenland's own agency has paved the way towards a wide self-determination agreement with the former colonial power. By continuously asserting self-determination, Greenland successfully widened its self-determination throughout both the Home Rule era from 1979 to 2009, and the following Self-Government era. Greenland's political agency has challenged the mainstream conceptions of how self-governance can be conducted within a state. Thus, earlier analysis of Greenland's actions in foreign policy have provided valuable insight into power relations and sovereignty games in a post-colonial setting (Gad 2017), or how Greenland has conducted paradiplomacy as a self-governing nation (Ackrén 2014, 2019, Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017).

Expanding its agency on the international stage is not new for Greenland. Some argue that a key moment in this process was the 1972 referendum on Denmark's membership in the European Community (EC, later the EU). Although 70 percent of the Greenlandic voters opposed membership, Greenland, constitutionally a part of Denmark, was forced to join the EC. This outcome is believed to have fueled Greenland's push for greater autonomy, ultimately leading to the introduction of home rule in 1979 (Gad 2017, Heinrich 2017). After home rule was introduced, Greenland chose to leave the EC, and further developed its foreign policies based on a pragmatic need to build markets and trading partners more widely. With its flourishing fishing industry, Greenland needed access to markets in Europe and East Asia and, later, sought partners from North American, Europe as well as with Australian and Chinese companies to develop its mineral and oil resources (Gad et. al. 2018, Andersson, Zeuthen & Kalvig 2018, Jacobsen & Lindbjerg 2024).

Greenland has been subject to quite a few studies of postcoloniality and IR that focus on how Greenland has widened its own areas of influence by pursuing certain business and trade areas that implicate Denmark's security and wider foreign policy (Sørensen 2017, Foley 2017). Most of the literature produced about Greenland and its possible trade and commercial relations with China and Russia, have thus focused on the security and geopolitical implications of Greenland being a self-governing subnation, building or attempting to build these relations with States in competition with the U.S. (Sørensen 2017, Jacobsen & Lindbjerg 2024).

A key difference in developing trade markets and partnerships with European and East Asian countries compared to the U.S. is that Greenland has not developed a market for its products in the U.S. Additionally, the U.S. mining industry has shown little commercial interest in Greenland's mineral reserves, despite extensive resource mapping by U.S. Geological Surveys. I thus identified a gap in further analyzing Greenland's relations with the U.S. with a focus on security priorities.

Very small states in IR

In a more abstract, theoretical perspective, I have sought inspiration in IR literature on very small states. This has guided me in better understanding Greenland's positions and roles in the relationship to first and foremost the U.S. but also as a small State-like polity in general.

Nordic scholars, with their natural interest in how small Nordic states as well as the self-governing nations in the North Atlantic function within IR, have contributed to the understanding of how small States can be smart in navigating and bargaining their positions within the realms of great power rivalry and alliances (Browning 2006, Wivel 2016, í Jákupsstuvo & Berg 2021). In neo-realist IR theories, balancing their relations to great powers is central to weaker States' strategies for protecting their citizens and advancing their national interests. This dynamic is particularly relevant for small State theories, which have examined how States like Iceland navigate their relationships with great powers such as the United States. These analyses often apply shelter theory, a framework that explains how small states seek support or "shelter" - political, economic, and societal - from larger States or alliances to mitigate their vulnerabilities and enhance their stability (Thorhallsson, Steinsson & Kristinsson 2018, Brady & Thorhallsson 2021, Mariager & Wivel 2021).

Applying small State theories to Greenland within the context of IR provides a unique opportunity to analyze how Greenland navigates its path toward greater self-determination and shapes its foreign relations. While Greenland is geographically vast, its small population and economic constraints align it with the characteristics of a small State. Its relationship with the U.S. offers an insightful case for examining how small States develop strategies within the limits and opportunities of their position, often leveraging their relations with great powers to expand their action space (í Jákupsstuvo & Berg 2018).

Small State theories, including shelter theory, significantly enhance our understanding of how small States interact with great powers like the U.S. Literature within shelter theory focuses on how small States seek protection and support across different societal sectors from a larger State, and thus, as an analytical tool, shelter theory focus on the external asymmetric conditions rather than the internal negotiations between the States, and within each State. Other theoretical approaches have enlightened how small states can be smart and salient and thus carve out their own space and significance in IR (Browning 2006, Wivel 2016). Here, strategies are often deployed to seek influence as well as support through complex networks of relationships with one or more larger States. Notably, shelter theory highlights that the scope of action available to a small State may vary across sectors. For example, a small State might rely on one great power for economic stability while seeking security guarantees from another, creating a nuanced and layered approach to managing external dependencies (Thorhallsson, Steinsson & Kristinsson 2018).

As neither shelter theory nor other approaches provide nuanced insights into the internal dynamics of negotiations, I turned to the action space theories of Nikolaj Petersen and Hans Mouritzen (2005 and 2006), and to Robert D. Putnam's two-level game theory (1988). Action space theory is related to shelter theory, as they both explore how small or subordinate political entities navigate constraints and opportunities within existing systems. The difference between them is that while shelter theory explains the dependency of a greater power, action space explains maneuverability within and beyond that dependency. Two-level game theory provides for analyses of maneuverings within specific negotiations, and regardless of the asymmetric relations, a two-level game analysis directs attention to the domestic and international politics parties navigate through. I thus chose to apply action space theory in further analyzing the range of choices available for Greenland in its relationships with the U.S. and Denmark, and to apply two-level game theory to dig into the specific relations between parties in negotiating new agreements. I introduce the action space and two-level game theories further in the forthcoming chapter on theoretical approaches after the following introduction to the three analytical articles.

Introduction to the three analytical papers and their interrelations

With the two background chapters as a backdrop (i.e. the historical framework of the U.S., and secondly, the Greenland-Denmark legislative framework) the three analytical articles expand further on the analysis of the developing U.S.-Greenland relationship. The three articles will be presented in the order they were published, reflecting the processes of thought and analysis in which they were written during this project.

Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country'). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US-Greenland bilateralism, (Olsvig 2022a) published in the Danish Institute for International Studies 2022 Danish Foreign Policy Review, is an article that first and foremost delivers empirical data. Through a process tracing analysis, the paper provides insight into the specifics of the negotiations between Greenland and the U.S. following the 'loss of the base maintenance contract', culminating with two Memoranda of Understanding in 2019 and agreements signed in 2020 that resolved the issue of the lost base maintenance contract. Process tracing was used to build timelines, resulting in a causal graph outlining four key steps: 1) Greenland asserts self-determination, 2) the U.S. recognizes this, 3) Denmark accepts Greenland's growing self-determination, and 4) Greenland builds a more

direct relationship with the U.S. (Olsvig 2022a). These steps appeared consistently across the case studies, and process tracing helped clarify how the trilateral relationship functions.

Interestingly, the casual graph also revealed a paradox: while the process tracing analysis suggested progress toward self-determination, Denmark's acceptance of Greenland's more independent actions would happen more or less deliberately. This dynamic was thus explored further in the latter analysis. The article concluded that Greenland deliberately sought a more direct and bilateral relationship with the U.S. by moving negotiations outside the previous trilateral framework that included Denmark. This shift was intended to, on one hand, assert self-determination under the Self-Government Agreement, which had not been fully exercised within the existing trilateral arrangements surrounding the Pituffik Space Base, and, on the other hand, resolve the issue of the lost base maintenance contract. The article also concluded that the U.S. found it important to demonstrate its willingness to work more directly and closely with Greenland, demonstrating a further understanding of the, often, contentious relationship between Greenland and Denmark. In this case, the U.S. was able to position itself closer to Greenland without creating too much turmoil towards Denmark.

As an 'afterthought', the article includes a discussion analyzing this development in comparison to the early 2000s analysis of the same relationship by Clive Archer (2003), in which he applied Robert D. Putnam's two-level game analysis explaining how national leaders must simultaneously negotiate at both the domestic and international levels, balancing internal political pressures with external diplomatic constraints to reach agreements that satisfy multiple stakeholders (1988). This article thus partly functions as an empirical foundation for the following two articles but also provides direction towards further analysis of what makes it possible to further nuance the two-level game analysis of the Greenland-U.S. relation in the later rounds of negotiations (as opposed to the negotiations of the early 2000s).

The second analytical article, *Greenland's Ambiguous Action Space: Testing Internal and External Limitations Between U.S. and Danish Arctic Interests*, published in The Polar Journal (Olsvig 2022b), built on the concept of Greenland's action space as defined by Petersen (2005) and Mouritzen (2006). The article explored how Greenland's ability to maneuver was shaped by both internal and external constraints, particularly in the context of great power rivalry. Empirically, the analysis was based on three cases (the Kangilinnguit

naval base, construction of the new airports in Greenland, and the Arctic Capacity Package - elaborated on in the thesis's methodology chapter), all of which illustrated how Greenland's action space was directly influenced by geopolitical dynamics.

In the article, I characterize Greenland as a State-like polity and argue that Greenland continuously tested its action space and learned to distinguish between having room to act and possessing actual influence. While great power rivalry shaped all three cases, Greenland's approach—especially in the later cases concerning airports and the Arctic Capacity Package—demonstrated a growing ability to navigate decision-making strategically. This suggests that Greenland had acquired political skills that strengthened its position and self-governance in relation to Denmark. Notably, the article found that Greenland's limitations were increasingly defined by the U.S. rather than Denmark, highlighting its evolving engagement with a global power. Additionally, the analysis showed that internal Greenlandic politics played a crucial role in shaping its action space. The process of "testing" its boundaries—whether intentional or not—provided valuable lessons on the importance of internal alignment and strategic cooperation with Denmark or the U.S. This, in turn, expanded Greenland's participation in decision-making over legislative areas that were not previously considered within its jurisdiction.

The third and final analytical article, *Odd Couple's Win-Sets: Maintaining U.S. Basing Rights Through New Two-Level Game Negotiations with Greenland*, published in a special issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies (Olsvig 2024), returned to Putnam's two-level game analysis as a tool to understand the new relationships laid out in the first two analytical articles. Here the case of analysis consisted of the four documents agreed upon by Greenland and the U.S. in late October 2020, shortly before the U.S. presidential election. These documents and the process towards the agreements demonstrated again, how Greenland and the U.S. intentionally sought a more direct and bilateral relationship and negotiations. This was communicated by the parties and is evident in the absence of Danish signatures on the main document of agreement. In the analysis, I concluded that the case demonstrated a move from a three-level game to a new interlocking two-level game, where a win-win-win situation resulted in Greenland being able to more directly engage with the U.S., while Denmark could retain its good relationship with both the U.S. and Greenland, although being sidelined. This did not necessarily happen in an unacceptable way to Denmark, but certainly in a way that Copenhagen would have liked to avoid. In this article, I also considered Greenland a State-

like polity, thereby allowing an analysis focusing on the internal Greenlandic processes and gains in a two-level game. This provided for an analysis of the interrelatedness of the domestic and international aspects of the particular negotiation and for a much needed, in-depth analysis of the incentives of both Greenland and the U.S. in pursuing a bilateral relationship. The article concludes that win-sets could be reached although the negotiating parties were very different in size and global roles, and that State-like polities such as Greenland can pave their way to play a game where the wins were as valuable to them as to as the great powers and the small States' wins. Such a negotiation required a deep understanding of the interests and aspirations, and limits in action space, of one's own nation as well as that of the counterparts. Greenland's hard-won insights to its own and to Denmark's action space proved useful in reaching win-sets in the interlocking two-level game. An elaboration of the theoretical approaches and the interconnected use of action space and two-level game analysis will be laid out in the following section.

Theoretical approaches

The constructivist backdrop and its relation to the rationalist analysis

One might ask why two-fifths of this thesis' publications (the two "background chapters"), are positioned theoretically within a constructivist setting, while the three analytical articles operate within rationalist, two-level game and action space theories. To me, this chronology and line of thoughts have been helpful. In their discussion of the two theoretical approaches, Fearon and Wendt argue that rationalism and constructivism are "most fruitfully viewed pragmatically as analytical tools" (2002: 52). They further argue that the approaches "view society from opposing vantage points (…) rationalism from the bottom-up and constructivism from the top-down" (Ibid: 53). In this thesis, the two background chapters give a top-down—or fly-in—overview of the relationships between Greenland and the U.S, and Greenland and Denmark. The Copenhagen School of Securitization approach of the second background chapter talks of agency and structure, while the first background chapters' social-constructivist analysis of Greenland as a foreign policy and security policy actor applies the lens of norms, roles and legitimacy as good analytical tools for a small state-like focused analysis.

Following the rationale of Fearon and Wendt, this can be seen as a discussion of usefulness vs. legitimacy in the sense that, whereas the rationalist analysis will convey a pragmatic insight into what is useful for the actor, the constructivists will convey an understanding of what the actor thinks is the right thing to do (Ibid: 61). As Fearon and Wendt write about the two-step option of analysis: "first we explain preference, then we explain action" (Ibid: 64, cf. Legro 1996). In line with Fearon and Wendt, I thus take the position of seeing the constructivist and rationalist approaches as a conversation rather than a debate, i.e., instead of seeing the two approaches or isms as competing in a zero-sum conflict, this thesis contributes not with a "lawyerly debate" but with a truth-seeking approach, the truth being seen from a Greenlandic perspective (Ibid: 68).

Greenland as a 'state-like polity' engaging in two-level games

In the analytical articles, I call Greenland a 'State-like polity'. In this chapter I will introduce the thinking behind this approach, relate it to IR theories and other ways of analyzing a State-like actor or a self-governing nation, and discuss the implications.

As laid out in the first background chapter, Greenland's home rule and later self-government agreements were foundational for the establishment of Greenland's own parliamentary and governmental systems. Legislation continuously developed between Greenland and Denmark as well as internally in Greenland, forms the institutions through which Greenland conducts its foreign policy and all other policies. Seen from a Greenlandic perspective, Greenland's agency in the foreign policy arena is highly institutionalized. Greenland has since 2016 formally called its department of foreign affairs a 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs', and with the 'Authorization Act' (Fuldmagtsloven) – a law passed in the Danish parliament in 2005 - Greenland and Denmark formalized Greenland's ability to engage in and act on certain international negotiations and agreements "on behalf of the Kingdom" (Government of Denmark 2005). An increased recognition of Greenland in the international arena came with the Self-Government Agreement, which was ratified by law passed in both the Danish and Greenlandic parliament. Denmark notified the UN about the new act, reiterating the status of the people of Greenland pursuant to international law (Staur 2009). This forges an analysis that theoretically encompasses Greenland as its own institution, having various institutional powers.

Robert D. Putnam's two-level games theory for domestic-international interactions (1988) is part of institutional liberalism within IR studies. The level two domestic negotiations and level one international negotiations is a game where the domestic level two negotiations direct or influence the level one international negotiations. As Putnam explains, "[at] the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments" (Putnam 1988: 434). "Win-sets" occur when the agreements at the international level one enjoy support on the domestic level two, making it possible for a chief negotiator to sign international agreements with a mandate from the constituents, and as Putnam reiterates "the contours of the Level II win-sets are very important for understanding the Level I agreements" (Ibid.: 437).

Some researchers have argued that the situation between Greenland, Denmark and the U.S. is a "three-level game", where the international and national levels are combined with a third level addendum being the intra-realm Greenland-Denmark negotiations (Archer 2003, Ackrén 2019). The analytical approach of this study posits, that the Greenland-U.S. relation can be analyzed as a new form of "two-level" game with its own win-sets, if or when Greenland and the U.S. directly negotiate with each other, as we see in several of the cases selected for this study. Seeing Greenland as a recognized actor with its own agency is key to employing this theory.

Within IR theories, two-level game theory provides an interesting analytical tool to reach a deeper understanding of the domestic level one and international level two negotiations affecting foreign policy, and how these levels work in practice. As Putnam argues, "[neither] a purely domestic nor a purely international analysis could account for [an] episode" (1988: 430). Two-level game theory can be applied on other players than States and can be employed in the analysis of international organizations in the field of economic and trade policy, or on other policy areas such as climate change (da Conceição-Heldt & Mello 2017). Two-level game theory is thus not only applicable in the traditional State-to-State negotiation analysis. Furthermore, scholars have delved into the role of individuals and their networks in two-level negotiations, and how the interests of individuals as they engage in more than one organization at once create 'interlocks'. Here, negotiators use each other in different ways for

firms to benefit from interpersonal relations (McKeown 2015, cf. Mizruchi 1996). I thus draw on further developments of the theory in introducing the concept of interlocking two-level games, where it is not the individual players (which in the case of states could be the chief negotiators and other government officials) that create an interlock, but the interests of each of the parties in the negotiation that create an 'interlocking two-level game'. My analysis includes Greenland as a state-like polity in analyzing two-level games between Greenland, the U.S. and Denmark. This will be further elaborated in Part II of the thesis.

U.S. President Trump's stated intention in 2025 to 'get' Greenland "one way or another" contrasts with the MoU signed in 2019 during the first Trump administration that focused on expanding mutually beneficial business development. In my analysis of Greenland's agency, much emphasis has thus been on Greenland's economic and trade relations, as these areas have historically been the drivers for the formulation of Greenland's foreign policy. In the years covered by the cases in this thesis, Greenland's increased agency on the international arena, and increased awareness by Greenland, the U.S., and Denmark of the legislative grey zones of authority that partially overlap with security and defense matters, created ambiguity on the question of a) legitimacy and b) authority. The further development of the U.S.-Greenland engagement and collaboration during 2019 and 2020 are clearly within areas of Greenlandic authority but included areas with security and foreign affairs implications, e.g., business development, foreign investments, and mineral resource development. A rationalist theoretic approach to the analysis of Greenland's agency towards the U.S. is applied in this thesis and employing a two-level game theory in the analysis of this development contributes to a deeper academic understanding of what lies behind U.S. and Greenlandic priorities.

Ambiguous action space

Several cases in this study were analyzed using another rationalist approach, namely theories of action space (handlerum) - or 'room for maneuvering' - as articulated by Hans Mouritzen (2006) and Nikolaj Petersen (2005) in their respective studies of Denmark's foreign affairs relations. In IR, it is often assumed that States possess full sovereignty. However, action space analysis shifts the focus to the constraints and opportunities within asymmetric power dynamics, particularly for small or medium-sized States in their relationships with great powers.

Mouritzen argues that the significance of small States to international relations is frequently overlooked in IR - a paradox, given that most states are not great powers. He further critiques neo-realist theories for neglecting the concept of action space, likely due to their inherent bias toward great powers (Mouritzen 2022: 9). In the works of Petersen and Mouritzen, Denmark, as a small Nordic State, serves as the primary case study illustrating how its action space has evolved and adapted in response to different historical and geopolitical contexts.

My analysis extends the application of action space theory to Greenland as a small State-like polity, to examine its political developments and foreign policy strategies. Unlike Denmark, Greenland has not been extensively analyzed through the lens of action space theory. Previous studies have explored Greenland's foreign policy agency through constructivist frameworks, highlighting its ability to engage in "sovereignty games" with Denmark (Gad 2017; Adler-Nissen & Gad 2017; Jacobsen 2020, Østergaard & Arnaut 2023). These studies provide valuable insights into how State-like actors such as Greenland assert their existence and agency within the IR system. However, as an analytical tool, sovereignty game analysis does not provide the preciseness of action space analysis in the endeavor to understand the dynamics of external and internal limitations and options for a small State or State-like entity.

Applying action space theory to Greenland thus offers a new perspective by examining the specific factors that delimit the small State-like entity's foreign policy action space. Petersen's action space theory was applied to characterize the constraints and opportunities within Greenland's action space in each case. Meanwhile, Mouritzen's theory informed the analysis of how decision-makers in Greenland identified and attempted to expand their action space within these constraints. This dual approach highlighted the interplay between structure and agency in the shaping of Greenland's foreign policy and its evolving relationship with great powers.

In contrast to a pure, neo-realist approach, where Greenland as a non-State would be more or less (depending on the level of analysis) non-existing, the rationalist approach includes necessary nuances and is a better tool for examining the complexities and implications of self-government on one hand, and the domestic processes that lie behind the foreign affairs and international agency conducted by Greenland on the other. Therefore, analyzing the empirical focus of this study as games is a great tool to take the two-step approach of the

analysis – first understand the preference through a constructivist analysis, then the action through a rationalist analysis.

Research design

Choice of methods

The overall aim of this thesis is to further understand whether there was a change in how Greenland *de facto* and *de jure* conducted its self-determination, as the nation - in times of increased tension in the Arctic - developed its relationship with the U.S. This aim prompted an analysis of how and why a State-like polity such as Greenland has conducted its negotiations with the U.S. Theoretically, the study applies a constructivist backdrop to a rationalist analysis. This provides a broader understanding of how Greenland exercises its self-determination and behaves as a State-like polity and the effects of this on the U.S-Greenland-Denmark relationship.

The two background chapters take a constructivist, top-down perspective, providing an overview of Greenland's relationships with the U.S. and Denmark through the lens of norms, roles, and legitimacy. The three analytical articles by contrast adopt a rationalist game-theory approach, focusing on Greenland's action space and maneuverings in decision-making. As laid out in the previous chapter, Fearon and Wendt argue that rationalism and constructivism should be seen pragmatically, with rationalism analyzing actions from the bottom-up and constructivism interpreting preferences from the top-down (2002). This distinction aligns with the thesis' structure: the constructivist chapters explore what Greenland perceives as the right course of action, while the rationalist analyses assess what is pragmatically useful.

Following Fearon and Wendt's reasoning, this thesis treats the two approaches as a dialogue rather than a debate, avoiding a zero-sum conflict between paradigms. Instead of presenting a rigid theoretical contest, it seeks truth from a Greenlandic perspective, emphasizing the interplay between perception and strategy in foreign policy. To further examine these questions, the study was thus designed to encompass a case study based on a careful selection of cases all relating to the above questions. Applying a within-case selection method, I deliberately picked five case-units that in different ways are interrelated in subject and in relation to the main case. This method allowed me to make a controlled comparison through

process-tracing of the causal inferences of my case-units (George & Bennett 2005), as I will elaborate on in the next section. It also allowed me to try and accommodate equifinality in the analysis of the case-units, as different roads to understanding the causal mechanisms and testing hypotheses could lead to similar conclusive outcomes. As George & Bennett write about designing a case study, "case selection should be an integral part of a good research strategy to achieve well-defined objectives of the study" (2005, pp. 83).

Case studies as a method includes a variation of data sources to analyze certain developments and applying several case-units is a way to conduct a range of perspectives to answer the research questions (Gerring 2004, Seawright & Gerring 2008). A triangulation of data was done by studying existing literature and recent research, collecting data from archives and governmental strategies, parliamentary debates, and relevant minutes of meetings. To inform the cases and the process tracing further, interviews were carried out with carefully chosen interviewees to gain deeper insights. Finally, based on the Danish Freedom of Information Act formal applications for access to non-public documents were submitted to obtain additional documentation that would not otherwise be available.

Case selection

The main case: *Greenland's geo-political position and the geostrategic interest of the U.S. in Greenland in the years 2014 – 2021*, was chosen as I had an expectation that the interests of the U.S. as a great power towards other great powers or competing powers, would influence U.S. behavior towards Greenland and Denmark. I then selected five case-units based on their ability to illustrate how Greenland's geopolitical position and decision-making action space were influenced by U.S. geostrategic interests between 2014 and 2021. These cases involve all three parties and I provide an overview of the cases and their characteristics in Figure 2, which also lists the legislative frameworks affecting each case. The main case examines Greenland's geopolitical role, where Greenland's political choices and decision-making action space was shaped by the U.S.'s growing strategic interest in Greenland. The five case-units each reflect a different dynamic of the relationship between the U.S. and Greenland, with Greenland in each case exerting varying degrees of agency and external influence, and thus provide for a rationalist analysis of Greenland's action space and two-level games with the U.S.

Cases	Characteristics of the case	Legislative frameworks affecting the case
Main case Greenland's geo-political position and the geostrategic interest of the U.S. in Greenland in the years 2014 - 2021	Greenland's political choices and decision-making action space are influenced by the geostrategic interests of the U.S., which became clearer in this period, as these cases unfolded.	In spite of Greenland's geo-political position, the legislative framework for Greenland's influence on its own security and military politics is limited, as these areas reside under Danish authority according to the Danish constitution. However, decisions taken in Greenland within legislative areas of Greenlandic authority have direct implications to security and military matters.
Case-unit I The closing and reopening of the Kangilinnguit naval base (2016)	The Kangilinnguit Naval Base and the conflict around its ownership and use is an example of U.S. influence on Danish decision-making, resulting in deletion of Greenlandic action space.	Greenland was asked by Denmark to determine the future use of the old naval base, including matters related to the environment, which was under Greenlandic jurisdiction. The U.S. wanted to avoid Chinese control of the abandoned base, and prompted a re-opening of the base, and all decision-making returned to Denmark.
Case-unit II The critical infrastructure airports (2018)	The new airport structure of Greenland is a case where Danish and U.S. interests influenced the decisions in Greenland, not deleting Greenland's action space, but changing it.	Denmark's influence and involvement in the projects was prompted by the U.S. Greenland determined when and where to build new airports but decisions over whom to partner with in terms of constructions, co-funding and investments were influenced by Denmark and the U.S.
Case-unit III The two bilateral U.S.-Greenland MoUs (2019)	The two Memoranda of Understanding related to minerals and energy. These areas are within Greenlandic jurisdiction and Greenland negotiated directly with the U.S., increasing its actions space.	The areas within which Greenland and the U.S. brokered bilateral agreements were all under Greenlandic legislative authority, as management of the mineral resource sector were taken over by Greenland in 2010, while legislation on the energy sector has been under Greenlandic authority since the Home Rule era.
Case-unit IV The framework agreements (2020)	The framework agreements from 2020 related to the Pituffik Space Base, and included matters within existing trilateral agreements between Denmark, the U.S. and Greenland. The case is an example of increased action space, with partial Danish participation. Mentioning Greenland as significant for U.S. and trans-Atlantic security and recognition of the Greenlandic MFA, were important elements of this case for Greenland.	The areas where Greenland was able to engage in bilateral U.S.-Greenland vs. trilateral agreements including Denmark were clearly demonstrated in this case, as there was a clear distinction between which documents of the agreements were signed by Greenland and the U.S. only, and which were co-signed by Denmark. The division of legislative authorities between Greenland and Denmark, and Denmark's understanding of security matters lying withing Danish authority, influenced the results of this case.
Case-unit V The Arctic Capacity Package (2021)	The Arctic Capacity Package is a case of Danish decision-making based on U.S. influence, where Greenland played a more peripheral role.	Denmark did not initially invite Greenland to influence the capacity package, but when Greenland demanded a say, finalization of the package was delayed. However, after a year's delay, Greenland did not change much in the original document but added an appendix with a range of policy achievements.

Figure 2: Single case design with five embedded case-units.

I chose to conduct a process-tracing analysis of the period from 2014 when the 'loss of the base maintenance contract' crisis occurred, until 2021, when the issue was resolved. The first analytical article laid out this process-tracing and its results through timelines and in doing so I uncovered additional empirical data (Olsvig 2022a). Three of the case-units (case-unit I the Kangilinnguit naval base, II the airports, and V the Arctic Capacity Package) were chosen as cases for the action space analysis in the second analytical article (Olsvig 2022b) as they all included political issues affected by the overall great power rivalry. The remaining two case-units, III the MoUs, and IV the 2020 framework agreements, were chosen as they represented politically determined deliverables as part of a longer process spanning from 2014 to 2021 of further developing the Greenland-U.S. relationship. Both case-units III and IV were deliverables in the process of repairing the diplomatic crisis sparked by the 'loss of the base maintenance contract', and while the MoUs (case-unit III) were a central part of the process-tracing of the first analytical article, the third analytical article was built on an analysis of case-unit IV, the 2020 set of agreements, which demonstrated how Greenland increased its room for maneuvering (Olsvig 2024).

Cases of different legislative authorities

The first case-unit of the closing and reopening of the Kangilinnguit naval base demonstrates how U.S. interests in avoiding Chinese control over the Kangilinnguit naval base constrained Greenland's action space. Here, Greenland's influence on the decision was nearly non-existent, as the U.S. strategic priority of ensuring Danish oversight of the base overruled Greenlandic decision-making influence.

The second case-unit about the new airport structure highlights how U.S. and Danish concerns, particularly regarding Chinese involvement, influenced Greenland's critical airport infrastructure projects. In this case, Denmark influenced how the ambitious projects were financed and who would build them but it did not determine other core decisions made by Greenland. Denmark's decision to exert influence by financing the projects was prompted by the U.S.' interest in blocking Chinese participation.

In case-unit III, the 2019 MoUs illustrated an expansion of Greenland's action space through direct negotiations with the U.S. on matters within Greenland's own jurisdictional authority. The focus of this case were the areas within which Greenland and the U.S. could negotiate bilateral agreements because legislative frameworks defined Greenland's jurisdiction and

authority over these areas. Similarly, case-unit IV focused on the Pituffik Space Base framework agreements of 2020, show Greenland's increasing ability to negotiate agreements independently, even within a trilateral constitutional setting involving Denmark. Here, Greenland's ability to engage in bilateral versus trilateral agreements was influenced by the division of legislative authorities between Greenland and Denmark.

Finally, case-unit V of the Arctic Capacity Package by contrast involved the U.S. exerting influence on Danish priorities, with Greenland playing only a peripheral role in decision-making. In this case, Greenland's influence on specific military capacity issues was delimited by Denmark's understanding of its constitutional legislative framework, under which it would not have to include Greenland in its decision-making. This led to a 'filibuster' situation, where the final approval of the package was subject to a long delay (Nielsen & Strandsbjerg 2024). The case was, on one hand, an example of the U.S. influencing Danish policy, and on the other, of Denmark first making unilateral policy decisions before permitting Greenland to influence the result.

Together, these cases demonstrate how Greenland's action space evolved in response to external pressures, showcasing instances where it expanded, was constrained, or adapted to shifting U.S. and Danish interests. By analyzing these cases, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how Greenland navigated its geopolitical position amid great power competition. All case-units took place prior to the second term of U.S. President Trump, but transcended the Obama, Trump I and Biden administrations. To demonstrate that the case-units have a certain scope in terms of legislative authority, I included descriptions of this in the table of Figure 2.

The case-units in detail

I) The closing and re-opening of Kangilinnguit naval base (unilateral Danish decision):

In 2016, Denmark decided to reopen the abandoned Kangilinnguit naval base in Southwest Greenland, following U.S. concerns over a Chinese company's interest in purchasing it. This move was prompted by pressure from Washington, urging Copenhagen to restore its symbolic military presence at the site. The closure of the base had been a contentious issue both locally and nationally in Greenland, and the decision to reopen it surprised many,

particularly Greenlandic politicians, as this unilateral decision by Denmark bypassed previous public debates and political processes. The case highlights Greenland's limited political influence, with key decisions made unilaterally by Denmark, under significant external pressure from the U.S. due to Chinese interests. This case-unit, together with case-units IV and V, are part of article two's analytical action space analysis of Greenland's ambiguous action space between Denmark and the U.S., and how Greenland continuously developed its agency in this space over recent years (Olsvig 2022b).

II) Critical airports (Greenlandic decisions influences by U.S. and Danish interests): In 2018, Greenlandic politicians decided to build two new international airports, one in the capital of Nuuk and the other in Ilulissat that would change Greenland's airport infrastructure. The new airports were the biggest and most expensive construction projects in Greenland's self-governing history and involved both foreign investments and foreign companies commissioned to build the airports. During the bidding process for the construction of the two international airports, the Chinese company, China Communication and Construction Group, was invited to participate. As in the case of the Kangilinnguit naval base, it was the Chinese interest that drew U.S. and Danish attention to the already conflicted issue of deciding on the new investments. The U.S. pushed for greater Danish involvement to ensure that a Chinese company would not be involved in developing critical Greenlandic infrastructure. The new airport in Nuuk was intended to replace the international airport at Kangerlussuaq, a former U.S. air base constructed by the U.S. military during World War II.

The future of Kangerlussuaq continued to be a disputed matter. Domestically, the issue divided the municipalities and parliament, thus creating a complex situation for the Greenlandic government. In the airport package under debate, Kangerlussuaq would be closed, or downgraded to a heliport, to ensure the economic viability of the two new airports at Nuuk and Ilulissat. However, neither Ilulissat nor Nuuk's new international airports would meet the length of the old U.S. military-built landing strip situated at the end of the longest fjord of West Greenland - a site with stable weather ensuring more regular operations. In the fall of 2018, the Danish Prime Minister arrived in Nuuk to announce investments and loans to support completion of the two international airports. The U.S. Department of Defense issued the Statement of Intent a few weeks later on the U.S.' interest in investing in dual-use critical infrastructure in Greenland. When the Danes offered financial aid for the airports, a governmental crisis in Greenland was sparked, and one party left the government coalition in

opposition to the Danish co-ownership of the airports. The case of the airports was thus an example of direct Danish and U.S. influence on domestic Greenlandic politics and was included in analytical article two (Olsvig 2022b).

III) The 2019 MoU's on further technical cooperation on the energy and mineral sectors and the 2020 so-called 'growth package' from the U.S. (bilateral U.S. – Greenland agreements):

In May of 2019, the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was supposed to visit Greenland on his way back to the U.S. from a trip to Europe (Associated Press 2019). In preparation for this visit 'deliverables' were to be announced with Greenland. The visit was cancelled, but in June 2019 a U.S. government official arrived in Nuuk and signed two Memoranda of Understandings on furthering technical cooperation between Greenland and the U.S. on the energy and mineral sectors (Naalakkersuisut 2019). As a follow up to these agreements, the U.S. Ambassador to Denmark announced an 'economic growth package' in April of 2020, where Greenland and the U.S. once again negotiated a list of areas for further cooperation (Sands 2020). The announcement of the 'growth package' initiated a heated debate in Greenlandic and Danish media, as members of the Danish parliament felt uninformed of the plans, and some claimed that Greenland was acting without proper involvement of Denmark (Jacobsen & Olsvig 2024). This case-unit is the main case in analytical article one, which is a process-tracing analysis of the MoU signing in 2019 (Olsvig 2022a).

IV) The framework agreements from October 2020 on future Pituffik Space Base maintenance contracts, consisting of four documents and agreements (bilateral and trilateral agreements between Greenland, U.S., and Denmark):

In late October 2020, days before the U.S. presidential election, and after several years of negotiations on the question of the maintenance contract at Pituffik Space Base, Greenland and the U.S. signed a new framework agreement on the issue (Sands & Kielsen 2020, Naalakkersuisut 2020). From Greenland's point of view, the maintenance contract had been 'lost' in 2014 when a U.S. company took over the contract after several decades of a Greenlandic-Danish company providing base maintenance and securing tax income for the Greenland treasury. The 'loss' of the maintenance contract created a crisis in the Greenland-U.S. relationship, and domestic turmoil in Greenlandic politics. Greenland's acceptance of the U.S. economic growth package in 2020 demonstrated Greenland's desire to reinstate collaboration with the U.S., including on matters pertaining to the Pituffik Space Base.

The case is interesting because the agreement consists of four documents, each different in their form. The signed document, the "Common Plan for U.S.-Greenland Cooperation in Support of our Understanding for Pituffik (Thule Air Base)," was signed only by Greenlandic and U.S. government officials without including a Danish signatory, although the issue related clearly to defense matters. This case-unit is the main case of analytical article three, where a two-level game analysis framework was used to explain a new form of interlocking two-level game between Greenland and the U.S. (Olsvig 2024).

V) The Arctic Capacity Package 2021 (unilateral Danish decision to expand military spendings predominantly for surveillance in Greenland).

In the spring of 2021, shortly before a snap election was called in Greenland, a majority of the Danish parties in the Danish parliament together with the Minister of Defense signed an "Arctic Capacity Package" increasing the Danish military expenditures in the Arctic and North Atlantic with 1.5 billion DKK. Two things were interesting about the Package: first, soon after the package was presented in the media, Greenlandic and Faroese elected officials from both the Greenlandic, Faroese and Danish parliaments criticized the decision-making process, claiming not to have participated in the deliberations on the package. Second, the U.S.' desire for Denmark to increase its military surveillance of Greenland underpinned the priorities in the package. The case thus demonstrates how the triangularity of the Greenland-Denmark-U.S. relationship implicitly creates dilemmas and challenges in the decision-making processes, which is why it was included in the analysis of article two (Olsvig 2022b).

Case-units I and V deviated most from the main case because they involve limited Greenlandic decision-making while *case-units II, III and IV* were the most crucial cases because they concern areas within Greenlandic jurisdiction and also implicate Danish security matters.

The design of a process tracing analysis

As a key methodological component, and as "the central challenge is to avoid "lazy mechanism-based storytelling…"", I applied process tracing as an important tool for tracing the development of the recent Greenland-U.S.-Danish negotiations (Bennett & Checkel 2015: 35, Ricks & Liu 2018). To produce further empirical data on these developments I

specifically conducted a process tracing analysis of the period since the 2014 ‘loss of the base maintenance contract’ to the resolution of the matter in 2021 (Olsvig 2022a).

In this thesis, I conduct analysis that delves deeper into the causal mechanisms underlying the activities outlined in the list of case-units. To achieve this, I use a structured approach to organizing datasets within cases, treating them as evidence or as a way to refine the assumptions that often arise in qualitative social science research. In other words, process tracing and systematic mapping serve as methods to better grasp the complexities of these processes, particularly in political dynamics—specifically, the relationship between Greenland and the U.S. This approach helps avoid the risk of oversimplified narratives that overlook crucial nuances. The case-units focused on areas where Greenland and the U.S. could establish bilateral agreements, while the analysis also considers the broader legislative framework governing areas that Greenland had assumed control over. The findings indicate that Greenland and the U.S. had intentionally shifted away from a trilateral framework involving Denmark, instead working toward a more direct bilateral relationship.

From informal dialogues and formal interviews for this project with government officials from both Greenland, the U.S. and Denmark, it became clear to me, that each of the three parties had different views on what role Denmark played in the development of these agreements, and whether the U.S.-Greenland relationship was truly bilateral. By applying process tracing, the aim was therefore to describe the causal process, and to achieve a deeper understanding of whether the developing relationship between Greenland and the U.S. included ‘red line’ issues, such as avoiding security matters, to conduct a bilateral negotiation without the involvement of Denmark. The process tracing method concluded with a causal graph, being *1) Greenland implementing self-determination, 2) the self-determining powers of Greenland becoming evident to the U.S., 3) Denmark accepting that Greenland acts on its own behalf, resulting in 4) a direct and bilateral process between Greenland and the U.S. being possible*, laying out the causal mechanisms behind the move from trilateralism to bilateralism. As initial preparations for conducting the process tracing, I identified the hypotheses presented in the following section.

Hypotheses

In designing the process tracing analysis, I drew inspiration from Jacob I. Ricks and Amy H. Liu's practical guide to process-tracing research designs (Ricks & Liu 2018).[4] According to Ricks and Liu, one of the first steps in designing process tracing research is to identify hypotheses to test the explanations and theories we find legitimate. Here juxtapositions and rivaling explanations is a tool to evaluate the hypotheses against each other (2018: 843).

In the following, I present three hypotheses, which are interconnected, and of which two juxtapose. The hypotheses are not primarily informed by theory, rather the hypotheses are informed by how Greenlandic politicians framed political issues in media, including the common understandings or misunderstandings reported in media. I attach theoretical isms to each hypothesis and return to this briefly in the discussion. The narratives conveyed through media are important because they form much of the domestic political narrative around Greenland's push for greater self-determination, and because reports in media outlets shape how the public responds to the Greenlandic politicians' narratives. Examples of such narratives include one former Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greenland clearly stating that security policy cannot limit Greenland's self-determination, and another stating that further Danish military presence is not welcome (Lindstrøm 2020, Kristiansen 2021, Filtenborg 2021, Veirum 2021).

The hypotheses are further informed by established empirical findings in scholarship within IR theories as laid out in the literature review of this thesis. Finally, the strict constitutional law perspective conveyed especially by Danish politicians and the Danish government sparked criticism by Greenlandic politicians about Danish media bias and about Denmark excluding Greenland from security and military policy decisions (Krog 2021, Neupert 2021, Sørensen & Olsvig 2022). By testing these hypotheses in my discussion, I am able to reach a better understanding of the dynamics and developments between the U.S. and Greenland. I will return to an analysis of the hypotheses in the discussion, included in Part II of this thesis.

[4] Ricks & Liu present a checklist with seven steps: 1) Identifying hypotheses, 2) Establish timelines, 3) Construct causal graph, 4) Identify alternative choice or event, 5) Identify counterfactual outcomes, 6) Finding evidence for primary hypothesis and 7) Finding evidence for rival hypothesis (2018).

The first hypothesis is that increased bilateral and diversified cooperation between Greenland and the U.S. expands Greenland's self-determination. Greenlandic politicians have increasingly framed direct collaboration with the U.S. as enhancing their autonomy. Key developments include the 2019 signing of two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Greenlandic jurisdiction, the 2020 announcement of a U.S. Agency for International Development-funded (USAID) collaboration package, and the 2021 resumption of the joint committee meetings originally established by the Igaliku Agreement. These developments, now framed as bilateral rather than trilateral, suggest that Greenland is exercising greater self-determination than in the past if Denmark is indeed excluded from negotiations as portrayed in media. This hypothesis would support a constructivist theoretical approach where Greenland's agency is recognized, and where norms, roles and legitimacy are built through an increased agency (Finnemore 1996).

The second hypothesis is that U.S. diversification of cooperation with Greenland primarily serves its homeland security interests. Historically, U.S. engagement with Greenland has centered on geopolitical and security concerns, such as establishing military bases, airstrips, and missile defense systems. As Greenland gains increased autonomy from Denmark, including expanded legislative powers and a voice in security matters, the U.S. appears motivated to maintain direct relations to safeguard its strategic interests. Here, the strategic interest is dictated by a pursuit of organizational stability to support security concerns through relations that can result in securitization of a range of areas (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998).

The third hypothesis is that heightened U.S. focus on military security may constrain Greenland's self-determination. Security theories suggest that security needs of great powers delimit the action space of smaller states (Mouritzen 2006). This contrasts with the first hypothesis, highlighting a critical analytical tension. While Greenland signals a desire for bilateral ties with the U.S., Denmark retains jurisdiction over foreign policy and defense under its Constitution. Although Greenland has decision-making power through the Self-Government Act, Denmark could assert sovereignty over matters it deems within its jurisdiction. This would imply a neo-realist regime, where security concerns overrule all other policy areas, including self-determination arrangements (Wivel 2002, cf. Waltz 1979).

Causal mechanisms on the road to further self-determination

In the first analytical article, the use of process tracing included setting up the afore-mentioned hypothesis and establishing timelines (which were also done in the background chapters). This resulted in the causal graph presented in the article, which can be translated to a broader context as four steps: 1) Greenland implements self-determination, 2) Greenland's self-determination powers become evident to the U.S., 3) Denmark accepts that Greenland acts increasingly on its own behalf, and 4) Greenland engages in a more direct relationship with the U.S. (Olsvig 2022a).

These steps were repeatedly evident in the case-units analyzed in this thesis, and the process tracing method proved useful for understanding the mechanisms within the trilateral relationship between Greenland, the U.S., and Denmark. The causal graph also displayed a paradox, as even though the result could be seen as a step towards further self-determination, the third step – the question of Denmark accepting these changes – constantly dialed up and down in the sense that Denmark supported Greenland's wider room for maneuvering but not always willingly. This will be further discussed in the second part of the thesis.

Elite and expert interviews

To ensure the most comprehensive collection of empirical data, a triangulation approach was applied. This included case studies, process tracing, document analysis, and finally elite and expert interviews. Given the relatively small number of individuals involved in the negotiations and decision-making processes in Greenland-U.S.-Denmark relations, these methods were best suited to capturing key insights.

Individuals from the Greenlandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Consulate in Nuuk, the U.S. Embassy in Denmark, and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were interviewed. Additionally, I had informal talks with officials from the U.S. State Department and the diplomatic representations of Greenland to confirm the information. As staff working on Arctic issues consisted of only a few individuals, conducting a large number of interviews was neither feasible nor necessary for this study.
I thus applied methods and categorizations of 'expert' interviews, of which some were 'elite' interviews (Meuser & Nagel 2009, Littig 2009, Pfadenhauer 2009). The distinction between

interviewing experts and elites provided valuable insights into how to approach interviews with this group of participants. To clarify their roles, all interviewees possessed both 'know-why' (theoretical or conceptual understanding) and 'know-how' (practical or applied knowledge). However, mapping their specific positions in terms of expertise and influence serves as an effective analytical tool. This helped determine whether, in particular situations and on specific issues, they functioned as experts—who not only shaped decisions but also had the power to interpret and contextualize information—or as elites, who, while influential as decision-makers, had less interpretive authority compared to experts (Littig 2009).

According to Michaela Pfadenhauer, we "regard those persons as "experts," who have privileged access to information and – moreover – who can be made responsible for the planning and provision of problem solutions" (2009: 83). I thus categorized the government officials interviewed as experts with occupational and professional knowledge, meaning they were experts with both interpretive power as well as formative power (Littig 2009: 99). The interviews with elected government and parliament members were also elite interviews, but rather than interpretive power, they were experts with formative power.

Between May 2021 and October 2022, interviews were conducted with twelve current and former government officials, including politicians, diplomats, and civil servants. These interviews included two U.S. diplomats, two Danish government officials, three Danish parliamentarians, two Greenlandic government officials, and three Greenlandic politicians. To verify the interview data, additional informal discussions were held with two other Danish government officials, two additional U.S. government officials, and various Greenlandic government officials and politicians. The interviews primarily focused on U.S.-Greenland relations from 2018 to 2021. Additionally, an informal conversation with a Greenlandic municipal politician was conducted to provide insights into the Kangilinnguit case from a local government perspective.

In the analysis of the interviews and in the application of the empirical data, I emphasized whether the information could be regarded as a political statement within the framework of the specific cases when the interviewee was an elected member, rather than an expert information included interpretive power, when the interviewee was a professional government official.

The application of expert and elite interviews provided important insight into how government officials, politicians and decision-makers from Greenland, the U.S. and Denmark each played a role in the negotiations and development of recent agreements. The interviews were semi-structured and centered around the processes of the cases presented in this paper (Kvale 1994).

Open access documents

Throughout the course of this project, I sought and used information through open access outlets, such as governmental and parliamentary documents, reports, and media outlets. I kept in mind that much of this information was authored from a specific perspective with a specific audience or interest in mind. Here I sought to highlight Greenlandic sources, as I saw an underrepresentation of Greenlandic perspectives both in mainstream media outside of Greenland, but also in academic research and writing. It was important for me to approach the documents with a critical perspective. I conducted extensive triangulation of data through interviews, follow-up interviews and, to some extent, applied to access non-public information in my analysis of several key documents that played central roles in this project, such as the framework agreements of October 2020 (case-unit IV).

Documents accessed through the Freedom of Information Act

I applied and was granted access to governmental documents from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Danish *Freedom of Information Act*. The documents were not publicly available. I was seeking information for the first analytical article, which includes a process tracing analysis of the specific events and meetings held between Greenland, and the U.S. within different timeframes between the years 2004 and 2021. The focus was on the period from the 'loss of the base maintenance contract' in 2014 to the resumption of meetings of the Joint Committee in 2021 – a body for cooperation between U.S.-Greenland-Denmark established with 2004 Igaliku Agreement - while also accessing information on how 'normal' procedures of engaging were prior to 2014.

The application for access was specifically directed at giving me insights to a timeline in events evolving around a certain type of meetings held between Greenland, Denmark and the U.S., and thus the documents obtained from the application were very specific. I received

several calls from ministerial personnel who wanted me to specify the timeframes and the types of interactions I was seeking information about, to narrow down the type of documents I would get, supposedly not to be overburdened with pages, which of course can be understood as a way for the ministry to delimit what I would get access to. Nevertheless, access to these documents provided me with robust insight into these events, and I was able to construct two timelines presented in the first analytical article (Olsvig 2022a). Some of the information from the application for access was triangulated with interviews and cross-checked in parliamentary and governmental documents, and by doing so, I was able to see how information was sometimes framed differently, according to the audience, which in itself was a good tool to understand the preferences and actions of the different actors.

The methods chosen and laid out above were all very good tools well-described in mainstream Western scientific methods and approaches to IR studies. I found it easy to navigate these methods, especially with my social science anthropological training, but in further analyzing my personal background as an Indigenous scholar, I needed to dig a little deeper to understand my own positionality.

Research ethics

My seven years as an elected official (from 2011 to 2018) provided me with insights and questions that motivated my interest in conducting academic research. Bringing with me a basic rationale in qualitative anthropological research methods, which include an array of methodologies to collect empirical data, also within one's own society, I needed to do this re-entering with an as foreign as possible 'view'. For me, the most intriguing foreign view within IR was that of a rationalist's approach. Firstly, the eyes of a rationalist IR researcher were the best tools to go back and analyze work that I would to some extents have been part of myself as a practitioner. Secondly, I was intrigued by reading rationalist and to me sometimes imperialist analyses of political developments in my own society and I became curious about how an Indigenous Greenlandic perspective could contribute to the hegemonic perspectives often conveyed in mainstream, non-Indigenous academia. In the following section, I position myself in this research as an Indigenous person, former practitioner, and researcher.

Positionality – the "in-between-ness"

My personal journey throughout the course of this project has truly been a journey through borderlands or in-between-ness. In *Arctic Auto-ethnography: Unsettling colonial research relations* by Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, the author discusses the challenges of being located in a borderland and place of in-between-ness, being of mixed heritage, and being an Indigenous academic approaching one's own community in the role of an academic stranger (2020: 39). Graugaard speaks of this as perceived by the surrounding world and oneself as providing privilege in the context of Greenland, as being an Indigenous scholar approaching one's own society and communities with a research project is also to be a bearer of all the symbolism brought with hundreds of years of academia entering Indigenous communities from the outside.

In my borderland or in-between-ness, the defining lines were not my ethnicity or mixed heritage background but that I was transitioning from being a practitioner – a politician – to being an academic – and mid-way into my project, transitioning back into the practitioner role. As a practitioner, I was enacting the assertion of self-determination while as an academic, I was a bearer of academic biases. As the project started in 2020, I was out of party politics but was Chair of Greenland's Human Rights Council and in mid-2022, I assumed the broader international role as Chair of the Indigenous Peoples' Organization, Inuit Circumpolar Council. At the same time, I was transitioning academically from being an anthropologist to working with political science and IR.

This made me feel as if I was moving on thin ice, having to tread carefully and constantly poke at the ice in front of me to test if it would hold. The circumstances challenged my thinking and academic capabilities and this I had a constant underlying flow of consciousness about the political awareness of myself and others. Sometimes silently within myself, other times expressed by others in ways that made me need to re-calibrate and dig deeper into thinking and analyzing.

My former and new political roles, as well as my Indigeneity and identity, were not the only things that made me feel as if I was in a place of in-between-ness and borderlands. In certain instances, I was faced with expressions of political positions by colleagues within the field of IR, who in their analyses were digging into issues related to my issues, but from a Danish

perspective, which meant that my national identity played a role in our relationship. Here I had to find ways to navigate between listening to and taking in those perspectives that were relevant to my re-learning how to be a researcher, and those that I would be better off ignoring. Although a good ambition, I started noticing that not all expressions and comments were easily forgotten to me, and sometimes they made me feel as if I was an intruder in a colonial approach to research.

At times, I would feel insecure and this insecurity would spill over into my feelings of whether my manuscript, my language, my approach and my academic contributions were strong enough. It was a learning experience to develop my confidence in the ontology and for that matter in the epistemology of my research, reminding myself that what I set out to do was not to question mainstream IR isms, but to apply the constructivist and rationalists approaches specifically to cases analyzed from a Greenlandic lens of IR.

Emil Sondaj Hansen writes in his article *Post-colonial gaslighting and Greenlandic independence: When ontological insecurity sustains hierarchy*, that "[the] gaslighting metaphor works well within the ontological security framework, as it highlights how barriers to agency can be deliberately constructed" (2023: 466-467). He further posits that, "A key question in any investigation of ontological security is, whose ontological security?" (Ibid.).

In my meeting with IR within a field predominantly occupied by non-Indigenous scholars from Denmark, I had to navigate my ontological security very consciously. I did come across a few instances of 'post-colonial gaslighting' in ways that resemble the cases presented by Hansen in his article. In one situation, I had to struggle immensely for the editors of an anthology to accept the use of the Greenlandic names for Naalakkersuisut, (Government of Greenland), Inatsisartut (Parliament of Greenland) and Naalakkersuisoq (minister). I insisted these words be used as they are the words used in the Danish language *Self-Government Act*, passed in the Danish Parliament. I knew that the old Danish concepts of "landsting" and "landsstyre" had deliberately been changed by Greenlandic politicians in the self-government negotiations that informed the development of the *Act*. I knew this had been a deliberate change following the inauguration of self-government in 2009, just like it was a deliberate change to include "Government of Greenland" in English in the government logo and changing the name of the former department of foreign affairs into 'ministry' in English. I was initially met with irritation and rejection of these wishes by the editors, and the words

were changed only in the last round of editing after I had put my foot down ready to retract my publication.

In another situation, a colleague commented emotionally that self-determination in the form pursued by Greenlandic politicians was unrealistic, making me feel uneasy in the collegial room I was in, and which I had silently struggled to feel safe in because of the feeling of intruding on someone else's academic domain. In this situation, I did not react, but the feeling stayed with me throughout the rest of the study.

These situations struck me as post-colonial gaslighting and I was forced to consider thoroughly how this study was positioned in a post-colonial setting. I thus include a discussion of this study's decolonial character in the second part of the thesis. As these experiences are not unique to me and also matter to my Indigenous colleagues at our university, I am certain they would also have mattered to me regardless of once having been a politician. I thus continued thinking of them as my project progressed and as I navigated these feelings and thoughts throughout the project. The situations described above both frustrated me and provided me with more incentive to have all my publications peer reviewed to ensure they are academically 'solid ice.' I felt the urge and need to provide a research perspective from within Greenland to widen the body of science and analysis, especially within rationalist analyses. This was and is of course a difficult balance but I kept reminding myself that no one can detach themselves from their own reality, history and background, neither me nor researchers of other nationalities belonging to colonizing societies.

This project has – with delays of leave when I became ICC Chair – run over five years. Changes have also happened institutionally at our university over those five years. Today, a group of researchers insist on calling Greenland by its formal Indigenous name, Kalaallit Nunaat, in academic publications. I fundamentally agree with this group, and I have insisted on using Kalaallit Nunaat in publications written later. This made me think retrospectively of my five publications in this thesis, where I use 'Greenland', and I realize that I would have chosen differently had my project been initiated in 2025 and not in 2020. I think this is quite representative of the development we are seeing not only in Greenland but across the board of Indigenous scholars positioning themselves in research (Wilson et al, 2020, Vigliano Relva & Jung 2021, Graugaard 2020).

Identity, sense of sovereignty, and studying one's own

My generation, born at the end of the 1970s, is often called "the children of Home Rule". We have never experienced Greenland not having its own government and parliament making most of its own decisions. Many of us, me included, have witnessed our parent's discussions around the dinner tables on the importance of eradicating inequities between Danish and Greenlandic citizens across sectors of society, and the importance of improving the lives of our fellow Greenlanders in our country. Often, waves have been high, and many feelings have been at play, publicly within our homes and within ourselves.

For many in my generation, the desire for empowerment and emancipation from colonial times and approaches have been embedded in our participation in society as an underlying unconditional focus. This was the case for me in my childhood home, where my parents emphasized the values of self-reliance and determining our own path as a society. Most importantly, my sisters and I were taught to learn and discover, to take responsibility over our own lives, and be open to other ways of thinking and viewing the world. Thus, a realization that I had to make during this project was that politics never really leaves my being, and I think that is true for most IR researchers, both those who do research on their own political systems, and those who do research on other systems than their own. After all, I did notice some of the same political scientists that I had felt foreign towards actively engaging as experts on Danish news in the early days of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, positioning themselves clearly as belonging to the political systems they as experts were to comment on, as they spoke of Denmark's position and options as 'us', and 'we'.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have thus been clearly aware of my own positionality and role and how it might affect my research. Although being out of party politics and life as an elected official seeking offices, my interest in politics and involvement in party-neutral national and international work continued.

Entering this world of political science and academia required me to transition in several ways – and at times, it has been a steep learning curve. First, I am an anthropologist, and although I have read much IR literature and reports while in politics, I had to transition mentally and in praxis from my anthropological training to the political science sphere. I choose to see all of these in-between-nesses and running across borderlands as a positive

precondition, that I think most Indigenous scholars operate within. We are often involved in many things at the same time but we also provide a "two-eyed" perspective that contributes with insights and rationalities that would not have been there if we did not insist on entering and contributing to the Western scientific world (Wright et.al. 2019, Vigliano Relva & Jung 2021).

Passive use of insider knowledge

Although much information used specifically in the analysis is from interviews, another side of my positionality was that I had insights that made me feel that I had a head start on some information as a former politician. I thus had a few considerations on the use of open-access parliamentary documents. Firstly, many of these outlets are Greenlandic institutional outlets, such as the Inatsisartut website and documents under each parliamentary agenda item, which I knew were there because I had been part of the deliberations as a parliamentarian but also saw that not many researchers used them in their analysis of the same issues. Furthermore, I was the author or co-author of some parliamentary document sources. It was therefore important for me to apply a rationalist approach in triangulating this information with other open access documentation, such as news outlets and governmental reports.

A significant aspect of my search for empirical data was informed by 'passive use of insider knowledge'. This passive use of insider knowledge has been in effect throughout the course of the project and has also changed in content and relevance with my shifting roles over the past five years. As Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, I often engage with government officials, for example, and I thus consistently and very clearly declared in what capacity I was approaching them – this was particularly relevant in the short overlap in late 2022 when I was still gathering background information for this study. The situation of occupying several roles is typical for small societies with few people, and that has been well described in literature (Baldacchino & Veenendaal 2018; Hayfield & Schug 2019). I thus in principle consider these issues as well described within academia and literature on doing fieldwork in one's own society, and not a limitation to my own positionality.

Following ethical guidelines

Based on Ilisimatusarfik's Guidelines for Ethical Research, I will lay out some additional ethical considerations related to publications and communication, data management, accountability about anonymity and "the long and not always positive research history that is linked to colonial history" in the following (Ilisimatusarfik 2024).

For this PhD project it has been important for me to publish what I write, not just as publications in academic anthologies and journals but also in easily readable and accessible publications such as newspapers and policy briefs (Olsvig & Gad 2020, Olsvig & Gad 2021b). Research is often not easily accessible to the public or even to politicians in Greenland (and to some extent in Denmark). Thus, I found it important from the beginning to offer presentations to a wide audience, including parliamentary committees. The two policy briefs I published in 2021 were translated into Greenlandic and I presented the recommendations included in them to the relevant parliamentary committees in Greenlandic and Danish. I have been active in Greenlandic and Danish media, commenting on events related to my research topics. It has to me been important for me to speak about these research topics in Greenlandic media, although this has been challenging at times because many of the relevant phrases and concepts have not been clearly defined in our own language. When conducting interviews with research participants in Greenlandic, I made it clear that it was a choice to be interviewed in our own language, although no-one asked to use this opportunity.

When approaching interviewees, I made it very clear in what capacity I was contacting the possible interviewees, often writing in the beginning of an email or saying on the phone: "I am contacting you in my capacity as a PhD student for an interview for my project". This clarity was important because we are operating in a small society, where many know each other in various ways. It was also important because as an ex-politician, the interviewees would quite certainly know who I was and would need to know from the outset that I was contacting them in my capacity as a researcher.

Erika Anne Hayfield and Mariah Schug write of the boundaries of belonging, that "in conceiving of small places, the picture of strangeness and belonging may be different. Rather than anonymity that is possible in highly populated urban settings, strangeness in small places

is defined by compulsory familiarity […]. People know (of) each other, and belonging is partly represented through connections, being familiar and networked [..]" (Hayfield & Schug 2019: 385). It was clear to me that the interviewees, especially those from Greenland, quickly adjusted to meeting me in my new position and at times I would find myself thinking during the interview that my change in role from being a politician-colleague to a PhD student asking for an interview immediately created a different dynamic between myself and the interviewees. They met me with familiarity but at the same time with a curiosity about my new role and research project.

As soon as interviewees had agreed to be interviewed, I sent a consent form with a project description to them, including a clear statement of what the interview would be used for in the project. Each of these consent forms were signed by the interviewee and myself, and kept in a secure locker, together with the recordings and my notebook used only during interviews. The interviews were recorded if the interviewee consented to it and all but one did so. All recordings were kept safe, and the files will be disposed of as soon as the project is completed.

All interviewees were anonymized in the research publications. The biggest reasons for that were 1) that Greenland is a small country, and many of us know each other, and 2) I knew that we might touch upon sensitive political matters, and I wanted to encourage interviewees to be as open as possible.

As it is stated in the Ilisimatusarfik guidelines "As an international researcher in Greenland, you are part of a long and not always positive research history that is closely linked to colonial history" and "Considerations about how the researcher is considered and how this may be accommodated must be taken into account when conducting research in Greenland" (Ilisimatusarfik 2024: 5). Although I don't fall under the category of 'international researcher' as an Inuk from Greenland, I needed to think through for myself how my research might contribute to the "long and not always positive research history linked to colonial history", an maintain a consciousness of whether my research and analysis skills would contribute to this not always positive history. I thus focused on avoiding reproduction of some of these imbalances in the researcher-researched power relations.

Quite early in my project I had such an experience. Rather than contributing to a line of research done on the field of IR that was looking from the outside in, I literally felt that I was looking from the inside out. This posed to me another challenge, in that I had to be careful not to fall into being partisan in my analysis. I thus became very aware of the importance of data triangulation and – to some – I might even have overdone my level of empirical focus, at times forgetting the more theoretical approaches and questions asked in my research design.

Part II: Dissertation publications

First background chapter

An English translation of background chapter 1, titled 'Greenland as a foreign and security policy actor' is included in the submitted thesis.

Olsvig, S., & Gad, U. P. (2021a). Grønland som udenrigs-og sikkerhedspolitisk aktør. In Rahbek-Clemmensen, J., & Sørensen, C. T. N. *Sikkerhedspolitik i Arktis og Nordatlanten* (pp. 168-93). Djøf Forlag.

English translation of:

Olsvig, S., & Gad, U. P. (2021a). Grønland som udenrigs-og sikkerhedspolitisk aktør. In Rahbek-Clemmensen, J., & Sørensen, C. T. N. *Sikkerhedspolitik i Arktis og Nordatlanten* (pp. 168-93). Djøf Forlag.

Greenland as a foreign and security policy actor

Chapter in Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen & Camilla Sørensen (ed)
Security Policy in the Arctic and North Atlantic, DJØF Forlag

Introduction: Greenland in foreign and security policy

Climate change in the Arctic and shifting global great power dynamics have created new strategic challenges for both the Realm and its constituents namely Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. These challenges have made clear that the handling of foreign and security policy in the Realm has undergone critical changes: The Danish state can no longer decide on Greenland in foreign and security policy issues in the same way it could when Greenland was a colony. Compared to other non-sovereign countries and regions, Greenland's paradiplomacy (Kuznetsov, 2014; Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2018) extends to parts of security policy. Since interests are not always seen as overlapping, the major political challenges continuously give rise to tensions between Nuuk (Greenland) and Copenhagen (Denmark).

In a purely Realist analysis that focuses on military capabilities and economic might, Greenland 'disappears' as a foreign and security policy actor on the international stage - just as Denmark would be unable to make much of a difference in the event of a war between great powers. However, the US has an agreement with Denmark that facilitates its military actions in Greenland - and similarly, Denmark no longer conducts foreign and security policy without Greenland's consent. To understand this, one must consider international politics as something more than pure power politics. This suggests a need for analyses that consider how international politics unfolds in a manner that creates opportunities for the participation of even the smallest actors. The current challenges and tensions thus pose two questions for our understanding of the Realm's relationship with the outside world: Firstly, how has Greenland, as a relatively small actor, established a role for

itself in international politics? Secondly, what are the tensions within the Realm regarding foreign and security policy?

To answer the first question, this chapter provides an analysis of Greenland's gradual emergence in the international society, utilizing well-established sociological concepts of norms, roles, and legitimacy. This analytical strategy has the advantage that the same conceptual apparatus can be used to answer the chapter's second question. Specifically, this is achieved by analysing the 'Realm' as a 'society' where Greenland and Denmark produce legitimacy in relation to a set of norms and roles – and then zooming in on how the actors in the parliamentary system that manages Greenland's foreign and security policy do the same. The chapter thus offers a better understanding of the tensions that the increased great power interest created in the Realm.

The analysis focuses on Greenland's relationship with the United States, partly because this relationship has been crucial for significant shifts in the norms governing Greenland's role in its foreign and security policy. This is in part due to the fact that this relationship has been quite unambiguously defined as security policy – and thus belongs in the part of foreign policy where the formalized norms give the most restricted role to Greenland.

The following section introduces the sociological framework underpinning the analysis. the bulk of the chapter unfold analyses of three social spaces or 'societies' that are the focus of the analysis – i.e., the international community, the Realm and the parliamentary system - leading to overall conclusions about the challenges facing the Realm as a community.

A final discussion concludes that the delimitation of 'security policy' from 'ordinary' foreign policy and from international aspects of domestic issues constitutes an independent challenge to both the ambition to let the Realm speak with one voice and the realization of Greenland's long-term ambition for further self-determination. Together with fundamental Greenlandic-Danish conflicts of interest on the one hand and various concrete parliamentary and bureaucratic procedures on the other, the impossibility of delimiting security policy puts the Realm under pressure.

Analytical framework: Norms, roles and legitimacy – three social spaces

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analytical narrative that explains how Greenland, even as a very small actor, has been able to play its part in international relations and how the difficulties

of advancing into this field can be understood. This chapter argues that the history of Greenland in international relations can be understood with the concepts of norms, roles and legitimacy.

The basis for such an analysis is that the relationship between states is not just a question of how much power they have. Rather, states build a society that can be described using concepts developed by sociology to understand human relations within a society.[1] Like a group of children in a schoolyard, states will have different roles in relation to each other; and there are norms for how children and states 'should' behave (Finnemore 1996: 15). Some norms are formalized in the form of international law, but unlike in the schoolyard there are no adults monitoring the international society. If a state does something 'illegal' or 'inappropriate', the result is rarely a concrete punishment – rather, the other states will adjust their expectations of how to deal with the state in question in the future. Even if the teacher has gone to get coffee, there are consequences if you smash a ball in the face of a classmate – but norms and sanctions are unevenly and unpredictably distributed, depending on your role in the social structure. If you are a small child who has been bullied by a classmate, direct payback might be acceptable to your peers. If you are a big-time bully who could easily beat up the smaller kids, several strategies become available. You can continue fighting and cement a position based on fear – or you can show care, and in this way gain legitimacy within the community. In this way, you may not have to spend energy fighting all the time and avoid the others ganging up on you in the long run. Formally, we can define 'norms' as the expected, socially accepted behaviour; 'roles' as a collection of norms linked to a specific position in a society; and 'legitimacy' as the 'license to act' that comes with adhering to roles and norms associated with one's position (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998).

The chapter is based on an analytical distinction between three spaces (or three 'societies' if you will). 1) The international society of states, 2) The Realm consisting of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and 3) the parliamentary system that manages Greenland's foreign and security policy, namely the Danish Government and Parliament (Folketinget) together with the Greenlandic Government (Naalakkersuisut) and parliament (Inatsisartut). The three 'societies' are obviously different in terms of the degree of formalization: when a norm is written down as legislation, deviations become more obvious. If there is a formal authority at the head of the table, it is expected

[1] This approach to international relations was originally known as the English School; since then, various variants of the approach have been termed *constructivism*.

that violations will be sanctioned. However, first and foremost, the three societies differ in who counts as legitimate actors.

The international society basically consists of sovereign states (Watson 1992). However, 'society' has developed (1992: 278), not least as a result of the concept of popular sovereignty (1992: 294-5). When the king could no longer legitimately say 'the state is me' but had to act as a representative of 'his' people, it became even more difficult to exclude colonized peoples from demanding their own state or separate rights precisely because the state was not their own (Watson 1997). Collective identities – states and peoples – are, of course, represented by concrete individuals, but it is precisely as a collective that one becomes a meaningful actor in the international society (Manning 1962: 101-3).[2] When the Realm does not merely act as a (Danish) unitary state but a more complex 'society', this is – as we shall see – linked to the development of a number of norms in the international society regarding how one can best be a state and a people. More generally, sovereign states are the typical actors in international society, but an increasing number of other types of collectives are achieving (partial) actor status.

As a society, the Realm is clearly demarcated, and everything beyond its three parts falls outside of it.[3] Formally, 'Greenland' and 'Denmark' appear at intervals and unambiguously as collective actors, for example, when a minister or authorized official signs a document 'on behalf' of either country. In less formal contexts, it may be less clear how much of a representative a given individual is, when speaking on behalf of 'his' or 'her' country. Often, prejudices about and observations of how ordinary Greenlanders or Danes behave lead to expectations about how Greenland or Denmark will act in relation to different norms.

To understand these ambiguities in the norms regarding who can assume different roles in relation to representing Greenland, Denmark, and the Realm, we must examine norms, roles, and legitimacy in the third social space: the parliamentary one. Here, only individuals appear. There are, of course, formalized procedures that govern how individuals can assume roles - or, in other words, where they can legitimately act as representatives. The entrance ticket to this 'society's' hierarchy of roles is formally that one is either elected to parliament by the population - or approved as a minister by

[2] It would not have had the same significance if Trump had offered to buy Greenland when he was still just a real estate speculator and thus did not represent the American state.
[3] An American president, diplomat, or soldier is a foreign element in relation to the Realm.

parliament - or employed as a civil servant to act 'on behalf of the minister'.[4] As we shall see, the lack of formalization of parliamentary norms in Greenland can, however, create ambiguity about the scope of representativity and legitimacy, even when a Prime Minister of Naalakkersuisut speaks on behalf of 'Greenland'.

First space: Global norms and Greenland's political identity

Before we delve into the specific review of the norms that Greenland and the Realm have developed, an introduction to Greenland's political history from 1721 follows. It begins with the meeting between the Inuit and Hans Egede and explores the Danish colonization project that followed. During their first meetings with Christian missionaries, Inuit likely had an identity that was fundamentally different from that of the Norse People, European whalers, and other explorers. Even so, a distinctly Greenlandic political identity – a self-understanding as an acting collective – was developed when encountering the Danish colonial power. This happened partly in contrast to the Qallunaat (the white people) (Sørensen 1994: 109), and in part in interaction with the – shifting – norms regarding how to be a People, i.e., maintain an identity, in the world that the colonizers brought with them (Sørensen 1994: 168-9; Petersen 1991: 20; Gad 2017a: 45). Strong European notions of their own racial superiority were exceptionally challenged by the Inuit's obvious technological superiority under Arctic conditions (cf. Hastrup 2000:4), and for long periods the colonial project was based on maintaining cultural difference. The economic viability of the Danish colonial project was, simply put, dependent on the Greenlanders maintaining the part of their material culture that made seal hunting possible (Graugaard 2018). Denmark could thereby – both towards Greenland and externally – legitimize its supremacy by contrasting it with the miserable fate of 'native' people elsewhere (Rink 1817).

Formal decolonization

This division of roles was rendered impossible by the new norms established by the UN following the Second World War. On the one hand, overt racial hierarchies were now delegitimized (Watsson 1992). On the other hand, the right of peoples to self-determination was extended to previously 'non-self-governing territories' (1992: 294-5). The UN Charter encompasses several principles

[4] An actor whose loyalty lies with a foreign power or, for that matter, with a particular commercial interest is considered illegitimate.

related to the development and promotion of self-government, the establishment of free political institutions among colonized peoples, and the fostering of interethnic harmony and security (UN, 1945). The Danish state responded to these new norms by formally integrating Greenland as an equal part of its Realm by the constitutional amendment in 1953 (Beukel et al 2010). It remains a matter of debate whether Greenlandic politicians and decision-makers at the time were fully informed about the range of options for decolonization processes discussed in the UN (Kleist 2019; Beukel et al. 2010). However, the Greenlandic public initially welcomed this approach as a means of continuing the story of Greenland's rise from poverty (Heinrich 2012).

Figure 1. Timeline of the changes in Greenland's status in relation to foreign and security policy.

1721 Hans Egede's landing
1941 Kauffmanns agreement with the U.S. on the defence of Greenland
1951 Renewed agreement between Denmark and the U.S. on the defence of Greenland
1953 Greenland is absorbed into the Danish Constitution
1973 Greenland becomes member of the European Community together with Denmark
1982 Greenland by referendum decides to leave the European Community
1979 Home Rule Government is introduced
1985 Inatsisartut - the Parliament of Greenland establishes its Foreign and Security Policy Committee
1991 The Home Rule Government takes over Kangerlussuaq and joins the Permanent Committee
2003 The Itilleq Declaration on Greenland's participation in foreign and security policy decision-making is signed
2004 The Igaliku Agreement on Greenland as a party to the Defence Agreement and the relation to the U.S. is signed
2005 The Authorization Act formalises the Itilleq Agreement
2009 Self-Government is introduced
2014 The base maintenance contract at TAB is awarded to an American company
2020 The U.S. announces an 'aid-package' and a new framework agreement on the base maintenance issue is signed

During the 1960s and 1970s, however, an increasingly broad stratum of the Greenlandic population reacted to the sharp contrast that emerged between the ever-increasing flow of Danes sent to build the welfare state in Greenland and the Greenlandic population that was to be modernized. The acute

cultural contrast gave rise to a distinct Greenlandic nationalism (Dahl 1986), which over the decades culminated in a desire to realize the international norm for how best to be a people in the world: by having one's own state (Gad 2017a). The result was a Greenlandic political identity adhering to the norm of the nation as a community of destiny, i.e., a culturally conditioned collective, responsible for its own progress (Thuesen 1988; Gad 2017a).

Home rule

At the initiative of Greenland, Home Rule was introduced in 1979. The Home Rule Act established a separate Greenlandic parliament, *Inatsisartut*[5] and executive *Naalakkersuisut* (The Prime Minister's Office 1979). In parallel, a number of Greenlanders participated in building international cooperation among peoples who had been left behind by the wave of decolonization following the Second World War (Dahl 2012). Legally, this work culminated in the UN declaration that indigenous peoples are peoples equal to other peoples with the right to self-determination, the right to self-identification, and the right to determine their own development (UN 2007).

However, alongside this formalized legal norm, there is also a more blurred, informal norm that gives parts of the international public an expectation that Indigenous Peoples are positioned as a minority either in opposition to or with special rights in relation to a 'foreign' state (Jacobsen & Gad 2017). Greenland's geographical separation from Denmark, however, made it clear for Greenlandic politicians the obvious way forward would be pragmatically merging their identity as an Indigenous People with the desire for self-determination and the nationalistic project of establishing a state of their own. This pragmatic fusion gives Greenland more leeway in international politics in certain contexts (Jacobsen & Gad 2017; Petersen 2006), just as this 'constructive ambiguity' provides a certain flexibility in relation to which contexts and from which angle Greenland can approach foreign and security policy matters. Conversely, it can also cause outsiders to misread Greenland's course if underpinned by outdated notions that associate 'Indigenous' with something primitive or traditionalist (Dahl 2012).

[5] The parliament replaced the National Council, an advisory body consisting of elected Greenlanders, which had existed in various configurations since 1911.

Self-government

In 2009, home rule, again at the initiative of Greenland, became self-government. The two do not differ much in their basic form. However, in terms of international law, the home rule arrangement and the self-government arrangement differ in that the recognition of the Greenlandic people under international law is affirmed in the preamble to the Self-Government Act. Politically, the Self-Government Act is not only seen as the framework for an expansion of the acquisition of competencies that began under home rule but also as a declared path towards increased self-determination, with the ultimate goal of independence.[6] Throughout the period of home rule and self-governance, increased self-determination and, ultimately, independence have been driving factors for both the development of the legal framework and in relation to the specific goals pursued within and on the edge of the legal framework. There may be disagreement about the speed and choice of path, but the direction for Greenland is focused towards increased self-government, increased economic self-reliance, and increased political independence internationally. There is broad agreement (see Isbosethsen 2018) that economic self-reliance is a prerequisite for actual secession from Denmark, but this does not mean that economic self-reliance is a prerequisite for an independent voice internationally. When the path towards independence and self-reliance intersects with foreign and security policy, a grey zone arises within the Realm.

Second space: Formal and informal frameworks for the Government of Greenland as a foreign and security policy actor

In the international society, the norm is that a state speaks with one voice. As described, however, Greenland has - by virtue of international norms on decolonization - gradually gained an unusually significant space to manoeuvre despite not being a sovereign state. Specifically, this has occurred because the Realm has gradually developed a number of internal norms that establish a framework for how Greenland can act in foreign and security policy. The result is that the Realm contains a constitutional ambiguity that can be difficult for outside actors to comprehend. This section reviews

[6] The Self-Government Act describes Greenland's access to independence and contains a financial agreement on a gradual reduction of the block grant that was frozen with the adoption of the Self-Government Act (The Prime Minister's Office 2009). The legislative complex also contains a description of Greenland's right to prepare its own constitution. This is an opportunity that Inatsisartut took advantage of in 2016 when it decided to establish a constitutional commission.

these norms and how Greenland has fought for them, based on concrete experiences and needs, particularly in relation to the American military installations.

Official interpretations of Danish constitutional law continue to assert that what we know as the Realm is legally a unitary state (Gad 2020b; Harhoff 1993: 73; Spiermann 2007: 11). The competences of self-government – including in the foreign affairs area – are in this view delegated from the central government (Gad 2020b). Conversely, legal scholars argue that the home rule and self-government arrangements have become a constitutional custom (above or alongside the written constitution expressed in the Basic Law of the Danish Realm, so to speak) that cannot be unilaterally revoked (Harhoff 1993; Spiermann 2007). Moreover, Greenland – most recently in the preamble to the Self-Government Act – is now recognized as a subject under international law. When the Self-Government Act is based on an agreement between two subjects under international law, it cannot be unilaterally revoked by one party. With this recognition comes the right to independence – and Spiermann (2007: 120-3) argues that when one can 'take home' all sovereignty through independence, there can be nothing to prevent one from taking home more extensive parts of it, including foreign and security policy competences. Successive Danish prime ministers have answered more ambiguously when formally quizzed on the matter in parliament. They have nonetheless tended to conclude that the Home Rule and Self-Government Acts are regarded as practically and morally binding agreements that should not be changed unilaterally by Folketinget (the Danish Parliament) without the consent of the Home Rule bodies (Rasmussen, 2018). It is the development of these formal and informal norms within the Realm that has, in the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, pushed the international community's norm of the unitary state's monopoly on security policy into the background. Ultimately, the relationship is more political than legal: Denmark cannot stand firm on an outdated colonial interpretation of how foreign and security policy competencies are distributed because the indisputable result of such an interpretation would be to push Greenland towards declaring independence.

Over the past decade, Denmark has nevertheless tried to be more consistently communicating when, in foreign policy contexts, there is a '*unity* of the Realm' acting and when there is a '*comm*unity of the Realm', or - as previously referred to in, e.g. the Arctic Council, "Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands" (Jacobsen 2019a). When U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke about his meeting with "the three ministers" from Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Denmark during his visit to Denmark in 2020, it was important for the Danish Foreign Minister and in particular the Danish press to refer to the meeting as a meeting between two foreign ministers - the Danish and the

American - with the participation of "representatives from Greenland and the Faroe Islands" (Krog 2020). Greenland has formally insisted on equality by using the English terms Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

International aspects of devolved competencies

The practical implementation of home rule consisted of Greenland taking over legislative and executive powers in a wide range of areas. The Self-Government Act expanded the list of areas that can be devolved to encompass virtually all the powers required for a nation to be considered self-governing. However, official Danish interpretation of constitutional law lists a series of core competencies that cannot be devolved because they are deemed crucial for the formation of a state. These areas include foreign affairs, security and defence affairs, citizenship, the Supreme Court, as well as currency and monetary policy (Naalakkersuisut 2008).[7]

On the one hand, foreign, security, and defence policy matters remain Copenhagen's prerogative, and the Self-Government Act states that none of the powers of the Self-Government formally limit the constitutional responsibilities and powers of the Danish authorities in international affairs. On the other hand, Chapter 4 of the Act describes Greenland's powers in foreign affairs. These powers are largely a formalization of practices that were developed by the Greenlandic parliament and government, who demanded and gained influence before being formally 'allowed' to do so (Spiermann 2007:126-7; Gad 2017a). Denmark's preferred role as a Nordic-style benevolent good citizen of the international community (Ren et al. 2020; Gad 2016; Thisted 2014) means that the international norm of state unity must give way. The result is that Greenland's creative paradiplomatic practices have been formalized over the years as norms of the Realm.

From Thule over Itilleq to Igaliku

The relationship between Greenland and the U.S. has been driving the expansion of foreign and security policy competencies in both the home rule and the self-government era. Notably, the

[7] Two appendices to the Self-Government Act list areas of competences that can be devolved - without (List I) or after negotiation (List II) with the Government of Denmark. The Self-Government Act itself does not list areas that cannot be devolved. Such a list, however, is found in the Self-Government Commission's report and is referenced from there on the website of the Greenlandic Government. Nevertheless, repeated revisions of the home rule and self-government arrangements have demonstrated that the official Danish interpretation of the constitution regarding what cannot be devolved have changed over time.

remaining American base, Thule Air Base (TAB), has resulted in a series of scandal that makes it hard for Denmark to deny Greenlandic demands for transparency and participation in decision-making. This difficulty of denial is stressed by the fact that the establishment of the Defence Agreement with the U.S. in 1951 occurred under evidently colonial conditions, which sharply contrast with current global discourses on the right to self-determination of all peoples. In the very last months before the extension of constitutional freedoms to Greenland in 1953, several hundred Inughuit were forcibly relocated to facilitate the expansion of TAB (Brøsted & Fægteborg 1985). Later, in 1968, a B-52 bomber crashed on the ice-covered fjord by the base, making it clear that the Danish policy of not allowing nuclear weapons was not being adhered to in Greenland (Amstrup 1997). Since then, concerns have emerged regarding pollution from the base and abandoned defence installations, particularly the nuclear-powered Camp Century, located beneath the inland ice sheet (Nielsen & Nielsen 2016), as well as occasional complaints about how the management of TAB has obstructed industrial development in the district (Gad 2017b). Based on findings from Danish archives (Brøsted & Fægteborg 1985) and supported by the Indigenous Peoples' organization Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), *Hingitaq'53* [the displaced] obtained a court ruling affirming that the Inughuit's relocation was indeed forced. In parallel, in 1995, a secret agreement from 1957 between Denmark and the U.S. was revealed. This agreement allowed the U.S. to store nuclear weapons in Greenland (Brink 1997), making Denmark more clearly responsible for the pollution from American defence activities. The revelations understandably spurred a Greenlandic distrust of Denmark and became a clear incentive for Greenland and Greenlanders to identify and show solidarity with the world's Indigenous and colonized Peoples. In particular, it was an incentive to insist on Greenlandic involvement and full information. Moreover, the revelations made Denmark vulnerable to being exposed as a hypocritical colonial power (Kristensen 2005).

The process of Greenland's involvement as a party in the negotiations between the U.S. and Denmark was triggered by the U.S. government's plans to upgrade TAB to incorporate it into its missile defence system (Kristensen 2004; Dragsdal 2005). Greenland's focus was directed more towards participation and self-determination, rather than towards questions regarding what role it should play in relation to world peace and the militarization of the Arctic (Dragsdal 2005).

As a first result of this process, a joint Greenlandic-Danish declaration, named after the settlement Itilleq, formulated a number of basic norms in 2003, stating that it is "natural" that Greenland is involved and has influence on foreign and security policy issues of importance to Greenland, that "the natural starting point" is that the Government participates in international negotiations of

special interest, just as it is "natural" that the Government can be a signatory to agreements binding under international law on behalf of the Realm (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark 2003).[8]

Based on the constitutional concession by the Danish state explicated in the Itilleq Declaration, tripartite negotiations were initiated with the Americans. These negotiations were held partly to modernize the 1951 defence agreement and partly to upgrade the radar at TAB (Kristensen 2005; Jacobsen 2019b). The result was a series of agreements known as the Igaliku Agreement. Firstly, the defence agreement was supplemented with a new document, in which Greenland, as a co-signatory, is recognized as a party. Central to the main document of the agreement are provisions on involvement which describe:

- How the U.S. is obligated to 'consult with and inform the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, including the Greenland Home Rule Government, prior to the implementation of any significant changes to United States military operations or facilities in Greenland.' (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark 2004)
- How the parties 'shall consult without undue delay regarding any question which one of the Parties may raise concerning matters pertaining to the U.S. military presence in Greenland and Defense Agreement and [the Igaliku] Agreement' (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark 2004).

The agreement's preamble also contains a condition that obligates Denmark by stating 'that the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark always consults and cooperates closely with the Home Rule Government of Greenland in affairs of state of particular importance to Greenland.'

A joint declaration on environmental protection additionally put combating pollution from the Thule base on the agenda of a new subcommittee of the Permanent Committee where the U.S., Denmark, and - now also formally - Greenland have been discussing practical matters regarding the base areas since 1991 (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark 1991). Moreover, a joint declaration on economic and technical cooperation established a so-called Joint Committee with the aim of creating a 'broad technical and economic cooperation' between the U.S. and Greenland.

[8] The content of the Itilleq Declaration was formalized in 2005 in the so-called Authorisation Act in which *Folketinget* formally gave Greenland the right to "negotiate and conclude international agreements, including administrative agreements, which fully concern devolved areas" with foreign states and international organizations (The Prime Minister's Office 2005). These formulations have since been incorporated into the Self-Government Act and similarly formalised for the Faroe Islands.

An economic agreement between Greenland and the United States was viewed by Greenlandic politicians not only as a means to rectify and improve the historical subordination of Greenlandic interests but also as an opportunity to secure income for the country. Income which, over time, could reduce Greenland's dependence on Danish subsidies. The entire agreement thus pointed both backward, toward the historical injustices committed against Indigenous Peoples under colonial conditions, and forward, toward greater Greenlandic independence, both politically and economically.

From Joint Committee to base contract to purchase offer

None of the future-oriented perspectives immediately lived up to expectations, but the responsibility for this seems to be somewhat unevenly distributed. Specifically, the Joint Committee intended to foster economic and technical cooperation between Greenland and the U.S. never clearly identified areas where American grants could address specific Greenlandic needs beyond a scholarship here and a study tour there. Economically, the relationship with the U.S. reached a low point when, in 2014, the U.S. awarded the maintenance contract for TAB to an American company. An unpleasant process preceded this decision. This came about as the combined result of American bureaucratic sleep walking, an Danish Foreign Ministry's reluctance to interfere, and bizarre mis-prioritizations on the part of the Government of Greenland leadership (cf. Spiermann 2015), which deprived Greenland of the three-digit million DKK income it had enjoyed for decades through co-ownership of the Danish-Greenlandic company that previously held the maintenance contract.

The renewed American security policy focus on the Arctic brutally manifested in a more aggressive style during the Trump I administration and appears to herald new times. Trump’s purchase offer in 2019 was clearly out of step with the norms of the international community as well as those of the Realm but behind the scenes both the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department had been preparing concrete advances. So far, however, Greenland had more birds on the roof than in its hand: A U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defence had reported that the U.S. was prepared to co-finance dual-use infrastructure in Greenland (U.S. Embassy Denmark 2020b). However, since Denmark rendered Chinese involvement in Greenland’s new airports redundant by offering a lucrative financial package (Sørensen 2018), it became less clear to the public what the U.S. specifically needed and wanted to contribute with. In October 2020, an agreement was reached on the terms for the next tender for the TAB maintenance contract which took effect in 2024. However, apart from the ‘aid

package' of consultancy services announced by the Americans in April 2020 (U.S. Embassy Denmark 2020a), a direct benefit for the Greenlandic treasury and society from the base maintenance contract itself was still uncertain (Rahbek-Clemmesen 2020b).

The Danish government placed an extraordinary amount of emphasis on the inclusion of Greenland, not least after Trump's intervention [during his first administration]. After the establishment of the American consulate in Nuuk, some communication has bypassed Copenhagen. Even so, Copenhagen insists on the right to decide when devolved issues are of such importance security-wise that they cannot be left to Nuuk – even though the Government of Denmark prefers dialogue and payment rather than pulling the constitutional handbrake. The Danish identification with the role of the benign (de)colonizer pushes the norm of the unitary state's monopoly on security policy into the background. However, as we shall now see, this shifts the pressure on the Realm to the practical bureaucratic and parliamentary norms in the daily management of foreign and security policy.

Third space: The information and decision-making structures between Denmark and Greenland and internally within the Government of Greenland

To recapitulate: The international society consists of collective actors, which are typically sovereign states. Similarly, the overall norms in the Realm describe the division of competencies between Denmark and Greenland. However, the Realm between the two collective entities, namely Denmark and Greenland, is played out in practice by a number of specific individuals endowed with distinct authority, including particularly parliamentarians, government ministers, officials, and diplomats. When foreign and security policy is conducted for Greenland, this takes place within a political system that includes individuals and institutions in both Copenhagen and Nuuk. In the following, focus is on the norms and roles that Greenland has developed for conducting foreign policy, as well as on the implications of how the Greenlandic and Danish parliamentary and bureaucratic systems are linked.

Secure communication

The need for meetings to take place and information to be exchanged and processed under strict confidentiality has increased significantly in recent years. However, secure rooms and

communication channels in the Self-Government approved by the police intelligence service have - at the time of writing - still not been established. This means that the usefulness of a phone call from a Danish minister to a Greenlandic minister (Kongstad et Maressa 2019) may be severely limited. An increasing number of security-cleared Greenlandic officials therefore venture to the headquarters of the Danish Joint Arctic Command by the harbour in Nuuk, where meetings and conversations can take place in a secure room and where documents can be exchanged via secure email. These documents may include briefings from the Danish government, either intended exclusively for the Greenland Government or to be read out to the Greenlandic parliament's Foreign and Security Policy Committee.

Parliamentary inequity and the norm of simultaneity

Through the Foreign Policy Committee (UPN), the Danish Parliament has a constitutional guarantee that the Government 'consults' a committee of parliamentarians before making decisions regarding major foreign policy implications (Folketinget 1953; Krunke 2003). The description of Naalakkersuisut's obligations towards the Danish Foreign Policy Committee's Greenlandic counterpart, the Foreign and Security Policy Committee (USPU), is significantly looser: USPU is tasked with 'dealing with foreign and security policy matters and presenting the questions and comments that these matters give rise to. It is the committee's responsibility to keep itself closely abreast of developments within its field of expertise' (Inatsisartut 2010). The committee works under the same strict confidentiality as the Danish Foreign Policy Committee but does not have the same constitutionally guaranteed right to be consulted by the government. In practice, this inequality between UPN and USPU has demonstrably created an imbalance in the level of information given to members of the Danish Parliament vis-à-vis the Greenlandic parliament. Usually, bias is in UPN's favor. Nonetheless, when the initiative originates from Nuuk, the roles, as we shall see, may be reversed.

Regarding the obligation towards Inatsisartut on the part of the Government of Denmark and Naalakkersuisut, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated that 'according to mutual understanding between the Danish Government and Naalakkersuisut, [a] fixed practice has been established that information on issues of particular importance for Greenland is given simultaneously in the Foreign Policy Committee and Inatsisartut's Foreign and Security Policy Committee' (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark 2018). USPU members often, nevertheless,

experience learning first about crucial and important foreign and security policy developments through the press rather than by being informed about them in the committee (Inatsisartut, 2018, 2019, 2019a). For example, when considering the Danish co-financing of airport expansions, USPU expressed concern about the lack of information regarding the security policy aspects of the airport facilities (Kristiansen, 2019; Inatsisartut, 2018, 2019). A contributing factor to this inequity is that the lack of secure communication channels has a doubly negative impact at the parliamentary level. Greenlandic parliamentarians meet only a few months a year, and committee meetings are therefore often held over the phone or online.

The Parallelism Norm and the South-to-North Norm

The Greenlandic description of the 'simultaneity principle' states that 'information to the Foreign Policy Committee of the Danish Parliament on matters of importance to Greenland is communicated to the Government of Greenland, so that to the greatest extent possible, the Foreign and Security Policy Committee can be informed simultaneously' (Inatsisartut 2010). Here, it becomes clear that, in addition to the norm of simultaneity, two further separate norms are at play.

Firstly, the procedure is based on a norm that the Danish Parliament and Inatsisartut are two separate but parallel parliamentary systems: the [Danish] Government is responsible for involving the UPN, while Naalakkersuisut is responsible for involving the USPU. This norm implies that the Danish Government sends briefings to Naalakkersuisut, which are then read out loud to the USPU. This norm thus involves Naalakkersuisut members perhaps being compelled to read documents out loud, which they disagree with in terms of content.

Secondly, the incorporated workflows are intended to secure northbound information from Copenhagen to Nuuk, as they are drawn from a time when the norm was for foreign, and especially security policy, initiatives and information issued from Copenhagen. The primary purpose of the simultaneity procedure was to facilitate Greenland's efforts to gain insight into security policy, thereby aligning with international norms for decolonization.

That the South-to-North norm – and the practical procedures it has shaped – is outdated became clear in connection with the publication of the U.S.'s so-called 'aid package' for Greenland in the spring of 2020. The agreement was largely achieved through a bilateral process between Greenland and the United States, with secondary involvement from the Danish government (Petersen & Synnestvedt, 2020). Greenland took the opportunity afforded by its rights under the Self-

Government Act to negotiate and conclude international agreements 'which fully concern devolved issues' (The Prime Minister's Office, 2009). As previously mentioned, the Igaliku Agreement stipulates that the parties 'shall consult each other without undue delay' on all issues concerning the American military presence in Greenland, as well as matters arising from other parts of the agreement, including technical and economic cooperation (The Foreign Ministry of Denmark, 2004). The conclusion of the 2020 agreement ultimately resulted in a briefing from Greenland to Denmark, after which the receiving Danish minister briefed UPN (in writing and not orally) and not simultaneously. This may thus be a contributing factor to several Danish parliamentarians appearing both surprised and duped by the agreement reached when they saw it in the press (Krog 2020).

International aspects of devolved issues and/or security policy

All these practical problems and unclear or outdated parliamentary norms contribute to confusion in addressing a crucial issue that is already impossible to solve on its own. Specifically, a central norm of the Realms creates three different divisions of responsibility and procedures: a) international aspects of issues devolved to Nuuk, b) 'general' foreign policy, and c) security policy. However, the boundaries for determining when a domestic policy matter becomes foreign or security policy, or when a foreign policy matter that falls within the scope of the Authorization Act assumes a security policy character or in other ways becomes an issue for Copenhagen, are unclear.[9]

Initially, the U.S. ambassador circumvented parliamentary norms by disclosing the 'aid package' and its contents to the Danish press before the Government of Greenland had the opportunity to publish the agreement itself. Furthermore, in her launch and subsequent interviews, the ambassador chose to frame the U.S. priority as securitizing Chinese and Russian Arctic ambitions rather than as a bureaucratic follow-up to old commitments (Sands 2020). This was despite the fact that, at first glance, the 'package' can be read as a delayed implementation of the Igaliku Agreement's ambition to increase technical and commercial cooperation between Greenland and the U.S. Later, the

[9] One can mention the decision-making process regarding the expansion of international airports (Rasmussen 2019), where Greenlandic politicians for a long period treated the matter as a domestic political issue related to the location of civilian airports and only late in the process began to include security policy aspects of the airports. The same applies to the decision to lift the zero tolerance towards radioactive minerals (Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2018) and investment opportunities in large-scale projects (Schriver 2013), where Chinese companies have shown interest. Here, security policy aspects have not played a major role in the local Greenlandic debate, while the focus of Danish Parliament politicians has largely been on the security policy implications of, for example, the possible extraction of critical minerals in Greenland (Andersson et al. 2018).

Greenlandic parliamentarians muddied the waters by insisting that the package had nothing to do with what was agreed on in Igaliku in 2004, even though the content covered the same agenda quite precisely (Inatsisartut 2020). Instead, the committee began its story of the genesis of the new agreement with the Memoranda of Understanding that Greenland entered into with the U.S. in 2019, which specifically included mineral exploration. This choice was likely made to emphasize the scope of the competence enshrined in the Self-Government Act to deal also with international aspects of devolved legislative areas without the need to legitimize this with separate agreements with Copenhagen. Both the Danish Foreign Minister and the U.S. Embassy in Denmark issued assurances that the agreement on the 'aid package' had been made in coordination with the Danish government.

Taken together, this affair is an example of how three things are intertwined: Outdated procedures and conflicting long-term goals muddy the grey area between foreign policy aspects of devolved issues and security policy. These waters are dire straits for idealistic desires for transparent information and coordination.

Conclusion: One voice is not possible – and outdated procedures are a hindrance

Greenland has established a role for itself in international politics by virtue of the need that both Denmark, which formally has sovereignty over Greenland, and the United States, which has military sovereignty, have to legitimize their roles and actions in relation to international institutions and global discourses: It is no longer legitimate for European states to reduce previously colonized populations to chess pieces in big politics by conducting politics over their heads. It is, even under an American administration with a confrontational approach to the Arctic, unnecessarily costly for the United States to take what it wants in Greenland. It is far cheaper to 'buy' acceptance by having Greenland serve as a co-signatory to the Defence Agreement and establish a consulate with an 'aid package' of consultancy services. These international norms on the self-determination of peoples are reflected in the Self-Government Act's norms of the Realm in three ways. Firstly, Greenland can reclaim areas and thereby gain substantial self-determination. Secondly, Greenland can declare itself independent. Thirdly, the norm of Greenlandic participation and insight is also crucial for Denmark's foreign and security policy on behalf of Greenland to be legitimate.

Greenland thus has a place in international politics that the Self-Government can use to work towards increased self-determination, also in areas that are ‘Realm affairs’ under the Self-

Government Act. With that goal in mind, the Danish desire for the Realm to speak with one voice in foreign policy is not always possible.

Conversely, it appears that a distinct genre has emerged among Danish opposition politicians, where they wake up in dismay and 'discover' that the Self-Government believes itself entitled to conduct foreign and security policy in relation to devolved issues (Mouritzen 2020). Put another way, there is neither agreement on whether the formalized norms are legitimate nor whether there is compliance. Behind the disagreements lies a more complicated reality. Specifically, Inatsisartut and Naalakkersuisut can, in accordance with the Self-Government Act, act internationally in a wide range of areas; however, the changed great power approach to the Arctic means that an increasing number of these areas have security policy dimensions. Several experts have called for clarification of the division of competencies as a prerequisite for the Realm—and the entities that comprise it—to maximize the benefits of great power attention (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020a). Even so, if a written division of competences acknowledges a security policy overlap in a broad portfolio of areas of competences and individual issues, this will erode the autonomy embodied in the Self-Government Act. Suppose the line is drawn the other way around so that issues administered by Greenland are 'safeguarded' from Danish interference. In that case, it will be intolerable for a constitutional interpretation that insists on the Danish government's monopoly on conducting security policy. Future cases will, therefore, have to be handled on an ad hoc basis, making it all the more important that procedures across the Realm are strengthened.

Several practical issues within the information and decision-making structures, both between Greenland and Denmark and especially within Greenland itself, challenge Greenland's ability to actively and proactively pursue its goals and interests. Paradoxically, these challenges also undermine the legitimacy that Denmark seeks by including Greenland in the foreign and security policies that Copenhagen conducts on behalf of the Realm. Neither the decision-making processes between Denmark and Greenland nor the internal Greenlandic ones are geared to the new reality. Firstly, the volume and complexity of the caseload are increasing. Secondly, Nuuk's increased competencies mean more instances where devolved issues and security policy overlap. Thirdly, Nuuk's increased ambitions mean that initiatives and information no longer originate only from Copenhagen, rather they may spring from Nuuk. Moreover, it is not clear that the Government of Greenland has the same attention or willingness to let information about its initiatives flow south. Fourthly, the fact that Denmark and Greenland suddenly have an urgent need to discuss their relationship with the U.S., with some certainty that the subject of discussion is not listening in,

stresses the need for secure lines of communication. By clarifying and strengthening the procedures and dialogues that legitimize the Realm's foreign and security policy in Greenland, it may become possible to discuss the real content of the relations to intrusive great powers – instead of debating procedures and wrestling the ghosts of the colonial era.

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Second background chapter

Jacobsen, M., & Olsvig, S. (2024). From Peary to Pompeo: The history of United States' securitizations of Greenland. In Jacobsen, M., Wæver, O., & Gad, U. P. *Greenland in Arctic security:(De) securitization dynamics under climatic thaw and geopolitical freeze (p. 383).* (pp. 107-148). University of Michigan Press.

4 | From Peary to Pompeo

The History of United States' Securitizations of Greenland

Marc Jacobsen and Sara Olsvig

In the summer of 2019, Donald Trump's idea of buying Greenland drew renewed attention to its geostrategic location and revealed widespread misunderstandings of its current constitutional status. Trump equated the idea to similar past purchase attempts, but since times of colonization Greenland had taken several steps to increase its autonomy. This meant that if a purchase should be proposed, it should have been addressed to the Government of Greenland, which, prompted or not, did not fail to respond on twitter: "We're open for business, not for sale" (GreenlandMFA 2019). While many ridiculed the outdated idea, it soon became apparent that it reflected a more profound shift in the U.S. security perspective on the Arctic region as being embedded in international great power competition with Russia and, especially, China. In response, the United States looked to Greenland with the aim of strengthening its regional presence and securing access to strategically important minerals such as rare earth elements that are critical components in many types of modern and so-called 'critical' technologies.

Whereas the dual awareness of natural resources and convenient military strategic location reflected the root of the U.S. interest in Greenland, the international power relations and the American security perspectives have changed throughout history. The aim of this chapter is to provide the first coherent analysis of the defining acts shaping the development of U.S. security interests in Greenland during

the past 200 years. In order to do so, we dissect how securitization acts and attempts have been carried out at specific times in history by pointing to perceived threats as legitimization of extraordinary means. When doing so, we employ the Copenhagen School's analytical apparatus as explained in the introductory chapter while paying special attention to the scales, audiences, and cascading effects of the particular securitizations. This means that we are extra attentive to whether the perceived threats have been articulated as, for instance, an international, regional, or national matter, whether the securitizations have had effects beyond the described purposes, and who the United States has considered relevant recipients with agency to accept or refuse the securitization act. We believe that these three specific foci—which we will soon explain in more details—provide effective tools in finding answers to our research questions, which are: Why has United States securitized Greenland, how have securitizations been received, and with what consequences?

When answering these questions, we show how securitizations have been discursively constructed as part of overarching security developments in which the U.S. has considered Greenland a geostrategic piece of land in the protection of U.S. self-interests and its balance of power against shifting enemies. As we shall see, the articulated reasons of the securitization acts have varied by sometimes pointing to referent objects at other scales such as 'Western hemisphere,' 'NATO area,' and 'international peace' in the quest to gain acceptance of extraordinary means. The choice of words has to some extent been guided by the congruent agency ascribed to Denmark and Greenland, which at different times in history, and in different ways, have been considered inactive spectators or as part of the relevant audience with power to provide formal or moral support. The U.S. rhetoric, however, has occasionally been a play to the gallery, as the extraordinary means in a few instances have been carried out prior to the rhetorical securitization, hence highlighting the unequal power relationship and the lack of depth of actual acknowledged agency. In other instances, Denmark has both acted as the accepting audience and carried out the extraordinary means even though it jeopardized domestic laws or entailed negative consequences at lower scales. It is important to note that throughout most of the historical period analyzed in this chapter, Greenland was a colony to Denmark, thereby being ruled out in the U.S.-Denmark decision making and deliberations roughly until after home rule was introduced in 1979. By focusing on cascading effects of

U.S. securitizations, we seek to bring attention to some of the derived consequences that, regrettably, are seldom part of analyses of U.S. security interests in Greenland and the Arctic.

Our analysis is divided into the six analytical periods of 1823–1914, 1914–39, 1939–45, 1945–91, 1991–2018, and 2018–21, delimited by the signing of the Monroe Doctrine, the outbreak of World War I, the beginning and end of World War II, the ensuing Cold War, its end, and the most recent, and still active, U.S. security perspective on Greenland and the Arctic where China and Russia are seen as great power competitors. This periodization rests upon a U.S. perspective of widely acknowledged shifts in the American geopolitical visions that have happened alongside U.S. securitization acts and attempts regarding Greenland.[1] Before turning to the analysis of these time spans, we will now explain our choice of theoretical tools and our selection of empirical data.

Scales, Cascading Effects, and Audiences

In continuation of the introduction's basic explanation of securitization theory, we will here focus on *scales*, *cascading effects*, and *audiences* that we find particularly relevant in the effort to get a better understanding of why securitizing acts have been executed, how they have been received, and with what consequences.

First, we are especially attentive to what *scale* the referent object is discursively placed on because it can help us uncover what or who exactly the securitizing actor pointed to as being threatened in the attempt to convince the relevant audience of accepting the use of extraordinary means. Was it, for instance, a threat to 'the West,' to 'regional Arctic peace,' or to 'U.S. sovereignty' that was articulated as the reason for a specific U.S. securitization with relation to Greenland at some point in history? By paying special attention to the prioritized scale in a securitization (attempt), we seek to dissect the given reason for legitimizing the use of extraordinary means and to draw attention to the consequences the prioritization of one scale may have had for entities at other scales given less or no attention in the securitization act. When applying this approach, we rely on Buzan and Wæver's (2009) article in which they lay out connections across the spectrum of scales as spanning from the global to the individual with system, civilizational, unit, and groups covering the middle ground (2009, 259). Among

these, the Copenhagen School has traditionally identified an empirical precedence to egotistical collective units such as—and most often—states and their protection of sovereignty on the national scale when relating to other similar entities through amity or enmity (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 254–55). This does not, however, indicate that referent objects at higher or lower scales than the national are not relevant to securitization processes. Instead, it is a consequence of the challenging process of successfully declaring, for example, 'humankind' on the system level or 'human being' on the individual level as threatened and particularly devising meaningful extraordinary means to their protection (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 254–55). This is because the relevant audience, the securitizing actor's scope of power and, hence, the possible extraordinary means are here not as clearly defined as they are within the boundaries of a state, which remains the most powerful unit in Buzan and Wæver's analysis. In their investigation into what happens above[2] the scale of collective units, Buzan and Wæver show how international security in a few instances is structured by one single overarching conflict that "incorporate, align and rank the more parochial securitisations beneath it" (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 253), hence obtaining the status of a so-called macrosecuritization. The example par excellence is the Cold War, whereas the Global War on Terror and the current climate change discourse are located on a high scale though not being as all-encompassing due to a lesser degree of widespread acceptance (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 254; see Kristensen and Mortensgaard, chap. 2, this vol.). In our analysis, these three major securitizations constitute inevitable elements of the historical context coconstituting U.S. engagements in Greenland. We will show how articulations of these overarching conflicts have differed throughout history due to their perceived relevance but also depending on what the relevant audience would accept as an existential threat.

Our second theoretical point of attention is *cascading effects*, which so far are remarkably seldom highlighted in securitization analyses, though such observations are straightforward to make (cf. Wæver 2017, 126). Thierry Balzacq and Ulrik Pram Gad are among the few who have previously done so, but their uses of the concept differ from one another. In Balzacq's (2010, 37) inquiry into methods of securitization theory, he uses the concept to explain the cascading effects within a recipient audience, where people may be convinced by their friend's acceptance of a securitization act and may subsequently convince others, hence continuing the cascade of acceptance and, one may add,

possible refusal of a securitization attempt. In another perspective, Ulrik Pram Gad (2021, 125–27) has used the concept to show how one securitization may trigger a second, which further activates a third, and so on, in his analysis of translations of security cascading at the Thule Air Base. With inspiration from Gad, we seek to develop his approach by pointing attention to two kinds of cascading securitizations, namely vertical and horizontal ones:[3] The vertical cascading effect of a securitization is the situation when a securitization articulated at one scale moves to a lower scale, with consequences beyond the initial intention of the securitizing actor. Horizontal cascading effects instead describe the movement from one sector to another as for example when the transformative force of climate change triggers insecurity in several other[4] sectors (cf. Jacobsen and Herrmann 2017, 7), such as moving from the environmental to the societal, economic, or even military sector if resource scarcity leads to conflict. The horizontal and vertical cascades may happen at the same time, such as when an international securitization of climate change also affects national policies that further cascade onto local households, perhaps by setting new requirements for their daily living. As our analysis will show, there have been examples when a U.S. securitization has been articulated as part of a macrosecuritization to legitimize extraordinary means, which subsequently has had vertical cascading effects on the Arctic region, Greenland, and its population, while simultaneously cascading horizontally from one sector onto several others.

Our third and last theoretical focus is the question of what makes up a relevant *audience*? In 'Security: A New Framework For Analysis' it is described as "those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of some issues" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 41), while practical examples include "political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 40). This lack of clarity has led to a call for a better definition of this central aspect of the theory, a call Wæver recognized (2003, 26) by explaining in more detail that a relevant audience is "those who have to be convinced in order for the securitizing move to be successful. Although one often tends to think in terms of 'the population' or citizenry being the audience (the ideal situation regarding 'national security' in a democratic society), it actually varies according to the political system and the nature of the issue" (Wæver 2003, 11–12). A relevant audience is thus not a fixed category but instead depends on the specific sociohistorical situation and the function that the securiti-

zation is intended to serve, hence in some instances it may be general while in others exclusively elitist (cf. Vuori 2008, 72). A handful of scholars have used the inconsistency of the category as an opportunity to add more details by showing that there may be multiple simultaneous relevant audiences with different characteristics (Balzacq 2005; Stritzel 2007; Salter 2008; Vuori 2008; Roe 2008) and different logics of persuasion requiring distinctive kinds of arguments (Léonard and Kaunert 2010, 58, 73–74). Among these scholars, Salter has suggested that there are at least four types of audiences labeled 'popular,' 'elite,' 'technocratic,' and 'scientific,' each with a particular local truth regime (2008, 322), while Balzacq (2005) and Roe (2008) have proposed distinguishing between audiences with the authority to provide formal and moral support to a securitization act. In our analysis, we will pay attention to how audiences are reconfigured throughout different historical stages depending on the context and their related authority, while we will seek to distinguish whether the audiences were then in a position to provide formal or moral support. Unlike the existing body of literature, which focuses on domestic audiences, our analysis adds a new dimension by investigating how foreign audiences (Denmark and Greenland) receive and act on securitization acts and attempts from a superpower (the U.S.) whose hegemonic status usually does not require foreign acceptance. In the quest to maintain alliances and nurture reputation, however, foreign support is important, especially to get and showcase moral support.

Because of our focus on audiences, our empirical data archive contains both communication from the American securitization actors as well as responses from audiences in the U.S., Denmark, and Greenland. Our identification of successful and unsuccessful U.S. securitizations relating to Greenland is especially possible due to the online[5] version of U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, the present and past web pages of the U.S. Department of State,[6] and due to references in secondary literature that we stand on the shoulders of. Through these channels, we have found strategies, agreements, speeches, intra- and intergovernmental correspondences by American governments, ministries, and bureaucrats. Responses from the non-American audiences have been found through secondary literature and the respective webpages of the government of Denmark[7] and the Government of Greenland,[8] where speeches and press releases are usually available. In some instances when speeches and press releases were no longer available online, we have used the online search tool Wayback Machine at archive.org/web to reconstruct parts of the archive.

The documents in our empirical data archive differ by originally being targeted at different audiences within or outside public attention. On the one side, official strategies, agreements, and speeches are carefully calibrated communication where nothing is left to chance with the purpose of publicly informing—and perhaps even convincing—a domestic and/or international audience of the U.S. security perspective at the time. On the other side, much of the intra- and intergovernmental correspondences analyzed in this article have been equally calibrated for a small selected audience, but were not meant to be shared with the public. This has happened through official openings of archives, publishing of diaries, or via unofficial sources such as Wikileaks. In between those two kinds of empirical categories, we find articulations reported by news media that may have been prepared for the public but that risk losing some meaning if the reader does not get the exact context. That is why we limit our use of news articles to a few instances in the most recent analytical period.

Now, as we have explained our most central theoretical elements and our collection of empirical data, we will observe them in our analysis of the six periods. The timeline below (fig. 4.1) provides an overview of the six episodes and the most important events within each of them.

1823–1914: The Monroe Doctrine and the U.S. Initial Interest in Greenland

Two hundred years ago, when the Monroe Doctrine was first formulated, Greenland was not explicitly considered within the United States' national security sphere like it is today. Instead, President James Monroe warned European powers that the U.S. would view any attempts to further colonize or otherwise interfere in the Western Hemisphere as a potentially hostile act. He expressed prime concern with the renewed European imperial interests in the Caribbean and Latin America, which he believed posed a threat to both U.S. sovereignty and the American political system (Berry 2016, 106). Drawing a clear antagonistic line between the U.S. and European powers, Monroe unambiguously declared in Congress that "we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety" (Monroe 1823, 13–14). Because his speech was widely accepted and later repeatedly referred to as justifi-

Fig. 4.1. The history of United States' securitizations of Greenland.

cation for exclusive U.S. interventions, it can be seen as a successful securitization of the referent object 'our peace and safety' in the military and political sectors, with European powers as the main enemies. Whereas Greenland was initially not included in this primary security perspective, it shortly after steadily entered the American security horizon, where it occasionally, and more frequently, was mentioned as an area of interest due to, first, its natural resources and, later, its geostrategic location.

The first reported mention of official U.S. geostrategic interest in Greenland happened in 1832, when President Andrew Jackson's administration floated the idea of buying the island (Geggel 2019). In a time of comprehensive U.S. territorial expansion through the purchases of Louisiana from France (1803), Florida from Spain (1819), present-day New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico (1853), and Alaska from Russia (1867), such an idea was not controversial. Three decades later, Secretary of State William H. Seward rearticulated the idea when he commissioned 'A Report on the Resources of Iceland and Greenland,' which provided a detailed examination of why annexing Greenland and Iceland would be "worthy of serious consideration" (Seward 1868, 1) for both political and commercial reasons (Seward 1868, 3). Seward, who had negotiated the Alaska purchase, believed the acquisition of Greenland would be geostrategically important as it could be used to "flank British America for thousands of miles on the north and west and greatly increase her inducements, peacefully and cheerfully, to become a part of the American Union" (Seward 1868, 3–4). In plain words, he would use Greenland together with Alaska to squeeze Canada into being part of the U.S. He further emphasized how Greenland's "vast fisheries and extensive coasts and numerous harbors, especially with abundant good coal there, must greatly antedate the period when the United States will command the commerce of the world" (Seward 1868, 4), and he foresaw how the world's largest cryolite ore in Ivittuut would be important in extending the use of aluminum (Seward 1868, 50), which, as we shall see, became an essential element of modern warfare during World War II. Seward's initiative arose from what he then thought were successfully completed[9] negotiations with Denmark to buy the Caribbean islands of St. Thomas and St. John in 1867 (Seward 1868, 1), but as the Senate eventually rejected[10] the treaty Denmark had already ratified, the report on Greenland's resources was never realized.

During the subsequent years, the dual interest in, primarily, the Danish West Indies and, secondly, Greenland grew congruently with Prus-

sian Germany's increasing power and territorial expansion, which caused concern on the other side of the Atlantic. In a letter to his secretary of state, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 wrote, "Both the Dutch and the Danish West Indies in America [. . .] will be a constant temptation to Germany unless or until we take them" (Peck 1969, 46; cf. Roosevelt 1903). Consequently, Roosevelt designated an ambassador to Denmark, who shortly after arriving in Copenhagen confirmed the president's concern. He reported, "Prussianized Germany might at any moment seize that little country and [. . .] the Danish West Indies would be German" (Peck 1969, 47; cf. Egan 1919, 54–55). This correspondence can be seen as a securitizing move in which Prussian Germany was depicted as the enemy, potentially threatening peace and safety in the Western Hemisphere and violating the Monroe Doctrine if Denmark and thereby also the Danish West Indies were subjugated. This securitization sought to legitimize the extraordinary means of acquiring Denmark's Caribbean islands, and in an attempt to arrange a quid pro quo bargain, the ambassador proposed to the U.S. assistant secretary of state that they should present the following offer to Denmark (Egan 1910a):

(1) Denmark to give Greenland to the United States.
(2) The United States in return to give Denmark the southern group of the Philippines, consisting of the Islands of Mindanao, Palauan, and the small islands south of these.
(3) Denmark to then surrender these islands to Germany.
(4) Germany in return to give back to Denmark the northern part of Schleswig.

The ambassador believed that the fulfillment of the strong Danish wish of getting back Schleswig would appease the patriotic pride and pave the way for the U.S. to subsequently buy the Danish West Indies (Peck 1969, 54; cf. Egan 1910b).[11] The suggested U.S. purchase of Greenland was therefore part of a more complex exchange of lands serving the ultimate purpose of the Danish West Indies being transferred to the U.S.

1914–1939: World War I, the Interwar Years, and Peary's Securitization Attempt

After five years with no official response from Washington, the plan was eventually resubmitted to President Woodrow Wilson in 1915, who

then encouraged the ambassador to proceed (Peck 1969, 62; cf. Egan 1915; Lansing 1915). Since the plan had originated, however, the opening of the Panama Canal and the beginning of World War I had enhanced the strategic importance of the Danish West Indies. This development was reflected in the protracted negotiations with Denmark in which the U.S. secretary of state threatened to occupy the islands if Germany invaded Denmark before a deal was settled (Peck 1969, 67–68; cf. Lansing 1915, 4). In response, Denmark set a high price of US$25 million (Peck 1969, 67–68; cf. Lansing 1915, 4) and—crucial for our concern—demanded as condition for a sale that the U.S. should recognize Danish sovereignty over Greenland (U.S. Department of State 1917).

When Robert E. Peary heard of Denmark's demand, he intervened in the U.S. domestic debate regarding the negotiations, as he feared that American acceptance of Danish sovereignty over the whole of Greenland would neutralize the claim to a large area of the northern part of the island he had made on behalf of the U.S. Because of these claims and his allegedly successful expedition to the North Pole, he had previously been rewarded the 'Thanks of Congress' and given the rank of rear admiral, which bore witness to his high status with power to potentially influence both the U.S. government and American public opinion. Using his privileged position, he launched a media campaign targeting both the country's elite decision makers and a broader popular audience, trying to convince them not to acknowledge full Danish sovereignty over Greenland. Instead, he wanted them to provide formal and moral support to his idea of purchasing Greenland, as he wrote:

> Geographically, Greenland belongs to North America and the Western Hemisphere, over which we have formally claimed a sphere of influence by our Monroe Doctrine. Its possession by us will be in line with the Monroe Doctrine, and will eliminate one more possible source of future complications for us from European possession of territory in the Western Hemisphere. Will turning Greenland over to Denmark now mean a repurchase of it later, or will obtaining it now mean closing the incident and placing Greenland where it must ultimately belong? (Peary 1916a)

While quoting major parts of Seward's report from 1868 as reasons for why acquiring Greenland would also make sense from economic

and political points of view, Peary especially highlighted its geostrategic significance to the U.S. Navy, emphasizing Cape Farewell as an obvious location for establishing a new naval base at the same latitude as Christiania (today Oslo), Petrograd (today St. Petersburg) and Britain's naval base in the Orkneys. Framed within the military and economic sectors, Peary thus tried to pre-emptively securitize the need for Greenland in order for the U.S. to proactively avoid future complications with European powers constituting a threat to the Western Hemisphere (1916a, 1916b). Although he recognized the strategic value of the Danish West Indies in countering the immediate threat from Germany and therefore supported the idea of buying the islands, he pleaded that it should not happen at the expense of Greenland, which in his perspective would only become more strategically important when sea and air power technology advanced, as "[w]ith the rapid shrinking of distances in this age of speed and invention, Greenland may be of crucial importance to us in the future. [. . .] Greenland in our hands may be a valuable piece in our defensive armor. In the hands of hostile interests it could be a serious menace" (Peary 1916a).

Despite his tenacious attempt, neither American politicians nor the public were sufficiently convinced that the U.S. should uphold or expand its sovereignty claims to Greenland at the expense of acquiring the Danish West Indies. Eventually, the Danish West Indies were transferred to the U.S. on March 31, 1917, just 52 hours before the U.S. declared war against Germany (Peck 1969, 74). In response to the demand of recognizing Danish sovereignty over Greenland entirely, the U.S. Secretary of State publicly announced that "the government of the United States of America will not object to the Danish government extending their political and economic interests to the whole of Greenland" (Lansing 1916). What is important to notice, however, is that with this announcement the U.S. did in fact not explicitly acknowledge full Danish sovereignty over Greenland, but merely its economic and political interests. Thus, the demand was actually not met. A few years later, when Denmark asked several other countries to recognize Danish sovereignty over Greenland,[12] the Wilson administration further said that it would not acknowledge any other country's acquisition of Greenland (U.S. Department of State 1941, 38), and following persistent rumors that the U.S. was again considering buying the island (cf. Kaminska 2019), the Danish prime minister, Thorvald Stauning, in 1930 found it necessary to issue a denial in *Financial Times* stating "Greenland not for Sale."

Although Peary's securitization attempt was largely rejected,[13] his predictions were nevertheless realized during the interwar years when aviation developments changed military strategic thinking (Berry 2016, 110). Central to this development was, first,—as Seward and Peary had predicted—the manufacturing of lighter aircrafts of aluminum in which cryolite from Ivittuut in Greenland was an important component. With longer possible flying distances, Greenland, secondly, became an obvious refueling spot for transpolar air routes between Europe and North America, and as it, thirdly, constituted a reliable meteorological location for predictions of European weather patterns crucial for all kinds of warfare,[14] its geostrategic importance only increased during the subsequent years (Douglas 1939; Plischke 1943; cf. Berry 2016, 110–11).

1939–1945: World War II and the First U.S. Securitization of Greenland

As World War II broke out in 1939, high-ranking U.S. decision makers once again discussed the pros and cons of purchasing Greenland (Logan 1961, 299), and when Germany invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940, the U.S. geostrategic interest began materializing. First, the U.S. established a consulate in Nuuk on the reason that:

> the United States Government, in agreement with the Greenland authorities, concluded that the numerous questions arising with respect to the welfare and needs of the inhabitants of Greenland and of Greenland's exports to the United States could, from a practical standpoint, best be met through the provisional establishment of an American Consulate in Greenland. (U.S. Department of State 1940, 350)

This decision rested on the need for protection of two particular referent objects, namely 'welfare and needs of Greenlanders' and 'exports to the United States,' which were placed on the national scale while respectively being part of the societal and economic security sectors. In a similar vein, the governor of South Greenland requested U.S. protection of the cryolite mine in Ivittuut, as documented in this telegram from the U.S. Consul in Greenland to the U.S. secretary of state, which subsequently ordered the U.S. coast guard to start patrolling:

> Called on Governor Svane. Brought up the question of defense of the cryolite mine, emphasized the vulnerability of the mine and expressed fear that sabotage might be attempted by Nazi sympathizers at Ivigtut. He asked whether it would be feasible for an American military detachment to be stationed there as soon as possible, and as an alternative suggested the stationing of an armed ship such as a Coast Guard vessel at Ivigtut. (U.S. Department of State 1940, 366)

Though still a nonbelligerent at the time, the U.S. repeatedly stressed that these decisions were part of U.S. policy to maintain Greenland's neutrality in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine.[15] For the same reason, the Roosevelt administration saw no other option than to continue to enhance U.S. military presence through the construction of air bases when Germany in March 1941 extended their war zone to Greenland's east coast (Archer 1988, 124). Thus it signed an agreement with Denmark's ambassador in Washington, who—in the name of the Danish king but contrary to governmental orders (Lidegaard 1996, 186ff)—granted the U.S. provisional control over Greenland's security with the reason that the "Defense of Greenland against attack by a non-American power is essential to the preservation of the peace and security of the American Continent and is a subject of vital concern to the United States of America and also to the Kingdom of Denmark" (Kauffmann and Hull 1941, 107).[16] With this, a few people from the U.S. governmental elite successfully securitized Greenland as essential to the referent object 'peace and security of the American Continent' in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine. They did so with acceptance from a small relevant audience consisting of one single Danish ambassador essentially gone rogue and two governors in Greenland granting formal support. Due to German occupation, the Danish government was excluded as a relevant audience at the time and was therefore not part of the decision-making process.

By labeling the defense of Greenland as 'essential' to the American continent, the Monroe Doctrine was thereby for the first time activated in relation to Greenland, where it was used as legitimation for the extraordinary means of de facto pausing Danish sovereignty over Greenland and pave the way for extensive militarization.[17] During the subsequent four years, 4 navy bases and 13 army bases were established (Archer 1988, 124), while 5,795 American military personnel were stationed, altogether constituting 25 percent of Greenland's total

population of 21,412 people in 1944 (Jex 2017). In this way, the macrosecuritization of World War II was decisive for why the U.S. securitized Greenland, which legitimized the United States' provisional formal sovereignty and continued control of the island's military security. Beyond the intensified military presence, the consequences of the securitization also entailed a break with more than 200 years of Danish control, meaning that Greenland for the first time in many years could engage directly with the world outside the Kingdom of Denmark. This experience gave rise to the subsequently growing wish for increased Greenlandic self-determination (cf. Beukel and Jensen 2008, 203), while sowing the seeds for later external acknowledgment of Greenland as an actor in international politics.

1945–1991: The Cold War and the Cascading Effects of U.S. Militarization

With the end of World War II, the government of Denmark requested a withdrawal of American troops from Greenland and an annulment of the 1941 agreement stating that it should "remain in force until it is agreed that the present dangers to the peace and security of the American Continent have passed" (Kauffmann and Hull 1941, article X). Whereas the Danish government thought that those dangers were no longer present, the U.S. government did not accept the desecuritization attempt. Or rather, the U.S. thought a new danger had replaced the previous one, as the Soviet Union had taken up the position from Germany as the main enemy. In the effort to enhance rather than diminish U.S. presence, senators and U.S. State Department officials initiated secret discussions about either purchasing Greenland or trading parts of it with portions of Point Barrow, Alaska (cf. Nelson 1991). In a counterproposal to Denmark, the Truman administration suggested three options ('Proposal with Respect to Greenland' 1946; cf. Nielsen and Nielsen 2013, 142):[18]

(1) A continuation of the 1941 agreement allowing the U.S. to officially take over the total defense of Greenland.
(2) A lease of the existing U.S. bases in Greenland for the next 99 years.
(3) A purchase of Greenland for the price of US$100 million in gold.

The Truman administration made clear that a sale "would be the most clean-cut and satisfactory" (Nelson 1991) as it would avoid criticism of U.S. bases on Danish territory while it could benefit the challenged Danish national economy (Nelson 1991). Denmark's minister of foreign affairs, however, rejected all three options on behalf of the government, characterized the idea as "absurd" (cf. Beukel 2010, 50), and told the U.S. ambassador to Denmark that "[w]hile we owe much to America I do not feel that we owe them the whole island of Greenland" (Lidegaard 2003, 220). This rejection by the relevant audience at the time gained solid support across the political spectrum as all parties in the Danish parliament publicly rejected the mere idea of selling Greenland (cf. Beukel 2010, 49).

Following repeated attempts, the Danish government in 1948 gave up trying to desecuritize the perceived need for Greenland as an essential element in the protection of the referent object 'the American Continent.' Instead it tacitly accepted continuous U.S. military presence in Greenland as part of the new macrosecuritization, where the threat of a potential nuclear war between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries constituted an overarching conflict that incorporated, aligned, and ranked other securitizations around the world (cf. Buzan and Wæver 2009, 253). Urged by this development, the securitization of Greenland was formally reconfirmed in a new bilateral defense agreement in which the purpose was stated as being "to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic Treaty area by uniting their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security and for the development of their collective capacity to resist armed attack" (United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark 1951, art. 1). The referent object was the 'stability, well-being, peace and security of the NATO area' while the threat was unspecified 'armed attack.' Whereas the main enemy at the time was obviously the Soviet Union, the vague definition of the threat allowed the agreement to stay effective even if the threat picture should change. Or as stipulated in article XIV: "This Agreement, being in implementation of the North Atlantic Treaty, shall remain in effect for the duration of the North Atlantic Treaty" (United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark 1951). On this basis, the U.S. upgraded and established several military bases and installations in Greenland. One of these was Thule Air Base, which soon consisted of 10,000 American military personnel, airstrips, a modern town, an enormous pier and a range of different military installations (Taagholt 2002).

The new agreement was exclusively between Copenhagen and Washington, which together legitimized the extraordinary means of allowing extensive militarization of Greenland. No Greenlanders whatsoever were acknowledged as part of the relevant audience at the time. Greenlanders, however, felt the derived consequences on other scales and sectors beyond those addressed in the agreement as the securitization cascaded both vertically, from a higher to a lower scale, and horizontally, from one sector to another. As illustrated in figure 4.2, it started with the macrosecuritization of relations between NATO allies and Warsaw Pact countries on the international scale, which first and foremost was a matter of military security. This overarching conflict unfolded on national scales all over the world, where in this case it caused a challenge to Denmark's sovereignty over Greenland, found within the political sector. As a direct local outcome of the macrosecuritization, the Thule Air Base was established in northwest Greenland, where it, on the one hand, served to protect 'NATO area,' but, on the other hand, interfered with the Inughuit's usual hunting grounds, suspending their hitherto living conditions and challenging their societal security. Ending with the individual scale, the cascade simultaneously signified a threat to the local hunter's household, within the economic sector, as their main income from selling seal fur and other hunting products was endangered (cf. Brøsted and Fægteborg 1987, 72).

When the base expanded in 1953, the local community's societal security was further threatened as their 26 households with a total of 166 people were forced to relocate 130 km north to Qaanaaq (Brøsted and Fægteborg 1987, 38, 63–64; Kristensen and Christensen 2009). Whereas the decision to remove the Inughuit people was in line with the defense agreement's article VI—stipulating that undesirable contact between local Greenlanders and U.S. personnel should be avoided—the timing of the execution was notable as it happened less than two weeks before Greenland's status as a colony ceased on June 5, 1953 (Brøsted and Fægteborg 1987, 66ff). After this date, Greenland became an integral part of Denmark through an enactment of the Danish Constitution, whereby the rules regarding repatriation became the same for Greenlanders as for Danes. This meant that the removal could not then have been carried out by the Danish authorities (Brøsted and Fægteborg 1987, 11), which were the ones essentially effectuating the extraordinary means of the American securitization. At the time, the issue was handled quietly by the Danish prime minister, who left the impression that it was a voluntary relocation. While a demand for com-

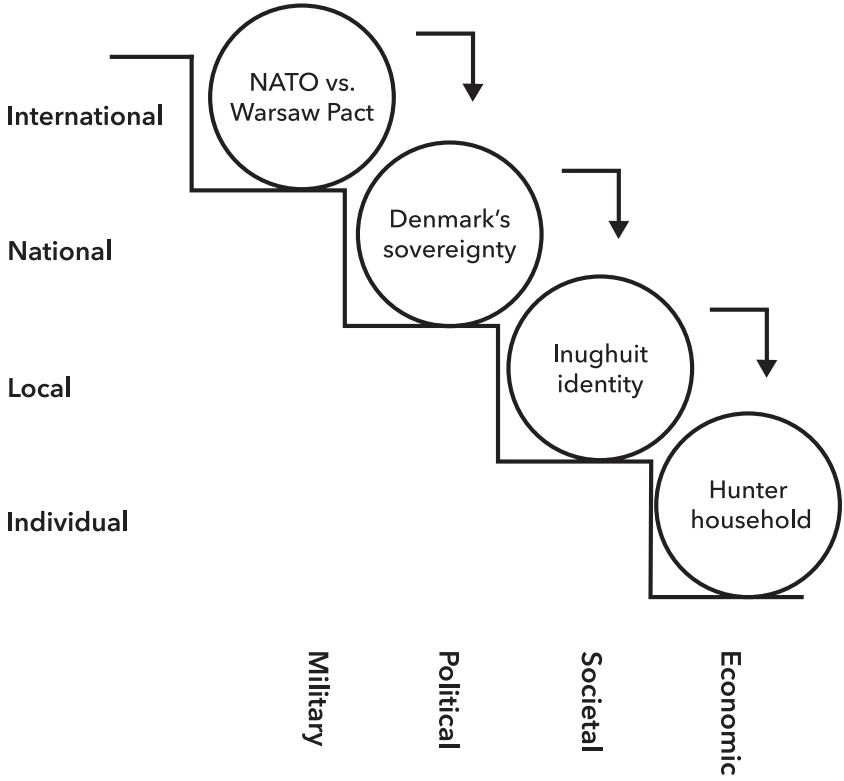

Fig. 4.2. The Cold War macrosecuritization between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries had cascading effects on other scales and sectors. For instance, the establishment of the Thule Air Base broke with full Danish sovereignty over Greenland and had further effects on the local societal security and the individual economic security, where the Inughuit identity and the hunters' households were threatened by the forced relocation. In the figure, the y-axis indicates the different scales and the x-axis the different sectors, while the text inside the circles describes the referent object, which changes as the securitization cascades vertically and horizontally, as the arrows show.

pensation to the Inughuit was already articulated in 1954, it was not before the mid-1980s that the exact circumstances were revealed. This both led to harsh criticism of and to legal action against the Danish state, which in 2003 was required to pay a minor compensation while the prime minister at the time, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, apologized to the Inughuit people (Nielsen 2004, 316, 328).

Another extraordinary means that was kept secret for a long time was the storage of nuclear weapons at Thule Air Base in spite of Den-

mark's 1957 ban of all nuclear weapons on its territory. This happened the same year with formal support from Denmark's prime and foreign minister, H. C. Hansen, who in a handwritten letter replied to the U.S. ambassador's question regarding if he would want to be informed in case the U.S. stored nuclear weapons in Greenland. He wrote:

> the U.S. Government is entitled to store supplies, provide for the protection of the area, etc. [. . .] [A]ll materials, supplies, etc. shall be permitted entry into Greenland free of inspection. You did not submit any concrete plan as to such possible storing, nor did you ask questions as to the attitude of the Danish Government to this item. I do not think that your remarks give rise to any comments from my side. (Hansen 1957; cf. DUPI 1997, 277)

By repeating some of the central elements of the 1951 defense agreement and omitting a direct answer to the precarious question, the minister diplomatically formulated an answer that indirectly provided formal support to the extraordinary means of allowing secret storage of nuclear weapons in Greenland despite the public ban. At the same time, his indirect acceptance also worked to fend off the American threat to Danish sovereignty as the storage of nuclear weapons would probably have happened even if he had refused. By replying as he did, the minister thus both refrained from providing a direct formal acceptance while performing as if a refusal of the American wish was in fact a possibility. Nevertheless, Danish law was essentially overruled by the American securitization as part of the overarching macrosecuritization on the international scale. To keep this decision secret for almost 40 years is in itself also an extraordinary means, as it neglected the democratic rights of the Danish public, ignored the majority of Danish parliamentarians who were excluded from the small exclusive group constituting the relevant audience, and did not take into account whatsoever the concerns of the Greenlandic people.[19]

The subsequent year, however, domestic debate could not be avoided any longer because a detailed news article (Bartlett 1959) revealed to the public that a transportable nuclear reactor was placed inside the inland ice sheet as part of a new military scientific research base named Camp Century, located 138 miles east of Thule Air Base. The construction of Camp Century had begun without prior acceptance from the Danish government, which was later informed at an informal cocktail party (Nielsen and Nielsen 2013, 150–51).[20] This order

of action emphasized how the U.S. militarization of Greenland basically did not depend on Danish acceptance. Instead, the Danish government was merely seen as a relevant audience on the surface, while the U.S. securitization would ultimately override Danish resistance if it should occur. While the Danish parliament eventually provided formal acceptance of the nuclear reactor, it did not consider the question of nuclear weapon storage, simply because it did not know of it. This first came to public attention in January 1968 when an American B-52 bomber carrying four nuclear bombs crashed near Thule Air Base.[21] This situation yet again compromised the collective and individual security of those Greenlanders who were exposed to nuclear radiation during their participation in the postcrash cleanup (Zinglersen 2015, 157–167), hence again illustrating how the securitization cascaded vertically from the international to the individual scale, and horizontally from the military to the environmental and societal sectors.

While the U.S. generally practiced a 'neither confirm nor deny' policy regarding stationing of nuclear weapons (Archer 2003, 134), they claimed that the 1951 defense agreement legitimized their right to do so in Greenland (Petersen 1998, 22), where they—according to a 1957 U.S. Department of Defense report to President Dwight D. Eisenhower—had "quite a free hand" (cf. Villaume 1995, 851). Nevertheless, the U.S. and Denmark entered a supplementary agreement in May 1968 in which it was clearly stated that the U.S. would neither store nor carry nuclear weapons in Greenland without previously informing Denmark.[22] During subsequent years, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller showed keen interest in Greenland's mining potential (Olsvig and Nielsen 2019, 76), while technological advancements within aviation and submarine warfare altered the U.S. military presence in Greenland. Consequently, the U.S. requested an upgrading of its ballistic missile early warning system (BMEWS),[23] a request that caused debate in Denmark and Greenland but ultimately gained formal support from both, hence giving way for the Thule radar upgrade in 1987 (Fischer 1993). This process bore witness to a new role taken up by Greenland after the introduction of home rule in 1979 as a more active part in security and foreign policy discussions with Denmark (DUPI 1997, 3) and as a recognized interlocutor on defense matters with the U.S. (Archer 2003, 135–37). These changes heralded a new period in the U.S. security perspective on Greenland, where negotiations steadily moved from being bilateral to trilateral while old threats vanished and new ones appeared.

1991–2018: The Thule Exception to Arctic Desecuritization

When the Cold War came to an end and the long-lasting macrosecuritization was, thus, desecuritized at the international scale (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 270), the United States' approach to the Arctic went through a similar shift during the 1990s, with more emphasis on environmental protection and cooperation and lesser concern with military threats. This development caused vertical and horizontal cascading effects of desecuritizations in the way the improved international and interstate relations had positive effects on the local living, while regional desecuritization within the military sector allowed room for other types of security concerns such as those caused by climate change (see Kristensen and Mortensgaard, chap. 2, this vol.; Gad, Bjørst and Jacobsen, chap. 3, this vol.). Bill Clinton's Presidential Decision Directive of 1994 illustrated well this new American security perspective on the Arctic, as it stated:

> The new atmosphere of openness and cooperation with Russia has created unprecedented opportunities for collaboration among all eight Arctic nations on environmental protection, environmentally sustainable development, concerns of indigenous peoples and scientific research. In turn, cooperation in these areas will help reduce the risk of a resurgence of traditional threats. (Clinton 1994, 2)

The newfound perspective was part of increased international environmental concerns and emphasis on the need for sustainable development (Wæver 1995, 62–65; Gad, Jacobsen, and Strandsbjerg 2019), while it contributed to the concurrent regional desecuritization where normal politics again prevailed and interstate sovereignty disputes were contained rather than being subject to new securitization attempts (Åtland 2008; Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg 2017, 20). Geographically located within the Arctic, Greenland would by default be included in the new U.S. Arctic policy. But while the post–Cold War American approach to the Arctic was largely preserved for almost 30 years, Thule remained detached from it. This was visible in the Rumsfeld Commission report, which characterized Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as 'rogue states' that—together with China and Russia—were posing serious military threats to U.S. national security (Rumsfeld 1998). In response to these threats, Rumsfeld recommended upgrading the BMEWS in which

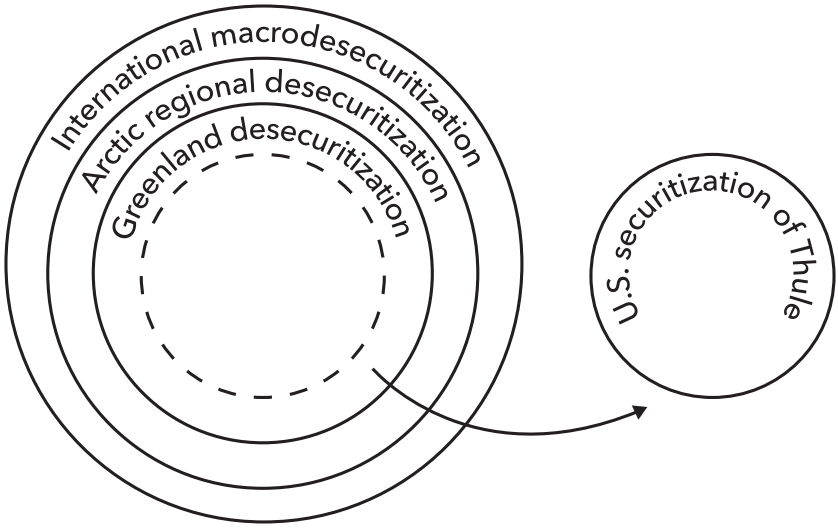

Fig. 4.3. Following the end of the Cold War, the macrodesecuritization of East-West relations cascaded onto the Arctic, where desecuritization within the military sector allowed more room for interstate cooperation regarding environmental protection and promotion of Indigenous peoples' rights. Though geographically located within the Arctic, Thule Air Base remained largely detached from this new U.S. regional security perspective because it was an essential element in the defense against 'rogue states' as securitized by the Rumsfeld Commission report.

the Thule Air Base radar was and is a crucial component. A few years later when this security discourse was incorporated in the Global War on Terror (GWoT) after 9/11, Thule then became part of a securitization on a higher scale, as the Bush administration tried to discursively frame the GWoT as a macrosecuritization with the West and liberal democracies as referent objects. The securitization of rogue states and the GWoT discourse, however, were not as widely acknowledged internationally as the macrosecuritization during the Cold War (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 254), making it more urgent for the U.S. to get support from the relevant audiences before upgrading the Thule radar.

Since the similar request in 1987, Greenland had gained more insight and influence into foreign policy and security matters, inter alia through the establishment of a Permanent Committee between the U.S., Denmark, *and* the home rule, which served the purpose of better knowledge-sharing regarding U.S. military presence on the island (Brown, Hedegaard, and Vesterbirk 1991). This development reconfigured the role of the home rule into being part of a more relevant audi-

ence, though not with sufficient agency to formally refuse or accept the American securitization, but merely as provider or denier of moral support. Conscious of the new status, the home rule in 1999 declared that it expected to participate on equal footing in trilateral negotiations and that it would only accept the upgrade if it did not jeopardize international peace and order (Naalakkersuisut 2000; Kristensen 2004, 13). The U.S. initially distanced itself from this discussion by labeling it an internal matter (Kristensen 2005, 193), while Copenhagen and Nuuk agreed on more equal participation and influence of the home rule as cosignatory on binding agreements under international law (Møller and Enoksen 2003).

This subsequently influenced the trilateral security discourse that shifted primary referent object from 'U.S. sovereignty' to the upscaled 'international peace,' which eventually secured Greenlandic acceptance of the American securitization. This was sealed by the signing of the Igaliku Agreement in 2004, which amended the defense agreement of 1951 and clearly acknowledged "Greenland's contribution to the mutual security interests and its consequent sharing of the associated risks and responsibilities" (Powell, Møller, and Motzfeldt 2004, 1) serving their collective aim toward "international peace and peaceful coexistence, and respecting the important contribution of Greenland to this end" (Powell, Møller, and Motzfeldt 2004, 1). With this agreement, the home rule enhanced its authority in foreign and security affairs, while also seemingly achieving the right to decide whether formal support should be given to U.S. securitizations involving Greenland. But, as with the Danish government during the Cold War referring to the defense agreements of 1941 and 1951, this role was only acknowledged on the surface, as a Greenlandic refusal would probably not have had any other effect than weakening the moral support and thereby potentially influencing public opinion in a negative way. The consequences of the U.S. securitization were thus the enhanced appearance of Greenlandic agency and the discursive change of referent object to 'international peace,' but the ultimate purpose of the U.S. was clearly to counter intercontinental ballistic missiles from so-called rogue states, constituting the basic securitization of this period.

When the process of replacing home rule with self-government was coming to an end in 2009, Greenland's enhanced self-determination also occupied increasingly more American attention. As revealed via three Wikileaks[24] cables, the U.S. ambassador to Denmark sent detailed briefs to Washington in which he assessed Greenland's political devel-

opment, other states' growing interests, and the U.S.'s strategic opportunities to win Nuuk's favor. The ambassador warned that if Greenland should achieve independence, the local government would then probably not continue to be a staunch NATO ally—as it is today through Denmark—but instead be part of the non-aligned movement (Wikileaks 2006), which originally refrained from choosing sides during the Cold War. To maintain crucial military presence and to pursue some of the newly reported offshore hydrocarbon riches (cf. U.S. Geological Survey 2007) he recommended improving direct bilateral relations with local decision makers in Nuuk through more frequent visits and, in time, by establishing a more permanent diplomatic presence:

> With Greenlandic independence glinting on the horizon, the U.S. has a unique opportunity to shape the circumstances in which an independent nation may emerge. We have real security and growing economic interests in Greenland, for which existing Joint and Permanent Committee mechanisms [. . .] may no longer be sufficient. American commercial investments, our continuing strategic military presence, and new high-level scientific and political interest in Greenland argue for establishing a small and seasonal American Presence Post in Greenland's capital as soon as practicable. (Wikileaks 2007)

The ambassador's recommendation was accompanied by remarks about growing European and Chinese interests in Greenland's natural resources, of which the latter was characterized as a direct competitor with the words: "Our intensified outreach [. . .] will also strengthen our relationship with Greenland vis-à-vis the Chinese" (Wikileaks 2007). This confirmed the U.S. skepticism toward China, as mentioned in the Rumsfeld Commission report, while indicating an emerging awareness of China as a geopolitical threat *in* Greenland, where large state-owned Chinese enterprises were positioning themselves as potential partners in the realization of the island's huge mining potential (cf. Gad et al. 2018; Jacobsen and Gad 2018, 18–20; Sørensen 2018; Andersson and Zeuthen, chap. 6, this vol.). In this way, the ambassador's warning drew the early contours of the later successful securitization of Chinese engagement in Greenland. In spite of the incipient great power competition on Greenlandic soil, however, the ambassador was confident that because of past successful experiences preliminarily culminating with the Igaliku Agreement, "Greenland nevertheless has a

growing appreciation for the logic of geography and its own potential as part of North America" (Wikileaks 2007).

U.S. security concern with China's engagement in Greenland only increased during the subsequent years, although it was seldom articulated in public and did not lead to any direct intervention from the American side. Instead, the government of Denmark acted as the staunch ally it has been for the past 70 years by accepting the American securitization of China behind closed doors and carrying out the American wish on Greenlandic soil. One example of this surfaced in 2016, when Denmark's then prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, refused to sell an abandoned military base in Kangilinnguit (Grønnedal) to a Chinese company, stating that even though it had been for sale, the Danish military suddenly still needed it (Breum 2016; Jacobsen 2019b). As we shall see, the concern later became more explicitly articulated as the Arctic again became a scene for great power competition, hence amplifying Greenland's geostrategic importance.

2018–2021: Great Power Competition and Pompeo's Successful Securitization

In 2018, when the expansion of existing and construction of new airports were at the center of comprehensive debates in Greenland (Sejersen, chap. 9, this vol.), potential Chinese involvement yet again caught American interest. Consequently, the U.S. secretary of defense, James Mattis, urged the Danish government to interfere as he believed the situation could risk introducing Chinese military presence in Greenland (cf. Hinshaw and Page 2019; Cammarata and Lipmann 2020). Denmark did so by offering low-interest loans and co-ownership to the Government of Greenland, which ultimately accepted at the expense of sharing the right to decide which construction companies to involve and exclude in the process (cf. Rasmussen and Kielsen 2018). The Danish government thus both acted as the relevant audience accepting and the actor carrying out the extraordinary means of the U.S. securitization of China (cf. Jacobsen and Lindbjerg, chap. 7, this vol.). Shortly after, the U.S. Department of Defense chipped in when announcing their intention to also make strategic investments in Greenlandic dual-use airport infrastructure in the effort to "enhance U.S. military operational flexibility and situational awareness in order to address the changing security environment in the Arctic" (Rood 2018). This was a

regional change, which was understood as being closely entangled with other international developments as "[i]n light of world events, the U.S. acknowledges the increasing importance of the Arctic" (Rood 2018). This statement was part of a shift in U.S. military priorities, where Russia and especially China were seen as the main strategic competitors undermining international order, challenging American power, and "attempting to erode American security and prosperity" (Trump 2017, 2) as expressed in the National Defense Strategy.

In an Arctic context, these perspectives were first publicly articulated by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo when he spoke at the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Finland in May 2019.[25] In stark contrast with Clinton's Presidential Decision Directive of 1994, Pompeo first argued that the council would no longer have the luxury of focusing almost exclusively on environmental research, cultural matters, and scientific collaboration for the next century, because "[w]e're entering a new age of strategic engagement in the Arctic, complete with new threats to the Arctic and its real estate, and to all of our interests in that region" (Pompeo 2019). After characterizing why the U.S. is an Arctic nation and praising the region's emerging economic opportunities, he addressed China and Russia as aggressors against 'our interests,' seemingly denoting the interests of the U.S., since all but the last one of his 26 mentions of 'our' were clearly self-referential. Beginning with China, he ridiculed its claim of being a 'near-Arctic state,' warned against its research presence as cover for military activities, and reminded the spectators of how Chinese investments may threaten the political security of the host country. His assessment was repeatedly reinforced with extra-regional examples illustrating the Chinese threat as part of a pattern on the international scale, inciting a new macrosecuritization of East vs. West. For instance, he stated, "China's pattern of [. . .] aggressive behavior elsewhere should inform what we do and how it might treat the Arctic. [. . .] Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims?" (Pompeo 2019).

He then turned to Russia, which besides one mention of its actions in Ukraine was only mentioned in an Arctic context and as a threat of military concern due to its rearmament and increased military activity in the region. This securitization had already been accepted by the domestic audience of the Trump administration, which acknowledged the need to fortify U.S. security and diplomatic presence across the Arctic: "On the security side, partly in response to Russia's destabiliz-

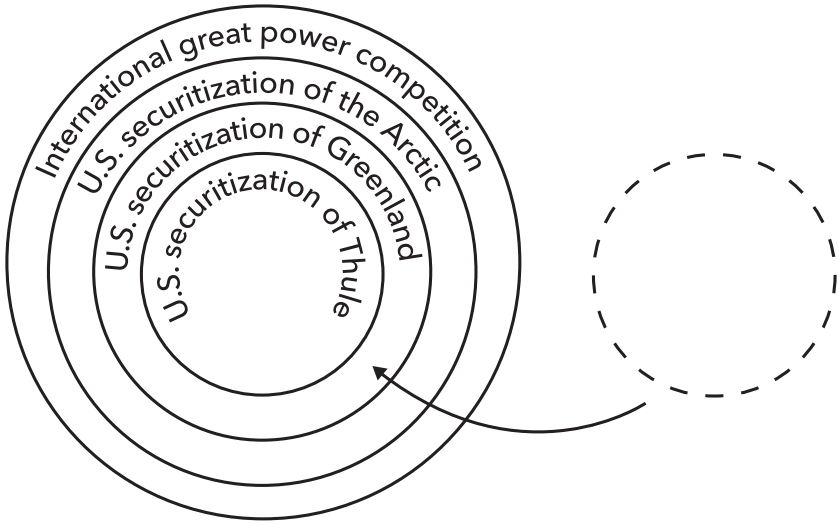

Fig. 4.4. After having been discursively separated, the U.S. security discourses regarding Thule, Greenland, and the Arctic were yet again aligned in 2019, when they were all framed within an overarching perspective of great power competition with China and Russia.

ing activities, we are hosting military exercises, strengthening our force presence, rebuilding our icebreaker fleet, expanding Coast Guard funding, and creating a new senior military post for Arctic Affairs inside of our own military" (Pompeo 2019). With his speech, Pompeo left no doubt that the American security approach to the Arctic was again primarily articulated within the military sector, with 'U.S. interests' as the referent object, while also framed within an international scale of global great power competition, giving way for U.S. rearmament in Greenland, the Arctic, and beyond. The Trump administration thereby distanced itself from its post–Cold War predecessors by yet again aligning the American security discourses regarding the Arctic, Greenland, and Thule Air Base, as illustrated in figure 4.4.

On his way home from Finland, Pompeo was supposed to visit Greenland to announce the decision to reopen a consulate in Nuuk, but due to escalating tensions with Iran, the visit was postponed at the last minute (Salama et al. 2019), reflecting how the U.S. securitization of the Arctic region still ranged below the threat from Tehran.[26] Instead, the U.S. ambassador to Denmark revealed the plans and explained at a conference in Nuuk that the decision served three particular purposes:

First, it rested upon Greenland's important geostrategic location in the defense of the North American continent against North Korea, among others, a reasoning that echoed the securitization by the Rumsfeld Commission report, which underlined the Thule Air Base radar as a crucial component in the BMEWS. Second, it was a response to regional security threats from Russia and China that reflected how Peary and the defense agreements of 1941, 1951, and 2004 placed Greenland within the North American sphere of influence in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine. Third, it should facilitate new American investments in Greenland within fisheries, tourism, and, not least, the mining sector (Sands 2019), as first reported by Seward in 1868 and later repeated by Peary and others as the geoeconomic reason for why the U.S. should purchase Greenland.

Two months later, the wish to upgrade the permanent U.S presence in Greenland turned out to be more comprehensive than first announced when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that President Trump wanted to purchase the whole island due to "its abundant resources and geopolitical importance" (Salama et al. 2019). Trump verified a couple of days later and reasoned that "essentially, it's a large real estate deal. [. . .] And, strategically, for the United States, it would be nice" (whitehouse.gov 2019a). Although the idea surprised many, the purpose of enhancing U.S. geostrategic presence and securing access to important minerals was in line with similar past attempts, as also highlighted by Trump: "This is something that's been discussed for many years. Harry Truman had the idea of Greenland. I had the idea. Other people have had the idea. It goes back into the early 1900s. But Harry Truman, very strongly, thought it was a good idea" (whitehouse.gov 2019a). But when Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, gave the same response as the Danish minister gave Truman in 1946 by characterizing the discussion as 'absurd,' Trump canceled his planned state visit to Denmark (whitehouse.gov 2019b).

Because interstate exchanges and purchases of land had become an outdated practice since 1946, and because Greenland had simultaneously experienced several steps of enhanced agency, the proposal should have been directed to the Government of Greenland in the attempt to gain formal support. This was emphasized by the Danish prime minister, who made clear that "of course Greenland is not for sale, and I would like to say, that I cannot sell Greenland. Greenland is not Danish. Greenland is Greenlandic" (Christensen 2019). Although she refused the particular purchase idea, she simultaneously under-

lined that Denmark would like an even stronger cooperation with the U.S. in the Arctic, where external interest regarding investments and development "also contains a clear security political aspect, which we have to react on" (Frederiksen 2019). In response, she announced—just before her first face-to-face meeting with Trump—that Denmark would allocate approximately US$235 million to Danish defense in the Arctic and North Atlantic (Mouritzen 2019). With this, Denmark both accepted the U.S. securitization of China and Russia in the Arctic and carried out an extraordinary means of boosting its military budget (cf. Jacobsen and Lindbjerg, chap. 7, this vol.).

The Government of Greenland, however, expressed discontent with not having been invited to the meeting with Trump (cf. Breum 2020) and later stated that it would not automatically accept Denmark's decision to boost its military presence in Greenland (cf. Wester 2021) and instead would pursue demilitarization or no further militarization (Egede and Enoksen 2021a, 14; Egede and Enoksen 2021b, 16; Gad, Rud, Jacobsen and Rasmussen, chap. 8, this vol.). Therefore the realization of the announced military enhancement was parked for some time while the details were once again reviewed. This situation was reminiscent of the process in the beginning of the millennium, where the question of enhanced military presence was object of debate between Denmark and Greenland. Only after entering an agreement would they together inform the U.S. on their collective response to its securitization act. Although Greenland received Trump's caprice as a neocolonial provocation, the amplified American attention nevertheless subsequently contributed to enhancing the Government of Greenland's international agency as reflected in its more active and more equal participation in trilateral foreign policy meetings as well as in bilateral economic agreements with both the Trump administration and the Biden administration.[27]

While President Biden differed from his predecessor by reintroducing the past U.S. emphasis on battling human-caused climate change in the Arctic, the securitization designating Russia and China as regional threats was maintained with him in office.[28] In times when such threats cannot be successfully incorporated within a macrosecuritization discourse, support from entities at lower scales are more important for the securitization actor in order to gain legitimacy to carry out extraordinary means. Conversely, if a threat is deemed more immediate, the people constituting the relevant audience may very well be fewer and more exclusive, hence potentially ignoring external

concerns, as was the case during the Cold War. At present, Denmark and Greenland are both treated as relevant audiences with the power to grant formal and moral support, but if the U.S. security situation changes for the worse, and Denmark and Greenland for some reason refuse an American securitization, it would be a serious test of how profound their actual acknowledged agency as a relevant audience in fact is, and of whether Denmark and Greenland respectively will be acknowledged to different extents.

Conclusion

In the beginning of the chapter we asked: Why has the U.S. securitized Greenland, how have securitizations been received, and with what consequences?

Starting with 'why the U.S. has securitized Greenland,' the most straightforward answer is that Greenland's geographic location and its natural resources have been deemed geostrategically important for the protection of U.S. security and its balance of power against external enemies. Whereas the perceived threats have changed throughout the analytical period of almost 200 years, a common finding for each of the securitization acts has been that they have all been closely connected to security developments outside the Arctic region and entangled with securitizations at higher scales. This finding has been facilitated by our special attention to scales, which has helped to clarify whether the threats were articulated as an international, regional, or national matter. With this approach, we have shown how overarching security developments have been important in framing the U.S. pleas for extraordinary means with regards to Greenland: The first successful securitization happened within the macrosecuritization of World War II when the Monroe Doctrine was activated in relation to Greenland in 1941, while the U.S. used the ensuing Cold War to resecuritize the need for Greenland in the protection of the American continent against the Soviet Union, which replaced Germany as the main enemy. With the global macro*de*securitization of the immediate post–Cold War period, the Arctic and Greenland were equally desecuritized, while the Thule Air Base was rearticulated within new U.S. securitizations targeting rogue states and, subsequently, as part of the GWoT. Despite American attempts to present these two consecutive securitizations as macro in scope, they did not gain sufficiently wide acceptance (cf. Buzan and

Wæver 2009, 254). Thus it became more urgent to gain formal and moral support from the relevant audiences in Denmark *and* Greenland before upgrading the Thule Air Base radar as part of the BMEWS. Concurrently, a U.S. securitization of China's (potential) engagement in Greenland emerged, which initially took place behind closed doors among an exclusive circle of American and Danish government representatives. Later, as great power competition again dominated the world agenda, the securitization was publicly articulated and used to legitimize amplified American engagement in Greenland and the Arctic, which again are aligned with the purpose of the Thule Air Base.

This brings us to 'how securitizations have been received,' in which the answer depends on who the relevant audience is with power to provide or deny formal and moral support. Unlike the existing body of literature, which only deals with domestic audiences, we have paid particular attention to the relevance of foreign audiences in the shape of Denmark and Greenland, adding new understandings to how U.S. securitizations have been received abroad—at other national scales—and whether their response matter(ed). The first successful American securitization of Greenland at the outbreak of World War II was executed by a small, exclusive group from the U.S. governmental elite, one single Danish ambassador, and the governors of Greenland who—as sender and receiver of the securitization move—agreed that Germany posed an existential threat to the American continent, legitimizing the extraordinary means of de facto pausing Danish sovereignty and allowing extensive militarization of Greenland. While the Cold War replaced World War II as new global macrosecuritization, and Denmark formally reclaimed sovereignty over Greenland, the Danish government appeared to regain the right to decide whether or not to accept U.S. securitizations of Greenland. The U.S. recognition of Denmark as relevant audience, however, was superficial, as exemplified by the U.S. carrying out the extraordinary means before requesting permission from Denmark. Public articulations and the actual acknowledged agency have thus not always corresponded. In step with the macrodesecuritization of East-West relations and the simultaneous gradual enhancement of Greenlandic self-determination, the U.S. recognition of Copenhagen and Nuuk as relevant audiences with the power to provide formal and moral support seems to have become more sincere. Since the 1980s, decisions to upgrade the U.S. military presence in Greenland have not been realized without prior agreements, which moreover have been shaped

by the trilateral dynamics, such as when Greenland successfully changed the referent object to 'international peace' as a condition for accepting the Thule radar upgrade. What we do not know, however, is how the U.S. would react to a Danish or Greenlandic refusal of their securitization attempt, which—if articulated in times of more immediate security concerns—would constitute a significant test of how profound or different their roles as relevant audiences actually are.

Answering the last research question regarding 'what consequences' the U.S. securitizations have had, we have throughout the analysis and in the previous lines of the conclusion mentioned the extraordinary means the securitizations have given way for. Additionally, our theoretical attention to cascading effects has opened up the analysis to derived consequences, which unfortunately are often omitted by analyses of U.S. security interests in Greenland and the Arctic. More particularly, we have nuanced the concept of cascading effects into consisting of vertical ones happening between scales and horizontal ones taking place between sectors. With this approach, we have shown how the establishment of the Thule Air Base as an extraordinary means of the Cold War macrosecuritization cascaded onto national, local, and individual scales as well as from military to political, economic, societal, and later also environmental sectors, which were not part of the original communication regarding enhanced U.S. military presence in Greenland.

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NOTES

1. For a fuller analysis of the U.S. presence and the history of Greenland, particularly before, during, and after World War II, see Heinrich 2012.

2. The scale below of collective units has been investigated by the expanding literature on human security (cf. Buzan and Wæver 2009, 254).

3. A similar matrix of vertical moves between scales and horizontal moves between sectors has previously been applied in Jacobsen's (2019b) study of sustainability discourses in Greenland and Nunavut. But neither a focus on securitizations nor on cascading effects were then part of the research.

4. Besides the environmental sector, insecurity caused by climate change effects in the Arctic are often articulated with reference to the societal sector (Herrmann 2017; see Gad, Bjørst and Jacobsen, chap. 3, this vol.; Kristensen and Mortensgaard, chap. 2, this vol.).

5. Due to COVID-19 restrictions it was not possible for us to physically visit the U.S. National Archives.

6. https://www.state.gov/

7. https://www.stm.dk/

8. https://naalakkersuisut.gl/kl-GL

9. Originally, the U.S. also wanted to purchase the third island of the Danish West Indies, St. Croix, but the negotiations with the government of Denmark eventually settled on a price of US$7.5 million for St. Thomas and St. John (cf. Peary 1916a).

10. The rejection was a response to Seward's support of President Andrew Johnson during his impeachment trial (Lansing 1931; U.S. Department of State 2001–2009).

11. The ambassador explained that the proposal was a synthesis of suggestions from influential Danes (Peck 1969, 53). On the one hand, it was reasoned in Denmark's previously failed attempt to trade the Danish West Indies with Schleswig, which they had lost in 1864 (Schepelern 2007), and, on the other hand, Germany's wish to consolidate its position as the only great European power in East Asia (Egan 1910a). In 1902, the United States had offered US$5 million for the Danish West Indies, but the offer was disapproved by a single vote in the Danish Landsting (Peck 1969, 48).

12. In 1919, Sweden, Italy, Japan, and France met the request without reservations, while the United Kingdom accepted on the condition that they should be consulted prior to any future sale. In 1921, Denmark formally declared sovereignty over all of Greenland, but was challenged in 1931 when five Norwegian trappers claimed sovereignty over a part of east Greenland on behalf of Oslo. In 1933, however, the International Court of Justice ruled in favor of Denmark (Emmerson 2010, 104–5).

13. In 1920, Peary's views found some support when the U.S. leading air strategist, Gen. William E. 'Billy' Mitchell, testified to the Senate that he agreed that it was of great strategic importance to establish U.S. air bases in Greenland and Iceland, which in his opinion would be even more important than the Panama Canal (Emmerson 2010, 123; cf. Fogelson 1989).

14. In the 1930s, German scientists had already completed several studies and developed plans to establish weather stations in eastern Greenland, plans they secretly carried out and preserved until 1943, when they were discovered (Blyth 1951).

15. For example, the U.S. secretary of state explained to the British ambassador that "it would be well in the interest of both countries to bring the Greenland situation up to date as it related to the Monroe Doctrine from the standpoint of this Government" (U.S. Department of State 1940, 353).

16. The agreement's article 1 referred to the Act of Habana, which in agreement with the Latin American republics in 1940 had given the U.S. legitimation to take over the administration of non-American states' colonial territories within the Western Hemisphere, reflecting the Monroe Doctrine.

17. At the same time, the U.S. used the situation to investigate the uranium resources in southern Greenland with a view to creating the first American nuclear bomb, but for unknown reasons the interest was never put into effect (Knudsen and Nielsen 2016).

18. The U.S. interest in purchasing Greenland at that time was kept secret from the public until April 28, 1991, when the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* wrote about it based on releases from the U.S. National Archive (cf. Nelson 1991).

19. The full disclosure of Prime Minister Hansen's indirect acceptance first happened in the mid-1990s, when a Danish journalist discovered the note and made it public (Brink 1997).

20. What was not revealed, though, was Camp Century's end goal, called 'Project Iceworm,' the stationing of 600 intercontinental ballistic missiles, placed inside the inland ice in a 4000 km tunnel system of 135,000 km2, operated by 11,000 men (Nielsen and Nielsen 2016, 196–97). Both Project Iceworm and Camp Century were eventually abandoned as the inland ice proved to be too porous for the comprehensive construction within. Project Iceworm was kept secret until 1996.

21. Reportedly, there were not any nuclear weapons stationed in Greenland after 1965, so the B-52 was overflying the country when it crashed (Archer 2003, 133; cf. U.S. Department of State 1999).

22. In the meantime, the idea of purchasing Greenland was discussed yet again in 1955 by the U.S. administration, and in 1960 Eisenhower aired the idea in a conversation with the King of Denmark, Frederik IX, who—as written in the Danish minister of foreign affairs' diary—allegedly punched the minister on his arm and eagerly said, "We do not sell!" (Lidegaard 2014, 1099–1100).

23. Constructed in 1958–1959 and put into use in 1961.

24. Other cables from Wikileaks revealed that the CIA has conducted secret transportations of prisoners in Greenland.

25. One month later, the U.S. Department of Defense published its Arctic Strategy, which contained similar descriptions of the regional security milieu (2019, 6).

26. The first U.S. consulate in Greenland was established in 1940 (Kauffmann 1940) and closed in 1953 (Naalakkersuisut 2020a, 43).

27. Similar mechanisms have occurred in Greenland's bilateral relations with the EU (Gad 2014, 2017) and in its autonomous engagements in Arctic governance (Jacobsen 2015, 2019a, 2020).

28. For example, the U.S. Army issued a chief of staff paper with the title 'Regaining Arctic Dominance,' warning that "The Arctic has the potential to become a contested space where United States' great power rivals, Russia and China, seek to use military and economic power to gain and maintain access to the region at the expense of US interests" (McConville and McCarthy 2021, 15).

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First analytical article

Olsvig, S. (2022a). ‘Uagununa Nunarput’(‘It’s Our Country’). Greenland’s aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US–Greenlandic Bilateralism. Danish Foreign Policy Review, 74-106.

'Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country'). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US-Greenlandic bilateralism

Sara Olsvig[1]

'Greenland has an impressive resource endowment and through this agreement is seeking to maximise opportunities to develop key energy and mineral sectors. As an important geopolitical partner we want to ensure that Greenland pursues an enabling environment to attract diverse and private investment to achieve its own energy and mineral resource security goals'.

The above are words of then US Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources, Frank Fannon, on the occasion of the signing of two bilateral memoranda of understanding between the US Department of State and the Government of Greenland (Fannon & Jensen 2019; Fannon & Svane 2019).[2] The signing ceremony took place later than originally intended; it had been planned to coincide with a visit to Greenland by then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo but the trip was cancelled,[3] and it was Fannon who signed from the US side a few weeks later on 4 June 2019. The two MoUs were the result of several months of dialogue and preparation between Greenland and the US, and were intended to signal a clear wish for more direct and expanded collaboration (Interviews K, E and J).[4] Initially prepared as a deliverable for Pompeo's cancelled visit to Nuuk, the media attention on the signing of the MoUs was not as intense as it would have been if the Secretary of State himself had been present and signed the documents (Interview E). In fact, the signing of the MoUs was subject to very little media attention, and only the news about the MoU on mineral resource collaboration is to be found on Naalakkersuisut's (the Government of Greenland) website and as a short media notice on the national Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation website.[5]

In sharp contrast to this minimal media coverage of the signing of the MoUs, the presentation in April 2020 of a so-called 'economic growth package' (Sands 2020), called an 'aid package' in the Danish media, sparked wide attention in Greenland, Denmark and abroad, and created political turmoil among Danish parliamentarians who were surprised by this new development. The package consisted of USD 12 million funding of a range of US initiatives in Greenland, mostly within the mineral sector, but also including tourism and education.

This article will present a twofold analysis of the processes leading to the signing of the MoUs and the following 'economic growth package'.

Firstly, leaning on process tracing methods (Beach & Pedersen 2013; Bennett & Checkel 2015) the article will dig into the processes prior to and following the signing of the MoUs, and the connection between the MoUs and the so-called 'economic growth package'. The article will also take a closer look at what role the Danish administration played in these processes, as well as what the reasoning was behind developing a more direct and bilateral relationship between Greenland and the US. Although unable to provide a full and complex analysis given the limited space of this article, a few steps will be outlined to examine the causal mechanisms. Thus, the first sections of the article go through historical events and developments that constitute part of the causal mechanisms leading to the signing of the MoUs.

Secondly, the article will follow up on Clive Archer's two-level game analysis of Greenland-US-Denmark relations in a 2003 article (Archer 2003) and discuss the new situation of Greenland negotiating directly with the US within areas that would formerly have lain within the aegis of the Igaliku Agreement Joint Committee – a trilateral forum established in 2004 for dialogue and development of further cooperation between Greenland and the US, with Denmark as an integral third party (Archer 2003; Ackrén 2019).

Establishing timelines is a simple and important step in process tracing, allowing the reader to understand a writer's thought process. Hence, applying parts of the practical guide to process tracing provided by Jacob I. Ricks & Amy H. Liu (2018), the article is constructed to give an overview of a series of events that took place in Greenland, the US and to some extent in Denmark.

The article seeks to answer the research question: *Why did the US and Greenland choose to engage in bilateral agreements and how does this development affect Greenland's decision making in areas that were formerly dealt with in a trilateral relation?*

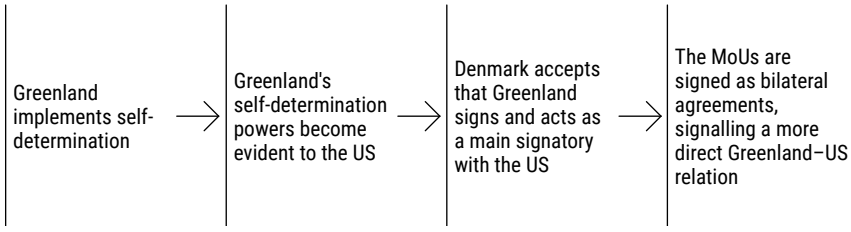
Setting up hypotheses is a process tracing tool to test the causal mechanisms of events. Two hypotheses are tested through the process tracing: A) *The bilateralism of the 2019 MoUs was the main aim of both signatories* and B) *Bilateralism was the preference of Greenland and, given the acceptance by Denmark, the US played along.*

These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, and they are not necessarily true for both the US and Greenland. They are helpful in tracing the events since Greenland's relation to the US related to furthering cooperation based on the US military presence, is anchored in previous agreements that include Denmark, including agreements signed between two sovereign states (the US and Denmark). While Greenland has previously either not been a co-signatory, or been a co-signatory *through* Denmark, the new development is that Greenland is now a *main* signatory. In relation to hypothesis A, the expectation according to the power relations between an autonomous nation and its sovereign state, and according to the previous trilateral agreements, would be that Denmark would be the main, or – at least – a third signatory. In relation to hypothesis B, an acceptance or authorisation from Denmark would be expected to be key, but the story told in the media does not relate such an intermediate role.[6]

A central concept throughout the article is the question of Greenland's 'room for manoeuvre' in exercising decision making, as well as its influence on matters related to the US presence in Greenland. Others have described related concepts, such as 'freedom of manoeuvre' (Mouritzen 2020, 2022) and 'action space' (Petersen 2005) in small state-great power relations. In this article the concept is used to describe the level of decision-making power and actual influence Greenland had in relation to the signing and content of the MoUs and the follow-up initiatives.[7]

The following causal graph (Figure 1) is a simple visualisation of the central mechanisms described in the article.

Figure 1.



The empirical data the article draws upon includes elite interviews conducted in the period May 2021 to May 2022 with government officials, civil servants and diplomats as well as politicians from Greenland, the US and Denmark. An implicit challenge with elite interviews is that the interviewees may have their own agendas on the matters discussed. Information used in this article has therefore been cross-checked with colleagues of the interviewees and by doing follow-up interviews, while studies of official documents, including documents from access applications,[8] and media reports and outlets have been used to triangulate the data. All interviewees are anonymised.

Historical context

Greenland was declared an 'equal part of the Kingdom' in a 1953 referendum in Denmark, formally ending the colonial era. Political developments have been strongly guided by postcolonial awakening and demands for further self-determination. In 1979 home rule government was introduced, and Greenland gradually started taking over legislative powers from Denmark. In 2009 self-government was introduced based on an act passed in both the Greenlandic and the Danish parliaments, recognising the people of Greenland as a people pursuant to international law, as well as Greenland's right to self-determination and future independence.

As part of the self-government agreement it is stated that the act 'shall not limit the Danish authorities' constitutional responsibility and powers in international affairs, as foreign and security policy matters are affairs of the Realm' (Government of Denmark 2009). This refers to §19 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, which states that 'The King shall act on behalf of the Realm in international affairs', meaning that it is the Danish state that

conducts the Kingdom's foreign policy (Folketinget 1953). Both prior to and after the inauguration of self-government, this provision has continuously caused contention in Greenlandic-Danish relations, and often in matters relating to the US (Archer 2003; Dragsdahl 2005; Ackrén 2019).

Although American geopolitical interest in Greenland can be traced back almost 200 years (for a fuller analysis and historical overview, see Jacobsen & Olsvig forthcoming), it was the outbreak of the Second World War that initiated a direct US diplomatic and military presence in Greenland, and activated the Monroe Doctrine in relation to Greenland (Jacobsen & Olsvig forthcoming; Archer 1988; 2003). In 1941 the first defence agreement between Denmark and the US was signed (Kauffmann & Hull 1941), and after the war ended the agreement was followed up, once again bilaterally between Denmark and the US, when an agreement on the continued 'defence of Greenland' was signed in 1951 (United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark 1951).

The two defence agreements resulted in a high degree of militarisation of Greenland, both during and after the Second World War. After the war many of the US military installations were abandoned, but the air force bases in Pituffik (Thule Air Force Base) and Kangerlussuaq (Sondre Stromfiord) were maintained. The Pituffik base was included in the US ballistic missile early warning system (BMEWS) already in the 1950s, while the base in Kangerlussuaq was closed and the landing strip handed over to Greenland for a symbolic sum. At the same time a first memorandum of understanding was signed between 'The Government of the Kingdom of Denmark (including the home rule Government of Greenland) and the Government of the United States of America' (Brown, Hedegaard & Vesterbirk 1991). With this agreement the first trilateral forum, the 'Permanent Committee' (PC in following) was established 'In order to facilitate consultation and exchange of information on matters relating to the US military presence in Greenland' (ibid).

By the end of the 1990s security developments in other parts of the world created an American need to further upgrade the Pituffik BMEWS, and this time the parliament and government of Greenland demanded a seat at the negotiating table (Dragsdahl 2005; Kristensen 2005). By 2003 Greenland and Denmark had internally agreed upon structures of Greenland's participation in the decision making in the 'Itilleq Declaration' (Møller & Enoksen 2003) and with that in hand, the negotiations with the US continued among all

three parties. The 'Igaliku Agreement' was signed by the US, Greenland and Denmark in 2004, granting renewed acceptance of the US military presence in Pituffik, this time engaging the then home rule Government of Greenland as 'a new almost state-like actor' (Kristensen 2005: 202).

With the Igaliku Agreement, the 'Joint Committee' (JC in the following) was established, creating a new platform for developing and expanding the Greenland-US relations to other areas than the military and security-related, as the agreement, apart from ensuring Greenland a continued seat at the table, included two memoranda of understanding – one on economic and technical cooperation and one on cooperation on the environment (Powell, Møller & Motzfeldt 2004). With the Igaliku Agreement, the road to further economic gain from the US presence was laid – at least so the Greenlandic politicians thought.

The following ten years saw a constant struggle by Greenland to define the relationship to the US, as Greenlandic politicians continued to seek implementation of the Igaliku Agreement MoUs. The most direct income from the US presence in Pituffik came from the Danish-Greenlandic co-ownership of the company awarded the maintenance contract for the base, and from taxes on base workers. Greenlandic politicians did not hold back from expressing their disappointment over the lack of tangible results from the establishment of the JC (Dragsdahl 2005; Olesen 2017: 75).

The 'loss of maintenance contract' crisis

The US-Greenland relationship entered an unprecedented diplomatic crisis when a 2014 decision by the US Department of Defence awarded the Pituffik maintenance contract to an American company (Olesen 2017; Ackrén 2019; Jacobsen & Olsvig forthcoming).

The crisis sparked a high degree of political disappointment and disapproval among Greenlandic politicians, who also looked inwards and demanded a full analysis of what had led to the loss of the contract (Bruun & Hjejle 2015).[9] In the time after the 2014 award, Greenlandic and Danish politicians, both government representatives and parliamentarians, continuously promoted a demand for the maintenance contract to return to a 'Greenland-Danish

company'. In Inatsisartut (the parliament of Greenland), a debate in the spring of 2015 resulted in a formal parliamentary statement supported by all Greenlandic parties stating that 'the maintenance contracts do not sufficiently guarantee income from Pituffik' and that 'the complex of defence agreements must be examined with the aim of renegotiating those aspects that do not meet the interests of Greenland' (Kalaallit Nunaanni Partiit Tamarmik 2015, own translation). The following year, Inatsisartut once again found common ground in supporting Naalakkersuisut's (Government of Greenland) 'efforts to seek the greatest possible benefits from the American presence in Greenland' including, 'if necessary, to demand amendments to, or renegotiate, the 1951 defence agreement' (Inatsisartut 2016, own translation).

Thus, a process sparked by the 2014 loss of the maintenance contract was initiated. Based on the heated debates that resulted in a consensus parliamentary mandate, Naalakkersuisut initiated efforts to resolve the issue with the US.

In the causal graph presented (Figure 1), the first mechanism was Greenland's implementation of self-determination, widening the room for manoeuvre on legislative matters taken over from Denmark, including those that had foreign policy implications. At the same time, the loss of the maintenance contract was an experience showing that Greenland's expectations of being taken seriously by the US were not being met. This led to the subsequent consensus mandate given to Naalakkersuisut by Inatsisartut to pursue a solution, a mandate that became an important stepping-stone in furthering Greenland's interests.

In October 2020, days before the US presidential election, a new framework agreement between the US and Greenland pertaining to the question of the maintenance contract at Pituffik was announced (Naalakkersuisut 2020). In a 'Statement on Improved Cooperation in Greenland – Including at Pituffik (Thule Air Base)', which is one of four documents published as part of the October 2020 agreements, the signatories Washington DC, Copenhagen and Nuuk wrote that 'In view of Pituffik's and Greenland's key role in Greenlandic, U.S., and transatlantic security, and based on our close dialogue concerning the base maintenance contract at Pituffik, we set out together to increase the benefits to the people of Greenland, through the understanding set forth in the exchange of diplomatic notes (…)' (Naalakkersuisut 2020). This referred to the 'Common Plan for U.S.-Greenland Cooperation in Support of

Our Understanding for Pituffik (Thule Air Base)' which was the only one of the four documents that included actual signatures, signed bilaterally by then Greenlandic premier Kim Kielsen, and then US ambassador to Denmark Carla Sands (Sands & Kielsen 2020).

To sharp eyes, this agreement on the further development of Greenland-US relations, particularly as it was bound up with the US military presence in Greenland and signed bilaterally by Greenland and the US and not by Denmark, is notable. Presenting this as a big win for Greenland, Naalakkersuisut was widely quoted in the Greenlandic, Danish and foreign media as specifically mentioning their satisfaction with the furthering of a 'bilateral' cooperation with the US. The four documents were presented as the result of and solution to the diplomatic crisis initiated in 2014.[10]

It is important to note that as of early May 2022, a full diplomatic solution and recovery from the lost maintenance contract has not been reached, as the award of a new contract for the coming term has not yet been announced. The celebratory mood described after the signing of the October 2020 agreement can thus be seen as an expression of the Greenlandic expectation that future contracts will once again be awarded to Greenlandic-Danish companies.

But what was the process leading to the festive mood on 28 October 2020? What is the connection back to the MoUs that were signed in 2019, and the 'economic growth package' presented in spring 2020, and why was Naalakkersuisut so keen to categorise the relations to the US as 'bilateral'?

Causal mechanism 1: The Greenland era of implementing self-determination

Prior to the inauguration of self-government, the Danish Parliament passed an act granting Greenland the powers to conclude certain international agreements 'on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark' (Ackrén 2019; Olsvig & Gad 2021). This act, also called the Authorisation Act, was developed to accommodate the decision making structures developed in praxis as Greenland engaged in international negotiations on overtaken legislative areas,

such as fisheries, education, etc. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s Greenland gradually developed an own foreign policy identity, increasingly seeing itself as an international player with direct relations not only to Denmark, but also to other foreign states and international organisations (Gad 2017).

The development of the US-Greenland relationship should thus be seen in the context of Greenland continuously pushing for a greater say in general, as well as in matters that are taken over that have security and foreign policy implications.

Raising the Greenlandic voice

In the years after the 'loss of the maintenance contract', Greenlandic politicians presented an initial demand for direct 'compensation',[11] but then agreed with Denmark on the wording, 'the US presence in Greenland should be to the benefit of the Greenlandic people', which continued to be expressed in official documents, in the media, as well as in meetings with US government officials (Naalakkersuisut 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020).

As a first tangible implementation of the Self-Government Agreement, the decision-making powers in the area of mineral resources were taken over by Greenland in 2010. The following development of policies on and around mineral resources was one that blurred the official and unofficial lines of legislative powers between Greenland and Denmark. An example was the question of possible uranium mining, which led to lengthy debates in Greenland, but also to new agreements between Greenland and Denmark pertaining to the security aspects of exporting uranium (Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2018). Another example was the debate in the Inatsisartut in 2012 on a large-scale business development act, where the prospect of thousands of workers from abroad, including from China, possibly arriving for large-scale mining projects sparked a debate in Denmark on how the security and foreign policy aspects of the newly-assigned powers to Greenland should be dealt with (Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2018; Olsvig & Gad 2021).

These developments led to further awareness of the consequences of the Self-Government Act, not least among Greenlandic politicians who became more

aware of when and how to maintain clear decision-making power, and when to – or not to – include Denmark in their decision-making (Olsvig & Gad 2021).

The US redefining itself as an Arctic nation

In the US two parallel developments were taking place during the 2000s and the 2010s. On one hand, the US chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2015 to 2017) was approaching, and on the other, the overall great power competition development was becoming increasingly agenda-setting, with China and Russia among the many states with clearly expressed interests and policies on and in the Arctic. The Arctic was put back on the political map with the formulation of Arctic strategies on different sectors, including military and defence, while US Arctic policymaking was increasingly institutionalised (Corgan 2014 & 2020; Ackrén 2019: 5; Weingartner & Orttung 2019). This forged the development of new US policies as well as an evaluation of US Arctic positioning, including on several micro-levels such as developing new and improved relationships to the Arctic peoples and nations. In a report titled 'Basing Rights and Contested Sovereignty in Greenland and Diego Garcia – The Impact of Decolonization on US and Allied Access in the Era of Great Power Competition' from an August 2019 'on-the-record event' hosted by the CNA Strategy and Policy Analysis program,[12] policymakers were specifically advised to invest in relationships and engage economically and politically with local peoples (Overfield 2019: 4-5). This report was sent to the Greenlandic representation in Washington DC in September 2019 with a note that the CNA hoped the representation would find the report useful.[13] As described by other scholars, American attention to Greenland's self-determination powers was not new. The US followed the approaching inauguration of self-government and noted that the agreement could result in Greenlandic independence from Denmark, and that this should give the US an incentive to further its more direct cooperation with Greenland (Olesen 2017; Henriksen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017).

Other developments also informed the overall US-Greenland relationship in the 2010s. It is widely acknowledged that it was American influence that led to the Danish Navy re-opening the Kangilinnguit naval base in 2016, and to the Danish investments and loans for the extension of two central civilian airports in Greenland in 2018 (Olsvig & Gad 2021; Jacobsen & Olsvig forthcoming). It is

also widely acknowledged that the US security interest in Greenland increased in that period in reaction to Russia's expanded militarisation of its Arctic territory (Kristensen & Mortensgaard 2021).

In September 2018, amid the Greenlandic parliamentary debates on the expansion of the country's airport structure, and after the news of a Chinese bid to construct the airports, the US Department of Defence issued a unilateral Statement of Intent (SoI in the following) expressing interest in investing in critical Greenlandic infrastructure (Rood 2018). In the SoI, it was made clear that the incentive for investing was to enhance US and NATO capabilities in Greenland and the North Atlantic. Documents show that the SoI came following meetings of the US, Greenland and Denmark Permanent Committee (PC). 'Joint infrastructure investment' was on the agenda at an extraordinary meeting in June 2018, while 'infrastructure investments – follow up on the Statement of Intent (SoI) from 2018' as well as general follow-up on the SoI were on the PC meeting agendas in the years after the statement was issued (own translation).[14]

A review of the yearly foreign policy reports of Naalakkersuisut to Inatsisartut show that the meetings of the JC were halted in 2015 due to the maintenance contract crisis and following negotiations (Naalakkersuisut 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020). Documents also show that the meetings in the PC were halted from October 2014 to January 2018, and according to the above mentioned reports the maintenance contract crisis from 2014 was the underlying reason for the halt.

These developments – the overall great power competition spillover in the Arctic, and the development and implementation of Greenland's widened self-determination – form the framework within which the Greenland-US relationship further developed.

Before moving into the analysis, an overview of the twists and turns in Greenland's room for decision-making manoeuvring is given in the following. This provides an insight to the pressures and struggles Greenland has continuously had to navigate in order to position itself at the negotiating tables, and to have its voice heard.

Twists and turns in Greenland's room for manoeuvre

When analysing Greenland's room for manoeuvre, Denmark's position towards the Arctic and towards Greenland is inevitably part of the explanation. Thus, how Denmark has developed its focus on the Arctic throughout the 2000s and 2010s is interesting and important to position and analyse the new and direct Greenland-US cooperation. As explained by Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen in the article 'The Arctic Turn. How did the High North become a foreign and security policy priority for Denmark?', the increased great power interest in the Arctic initiated by the Russian 2007 flag-planting in the Arctic High Seas seabed close to the North Pole forced Denmark to re-develop its Arctic focus (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2018). Prior to these events the Arctic had, since the Cold War, been of little interest to Denmark, and Greenland had a relatively big room for manoeuvre, for example sitting at the table in the Arctic Council including signing the founding document of the council on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark in 1996, and initiating a tradition of taking a direct part in the different levels of the council's work (Holm Olsen & Shadian 2018). With the increased great power attention to the Arctic, Denmark moved its focus from largely being around developing policies and taking part in events and developments through the relation to Greenland, to increasingly seeing itself as an Arctic state with a broader interest in the Arctic than just that of through or about Greenland (ibid). But this re-positioning did not come without challenges for the Greenlandic-Danish relationship, and there was a hard pushback from Greenland, which intensified when Naalakkersuisut, contrary to the previous tradition, was pushed to the side and 'excluded' from sitting at the table during the Swedish chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2011 to 2013. Greenland boycotted the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna in 2013, creating quite an amount of attention to the precarious situation. Whatever solution was to be found to bring Greenland back to the table, the development had paralleled the Danish Arctic turn and increased focus on statehood in the Arctic cooperation. Some have called this development a 'Westphalianisation' of the Arctic Council, changing the council from being for and by Arctic and Indigenous Peoples, to increasingly being a state-focused forum (ibid).

Although the pushback from Greenland against Denmark's increased Arctic diplomacy was never explicitly explained by Greenlandic politicians as a reaction against this 'Westphalianisation', Greenland as a polity did seek recognition as something that, as much as possible, resembled a nation-state (Jacobsen & Gad 2018), by being very clear on the areas of legislation that it had power over, and by demanding that Greenland could act on its own, also when there were foreign and security implications in those areas (Takahashi 2019a; 2019b).

Causal mechanism 2: Greenland's self-determination powers become evident to the US

The steppingstones laid throughout the 2000s and 2010s, including the introduction of self-government in Greenland, thus created a contentious space of power play between nation-states and a sub-national polity. This is the background against which this article analyses the Greenland-US relationship, and the signing of the MoUs with the follow-up funding for increased American activities in Greenland.

As stated in the CNA report mentioned above, somewhere along the line it became evident to US government officials that Greenland, with its self-government agreement with Denmark, had formally gained further self-determination (Overfield 2019; Olsvig & Gad 2021). In addition to the new formal framework, informal and diplomatic activities, especially after Greenland established its own representation in Washington DC in 2014, made it hard to overlook the message from Greenland that there was interest in a more direct cooperation with the US. In the years following 2014 the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs travelled frequently to the US, including a trip to Washington DC and Colorado in 2016 together with the parliament's foreign policy and security committee 'to gain a better understanding of the conditions in relation to the US military presence in Greenland'[15] (own translation).

Causal mechanism 3: Denmark accepts that Greenland deals directly with the US

The push for a more direct relationship with the US put the US government officials in a delicate position. On one hand, they had to respect and meet the demands of their Danish counterparts who were increasingly aware of Denmark's own role in the Arctic and intent on maintaining or claiming power over anything foreign policy and security-related. On the other hand, they wanted to meet the wishes of an increasingly self-aware Greenlandic system, that was pointing to the Self-Government Act and division of powers and authorities agreed upon with Denmark.

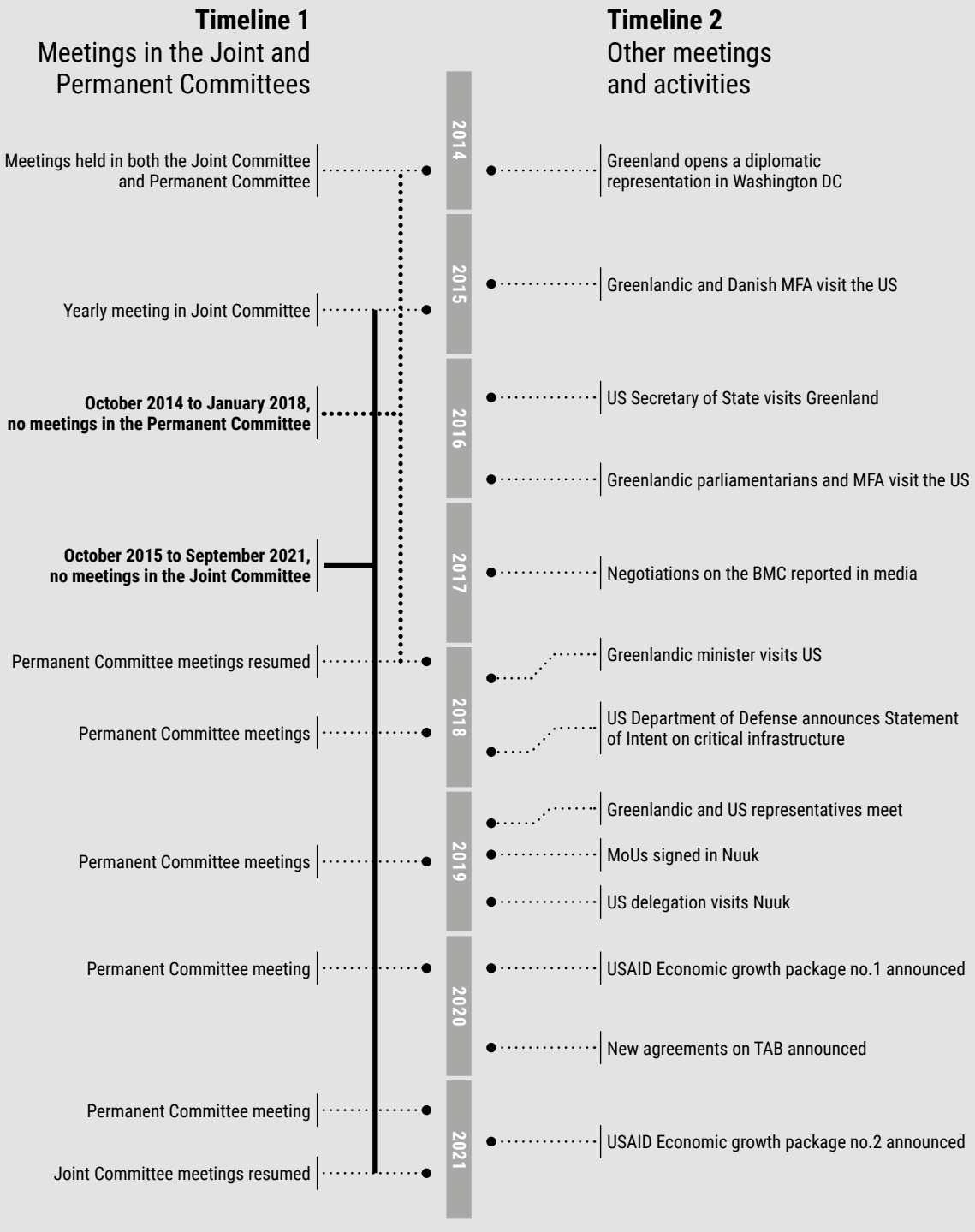
In the case of the 2019 MoUs, Greenland did inform Denmark about the MoUs, although the information was conveyed shortly before the actual signing, and Denmark saw no reason to interfere or prevent them (Interview A, I, J and K). The question is whether that would have been the case, had the content of the MoUs been more controversial in the sense of containing matters, seen from a Danish perspective, as being beyond Greenland's autonomous powers. The point from a Greenlandic perspective is that Greenland didn't ask for permission because Greenland saw this kind of agreement as being fully within Greenlandic authority. Relating the development to the causal graph in Figure 1, it is these developments that led to a common understanding between Greenland, Denmark, and the US that the MoUs could be signed bilaterally by Greenland and the US.

Causal mechanism 4: The road to bilateralism through the MoUs

The MoUs thus became an important steppingstone towards a more direct relation between Greenland and the US.

Figure 2 contains two timelines starting from the 'loss of the maintenance contract' in 2014 and ending with the 2021 restarting of the Joint Committee.[16]

Figure 2.



Timeline 1 gives an overview of meetings in the Permanent Committee and the Joint Committee. Meetings in both forums were halted from 2014 due to the maintenance contract crisis.

Meetings in the Permanent Committee were resumed in 2018 while meetings in the Joint Committee restarted in 2021.

Timeline 2 shows other activities in the same period, but is not exhaustive of all meetings and activities that took place. It gives a picture of vast activity during the halt in the two formalised meeting structures.

The first timeline simply aims at providing an overview of the meetings held in the JC and PC in the period after the loss of the maintenance contract up until 2021. As explained in the above, both fora are trilateral, uniting the US, Denmark, and Greenland in dialogue on security and military issues (in the PC), and in dialogue on developing cooperation in civilian areas such as education, business and trade including resource development, health, environmental issues and tourism (the JC). Meetings in both the PC and the JC were halted after the loss of the maintenance contract. The last meetings in the PC were held in October 2014, and the JC in October 2015.

In 2017 negotiations on the issue of the base maintenance contract still had not led to any solutions,[17] but meetings in the PC were resumed in January 2018, following a decision to reinstate negotiations on the lost maintenance contract, as reported in Naalakkersuisut's yearly foreign policy report to parliament (Naalakkersuisut 2020: 43-44).

The second timeline shows several significant activities conducted outside of the auspices of the PC and JC, revealing extensive activity in the shape of dialogue and meetings between Greenland and the US during the period of the JC and PC meeting suspension. Greenland established its own diplomatic representation in Washington DC in September 2014 and from 2015 onwards the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs visited the US frequently, both with and without Danish counterparts.

When the MFA and the Parliament of Greenland's Foreign Policy and Security Committee collaboratively visited Washington DC and Colorado in 2016, the committee and the MFA jointly stated that they were 'united in working to ensure that Greenland and the Greenlandic society get the highest possible return and benefits from the US military presence, whether within the 1951 Defence Agreement with subsequent supplementary agreements, or in the form of an actual renegotiation of the agreement complex' (own translation).[18]

The two timelines thus show, that while the meetings in the joint and permanent committees were halted, activities and events, largely advanced by Greenlandic politicians and diplomats, developed in parallel to the push from the joint Greenlandic-Danish side. The question is: did these advancements also lead to a common understanding between the Greenlandic and US representatives

that a new and more direct relationship between the two should and could be initiated? Drawing on the process tracing method, 'smoking gun' evidence points to a high degree of intention on the part of Greenland towards such a development. In talks and interviews with US government officials, the US pointed to the wish to resolve the maintenance contract issue as a driver for continuing the dialogue directly with Greenland.[19]

When the meetings in the PC were resumed, talks on furthering the cooperation in investments in Greenlandic infrastructure were on the agenda.[20] Subsequently the US Department of Defence issued the September 2018 Statement of Intent (SoI) expressing their interest in investing in the critical infrastructure of Greenland, signalling a clear US willingness to engage.

Although the SoI did not result in US investments in Greenlandic infrastructure, a line of events (visualised in timeline 2) did continue to develop.

In 2019 Greenlandic and US representatives met without Danish representatives on several occasions to discuss US-Greenlandic relations (Interviews I, K and J). Following these meetings, preparations for the two MoUs were initiated, and communications between the individual Government of Greenland departments and the US State Department became frequent (Interviews K, I and E).

As explained in the introduction, the MoUs were meant to be deliverables at the US Secretary of State's visit to Greenland in May 2019. This trip was cancelled, and the MoUs were signed by another US representative, but the fact that they were supposed to be signed by a Secretary of State nevertheless points to the importance of the signal from the US side and signals that the signatories wanted attention to this new and more direct form of cooperation.

As a key Greenlandic politician put it: 'From Greenland's side we continuously held on to our right to negotiate on our own and directly with the Americans, without Danish involvement, on areas that are taken over by Greenland. *It's our country*' (Interview I). The clear focus on areas taken over by Greenland was also highlighted by other interviewees, who reiterated that the areas of cooperation to be developed were based on the wishes expressed by Greenland (Interviews E, G, K, H and J).

Following the signing of the MoUs a large delegation from the US State Department visited Nuuk in September 2019 and frequent talks continued on how to implement the aims of the MoUs (Interviews K and I). Greenland's delegations to these meetings maintained a focus within legislative areas that had been taken over by Greenland, establishing a room for manoeuvre to influence and be the decision makers. Danish representatives were sometimes present at the meetings but were not part of the deliberations with the Americans. At other times Danish representatives were not allowed into the meetings, although they wanted access (Interviews K, I and J).[21] The areas of cooperation funded by the economic growth package, were chosen by Greenland (Interviews A, K, I, E, G).

At the time of application for access to documents for this article, the JC meetings had not been resumed, but in a later press release Greenland and the US announced that new meetings were formally resumed in September 2021. These new meetings were held as JC meetings between Greenland and the US but, evidently, there were Danish representatives at the meetings (as seen in the group photos), but the communication contained no mention of Denmark.[22] Naalakkersuisut spoke of bilateral relations although there was no formal announcement of changing the original trilateral character of the JC. This resembles the 'photoshopping Denmark out' of the Greenland-EU relation described by Ulrik Pram Gad, where Denmark is 'cleared away so that Greenland's true identity can be recognised by a better other' (Gad 2017: 88). In the case of this present article, the 'better other' is the US.

Ambiguous US signals

Identifying an alternative and counterfactual event is yet another step in a process tracing analysis that can be beneficial to the understanding. In this case, the alternative event would be that the MoUs or the new and enhanced agreements on Greenland-US cooperation were concluded through the existing structures, i.e. the JC, and with the direct and integrated involvement of Denmark. But what would have been the outcome of that? It would most probably have been *trilateral* agreements and thereby an implicit involvement of Denmark in areas that Greenland strictly sees as its exclusive jurisdiction, therefore not satisfying the Greenlandic need for implementing and exercising self-determination. Furthermore, a direct involvement of Denmark would most

probably have meant that Danish institutions would be part of the equation, a situation that Greenlandic government officials clearly expressed opposition to (Interviews K, I).

So, going back to the two hypotheses, the analysis shows that it is hypothesis A) *The bilateralism of the MoUs was the main aim of the signatories*, that is the most likely of Greenland's incentives, as similar agreements with the same content could have been signed in a trilateral arrangement. For the US there are also clear indications that bilateralism was a goal, but hypothesis B) *Bilateralism was the preference of Greenland and, given the acceptance by Denmark, the US played along*, also rings true as the US was under an obligation to balance its obligations to Denmark, its state counterpart. Interestingly, as seen in the communications from both Greenland and the US, the US signals through the media were deliberately made ambiguous.

In the following a theoretical retrospective glance at earlier international relations (IR) analyses of Greenland, the US and Denmark, and their interrelated developments, including the move from bilateralism to trilateralism and back, will inform the latter part of this analysis, before concluding the article.

Balancing several areas of practical tension

The US-Greenland relation is developing in an arena and an era of tension. On the one side China and Russia's actions both in and outside the Arctic dictate American Arctic policy (Weingartner & Orttung 2019). This has become a determining condition in 2022 with the Russian invasion of and war in Ukraine and its consequences, which include pausing the Arctic Council and sanctions by the West towards Russia, supported by Greenland. On the other side, the US is exercising a liberal approach of obtaining (mutual) benefits from cooperation, as seen in the US approach to Greenland (Overfield 2019). This analysis thus takes its IR point of departure in the macrolevel realist paradigm of great power competition but also digs into a microlevel, liberal approach to how relationships develop through cooperation.

For both the US and for Greenland there are domestic interests at play and, through diplomacy, both countries implement goals that in different ways benefit each their own domestic agendas. The present analysis draws on

Putnam's two-level game theory framework as 'a metaphor for domestic-international interactions' (Putnam 1988), and follows up on, inter alia, Clive Archer's 2003 two- and three-level analysis of the Greenland, Denmark, US security triangle, which among other things concludes that the Greenlanders could be at future negotiating tables and that the US most likely would seek to avoid alienating Greenland by providing side-payments in order to obtain acceptance of the presence of the missile defence system (Archer 2003: 142). The analysis is an attempt to shed light on the nuances of what has changed since the 2000s and the trilateral nature of the Greenland, Denmark, US relations pertaining to the US presence in Greenland.

Archer argued that in the case of the negotiations on the Pituffik upgrade in the beginning of the 2000s, the 'three levels of negotiations are international negotiations (US-Denmark), the domestic level (within Denmark, including Greenland) and the intra-realm (Danish-Greenlandic)' (Archer 2003: 126). He furthermore argued, that 'the security of Greenland is not just a matter between two powers, one large and one small, but is also a question that closely involves the Greenlandic authority, the island's people and interest groups' (ibid: 127).

It is clear that in the process leading to the signing of the two MoUs in 2019, Greenlandic government officials and politicians highlighted the importance of negotiating directly with the US, with minimal or without any involvement of Denmark (Interviews K, J, informal follow-up talks). Danish government officials did not express dissatisfaction at having been excluded from the formulation of the content of the agreements (Interview A and follow-up talks and interview). Danish parliamentarians expressed no or very little knowledge of the MoUs and were surprised by the later-announced 'economic growth package' (Interviews F, C, B), a reaction they did not hold back from voicing to the media.[23] The Inatsisartut Foreign Policy and Security Committee stated, shortly after the news of the package was announced, that it was connected to the 2019 MoUs and not to the 2004 Igaliku Agreement.[24]

With the agreements, Greenland and the US thus signalled a new (metaphoric) level one play, negotiating directly with each other, while the domestic, level two, play in Greenland was about satisfying the parliamentary wish for renumeration from the loss of the maintenance contract as well as an assurance that Greenland will never again stand with no or little income from a US military presence. At the same time Greenland was signalling an increased

decision-making power, and thus strictly maintaining its autonomy within the areas taken over from Denmark.

Both Greenlandic and US representatives highlighted that the MoUs only include legislative areas fully taken over by Greenland according to the Self-Government Act, i.e. mineral resources and energy (Interviews K, J, I, G, E). This strict focus was also expressed at, for example, the newly re-established US Consulate in Nuuk's public diplomacy events, where the list of areas of cooperation further developed through the existence of the consulate are all within overtaken legislative areas.

The question is whether Greenland and the US played the two-level game by carving into areas strictly seen as of Greenlandic authority, and by doing so avoided a third level Danish-Greenlandic quarrel that could result in different outcomes of the agreements, and risk sparking a time-consuming Greenlandic-Danish dispute?

By acting in this way, the US and Greenland mutually enhanced each other's 'win-sets'. Referring to Putnam, Archer states that, 'a small "win-set" means that negotiators know what to go for but could find that their limited room for manoeuvre resulting from domestic constraints leads to a breakdown in negotiations. However, level one negotiators are "often in collusion", helping each other to get the deal ratified' (Archer 2003: 127).

Thus, the Greenlandic and US negotiators balanced their practical interactions against several levels of high-tension relations. Firstly, the question of how to develop further cooperation and tie together Greenland and the US. From a Greenlandic perspective this had to avoid being a direct US enhancement of military presence or a new colonial relationship similar to the one Greenland is in the process of attempting to leave behind. However, seen from a US perspective, it had to lay the ground for future needs, including for enhanced military presence on Greenland soil.

Secondly, Greenland and the US were balancing their play in a field where there is, officially, a third player, Denmark, but in a manner that satisfied the Greenlandic need to act on its own, in a direct and exclusive play with the US. This raises the question of how much communication there is between the US and Denmark without Greenland. But, as history shows, a process not

involving Greenland, or of keeping Greenland in the dark on matters pertaining to Greenland, could spark a new distrust towards the Danes, as has previously been described by Anders Henriksen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (2017).

Thirdly, Greenland and the US balanced and moved in on areas of cooperation that, in a tense and conflicted world with a high degree of great power competition, will inevitably have security and foreign affairs implications, e.g. access to and power over minerals and energy, and not least data about these resources. Evidently the parties were aware of this. Whether this tense field and the new world crisis with the war in Ukraine leaves Greenland with any alternative opportunities other than to play exclusively with the US is a question that remains unanswered.

The 2019 MoUs are thus an example of how Greenland leveraged a crisis based on a lost maintenance contract by seizing the opportunity granted by a halt in meetings in an arrangement where Greenland was part of Danish delegations – one formed in 1991 (the Permanent Committee), and the other formed when Greenland last grabbed itself a seat at the negotiating table (the Joint Committee established through the 2004 Igaliku Agreement).

The new and current room for manoeuvre was made possible by the establishment of self-government, and the powers taken over as part of that agreement. But it was also made possible by the lack of developing follow-up decision making structures for the areas of legislation that have security and foreign policy implications, and for how to practically resolve issues that involve grey zones and areas with blurred lines.

If we ask how intentionally this room for manoeuvre was created, it was clearly intentional from the Greenland side. From the US side there was a need and desire to solve the diplomatic crisis of having awarded a maintenance contract to an American company and not a Greenlandic-Danish one, a crisis that was apparently possible to solve by satisfying a Greenlandic wish to signal more direct US-Greenland relations. From the Danish side, bilateralism in the MoUs was not intentional, but Denmark saw no reason to demand trilateralism. Had Denmark demanded that the US and Greenland halt signing the MoUs, the story would have been very different.

'People-to-people cooperation'

An underlying precondition of the Greenland-US relation is the great power competition on a world scale. Here, the realist and paradigmatic US relations to China and Russia are clear factors that guide American attention to Greenland. But current developments beg the question of whether Greenland, even if Greenland wants to, can maintain or further develop the 'open for business *with anyone*' policy, which has been the guiding principle for Greenland's foreign and trade relations for decades? US-Greenland relations have gradually become more closely tied-up through the MoU follow-up economic growth packages. The latest came in 2021, when the US announced an additional USD 10 million of USAID spanning until 2026, referring to the 'The Common Plan', thereby connecting the MoUs to the further agreements on the Pituffik maintenance contract process, laying the ground for a tighter political relation between Greenland and the US, including on matters relating to the US military presence.[25] During US Secretary of State Blinken's visit to Greenland in May 2021, these relations were described as 'shared democratic values and enhanced people to people cooperation'.[26] The USAID amounts are negligible in comparison to Greenland's export of fisheries products to Asia, including China, and to Russia.

This analysis also shows that the MoUs and the 'economic growth package' would highly likely have been developed even without the inclusion and blessing of Denmark. As a postcolonial statement, it was paramount for Greenland to be in control of the content of these agreements, thus they lie within legislative areas managed from Nuuk. Denmark and the Danish system were kept informed and included where necessary and obligatory. In the initial process of attempts to solve the maintenance contract quarrel, Danish involvement was an integral part of the Greenlandic push.

From a Greenlandic perspective, the process demonstrated initiative and decision-making power. Since the agreements led to tangible benefits from the US presence in Greenland, it was difficult for the Government of Denmark to criticise them.

But the process also continued to create turmoil in Danish politics, and that is a weakness in the structure and legitimacy of the decision making seen from a Danish perspective, because it suggests that Denmark's powers may have been diminished.

Conclusion

In a special briefing titled 'On the road to Nuuk: Economic Cooperation' in May 2020 in Washington DC State Department officials said, '[...] the topline goal for US policy for the Arctic region is straightforward and simple: We are seeking a secure and stable Arctic where US interests are safeguarded, the US homeland is protected, and Arctic states work cooperatively to address shared challenges'. Officials continued to explain that the MoUs signed with Greenland are first 'helping Greenland to understand its resources, second, supporting the resource development management; and third, helping Greenland's domestic capability'.[27] This ties in closely with the announcement by the then US Ambassador to Denmark, Carla Sands, of the economic growth package, where the ambassador linked the enhanced US presence and initiatives in Greenland with the overall security development in the Arctic, with Russia on one side militarising its domain, while China on the other is enhancing its economic interests.

As quoted in the beginning of this article, the US sees itself as 'an important geopolitical partner [who wants] to ensure that Greenland pursues an enabling environment to attract diverse and private investment to achieve its own energy and mineral resource security goals'.[28]

The MoUs and the USAID initiatives can therefore be seen as *civilian means to security goals* for a US that has, for several years, expressed a clearly articulated need to enhance its presence in the Arctic, and build connections to Arctic peoples both economically and politically.

In answer to the research question (*Why did the US and Greenland choose to engage in bilateral agreements and how does this development affect Greenland's decision making on areas that were formerly dealt with in a trilateral relation?*), we have seen that the bilateralism was an important goal for Greenland in the aim of furthering autonomy and self-determination in the development of Greenland's businesses and foreign relations. For the US, the aim was partly to make sure that new economic and political relations were built directly with Arctic peoples as part of assuring future access to military basing rights, but also to demonstrate that there was willingness to solve a diplomatic crisis specific to Greenland surrounding the Pituffik base maintenance contract.

The result for Greenland was that the jumpstart of the Joint Committee, formerly a trilateral forum based on the Igaliku Agreement, was now portrayed as a bilateral forum where Denmark was not fully out of the equation, but since the US was playing along, was pushed to a more insignificant position on the side-lines. Although it did not seem to matter for Greenland whether Denmark was completely in agreement with this position, it seemed necessary for Denmark to accept this new role to keep its word on further autonomy to Greenland, and – paradoxically – also to avoid diminishing the coherence of the Realm.

If Greenland succeeds in maintaining a constant awareness of the division of authorities throughout each of its involved government departments, this position can be maintained. This will require a constant push at every meeting for Greenland to speak on behalf of itself. The MoU processes have created an expanded room for manoeuvre for this to happen.

If Denmark puts its foot down and plays the security and constitutional card in these areas, the story may change, but given that the well-defined areas of cooperation are within overtaken areas, that is not very likely to happen and would most likely create a new round of distrust in the Greenland-Denmark relation.

Notes

1 Sara Olsvig, Cand. Scient. Anth, is a Ph.D fellow at Ilisimatusarfik – the University of Greenland. Olsvig was a member of Folketinget, the parliament of Denmark, from 2011 to 2015 and of Inatsisartut, the parliament of Greenland, from 2013 to 2018.

2 'Joint Greenland–US technical engagement'. Press release 5 June 2019, Naalakkersuisut – the Government of Greenland. URL: https://naalakkersuisut.gl/en/Naalakkersuisut/News/2019/06/0506_aftale, [10 March 2022].

3 'Pompeo cancels stop in Greenland'. Associated Press, 9 May 2019. URL: https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/09/mike-pompeo-greenland-iran-1313121, [9 March 2022]

4 Interviews and discussions were conducted in the period May 2021 to May 2022. All interviewees have had a direct role in the development of the US-Greenland relations described in this article. Additionally, informal talks and communications following up on and cross-checking facts used as empirical data in the article, have been conducted with both interviewees and with a number of other government officials from all three countries.

List of interviewees:
Interview A: Danish government official
Interview B: Danish parliamentarian
Interview C: Danish parliamentarian
Interview D: Danish government official
Interview E: US diplomat
Interview F: Danish parliamentarian
Interview G: US diplomat
Interview H: Greenlandic politician
Interview I: Greenlandic politician
Interview J: Greenlandic politician
Interview K: Greenlandic government official

5 'Aftale mellem USA og Grønland skal styrke mineralforskning'. KNR.gl. 6 June 2019. URL: https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/aftale-mellem-usa-og-gr%C3%B8nland-skal-styrke-mineralforskning, [9 March 2022]

6 In the context of a process tracing analysis strictly following the Ricks & Liu guidelines (2018) and other process tracing methods, the original trilateralism would be H_0 and not entail variation, while hypothesis A would be H1 and hypothesis B would be H2, entailing variation or change in the development.

7 In a lengthier and a more theoretical publication, it would be interesting to further analyse these relations based on action space or freedom of manoeuvre-related IR theories, both in relation to Denmark vs. the US, Greenland vs. Denmark, and Greenland vs. the US, as these relations also play a role in the outcome and process surrounding the 2019 MoUs and the follow-up initiatives.

8 Applications for access to governmental documents were sent to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 2021. The ministry granted access to a number of relevant documents, including agendas and dates of the joint and permanent committee meetings held in the period 2004 up to the date of the application. Additional access to materials from an earlier application was obtained from another source. All information referring to the granted access to documents is marked with official document numbers.

9 In 2015 the law firm Bruun & Hjejle was commissioned to write a full and independent report 'to uncover the self-government's participation in the case of the base maintenance contract regarding Pituffik' (Bruun & Hjejle 2015). The report concluded that both the Government of Greenland and the Government of Denmark could have been more aware of the criteria themselves, and the process of approval of the criteria, when the maintenance contract tender was formulated. The report is an important document for the full understanding of the process leading to the loss of the maintenance contract, but since this article analyses the time after the loss, the report is less relevant in this context.

10 'Thule-aftale på plads efter årelange forhandlinger', Altinget.dk, 28 October 2020. URL: https://www.altinget.dk/arktis/artikel/thule-aftale-paa-plads-efter-aarelange-forhandlinger, [8 March 2022].

'Ny aftale om Pituffik: Servicekontrakt om millioner vender hjem til Grønland', KNR.gl, 28 October 2020. URL: https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/ny-aftale-om-pituffik-servicekontrakt-om-millioner-vender-hjem-til-gr%C3%B8nland, [8 March 2022].

'US, Greenland reach agreement on Thule Air Base contract, long a source of dispute', *Arctic Today, 29 October 2020. URL:* https://www.arctictoday.com/us-greenland-reach-agreement-on-thule-air-base-contract-long-a-source-of-dispute/, [8 March 2022].

As of March 2022 a new maintenance contract has not been awarded yet, thus there is still no clarity as to whether the contract will be received by a Greenlandic, Danish, American or other company.

11 'Grønland kræver kompensation for Thule', KNR.gl, 8 January 2015. URL: https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/gr%C3%B8nland-kr%C3%A6ver-kompensation-thule, [7 March 2022].

12 According to their website, the CNA is a non-profit research and analysis organisation focusing on national security and defence issues. URL: https://www.cna.org/about/, [6 March 2022].

13 Access to document case number 2019 – 18067.

14 Access to document case number 2020 – 4099, identification number 5544385.

15 'Inatsisartutudvalgets orienteringsrejse til USA afsluttet', press release, Naalakkersuisut and Inatsisartut. 6 September 2016. URL: https://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2016/09/060916_USA_tur [6 March 2022]. The author participated in this trip as a parliamentarian.

16 With the headline 'Restarting of the US-Greenland Joint Committee Meetings, 15 September 2021', the press release mentioning only Greenland and the US and not Denmark, is posted on the website of the US Embassy and Consulate in the Kingdom of Denmark. URL: https://dk.usembassy.gov/restarting-of-the-u-s-greenland-joint-committee-meetings-september-15-2021/ [3 May 2022].

17 'Dialogen om Pituffik er ufrugtbar', KNR.gl, 13 July 2017. URL: https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/dialogen-om-pituffik-er-ufrugtbar, [6 March 2022].

18 See Note 15.

19 It is notable for understanding of the importance of this matter to the US, that helping reach a solution on the base maintenance contract is mentioned as one of the achievements of the then US Ambassador to Denmark Carla Sands on her campaign website in her candidacy for the US senate. Here it is also mentioned that Sands 'facilitated partnership agreements between the United States and the people of Greenland'. URL: https://carlasands.com/about/ [3 May 2022].

20 Access to document case number 2021 – 18171.

21 At the time of the signing of the MoUs (2019) there were no permanent Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative in Nuuk. In 2020, the Danish MFA decided to post a permanent representative in Nuuk and in 2021 a permanent employee to focus on the Arctic in Washington DC. Some Greenlandic diplomats and government officials express some frustration with these posts, as they feel that the MFA representatives cross the lines of Greenlandic authorities. The posting initiatives were presented as part of the Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy published in 2022.

22 'Fælleserklæring vedr. samarbejde mellem USA og Grønland', Press release 15 September 2021, Naalakkersuisut. URL: https://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2021/09/1509_joint_statement, [6 March 2022].

23 'Danish politicians attack "unacceptable" US Greenland deal', *The Local, 23 April 2020. URL*: https://www.thelocal.dk/20200423/us-accused-of-working-to-undermine-denmark/, [8 March 2022].

24 ' Udenrigs- og Sikkerhedspolitisk Udvalg er blevet orienteret af Naalakkersuisut om projektmidler fra USA til Grønland', Press release from Inatsisartut's Foreign Policy and Security Committee, 23 April 2020. URL: https://ina.gl/dokumenter/nyheder/?year=2020&id=19412 [4 May 2022].

25 'Pele Broberg underskriver USAID-aftale på vegne af Naalakkersuisut', press release, 15 September 2021, Naalakkersuisut. URL: https://naalakkersuisut.gl/da/Naalakkersuisut/Nyheder/2021/09/1509_USAID, [8 March 2022].

26 'Secretary Antony J. Blinken, Greenlandic Premier Mute Egede, Greenlandic Foreign Minister Pele Broberg, and Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod at a Joint Press Availability', US State Department remarks to the press, 20 May 2021, URL: https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-greenlandic-premier-mute-egede-greenlandic-foreign-minister-pele-broberg-and-danish-foreign-minister-jeppe-kofod-at-a-joint-press-availability/, [10 March 2022].

27 'Briefing On the Road to Nuuk: Economic Cooperation', US State Department special briefing, 15 May 2020. URL: https://2017-2021.state.gov/briefing-with-deputy-assistant-secretary-for-european-and-eurasian-affairs-michael-murphy-assistant-secretary-for-energy-resources-frank-r-fannon-principal-deputy-assistant-secretary-for-oceans-and/index.html, [8 March 2022].

28 See Note 2.

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Greenland's ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests

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ABSTRACT

As a self-governing nation that exercises jurisdiction over most policy areas, Greenland is constantly testing its foreign policy and self-determination action space. Predominantly having aimed at increasing its action space towards Denmark, especially since inaugurating home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009, Greenland has for the past decade been increasing its engagement as a direct partner to the US. In this paper, I analyse three cases where the Greenland-Denmark-US relations in different ways are delimited and affected by great power relations between the US, China, and Russia. In doing so, I demonstrate how Greenland increasingly uses its action space to affect the outcome of policies and initiatives that lie within the 'grey zones' between Greenlandic and Danish power relations. The paper contributes to the understanding of how state-like actors balance their relations in ambiguous ways towards larger states and creates action spaces to determine their own futures. The article argues that Greenland, by balancing the internal and external limitations determined by Greenland's relations to Denmark and the US, is creating an ambiguous action space, where Greenlandic politicians can and do affect their action options. At the same time, these politicians must acknowledge that Greenland's action space is constantly evolving against a backdrop of deepening relations between Nuuk and Washington, as well as increasing international tensions. The article is based on an analysis of official documents, media outlets and elite interviews.

KEYWORDS

Greenland; Arctic; self-determination; great power competition; action space

Introduction

Arctic Indigenous peoples and nations are deeply affected by great power competition. The current increased rivalry between the US, China, and Russia marks the return of a more direct influence from great power politics on Arctic peoples, as seen during WWII and the Cold War.[1] Notably, in March 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in the 'pausing' of the Arctic Council. This multilateral institution has brought Arctic states and Indigenous peoples together in peaceful dialogue since the early post-Cold War period.[2] However, even prior to this breakdown of circumpolar cooperation, Greenland's relations with Russia and China were being affected by increasing competition.[3]

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[1] Gjerstad and Rogers, *Knowledge is power: Greenland, great powers, and lessons from the Second World War*.
[2] U.S. Department of State, *Joint Statement on Arctic Council Cooperation Following Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*.
[3] Sørensen, "Kina i Arktis: Stormagtsambitioner og indenrigspolitiske prioriteter"; Staun, "Rusland i Arktis: Fra Arktis som ressourcebase til sikring af suverænitet": 54.

According to neo-realist IR theories, weaker powers need to balance their relations with external great powers if they are to protect their survival as states that can pursue their own political development.[4] However, this notion is often seen as too simplistic.[5] Indeed, small state theories and analyses have added to our knowledge of how small states can behave and develop their relations to great powers such as the US. Within IR, Shelter Theory helps to explain how small states can seek political, economic, and societal shelter, sometimes within in a complicated network of relations to one or more larger states.[6] In Shelter Theory, the *action space* (meaning the ability to decide one's own behaviour) of the small state may vary from sector to sector. In this paper, the focus is on cases within legislative areas where Greenland does not have full self-determination because they are in some way security related.

Although not an independent state, Greenland has its own parliament and government. Based on the home rule and self-government agreements with Denmark, Greenland applies self-determination – *de facto* and *de jure* – to a long range of legislative areas. In this paper, Greenland is thus considered a small 'state-like actor'.[7] This enables an analysis of how Greenland, being large in geographical size but with a very small population, has developed its self-determination and foreign relations, within the limits and possibilities typically associated with a small state, and, in this case, specifically through its relationship with the US.[8] Current tensions in the international system, and the general shift to a more bipolar or multipolar world has affected Greenland's action space. Within this context, it has proven particularly helpful for Nuuk to increase its direct dialogue with Washington. This is because the US in recent years seems to have improved its understanding of the limitations and possibilities of Greenland's self-government arrangement.[9] The cases analysed in this paper show that the US' influence over Denmark on issues relating to Greenland's critical infrastructure or relations to other great powers has helped reshape an action space for Greenland, in which Nuuk no longer has to seek alignment with Denmark (although it still helps to increase the action space). However, in the struggle for a widened action space, Greenland must be fully aware of US expectations whilst clearly communicating its own views to Washington regarding their developing relationship.

[4] Waltz, *Theory of international politics*.

[5] Browning, "Small, smart and salient? Rethinking identity in the small states literature"; see also the discussion by Keohane in 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics".

[6] Thorhallsson, Steinsson and Kristinsson, "A Theory of Shelter: Iceland's American Period (1941–2006)"; Brady and Thorhallsson, "Small States and the Turning Point in Global Politics"; Mariager and Wivel, "From Nordic Peacekeeper to NATO Peacemaker: Denmark's Journey from Semi-neutral to Super Ally".

[7] Among others, see Archer, "Greenland, US bases and missile defence: new two-level negotiations?"; Gad, *National identity politics and postcolonial sovereignty games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union*; Olesen,"Lightning rod: US, Greenlandic and Danish relations in the shadow of postcolonial reputations"; Jacobsen and Gad, "Setting the scene in Nuuk: Introducing the cast of characters in Greenlandic foreign policy narratives".

[8] í Jákupsstuvo and Berg, "The Faroe Islands' security policy in a process of devolution"; Bertelsen, "Science diplomacy and the Arctic" for discussions of micro-states and smallness in the North Atlantic. The term "micro-state" could have been applied in this article, but since the US is so overwhelmingly a great power in relation to Greenland, applying "micro" or "small" would make no difference in this context.

[9] Olsvig, "'Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country'). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US–Greenlandic bilateralism".

This paper is based on an analysis of public government statements and reports,[10] material from media outlets,[11] and elite interviews with central government officials from Greenland, Denmark, and the US.[12] Drawing on these materials, I examined how Greenland's action space for decision-making is affected by US and Danish interests.[13] This is achieved through an investigation of three cases, all of which exemplify the structural decision-making challenges that surfaced between Greenland, Denmark, and the US. The first case study concerns the use of an old Danish naval base, Kangilinnguit. The second centres on the process of changing Greenland's fundamental airport structure. The third case is the Danish Arctic Capacity Package, which consists of increased military surveillance and domain awareness initiatives in Greenland and the North Atlantic. The three cases have fundamental differences that will be presented in the following sections. However, what they all have in common is that they represented situations in which: 1) Greenland's action space was in different ways affected by Copenhagen's determination to uphold good relations with the US; 2) the initiatives or implications prompted US interest in and influence over the outcome; and 3) the issues were connected in some way to the US's great power rivalry with Russia and China.

All three cases are also (somewhat indirectly) related in some way to matters of security, which occupies a contested 'grey zone' (meaning that it is not clear where the division of decision-making powers are) in the decision-making structure between Greenland and Denmark. This is because although Denmark constitutionally has sovereignty over security matters, Greenland, in exercising self-determination, often makes decisions that have security implications. Comparing these cases helps us to understand how state-like actors like Greenland act and balance its relations in ambiguous ways which are not necessarily seen when only analysing relations between sovereign nation-states. In other words, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding of how Greenland, despite pressure from Denmark and the US, is creating room to define its own future.

[10] As questions about the Kangilinnguit naval base were only briefly touched upon in some of the interviews, that case is mostly analysed through written sources, including government reports delivered to parliament. Two applications to access to documents under the Danish Freedom of Information Act about US-Greenland-Denmark security relations are part of the written documents analysed in this article. Among the written sources, government and parliament documents were prioritised, while also media outlets were secondarily consulted.

[11] Media outlets include Greenlandic, Danish and US media articles where primary sources are interviewed or quoted.

[12] Interviews with 11 current and former government officials, including politicians and diplomats or civil servants, were conducted in the period May 2021 to May 2022. The interviews included two US diplomats, two Danish governments officials, three Danish parliamentarians, one Greenlandic government official and three Greenlandic politicians. To verify the interview data informal talks were conducted with two other Danish government officials, as well as with two additional US government officials, and various Greenlandic government officials and politicians. The interviews mostly evolved around the recent US-Greenland relations (2018–2021). One informal talk with a Greenlandic municipal politician was also conducted to include insights to the Kangilinnguit case seen from a municipal point of view. In conducting elite interviews, I am aware that the interviewees being part of the decision-making powers on different levels, can have biased opinions or a specific agenda. Thus, the empirical data is triangulated throughout the paper by consulting written sources. As some of the interviewees expressed their wish to be anonymous due to the delicate nature of the issues, all interviews are anonymised.

[13] This paper includes cases that took place during some of the years I was an elected official, as I was member of the Danish Parliament from 2011 to 2015, the Parliament of Greenland from 2013 to 2018, and a minister of the Government of Greenland from 2016 to 2018. My knowledge on aspects of the cases analysed is thus also partly informed by these years in politics. I have sought clear and triangulated empirical data for the paper, as mentioned in the above, to ensure a non-biased description of the cases.

Delimiting Greenland's action space

The cases are analysed through theories of action space (*handlerum*) as laid out by Hans Mouritzen[14] and Nikolaj Petersen[15] in their respective analyses of Denmark's action space in foreign affairs. In IR studies, it is often taken for granted that a state has full sovereignty. Also, when it comes to analyses of action space, scholars typically focus on the asymmetric power relations of small or medium sized nations vis-à-vis great powers. Mouritzen argues that the closer relations of small states are often overlooked, and that this is a paradox since most states are not great powers. Furthermore, he argues that neo-realists have 'ignored the concept of actions space, presumably because of the great power bias.'[16] In their work, Petersen and Mouritzen focus on Denmark – a small Nordic state. They analyse how its action space has changed and developed throughout different eras and circumstances. Drawing on their insights, the following analysis applies action space theory to political developments in Greenland as a small state-like polity, that has not previously been examined in this context.[17] Petersen's action space theory is included in this paper to *characterise* the action space in each case. Mouritzen's theory is used to analyse the *methods* which decision-makers *identify* action space in each case, in an effort to expand their action space. Applying action space theory in this way offers insight into what delimits Greenland's foreign policy action space.

Greenland – a nation in transition

Greenland, is a self-governing nation within the Kingdom of Denmark, which has undergone significant changes within the last century. The country was a colony of Denmark since the 1700s. The people of Greenland, through their elected officials, have constantly pushed for greater self-determination. A 1953 referendum in Denmark changed the Danish constitution and formally ended the colonial era. Greenland continued to be a Danish county, administratively and politically under Danish authority until the implementation of the Home Rule Act of 1979 brought a significant democratic change, as Greenland established its own parliament, Inatsisartut, and government, Naalakkersuisut. The 2009 Self-Government Act recognised the people of Greenland pursuant to international law, with the rights of self-determination, and provided a legislative framework that enabled Greenland to exercise jurisdiction over areas previously administered by Denmark. However, the predominantly Danish interpretation of the constitutional arrangement delimits these powers to exclude foreign policy, security, defence matters, and territorial sovereignty.[18]

[14] Mouritzen, "A hundred years of Danish action space", "Grænser for handlefrihed: Skandinaviske stater i asymmetrisk bilateralt diplomati".
[15] Petersen, "Danmark som international aktør 705–2005".
[16] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed": 9.
[17] Others have done extensive analyses of Greenland's foreign policy agency through constructivist theories and described Greenland's agency and ability conduct sovereignty games towards Denmark, which also provides insight to how a state-like actor such as Greenland can claim its existence in IR. See Jacobsen and Gad, 'Setting the scene in Nuuk: Introducing the cast of characters in Greenlandic foreign policy narratives'; Gad, *National identity politics and postcolonial sovereignty games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union*; Jacobsen, 'Greenland's Arctic advantage "; Rahbek-Clemmensen "Denmark and Greenland's Changing sovereignty and security challenges in the Arctic"; Olsvig and Gad, "Grønland som udenrigspolitisk aktør'.
[18] Olsvig and Gad, "Grønland som udenrigspolitisk aktør": 178.

Nuuk's implementation of its hard-won powers has posed challenges to the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, as it has not always been clear when an issue decided by Parliament and the Government of Greenland relates to a matter of security or defence. This has blurred the lines of legislative powers vis-à-vis the Danish Government. Furthermore, it has at times been unclear as to what extent Greenland should be consulted or take part in decision-making processes in matters decided by the Danish government and parliament. Therefore, Greenland is constantly testing its action space. The grey zones in the division of powers between Greenland and Denmark create an interesting case for analysis of how a small state-like actor such as Greenland continues to be impacted by external factors in its governance. Greenland's defence relationship with the US and the US government's rivalry with China and Russia poses one external factor, while Greenland's constitutional relationship with Denmark poses another. Although Danish and US interests have shaped Greenland's action space, the complex constitutional structures between Greenland and Denmark also provide Nuuk with an ambiguous playing field of action options that can be directed either at Denmark or the US. The three cases discussed in this paper demonstrate some of the successes and failures that Greenland has had in creating and maintaining an action space within these complex structures.

Action space explained

Mouritzen states, 'there are two aspects of a state's power' (. . .) 'while influence-capability means the ability to modify other's behaviour, action space denotes influence over one's own behaviour, in other words the ability to prevent other's influence over it (a question of degree)'.[19] As he explains, 'action space for non-great powers is essentially conditioned by two external factors: first the balance of power between the proximate powers and secondly the tension between them'.[20] In this analytical framework, there are several conditions that influence a state's action space and its limits: a) The external conditioners, such as the relation to a great power and the influence of it on a smaller state's policies and priorities. Basically, eras of low tension increase a small state's action space, while times of conflict decrease the action space. And b) the internal conditioners, being the domestic political milieu and the voice of the people of the state also play a role. The internal action space is dependent on the external conditions, i.e., domestic debates can only impact the external framework set by relations with a greater power to a certain degree, and domestic disputes thus play a more limited role if the greater power has specific expectations with regards to the outcome of the situation.

In Nikolaj Petersen's model of action space, there are three fundamental factors that affect the action space. They are the internal limitations, the external limitations, and the ambitions of the decision-makers.[21] The space of the triangle becomes bigger or smaller as these three sides increase or decrease. On the issue of internal limitations, domestic political consensus increases the action space, while the external limitations are subject to a higher or lower degree of alignment between the state's interests and the external

[19] Mouritzen, "A hundred years of Danish action space": 115.
[20] Ibid.: 117.
[21] Petersen, "Danmark som international aktør 705–2005": 46.

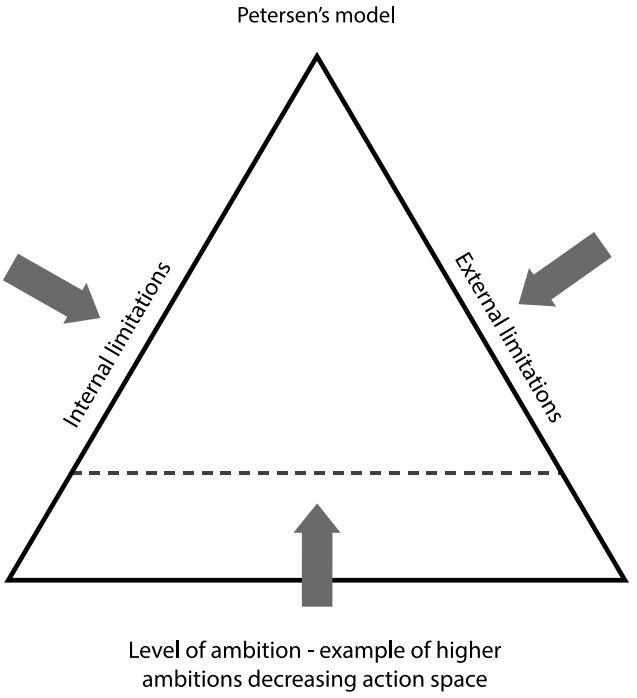

Figure 1. Nikolaj Petersen's action space models demonstrate how three factors affect the size and configuration of a nation's action space. This figure illustrates an example of higher ambitions decreasing the action space, while there is pressure on both the internal and external limitations. The figure is drawn up with inspiration from the action space configurations found in Petersen's article "Danmark som international aktør 705-2005", p. 48. Graphics: Jette Brandt.

greater power's interests. A new government changing policy, or increasing its level of ambition, can decrease the action space (see Figure 1).

In Hans Mouritzen's 2006 article on the boundaries of action space, he presents a figure that demonstrated a state's external action space drawn into a circular diagram.[22] The biggest slice of the circle is the 'forbidden policy option', while the rest is divided into two grey zones representing the blurred lines of the action space between the 'forbidden policy option' and the 'permitted policy option' (see Figure 2).

A range of methods are often used by states to test the grey zones of an action space and to identify the lines between permitted and forbidden policy options. These include; a) flying a trial balloon to test the reaction of the greater power, b) playing on the anticipation of likely responses of the great power, c) applying learning by doing, c) taking controversial actions based on past experiences, d) setting up bastions of, for example, value based human rights principles, demanding action when engaging with another state.[23] Bastions, as an offensive tool, can hinder the ability to obtain goodwill

[22] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed: Skandinaviske stater i asymmetrisk bilateralt diplomati": 11.
[23] Other methods include to conduct parallel actions resembling the actions of others who are like oneself or applying foreign policy lessons from previous successes or failures is, yet another method described by Mouritzen. See Mouritzen, "A hundred years of Danish action space": 146.

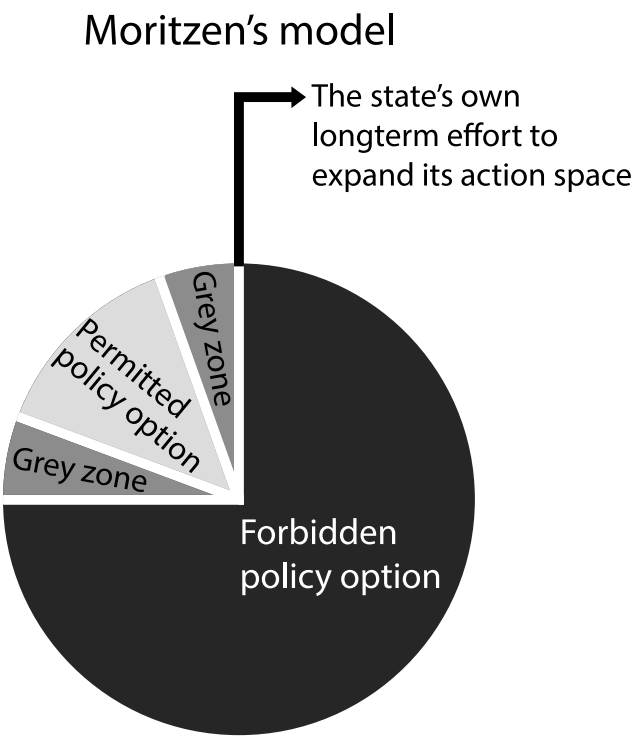

Figure 2. Hans Mouritzen's action space model illustrates how the grey zones between permitted policy options and forbidden policy options of a nation can be widened or tested, in order to identify the lines between the forbidden and permitten policy options in any given situation. The figure is the same as Mouritzen's figure in his article "Grænser for handlefrihed", p. 11. Graphics: Jette Brandt.

from a great power, if the bastion is too easily penetrable. Thus, every state is in a potential dilemma on how to engage in dialogue and pragmatic solutions to achieve goodwill from the greater power, without risking more demands. According to the power relations in the specific case, bastions can be formulated with a higher or a lower ambition, but actively applying bastions demands great competence among the decision-makers, if they are to be used to increase a country's action space.[24]

The back-and-forth dance

Before the introduction of these three case studies, it is necessary to briefly recount the history of Greenland's relationship to Denmark and the US. Under home rule and later the self-government arrangements with Denmark, Greenland gradually took over a range of legislative areas. Since 2005, Nuuk has had a formal agreement in place with Copenhagen authorising Greenland to act on its own behalf in cases of foreign affairs that are related to issues under Greenlandic jurisdiction.[25] The grey zones in these

[24] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed: Skandinaviske stater i asymmetrisk bilateralt diplomati": 20–21.
[25] Olsvig and Gad, "Grønland som udenrigspolitisk aktør".

arrangements, have led to continuous debates and contentions, domestically in Greenland, and between Greenland and Denmark.

In recent years, Greenlandic politicians have expressed a clearer expectation that they should be included in decision-making processes in relation to issues of security and defence.[26] Furthermore, and more notable in the context of this article, more and more decisions taken *in* Greenland carry implications related to security and defence matters. For example, the Government of Greenland has sought to fundamentally change the critical infrastructure of the country, enacted legislative reforms in relation to mining, further developed cyber-connectivity and digitalised infrastructure, and facilitated foreign investments and loans for large scale projects. This has challenged the legitimacy of decision-making in both Greenland and Denmark in different ways.[27]

As a fundamental challenge in the Greenland-Denmark relationship, Greenland, by implementing self-government and taking decisions on various issues, including some relating to security and defence, is affecting relations that go beyond its relationship with Denmark. Greenland is building and renewing relations to foreign states, multilaterally and bilaterally, and has for decades developed relations to international institutions such as the EU.[28] Greenland has particularly worked on expanding its markets of the export of fish products,[29] both in the EU and among other states, also in East Asia and Russia.[30]

The US in Greenland

Greenland's relationship with the US is largely based on the defence agreement signed by the US and Denmark in 1951. American interest in Greenland for military purposes has been consistent and clear since the end of the WWII. A few amendments have been made to the original defence agreement, giving Greenland more of a say in military and security matters.[31] Agreements with Washington, and the American presence in Greenland, generally dictate the military activities that occur within and around Greenland, and thus Denmark, Greenland and the US have since 1991 engaged in dialogue and mutual information sharing in a 'Permanent Committee'.[32] Hence, the expectation is that the Greenlandic authorities are consulted on the military plans and the needs of both the US and Denmark. However, as shown with these cases, the day-to-day implementation of

[26] In August 2022, the Danish Minister of Defence and the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs signed a new agreement on Greenlandic involvement in the preparations of the coming defence spending agreements. See Danish Ministry of Defence, *Ny aftale mellem Danmark og Grønland om inddragelse af forberedelser til forsvarsforliget*.

[27] Olsvig and Gad, *Outdated lines of communication undermine legitimacy*; Olsvig and Gad, *Greenland obviously has its own defence policy*.

[28] Gad, "National identity politics and postcolonial sovereignty games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union".

[29] Fisheries is the main business and export of Greenland and has been so for decades.

[30] Rahbek-Clemmensen, "Denmark and Greenland's Changing sovereignty and security challenges in the Arctic"; Sørensen, "Kina i Arktis: Stormagtsambitioner og indenrigspolitiske prioriteter"; Szymanski, "Wrestling in Greenland. Denmark, the United States and China in the land of ice".

[31] For example, through the Igaliku-Agreement. See US Department of State, *Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, including the Home Rule Government of Greenland*.

[32] Government of the United States of America, Government of Denmark, Government of Greenland, *Memorandum of Understanding concerning use of Sondrestrom aviation facility*. Interviews with Danish government officials conducted May 15 and 18, 2021, confirm that the dialogue between Greenland, Denmark and the US has been continuous since 1991, but that there has been a pause in the meetings in the Permanent Committee from 2014 to 2018. The interviewees confirm that the US needs for domain awareness and military presence are well known by the governments of Greenland and Denmark.

formalised structures of consultations and decision-making were not without challenges. Greenland's constant push to exercise its right to self-determination also plays a role in relation to the US, impacting the trilateral relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the US.

Despite a good and longstanding relationship with Washington based on the defence agreements, the US does not make up a big export market for Greenlandic fish products. Therefore, Greenland has pushed for expanded cooperation with the US and established its own diplomatic representation in Washington DC in 2014, partly with the aim of increasing trade relations to the US.[33] Two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), which were signed by Greenland and the US in 2019, demonstrate how Greenland aims to build a new bilateral relationship with the US in areas that were previously dealt with under the auspices of the trilateral Greenland-Denmark-US forums. The MoUs were followed by the 'economic growth packages' funded by the US Congress via USAID in 2020 and 2021. Herein, Greenlandic and US representatives chose areas of cooperation that lie within Greenlandic authority according to the Self-Government agreement. Thus, Denmark accepted that Greenland has initiated a more direct and bilateral relationship with the US. As a result, Greenland has positioned its developing cooperation within an acceptable action space framed by the self-government agreement.[34]

Testing Greenland's action space

The cases in this article differ from the cases of the MoUs and the following USAID-packages, as the Kangilinnguit base, the airports and the Arctic capacity package were recognised by both Greenland and Denmark (and the US) as being cases that involved security aspects. However, from a Greenlandic perspective, it was not clear that the future of the Kangilinnguit naval base and airports would, from the outset, be a matter for Denmark, or indeed an issue that Copenhagen would decide exclusively. In contrast, the Arctic capacity package was, from the beginning, a defence and security issue, but the Danes recognised a Greenlandic say in the matter to the extent that a finalisation of the package awaited Greenlandic decision-making. The case of leaving the naval base in Kangilinnguit was initially an issue to be decided upon by the Danish military authorities. However, it also involved the Greenlandic municipal decision-makers and the Parliament and Government of Greenland. This was a result of the environmental task of cleaning the site. The decisions on what the remaining houses and installations should be used for, were made subject to the direction of the Greenlandic authorities. In the case of the airports, an initially national Greenlandic compromise was reached after a decade-long debate on how to change the fundamental infrastructure of Greenland. This attracted Danish and US interest shortly before the final decisions was made.

[33] Kristiansen, "Grønland får snart en repræsentant i Washington".
[34] Olsvig, "'Uagununa nunarput' (It's our country)".

The Kangilinnguit naval base

In 2016, the Danish government decided to reinstate the abandoned Danish naval base, Kangilinnguit in South-West Greenland. This decision was made after a Chinese company had expressed interest in buying the base for research purposes. Alarmed by the proposal, Washington pushed Copenhagen to reinstate Denmark's own military presence on the site.[35]

Up until the abrupt Danish decision to reinstate a military presence on the base, intensive decision-making processes had been conducted at both municipal and national levels in Greenland. These focused on what the future of the old naval base should be. Public hearings were held in the municipality, as well as in the settlement of Arsuk, near Kangilinnguit. These meetings engaged the local citizens in planning for the future use of the site.[36] As the Kangilinnguit naval base is near the settlement of Ivittuut, where base personnel lived, the decision of the Danish military to leave the base also meant that Ivittuut, which prior to a structural 2010 reform, was a municipality of its own with a municipal council and a mayor, would be administratively closed.[37]

Closing the settlement was a contested issue at both the local and national level. When the decision was made, a public debate on what to use the site for was initiated. Some Greenlandic politicians wanted tourism, leisure, and research opportunities. A more controversial proposal was that a new prison should be established on the base instead of in the capital region of Nuuk. One of the parties in Denmark suggested using the place for asylum seekers or a prison for the most serious offenders in Denmark.[38] In the early 2010s and until the Danish decision to re-establish the military use of the base, the debates on the future use of the abandoned naval base were constant and, at times, quite heated. The issue of re-establishing a naval base was not part of the public debate, nor had it been part of the political deliberations on a defence spending agreement in the Danish parliament, finalised in 2015.[39] Thus, it came as a surprise, not least to Greenlandic politicians, when these lengthy processes were made completely redundant by the Danish Government's decision to reverse the closure of the base.

The case of the Kangilinnguit naval base and the U-turn by Danish politicians was a clear case of Greenland's action space being strongly limited by decisions in Denmark. Key factors in this case include that the decision to abandon the base was taken unilaterally by Denmark, although it is important to note the pressure that was being put on Copenhagen by Washington, where Chinese interest in buying the base had sparked serious concern.

[35] Forsby, "America First": Denmark's Strategic Navigation in the Era of US-Chinese Rivalry"; Berthelsen, "Science diplomacy and the Arctic"; Jiang, "Danmarks politik i forhold til kinesiske investeringer"; Sørensen, "Kina i Arktis: Stormagtsambitioner og indenrigspolitiske prioriteter".

[36] During the years of debate, numerous parliamentary questions were asked from both the Danish parliament and the parliament of Greenland, focusing on the environmental aspects of abandoning, and cleaning up the site. See for example Danish Ministry of Defence "GRU Alm. del – endeligt svar på spørgsmål 47 *Status – Miljøoprydning Grønnedal*. Local politicians were also preoccupied with future use of the site as well as the benefits that citizens of Arsuk had had from the military presence, such as transport and health care support. Information from informal talk with former municipal politician, 9 June 2022.

[37] Ivittuut had been a small mining town, going all the way back to the mid 1800's, and was a significant provider of cryolite to the US production of aluminium during the WWII, and thus has a long history of being a significant site for both the US, Denmark, and Greenland.

[38] Kaasgaard, "DF vil sende flygtninge til Grønland", Altinget, 16 September 2015.

[39] Sørensen, "Chinese investments in Greenland": 92.

Critical airports

Following a government commissioned report on Greenland's overall infrastructure needs presented in 2011, the parliament of Greenland had intensely debated a fundamental change of the country's airport infrastructure. This included a plan to abandon old US military installations as the island's main international airports (Kangerlussuaq and Narsarsuaq).[40] In 2018, Greenlandic politicians settled on building two new international airports, one in the capital of Nuuk and the other in Ilulissat. Additionally, a new regional airport will be built in Qaqortoq. The new airports would be the biggest and most expensive construction projects in Greenland's history and would involve both foreign investments and foreign companies to help build them.

During the bidding process for the construction of the two international airports, the Chinese company, China Communication and Construction Group was invited to participate. As in the case of the Kangilinnguit naval base, it was the Chinese interest that drew US and Danish attention to the already conflicted issue of deciding on the new investments.[41] The US pushed for greater Danish involvement to ensure that a Chinese company would not end up constructing critical Greenlandic infrastructure.[42] The question of Kangerlussuaq's future, the former US military base and current alternative runway to Pituffik (the Thule Air Base) continued to be a disputed matter domestically, dividing the municipalities and parliament on the matter, thus creating a complex situation for the Greenlandic government. In the airport package debated, Kangerlussuaq was planned to close, or be downgraded to a heliport. However, neither Ilulissat nor Nuuk's new international airports would meet the length of the old US military-built landing strip situated at the end of the longest fiord of West Greenland, a site with stable weather ensuring more regular operations.[43]

In the fall of 2018, the Danish Prime Minister arrived in Nuuk bringing both investments and loans to the realisation of the two international airports,[44] while the US Department of Defence a few weeks later announced the US' interest in investing in Greenland's critical infrastructure, with dual-use purposes.[45] When the Danes offered financial aid, a governmental crisis in Greenland was sparked, and one party left the government coalition in opposition to the Danish co-ownership of the airports.[46] The case of the airports is thus another example of direct Danish and US influence on domestic Greenlandic politics.

[40] Government of Greenland, *Transportkommissionen – Betænkning*.
[41] Bislev, Gad and Zeuthen, "China seeking Arctic Resources – The Arctic seeking resources in China"; Sejersen, "Infrastructural (re)configurations and processes of (de)securitization".
[42] Bertelsen "Science diplomacy and the Arctic" 2020; Matzen, "Denmark spurned Chinese offer for Greenland base over security: sources", Reuters, 6 April 2017; Matzen and Daly, "Greenland's courting of China for airport projects worries Denmark", Reuters, 22 March 2018; Danish Radio, "USA advarer Claus Hjort om kinesisk entreprenør på Grønland", Ritzau via dr.dk, 25 May 2018;, Hinshaw and Page, "How the Pentagon Countered China's Designs on Greenland; Washington Urged Denmark to Finance Airports that Chinese Aimed to Build on North America's Doorstep", Wall Street Journal (Online), 10 February 2019.
[43] Rambøll, *Fem scenarier vedrørende Kangerlussuaq lufthavns fremtid*.
[44] Jacobsen and Olsvig, "From Peary to Pompeo"; Government of Denmark and Government of Greenland, *Aftale mellem regeringen og Naalakkersuisut*; Sejersen, "Infrastructural (re)configurations and processes of (de)securitization".
[45] U.S. Department of Defence, *Statement of Intent on Defence Investments in Greenland*.
[46] Lihn, "Partii Naleraq har forladt koalitionen"´, Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation, 9 September 2018.

The Arctic capacity package

On 11 February 2021, six Danish politicians representing a broad majority of the Danish parliament presented a so-called, 'Arctic Capacity Package,' of DKK 1,5 billion investments in the surveillance and defence of Greenland and the North Atlantic.[47] The content of the package included a focus on improving domain awareness, communication, exercises, and initiating a more direct involvement of Greenlandic citizens in the military task solving, was not in itself surprising. The need for improving these areas had been known and debated for years, and explicitly mentioned in the Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic Strategy from 2011.[48] What was more notable was that after the presentation, members of the Inatsisartut Foreign Policy and Security Committee expressed their discontent with the lack of involvement of Greenlandic decision-makers, stating that the agreement had 'not officially been brought to Inatsisartut'.[49]

From a Danish perspective, considering defence and security matters exclusively as Copenhagen's responsibility, a Danish Minister of Defence negotiating defence spending agreement with parties in the Danish parliament and gathering a majority to present a new agreement, was not extraordinary. But the disappointment and disapproval expressed by Greenlandic parliamentarians immediately after the presentation of the package revealed the inadequacy of decision-making structures from a Greenlandic view.[50] The Danes expressed their anticipation of Greenlandic and Faroese involvement on a governmental level, as the agreement included the statement, 'political support from the Faroe Islands and Greenland for radars and concrete construction work is of course absolutely central. The Ministry of Defence is in close dialogue with the Faroese and Greenlandic authorities and look forward to their feedback and continued close cooperation'.[51] Greenlandic and Faroese parliamentarians denounced the package based on their not having been included in the decision-making process. They also publicly criticised very specific initiatives within the package.[52]

A new Greenlandic government was formed following the 2021 general election. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pele Broberg quickly expressed his disapproval of the Arctic capacity package, demanding that a process of Greenlandic decision-making on the contents of the package should take place before Greenland could support it.[53] A year after the original presentation of the package, the Greenlandic and Danish governments announced a renewed agreement, highlighting changes such as involvement of Greenlandic businesses and the planned defence education, which was now a civilian education focused on search and rescue. In general terms, the increased domain awareness and communication initiatives remained the same.[54]

[47] Danish Ministry of Defence, *Politisk aftale om Arktisk Kapacitetspakke til 1,5 mia. kroner*.
[48] Government of Denmark, *Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2022*: 20–21.
[49] Kristiansen, "Politikere: Inatsisartut har ikke set forsvarsaftale", Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation, 11 February 2021. Faroese parliamentarians issued a similar statement, see Joensen,"Færøerne kritiserer udmelding om radar", Sermitsiaq.AG, 12 February 2021.
[50] This disappointment was reiterated at interviews with three Greenlandic politicians conducted June 16, 6 December 2022, 2021, and 17 February 2022.
[51] Danish Ministry of Defence, *Aftale om en Arktis-Kapacitetspakke*. Own translation.
[52] While Greenlandic politicians criticized the plans for a defence education, Faroese politicians were critical towards a planned radar in Faroe Islands, an issue that had been considered controversial in Faroese politics before. See í Jákupsstuvo and Justinussen, "Grænser for færøsk paradiplomati?".
[53] Veirum, "Pele undsiger dansk milliard-aftale". Sermitsiaq.AG, 7 June 2021; Filtenborg, "Nej tak til øget dansk militær indsats i Grønland, siger udenrigsminister", TV2.dk 6 June 2021.
[54] Danish Ministry of Defence, *Enighed om principperne for Arktis Kapacitetspakke i Grønland*.

In the case of the Arctic capacity package, it was the prolonged negotiations that demonstrated how Greenland regarded its right to self-determination to be an inherent part of decision-making processes in all matters, including those seen from a Danish state perspective as not being Greenlandic responsibilities. The question, however, is how much real *decision-making influence* Greenlandic decision-makers could have on a package, decided within an *action space* limited by NATO and US demands and wishes for *Denmark* to take more responsibility of its surveillance and domain awareness in Greenland.[55]

Erasing and expanding action spaces

An action space erased?

As explained, the Kangilinnguit naval base was closed when it was decided to move the Danish military command to Nuuk in 2012. The decision was reversed unilaterally by Denmark in 2016, which surprised Greenlandic politicians. However, public deliberations on what to use the site for show that this allowed Greenlandic politicians to take advantage of the action space that had been created when the initial decision to abandon the base was taken. However, after a Chinese company signalled its intent to buy the abandoned base, Copenhagen's decision to reinstate a Danish military presence on the site completely erased Greenland's action space. The Danish government did this after realising that handing over responsibility of the port to Greenland, or to foreign interests, could result in a situation where Denmark was no longer in control of whom would be involved or present at the site in the future. As the then Danish Minister of Defence put it: 'we cannot have two great powers playing hide and seek in Greenland'.[56]

Applying Petersen's action space triangles to this scenario, it was an alignment of the Danish and US policies of not allowing a Chinese company to buy an old naval base that resulted in the reversed decision. If there was an alignment that engaged a Chinese company, this was a no-go between either Greenland and Denmark, or Greenland and the US, before the heated debates, the story may have been different. The failure to align the expectations and ambitions thus short circuited the process. If Denmark had included Greenland in its decision-making, arguments could have been avoided. In other words, Greenland's investigation of action space grey zones resulted in an extremely limited policy option, decreasing Greenland's permitted policy options to almost non-existing. Today, only a few people occupy the base while some buildings have been torn down. There are still debates on what to use the place for, besides the military presence and some research activities, however there is currently no noteworthy Greenlandic debate on what to use the place for. On the question of the site's future, Greenland's action space has been 'erased' or replaced by Denmark's action space.

[55] In the agreement text, direct reference was made to Denmark's aim to meet the NATO wishes of furthering surveillance initiatives, and it was made clear, that Denmark saw it as crucial, that the systems acquired would contribute to NATOs strength targets, see Danish Ministry of Defence, *Aftale om en Arktis-Kapacitetspakke*.

[56] Sørensen, "Medie: Løkke frygtede Kina og USA i Grønland på samme tid", Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation, 24 April 2017.

Setting up bastions to create goodwill?

In the case of the Greenlandic airport structure, Nuuk considered that taking decisions on its infrastructure was a permitted policy option. This led to a lengthy decision-making process involving the parliament and municipalities. Although, they were aware that the Kangerlussuaq Airport was still in use and remained relevant as a military landing strip, the initial debates on the airport structure avoided the issue. At the same time, the possible involvement of a Chinese company in constructing the airports was not seen as controversial by the Greenlandic politicians. After all, official Greenlandic delegations had several times been to China with the aim of attracting further business cooperation and investments, in the same way as Denmark, Europe in general and North American countries had considered China a viable business partner at the time.

If we relate this to Mouritzen's theory, it seems that Greenland did not consider the possibility that its approach to China would become a forbidden policy option, or that the situation could be used to create bastions of principles designed to test how Denmark and the US would respond.[57] Here, the grey zones come into play again. For instance, if Greenland did in fact set up certain bastions of principles instead of engaging in real dialogue, these bastions could be penetrated by the great powers, but could also serve to generate goodwill from Denmark and the US. The original airport package debated by Greenlandic politicians did not consider the military needs or geostrategic security aspects, which were evidently still part of the US and Danish considerations. The result was that Denmark got involved. Once Denmark was involved, both regarding the use of Kangerlussuaq, and on the issue of Chinese involvement in the construction, Greenland's permitted policy option shrunk. However, it did not shrink to enhance the forbidden policy option since the permitted policy option was now shared with Denmark. For the Government of Greenland, the result of co-funding and co-owning the two new international airports in Nuuk and Ilulissat with Denmark, as well as a solution to the issue of renovation of the landing strip and installations in Kangerlussuaq, which the Danish defence spending must cover, was seen as a big win. If one made a figure based on Mouritzen's circle, new slices representing Denmark's policy options would be added within Greenland's existing permitted policy options, demonstrating the even more limited space for the policy options Greenland ended up with, in this situation.

Still, it is important that this should not be seen as a zero-sum situation, where more action space for Greenland automatically decreased Denmark's action space, but rather as a complex game between Greenland and Denmark that played out parallel to balance the external great power influx on both Greenland and Denmark, battling over how to deal with the grey zones.

Sending risky trial balloons playing on anticipated responses?

Since the military activities in Greenland, and decisions surrounding them, were the subject of mutual information sharing and consultation with the 1991 established Permanent Committee, one would have expected that issues such as the future of Kangerlussuaq would be discussed between Greenland, Denmark, and the US. But due to a diplomatic crisis erupting in 2014 over the base maintenance contract on Pituffik (the US Thule Air Base),

[57] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed": 22.

the meetings of the Permanent Committee had been suspended since the fall of 2014.[58] Only in January 2018 were the meetings resumed and when followed up in June and August that same year, 'Joint infrastructure investments' was on the agenda.[59] In September 2018, the US Department of Defence released their Statement of Intent announcing an interest in investing in critical infrastructure in Greenland, with dual-use purposes.[60]

Within the framework of Mouritzen's action space analysis, taking the controversial action of inviting a Chinese company to bid on the construction of large airports in Greenland, or even the initial decision to close Kangerlussuaq as a civilian airport when the operation of the airport was still fundamental for both US and Danish military activities, would be one way for the Greenlandic politicians to test or learn about their action space. Although there is no empirical evidence that these were deliberate tests, an analysis applying Mouritzen's theories contributes to understanding of what was at stake, and why Denmark and the US reacted as they did. Was it possible for Greenland to unilaterally make decisions to close Kangerlussuaq, and would it be possible, without Danish or US reactions, to engage a Chinese company in constructing the two new international airports in Greenland? The focus for Greenlandic politicians was on taking hard and contested domestic decisions on how to change the fundamental structure of Greenland's airports. The aim was to leave behind old military bases located in areas where very few people lived, to build new international airports in the towns where most people travelled to and from.[61] The debates on the airport infrastructure were often linked to Greenland's aim of enhancing self-determination by providing new means of income to the country, for instance through more business and tourism.[62] Being highly disputed domestically, it would neither be beneficial for Copenhagen or Nuuk to indicate that Greenland would not be able to decide these things without Danish involvement, or even for the US to be outspoken about its concerns regarding Chinese involvement and the possible loss of access to an airport such as Kangerlussuaq.[63]

The question is, thus, whether these events can be seen as the trial balloons Mouritzen points to in his action space analysis tools to observe or provoke a response, or if they are rather examples of how a small nation (Greenland) plays on the anticipated reaction of one or two greater powers (the US, and to some extent Denmark). If the invitation to a Chinese company was in fact a Greenlandic trial balloon, it would have been a risky one. The case of the Kangilinnguit naval base had already shown, that US intervention could be anticipated, and while Greenland had actively engaged in dialogue with China on a formal level to attract investments and cooperation, using a Chinese company as a trial balloon would put the developing diplomatic relationship with China at risk. On the issue of Kangerlussuaq, it is difficult to imagine, that Greenlandic politicians would not be aware of the importance of the airport to US and Danish military activities, as the use of and access to the airport was part of

[58] Olsvig, "'Uagununa nunarput' (It's our country)".
[59] The question of joint infrastructure investments and following up on the Statement of Intent was on the agenda in the following meetings of the Permanent Committee, access to documents in case number 2021–18,171/6,912,714.
[60] U.S. Department of Defence, *Statement of Intent on Defence Investments in Greenland*.
[61] Rambøll, *Fem scenarier vedrørende Kangerlussuaq lufthavns fremtid*.
[62] Sejersen, 'Infrastructural (re)configurations and processes of (de)securitization'.
[63] Interviews conducted with US diplomats 26 May 2021, and 11 June 2021, confirm, that the US was very determined to show respect of Greenland's own decision-making processes and did not want to stir up the waters more than necessary.

agreement signed in 1991.[64] The domestic disputes on the different aspects of the airports reveal, that there was no or little internal coordination in the Greenlandic government and parliament on these matters, and if the actions had in fact been trial balloons, only very few persons in the very centre of Greenland's government would know.[65]

Ultimately, it does not matter whether the actions by Greenland should be seen as deliberate trial balloons, or as playing on the anticipated reactions of great power. The solutions reached signalled that Greenland did in fact have an action space as the Danish investments and loans were based on a formal agreement with Greenland. At the same time, the Danish push for not closing Kangerlussuaq resulted in the airport being maintained at the expense of the Danish Ministry of Defence, which solved a disputed domestic political issue for the Greenlandic government. This meant that Nuuk could then continue developing the original airport-package without including the expense of Kangerlussuaq.

Accordingly, the airports, in an action space analytical perspective, demonstrate the ambiguous action space Greenland has at hand, guided by a consensus in Greenland to maintain as high a degree of self-determination as possible, even in cases with security and defence implications. But in the 'awkward tango for three', as one interviewee put it, 'one party is hanging on someone else's leg', making the dance a heavy and inflexible movement.[66]

Ambitious and ambiguous action space

Relating the case of Greenland's airport package to Nikolaj Petersen's action space triangles, the example demonstrates how Greenland found its way through the three sides of, theoretically, extreme limitations.[67] As the airport package was for a long time highly disputed domestically in Greenland, internal limitations were decreasing the action space. There was also a high degree of ambition among Greenlandic decision-makers, both on the size and the price of the projects, but also on anticipated cooperation with foreign investors and companies, further decreasing their action space. Finally, the external limitations were clear, as the US expressed its concern with Greenland possibly choosing Chinese partners and to close an airport still relevant for the US military. Thus, until the ambition of the Greenlandic decision-makers was aligned with the ambitions of the external greater power, the action space for Greenland would be extremely limited.

A key question was whether Greenland needed an alignment with Denmark first, before reaching a state of alignment with the US? In practical terms, that was what happened, as it was the agreement with Denmark on funding, loans, and co-ownership of the airports, that settled the waters. It seemed that the alignment between Greenland and Denmark is what calmed Washington's concerns. Combining Petersen's and Mouritzen's action space models, this case theoretically put Greenland in a very big grey zone area, where all three sides of the Petersen triangle were subject to wider or narrower limitations

[64] Government of the United States of America, Government of Denmark, Government of Greenland, *Memorandum of Understanding concerning use of Sondrestrom aviation facility*.

[65] The open access parliamentary questions sent to the Government of Greenland in 2018 count 20 rounds of multiple questions related to the airport projects, the model of financing, the Danish loans and co-ownership and other aspects related to the projects asked by seven different politicians from six different parties (data from Inatsisartut's website).

[66] Interview with Greenlandic politician, 16 June 2021.

[67] In the case of the airport package, Greenland set out with a high ambition of involving foreign investments through an open tender, while both the internal limitations were high due to domestic quarrels, and the external limitations by not being aligned with Danish and US interest, were high.

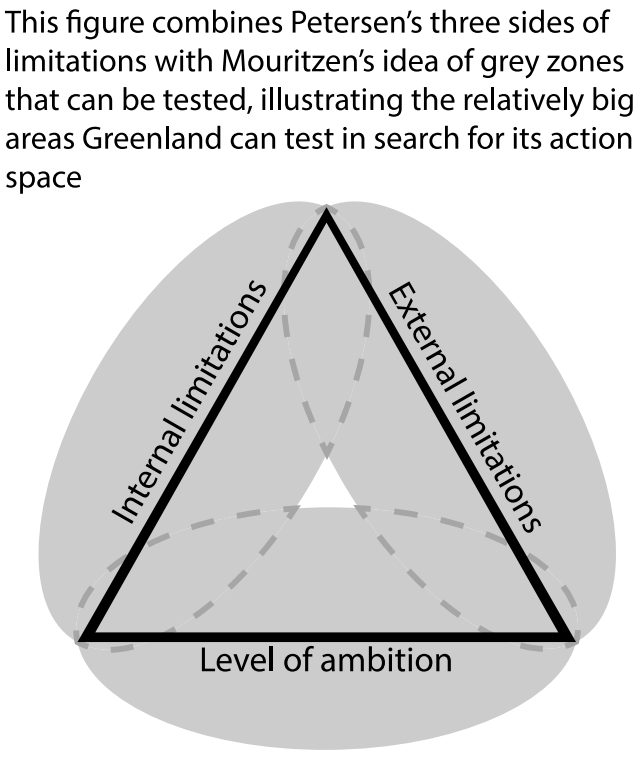

Figure 3. This model illustrates the combination of Petersen's and Mouritzen's action space models, demonstrating the relatively big grey zone area Greenland can and does test in search for its action space, in any given situation. The more knowledge Greenland has on its own position related to the three sides of internal limitations, external limitations and levels of ambition, the more deliberate can Greenland be on how to position itself within the grey zone. Graphics: Jette Brandt.

(see figure 3). Greenland's ability to navigate in between these limitations determines how big or narrow an action space Greenland has. It is a very high ambition to have, to try and affect a great power's behaviour, and in the airports case, the actions rather demonstrated that Greenland was clear on not mistaking influence-capability with action space. That was not necessarily the case when Greenland decided to go against Danish decisions in the case of the Arctic capacity package.

The Arctic capacity package was a Danish attempt to ensure action was taken on a range of concerns expressed by the US related to domain awareness in Greenland.[68] Therefore, the case of the Arctic capacity package is of twofold importance for analysing Greenland's action space. First, it informs our understanding of Greenland's action space towards Denmark and with specific regard to relations between Nuuk and Copenhagen. Secondly, it draws attention to Greenland's status as a self-governing Arctic nation whose action space is also influenced by strong relations with the US, and the broader geostrategic rivalry between the US, China, and Russia.[69]

[68] Kjærgaard, "Dansk Militær Opbygning i Grønland Og Fastholdelse Af Arktisk Lavspænding"; Sands, *The US View on the Arctic*.
[69] Pincus, "Three-way power dynamics in the Arctic".

The presentation of the Arctic capacity package therefore became 1) an iconic example of the challenges Greenland and Denmark face on decision-making structures in the current arrangement of self-government within a state, 2) an example of how Denmark wanted to improve its relations with the US but was faced with the difficulties of finding a balance in its interests towards, and inclusion of, Greenland in the decision-making process, two factors that simultaneously delimited Greenland's real action space, and finally, 3) an example of how Greenland demonstrated the ability to operate relatively independently in an action space, without being overly-constrained by its ties with Denmark.

A limited action space vs. ability to influence

The Arctic capacity package is thus also an example of how action space can be challenged by a lack of alignments and high ambitions. The case is an example of a process, which from the outset could be seen as an exclusive issue for Denmark to decide on since it was it was a matter of defence and security. But as seen in other cases, Greenland's involvement as more than just a consultative partner proved important and necessary.[70]

Although the governments of Greenland and Denmark did deliberate, both jointly and separately, on the content of the Arctic capacity package in the years prior to the presentation of the original package, the decision-making situation itself became a disputed affair, as the final draft agreement was only sent to the Government of Greenland from the responsible ministry in Denmark a few hours before publication.[71] This left the Greenlandic system no time to ensure a proper process involving the parliament, or even to take a cabinet decision on the matter. Considering this process, which was essentially not seen as a wrong process from the Danish side, the parliamentary reaction questioning the content of the package was not surprising. But the following year of deliberations internally in Greenland and between Greenland and Denmark, demonstrated the difficulties of upholding an action space for both Greenland and for Denmark, amid these complex constitutional relations.

Greenland's action space was from the beginning limited by the US' demand for increased attention and action on the issue of surveillance and domain awareness. However, the lack of alignment between Greenland and Denmark, and internally in Greenland, was another limiting factor. Furthermore, following the change of government in early 2021, Nuuk's call to be included in the decision-making, while at the same time being very vocal in expressing the new coalition's policy on demilitarising Greenland, suggested that the Greenlandic government had high ambitions. Thus, the negotiations and deliberations took place the following year, would be taking place in a very limited action space, according to Petersen's triangular actions space model.

Relating this situation to Mouritzen's circle of permitted and forbidden policy options, Greenland could also be seen as testing the grey zones of its relationship with Denmark and attempting to widen the permitted policy options. The problem was that it was not only Denmark's interest that guided the Arctic capacity package. Rather, the domain awareness and surveillance initiatives stemmed from US and NATO wishes for increased

[70] Olsvig and Gad, *Greenland obviously has its own defence policy*.
[71] Interview with Greenlandic politicians on 6 December 2021.

funding and capabilities. Therefore, there would not be much to influence or to create more action space around, no matter the internal quarrels between Greenland and Denmark, or domestically in Greenland. As Mouritzen reiterates, the external limitations are primary to the internal limitations.[72]

Greenlandic politicians did not only express scepticism about the content of the capacity package, they also questioned whether the military presence in Greenland should go through a complete paradigm change. For instance, the then Greenlandic MFA expressed his views on possibly exchanging the Danish military presence with Americans.[73] If that idea was to be seen as a trial balloon, it would have been another very risky one. According to Mouritzen, testing a great power's response with a trial balloon should be done in a case of limited publicity in order not to lose credibility. But the exact opposite happened, as the ideas floated by the new government made big headlines in Danish and Greenlandic media.[74]

Domestic limitations at play

Although ambiguous, Greenland's actions were directed towards both Denmark and the US. However, because of domestic quarrels among Greenlandic politicians, as well as further quarrels between Greenland and Denmark, Nuuk was operating within a very limited action space. The bluntness of expressing ideas of paradigmatic changes to the military presence in Greenland should be seen and understood in the context of Greenland being in a parallel process of building a more bilateral and exclusive partnership with the US on matters relating to legislative areas taken over by Greenland, i.e., the MoUs and the USAID economic growth funding. In the case of the MoUs and the USAID initiatives, Greenland's action space was widening *because* of Greenland's own actions and agency to specifically target areas of cooperation with the US within Greenlandic jurisdiction, and thus formally accepted by Denmark. With the processes around signing MoUs and engaging in USAID support negotiations, Greenlandic politicians gained experience of being able to influence the US and drag the great power in the direction of Greenlandic wishes. In the Arctic capacity package, most initiatives suggested in the original package derived from the US and NATO. Furthermore, the US, both in respect to rule of law and international relations, saw these tasks as Danish responsibilities, and did not see itself obliged to fund them.[75] Thus, the action space remained limited, although the influence Greenland had on the final agreement included furthering more specific goals of including Greenlandic businesses in the task solving, while the military education that had been on the table was changed to being a civilian education with the aim of engaging more Greenlanders in the search and rescue and other response preparedness tasks, based on a Greenlandic wish. None of the issues demanded by Greenland were controversial. Thus, the specific Greenlandic push for widening its action space was an example of Nuuk mistaking action space with

[72] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed": 23.
[73] Andersen, "Pele Broberg foreslår islandsk model", Sermitsiaq.AG 21 May 2021.
[74] Filtenborg, "Nej tak til øget dansk militær indsats i Grønland, siger udenrigsminister", TV2.dk 6 June 2021.
[75] Interview with Danish government official conducted 18 May 2021, confirms that the Danes were clear on what the US expectations were towards Denmark living up to its responsibilities in ensuring domain awareness and solving military tasks in Greenland.

'influence-capability', what Mouritzen called 'the ambitious twin sister of action space'.[76] In Petersen's context, it was an example of Greenland being overly ambitious.[77]

Conclusion

The three cases demonstrated the complex web of relations Greenland is navigating. On the one hand, as a very small, state-like actor, Greenland is highly dependent on other states, and greatly influenced by the balance of power between the US, China, and Russia. On the other hand, Greenland has also demonstrated an ability to find a way through these deep waters whilst pushing for further autonomy. This means Nuuk can simultaneously develop solutions that are viable domestically in Greenland, and in the relation to Denmark.

As stated by Mouritzen, 'the domestic opinion has in several cases played a role before the crisis but is often checkmated by governments as soon as external pressure arises'.[78] The three cases analysed in this paper were all subject to public and heated domestic debates. While dealing with the domestic disputes, Greenland continues to test its action space when it sees an opportunity to do so.

In the case of the Arctic capacity package, Nuuk is learning not to confuse action space with influence-capacity. Although the constitutional relationship to Denmark still includes confusing grey zones of decision-making structures (and the permissible policy options are thus blurred), Denmark and the US are both eager to maintain a good relationship with Greenland. Denmark, because the state would not be able to call itself an Arctic state covering 20% of the Arctic without Greenland, and the US, because Greenland is a geostrategically important area for the great power to include in its positioning towards other great powers. Thus, Nuuk has good cards in its hand, and has learned its lessons 'the soft way' as opposed to a 'hard way', which could have been the consequence of a small state-like actor sending up trial balloons or testing greater powers. Furthermore, the US seems to have become increasingly comfortable in dealing with the grey zones of the Greenland-Denmark relationship,[79] while Greenlandic politicians have showcased initiatives to become more closely aligned with the US.[80] This creates a more ambiguous action space.

Greenland has previously proclaimed to be open for business with everyone, including China and Russia. The current conflict between the Western alliance and Russia is a threat to this policy, but Greenland has, by aligning itself clearly with the West, ensured that its external action space is seemingly stable for now.[81] Greenland can successfully

[76] Mouritzen, "A hundred years of Danish action space": 115.
[77] Petersen, "Danmark som international aktør 705–2005": 47.
[78] Mouritzen, "Grænser for handlefrihed": 23. Own translation.
[79] Olsvig, "'Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country')".
[80] At a 15 June 2022, event at the Wilson Center in the US, the Premier of Greenland strongly highlighted Greenland's wish to engage further with the US, indicating ongoing negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between Greenland and the US. At the event, government officials from the US State Department and Greenland's Ministry of Mineral Resources highlighted the vast opportunities to cooperate further on mineral resource exploration and development, see Wilson Center, *Trade, Minerals, and the Green Transition in Greenland: A Conversation with Prime Minister Múte B. Egede*. 15 June 2022.
[81] The very clear alignment is a recent development especially made clear to the public after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Greenland's engagement in Western sanctions against Russia. Earlier, an alignment with the West has not been as clear. See Gad et al., "Imagining China on Greenland's road to independence".

continue to widen its action space by balancing its push to increase its permitted policy space with the strategic imperative of aligning itself with Denmark vis-a-vis the US.

However, Greenland must be careful to not to seem overly ambitious or take too many risks, for example, by flying trial balloons on matters that have too much publicity. That does not mean that Nuuk must always align with Denmark, nor would Greenland necessarily be able to. Rather, it means that Greenlandic decision-makers must think carefully about what conflicts to make public, and what issues to keep 'under the radar', within a confidential space. Indeed, it seems the decisive external limitations to Greenland's action space are not the limitations set by Denmark, but those set by the US.

Today, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the new world crisis is testing Greenland's ambiguous positioning regarding further trade relations. The Russian market for Greenlandic fish products is gone, and Greenland is forced to seek other markets, thus looking to further expand export to the EU, the UK, and the US. Depending on the development of the great power rivalry, Greenland may be forced to be more cautious as it seeks to further its links with Chinese markets. As Greenland's export to China makes up an even bigger percentage than the export to Russia, possible sanctions on China or the loss of a Chinese market would put Greenland's economy under great pressure.

The current development towards a bipolar or multipolar world is thus challenging Greenland's action space, despite Greenland's clear alignment with the Western and US alliance. The recent development of Greenland engaging more directly and expressing its alignment with the US can be described as a parallel to the Danish 'Super-Atlanticism', which describes how Denmark is often acting in harmony with the US.[82] However, the difference between Greenland's and Denmark's Super-Atlanticism is that Denmark is pursuing this course by choice, while for Greenland, such positioning has become a necessity. Also, it has become clearer that because of this pre-condition, Greenland can to a greater extent test its action space towards the US, whereas Denmark has a more limited actions space.

With the Greenland-Denmark-US relationship and the increasing world tension as a backdrop, it will be even more important for Greenland to clearly define and be aware of its internal action space limitations. Greenland's action space may be further widened depending on the development of a 'Nuuk-centric' approach, where it is the proximate great power actions and tensions over *Greenlandic* territory rather than Danish territory, which matters most.[83]

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[82] Mouritzen, "Denmark's super Atlanticism".
[83] Mouritzen, "A hundred years of Danish action space": 117.

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Odd Couples' Win-Sets: Maintaining U.S. Basing Rights Through New Two-Level Game Negotiations With Greenland

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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SCANDINAVIAN MILITARY STUDIES

ABSTRACT

As a political focal point, the Pituffik Space Base ("Pituffik") has played a decisive role in deepening relations between Greenland and the United States. To shed light upon these relations, both between the two internally and with regard to Denmark, this article analyses the 2020 negotiations regarding Pituffik and the positions of the three parties in both the final agreement and the process of negotiation. The theoretical framework of the analysis is an interlocked two-level game analysis following Putnam (1988); the study is based upon 12 interviews with key figures, media coverage, and on the negotiated agreements themselves. The article argues that Greenland and the United States, although being an odd couple as a small state-like self-governing nation and a global superpower, conducted a new, interlocking two-level game, reaching win-sets and common interests while changing the way the parties negotiate and sign agreements. Thus, the article concludes that the 2020 negotiations about the base inaugurate a change in the overall relationship by positioning Greenland in a new and more direct relationship with the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly 200 years, the United States' engaged interest in Greenland has reflected the geostrategic significance of its position on the north-eastern flank of the North American continent (Archer, 2003; Olesen, 2017; Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020; Jacobsen & Olsvig, 2024). Notwithstanding recent developments, the context has changed significantly since the colonial era, where decisions on Greenland were taken in Denmark, and the mapping of coastlines and resources by polar explorers sparked debates in Washington on the possibility of annexing or purchasing Greenland (Jacobsen & Olsvig, 2024, p. 115). Today, Greenland is self-governing and strives for statehood; relations and negotiations with foreign states form part of the nation's efforts towards self-determination.

In times of increased geopolitical tension, much attention is paid in both academia and media to analyses of the actions of great powers; countries resembling a small state, such as Greenland with its population of only 56,500 inhabitants, and Denmark, a small state itself, are easily overlooked. But it is precisely the space created through the increased great power rivalry that makes for an interesting analysis of how a small state-like polity striving for nationhood manoeuvres (Olsvig, 2022b).

Clive Archer (2003) has analysed the changes in relations shown in earlier Greenland-U.S.-Denmark negotiations within the framework of Robert D. Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory, predicting that Greenland would achieve a stronger bargaining position in the future. This article follows up on Archer's discussion and contributes with a demonstration of how a small state-like self-governing nation and an international great power conduct what this article considers to be a new, interlocking, two-level game, reaching win-sets while changing the way the parties negotiate and sign agreements.

Concretely, this article looks at negotiations concluded between Greenland, the United States and partly Denmark in 2020 on increased benefits for Greenland from the U.S. military presence in Greenland, particularly at the U.S. military base Pituffik Space Base ("Pituffik", formerly known as the Thule Air Base, built in 1951). This base is a key political focal point for Greenland in the nation's relation to the United States. For example, Pituffik Space Base has been part of the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System since the 1950s, has a deep-water port and, among other things, provides support to space-based missions. When a U.S. company was awarded the base maintenance contract instead of a Greenlandic-Danish contractor in 2014, it was met with disapproval among Greenlandic politicians, who saw the loss of the contract as a diplomatic crisis. Initially the United States did not pay any significant attention to the situation or the criticisms. The choice of a U.S. contractor was expected to decrease Greenland's tax income, and in the lack of attention from the United States, Greenland and Denmark joined forces and aligned their push for a solution "to the benefit of Greenland" (Naalakkersuisut, 2016, p. 50). The 2020 negotiations on U.S. military presence in Greenland proved an important avenue for Greenland to further push its own agenda.

The article explores the role of Greenland in the process leading to the conclusion of a set of agreements in 2020, including new tender criteria for the Pituffik base maintenance contract. The research question the article seeks to answer is "How did Greenland utilize its bargaining position in the 2020 Pituffik negotiations with the United States and Denmark?" Using Putnam's theoretical two-level game framework, the article argues that Greenland assumed the position of a sovereign state in the negotiations and demonstrated a greater sense of its own room for manoeuvre through a more streamlined approach to the United States. The analysis concludes that, throughout changing governments and parliaments, Greenlandic politicians became more stringent in their decision making and manoeuvrings in the negotiations with the United States.

After a background section devoted to the complex historical positions in the U.S.-Greenland-Denmark relationship and how it relates to the Pituffik Space Base, the article's theoretical framework is presented, and the key methods and documents introduced. The analytical section that follows analyses the interest of each party, the perception of Greenland in the agreements, the circumstances of the negotiations, and Greenland's state strength. The discussion deals with how the agreement best can be understood as a new interlocking two-level game. The conclusion suggests that Greenland, through the 2020 agreements analysed in this paper, engaged further and more directly with the United States while changing its relation to Denmark.

BACKGROUND: INCREASED U.S. ATTENTION TO GREENLAND'S SELF-DETERMINATION

While U.S. attention to Greenland has historically centred around the security of the United States itself, the superpower has not generally expressed this specifically; defence agreements between Denmark and the United States emphasize American assistance for Denmark's defence of Greenland rather than the United States' interest in homeland security *through* presence in Greenland. The 1941 agreement stated: "Defence of Greenland against attack by a non-American power is essential to the preservation of the peace and security of the American Continent and is a subject of vital concern to the United States of America and also to the Kingdom of Denmark" (Kauffmann & Hull, 1941), while the 1951 renewed defence agreement was titled "Defence of Greenland" (United States of America & the Kingdom of Denmark, 1951).

We find an explicit example of Greenland's geostrategic importance to the security of the U.S. homeland in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defence dated 21 January 1955, written by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Department of Defence. The memorandum referred to the agreement between the United States and Denmark on the defence of Greenland and reiterated Greenland's geographic position as being within the sphere of interest pursuant to the Monroe Doctrine. It concluded:

> As to whether it would be to the military advantage of the United States to acquire title to Greenland, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe it to be axiomatic that sovereignty provides the firmest basis of assuring that a territory and its resources will be available for military use when needed. United States sovereignty over Greenland would remove any doubt as to the unconditional availability of bases and would avoid uncertainty which attends the occasional necessity for renegotiating agreements which, as in the case of Iceland, is at times inhibitory to the orderly development of facilities programs. (Radford, 1955)

Two things are relevant to note in this quote. Firstly, it reaffirms the military significance to the United States of access to basing rights in Greenland and that this access would be most easily obtained by claiming sovereignty over Greenland. Secondly, it foresees the difficulties of entering several, and possibly continuing, rounds of renegotiations on the U.S. presence in the territory. Both issues continue to be of relevance today; the difference from the early post-colonial era is that Greenland has gained a broad degree of self-determination.

As seen throughout the era of Greenlandic home rule and self-government, several rounds of renegotiations have taken place. In the 1980s and the early 2000s, the United States needed upgrades of the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Systems, and Greenlandic politicians demanded a say in the changes made to U.S. installations at Pituffik (Archer, 1988, 2003; Dragsdahl, 2005). In the early 2000s negotiations, the Itilleq Declaration was signed between Greenland and Denmark as a precursor for the 2004 Igaliku Agreement, which will be presented in the following pages. The Itilleq Declaration can be seen as part of the process of Greenland's negotiations for greater self-determination from Denmark and was a necessary step for Greenland's participation in the trilateral negotiations concluded the following year (Møller & Enoksen, 2003).

DENMARK AND GREENLAND

Although the delineations of authority may seem clear from a traditional constitutional legal point of view, (Folketinget, 1953; Government of Denmark, 2009; see Harhoff, 1993; Spiermann, 2007; Gad, 2017), implementation of home rule and self-government in Greenland have created ambiguity in what lies under Danish or Greenlandic authority (Gad, 2017; Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017; Jacobsen & Gad, 2017; Sørensen, 2018; Jacobsen, 2020). Greenland has continuously pushed for greater self-determination and participation in decision-making, including on matters related to security and military activities; the 2009 Self-Government Agreement marked the beginning of a new era of increased Greenlandic political and positional self-awareness on this ambiguity. Furthermore, Greenland's geostrategic importance increased in this era as a direct consequence of great power rivalry (Kjærgaard, 2021; Nielsen, 2021, p. 258; Sørensen, 2021).

Greenland has increasingly sought partners in foreign relations and international business with a view to the development of its fishing, mineral, tourism, and most recently, infrastructure

and green energy sectors, extending, even, to the prospect of partnering with Chinese companies (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2017; Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2018). This has led to a degree of uncertainty in the Greenland-Denmark relationship, with Copenhagen demanding a say on issues deemed by Denmark to be related to security. Although the Danish Constitution determines that it is the state government that conducts the Kingdom's foreign policy, Greenland has initiated the widening of its foreign policy action space throughout the Home Rule era, with, among other things, its referendum to leave the EU in 1982, and later by participating in the negotiations with the United Stated in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

These changes pose new challenges to U.S.-Greenland-Denmark trilateral relations (Olsvig, 2022a). Examples of uncertainty include questions of uranium and rare earth mineral mining, and decisions to change the country's fundamental airport structure. These examples have all posed challenges to the existing decision-making structures between Greenland and Denmark and resulted in new agreements and political practices being introduced (Sørensen, 2018; Sejersen, 2024).

DENMARK AND THE UNITED STATES

As a co-founder of NATO, Denmark considers itself a close ally of the United States; since the end of WWII, Denmark's foreign and security policies have been closely aligned with the superpower and the NATO alliance. Some have argued Denmark to be a "super-atlanticist" (Mouritzen, 2007) and that it does not consider any superpower other than the United States able to guarantee its security (Olesen, 2020). The trilateral relationship between Denmark, the United States, and Greenland has thus been dictated by the Danish-U.S. security relationship, and Denmark has increasingly understood its entry into Arctic and North Atlantic security through the lens of a state geographically incorporating Greenland. When it comes to Greenland, much of Denmark's recent relationship to the United States has been conditioned by developments in great power rivalry. As both Chinese interests in the Arctic and Russian aggression have become more tangible, the Danish-American relationship in coordinating their approach and influence in Greenland has increasingly come to the fore (Olsvig, 2022b; Jacobsen & Olsvig, 2024).

THE UNITED STATES AND GREENLAND

U.S. military presence in Greenland was established during WWII and the years following. While thirteen U.S. Army and four U.S. Navy bases and installations were in use when the presence was at its height in the mid-1950s (Archer, 1988; Rahbek-Clemmensen & Henriksen, 2017), direct U.S. military presence in the form of basing is now limited to Pituffik. While world security relations have affected U.S. interests in Greenland differently over the years, internal changes in Greenland, and between Greenland and Denmark, have affected the way in which the United States *can* and *does* approach the self-governing nation.

Greenland only became directly involved in the dialogue on Pituffik with the United States through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1991, establishing the Permanent Committee with the participation of all three parties (Governments of the U.S., Denmark & Greenland, 1991). The agreements of 1941 and 1951 were signed by Denmark and the United States before Greenland had its own parliament and government, and thus in an era with no formal Greenlandic say on the matter. In 2004, the Igaliku Agreement, a formal follow-up to the 1951 defence agreement, saw the establishment of the Joint Committee, instituted to "promote and coordinate the wide spectrum of activities foreseen with … enhanced economic and technical cooperation" and to "cooperate on all issues of mutual interest" (Powell, Møller & Motzfeldt, 2004). Since their establishment, the Permanent and Joint Committees have served as continually open avenues for dialogue between Greenland, the United States, and Denmark (Gad, 2017). As a direct consequence of the negotiations on the Itilleq Declaration and the Igaliku Agreement, the Authorization Act was passed in 2005. This act authorized Greenland to act on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark on certain foreign political areas (Kristensen, 2005). The provisions of the act were transferred into chapter 4 of the 2009 Self-Government Act which lay out Greenland's foreign affairs authorisations.

The U.S. military presence in Pituffik added significant income to Greenland through taxes from workers on the base, with maintenance contracted to a company registered as a "Greenlandic-Danish" business. In the Parliament of Greenland's fiscal act for 2015, a drop in the income reserve is explained as a consequence of the lost maintenance contract (Naalakkersuisut, 2015a,

p. 222). It was reported in media that Greenland would lose approximately 200 million DKK a year (Løwschall-Wedel, 2014). This income was seen by Greenlandic politicians as important – an essential return for housing the U.S. military base (Naalakkersuisut, 2015b, p. 15).

THE TRILATERAL RELATIONSHIP UP UNTIL THE 2020-NEGOTIATIONS

After the surprising loss of the base maintenance contract, the Greenlandic parliament debated demands for a renegotiation of the defence agreements with the United States (Inatsisartut, 2016). With the implementation of self-government, uncertainty in decision-making powers between Greenland and Denmark have increased, especially on matters related to national security, and Greenlandic politicians have increasingly debated security and defence-related issues, demanding a greater say. For example, in October 2021, Greenland, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands signed an agreement to establish a new contact committee on foreign policy, security and defence issues aiming to ensure more structured coordination and information sharing on these matters (Frederiksen, Nielsen & Egede, 2021).

The relationship between Denmark and the United States has been free of diplomatic conflict for decades. And this is how Denmark strongly wishes it to remain (Olesen, 2017). Danish support for solving the loss of the Pituffik base maintenance contract, and for Greenland to develop a strong relationship to the United States, has thus been clear. In the years 2014 to 2020, Greenlandic politicians made joint and thoroughly coordinated efforts to be clear in their messaging to the United States and Denmark on a solution for the matter. The message was that a solution needed, first, to include a return to Greenlandic-Danish companies holding the maintenance contract, ensuring direct tax and revenue income to Greenland, and second, that the U.S. military presence in Greenland should bring tangible benefits for Greenland – at least more tangible than those brought by the Igaliku Agreement of 2004.

In recent years, the United States has both directly and indirectly demonstrated its interest in engaging with the self-governing nation. President Trump's 2019 expression of interest in buying Greenland represents one very direct and visible example of an interest exceeding existing relations.[1] The signing of two bilateral Memoranda of Understanding between Greenland and the United States in June 2019 represent a more subtle engagement. Today, Greenland often portrays U.S.-Greenland relations as bilateral in nature, and Greenland has specifically aimed its cooperation with the United States at legislative areas unambiguously taken over from Denmark, such as business development and resource management (Olsvig, 2022a).

In October 2020, through the signing of new agreements consisting of four documents, two signed agreements and two verbal notes, the areas of cooperation laying within Greenlandic jurisdiction were tied to the U.S. military presence. This represented a new development of the U.S.–Greenland–Denmark relationship; military issues had previously been dealt with in a strictly trilateral negotiation and under the auspices of the Permanent and Joint Committees.

This article contributes with an analysis of these agreements, conducted in the somewhat complex context of Greenland's self-governing status in an existing constitutional framework which sets out a division of powers regarding national security and defence (Folketinget, 1953). While traditional legal interpretations are clear on this division between Denmark and Greenland, the territory is nevertheless provided with room for manoeuvring in decision-making which has increasingly come to intersect with issues considered the province of a sovereign state. The article has chosen to analyse the development of these agreements as they are a clear example of military and security issues being intertwined with legislative areas assumed by Greenland.

THEORY: PUTNAM'S INTERLOCKING TWO-LEVEL GAME, ARCHER AND BEYOND

The choice of a rational negotiation theory provides an opportunity to learn about the interconnectedness of factors relevant for the specific result of any negotiation. Considering Greenland a state-like polity allows for an analysis of the country's internal rationale rather than the external factors making these negotiations relevant. Putnam's rational two-level game

1 Although initially seeming like a spontaneous post on social media, U.S. President Trump's expression of an interest in purchasing Greenland was followed up in formal interviews and reported widely in world media in mid-August 2019. See Salama, Ballhaus & Restuccia, 2019.

framework is chosen because it is serves in the useful description of Greenland's manoeuvring possibilities in these negotiations. It also creates a theoretical common ground permitting analysis to draw on previous literature on Greenland's negotiatory manoeuvres (Archer 2003). Other analytical tools could have been used, especially those within small-state theories such as action space theory (Petersen, 2005; Mouritzen, 2022) or shelter theory (Thorhallsson, Steinsson & Kristinsson, 2018; Brady & Thorhallsson, 2021), which would serve as helpful tools in analyses focusing on the asymmetry of the Greenland-U.S. relationship (see also Olsvig, 2022b).

The analysis in this article is not, as such, about the asymmetrical relationship between the United States as a great power and Greenland as a small state-like polity. Rather, two-level game theory shows its strength by directing our attention to the interrelation between international politics (called "Level I" by Putnam) and domestic politics ("Level II") in international negotiations and, furthermore, how these levels are negotiated simultaneously in an interdependent relation between the two levels. In Putnam's two-level game theory, the concept of *win-sets* is key – and larger win-sets make agreements more likely. Putnam defines "win-sets" as the possible outcomes and agreements that would be acceptable on the domestic Level II of both the negotiating parties, as the agreements "gain the necessary majority among the constituents – when simply voted up or down" and "fall within the Level II win-sets of each of the parties to the accord" (Putnam, 1988, pp. 437–438).

Win-sets can be shorter or longer depending on the possible overlaps between the negotiating parties' interests on the domestic Level II. For example, a high degree of internal domestic disagreement on a policy negotiated at international Level I can risk shortening a win-set, while a high degree of dependency on a foreign power's willingness to cooperate, thus increasing the domestic costs of a no-agreement, can lengthen a win-set. Furthermore, knowing one's room for manoeuvre is an essential factor. Putnam explains how, on occasion, Level I international negotiations can determine the outcome of the Level II domestic political issue. For example, developments in international negotiations may affect how domestic constituents view a certain agreement or a certain policy; sometimes negotiators can bargain and coordinate on the international Level I and thereby change what is politically pursued from the domestic Level II (Putnam, 1988, pp. 428–429).

Two-level game theory should take a holistic perspective, considering the domestic constituencies of the parties negotiating, the size and power of the states and nations party to the negotiations, and, indeed, their status – whether they are states, nations, or international institutions.

Some researchers have previously related the development in Greenland's relations to the United States to two-level game analyses and argued that Greenland is engaging in a three-level game (Archer, 2003; Ackrén, 2019), while others have extensively analysed the theoretical aspects of Greenland's defence agreements with the United States (Petersen, 1998, 2011; Søby Kristensen, 2004; Dragsdahl, 2005). Figure 1 exemplifies the two- and three-level games as they were described in previous literature, where it is Denmark and not Greenland engaging with the United States on the international Level I negotiations, and Greenland engaging only on the domestic Level II, through Denmark, or on the 'intra-realm' Level III, with Denmark. In this model, Denmark becomes Greenland's supervisor, or gatekeeper, while Greenland is not independently positioned towards the United States.

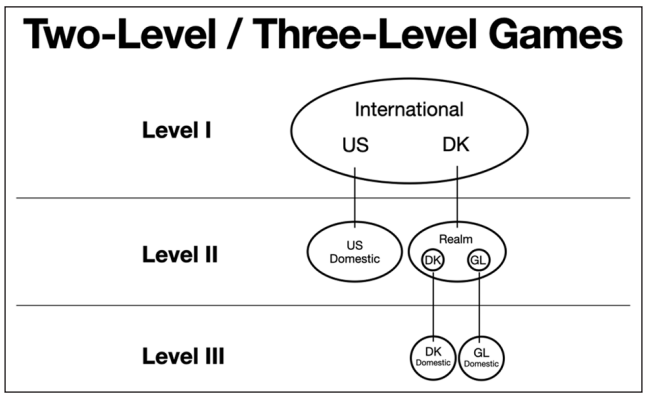

Figure 1 Two-level and three-level games exemplified in relation to the U.S.-Denmark-Greenland negotiations concluded with the Igaliku Agreement in 2004. Here Greenland is not engaging directly with the United States on Level I, and it is clear that Greenland and Denmark must agree internally on Level II, while consulting each of their constituencies on Level III, making it a three-level game. (Source: author).

Clive Archer (2003) successfully applied Putnam's two-level game theory in his analysis of the relationship between Greenland, the United States, and Denmark. His discussion considered the negotiations of the early 1980s and the early 2000s negotiations, positing that the United States would have to sell the idea of a missile defence system through "side payments such as economic aid and market access for Greenlandic products." He also discussed the transition from a three-level negotiation (including an "intra-realm" level of coordination and negotiations between Greenland and Denmark) to a two-level negotiation, should Greenland become independent of Denmark. In such a situation, he argued, Greenland's domestic politics would be advantageous to its Level I negotiations, as the United States would seek to avoid alienating Greenland. Archer also notes that internal political disagreements and changing governing coalitions "would shorten the Greenlandic win-sets at level one" (Archer, 2003, pp. 141–142).

With "shortened win-sets", Archer wanted to describe how internal disagreements and changing positions within domestic Greenlandic politics would make overlapping gains or "wins" from negotiations with the United States less likely: the decreased room for manoeuvre arising from domestic obligations would make it more difficult for Greenland to negotiate and reach agreements with the United States.

However, as the literature on previous rounds of U.S.-Greenland-Denmark negotiations shows, and for getting our understanding of the processes right, it is important to be clear *if*, *when*, and *how* the negotiations are not structured as the clear-cut two-level games Putnam studied, but, rather, as related but distinct types of games. In a footnote, Putnam references how other scholars have investigated what they have called "interconnected games", "nested games", "parallel games", "overlapping games", or "linked games" (Putnam, 1998 p. 441). I choose to call this article's adjusted version of Putnam's two-level game an "interlocking game", as together the three parties conduct interlocked, rather than deadlocked, negotiations; while they negotiate around the same issues, reaching win-sets.

In Putnam's figure explaining the effects of reducing win-set size, he draws a line with X_M and Y_M at each end, representing the maximum gains by two respective negotiators. In between the X_M and Y_M, the negotiator Y's agreement ranges are marked with Y_1, Y_2 closest to X_M, and X_1 to their right, making an agreement feasible (Putnam, 1988, p. 441). If Y_3 was further to the right, outside of negotiator X's range of acceptable outcomes, the negotiations would be deadlocked. Putnam's figure exemplifies how a two-party negotiation's range of win-sets can be analysed on a linear figure.

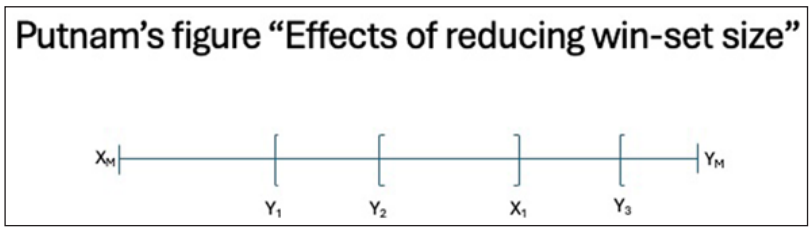

Figure 2 Robert D. Putnam's figure "Effects of reducing win-set size" (Putnam, 1988, p. 441).

The win-sets of on interlocking two-level game involving three parties cannot be described by a linear figure: each party would need their end of a line. In order to explain the interlocking two-level game between three negotiators, I thus turn to the three-level game shown in Figure 1, and add a negotiator on each level in a new two-level game shown in Figure 3. Here, the Level II circles overlap, with the overlapping area representing the range of win-sets from Putnam's linear range win-set sizes between each of the negotiators. The win-sets are here demonstrated by overlapping circles; these are determining factors for the two-level game to be interlocking. While an acceptable result serving as a win for Greenland does not necessarily mean a win for Denmark or the Unites States, the wins are, nevertheless, interdependent. For example, Denmark is interlocked because a failure to achieve agreement would harm its relationship with both Greenland and the United States. The state of that relationship is not a factor in determining a win for Greenland, however: Greenland can achieve a win by demonstrating new benefits from the U.S. military presence, including a more "independent" relationship

to the superpower, without Denmark necessarily supervising every step taken by Greenland. For example, Naalakkersuisut states in the 2021 foreign policy report that "Greenland's more active foreign policy shows that it is ready to replace the Joint Committee with a more direct bilateral cooperation with the U.S. without the need for Danish supervision" (Naalakkersuisut, 2021a, p. 39; author's own translation). In an interlocking two-level game analysis, win-sets that interlock more than two negotiators thus become the determining factors for a successful result for all parties. An interlocking two-level game thus occurs when the "gives" and "takes" in a particular negotiation not only end up benefitting all negotiators in a bargaining but lock them, also, in a position that would otherwise not have occurred.

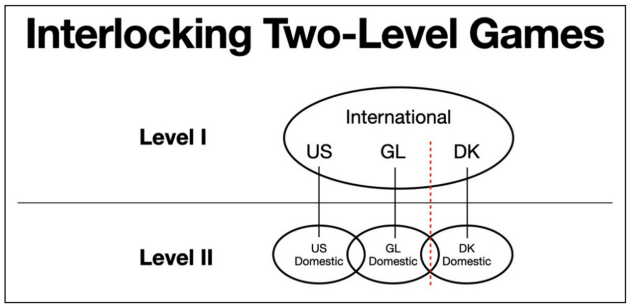

Figure 3 Interlocking two-level game illustrated in relation to the 2020 agreements between the United States and Greenland. Here, win-sets are reached between the three parties, and the Level I negotiations are conducted bilaterally between Greenland and the United States, with Denmark in a secondary role; thus the dashed line between Greenland and Denmark. (Source: author).

While Clive Archer foresaw the return to a two-level game in a scenario of a future independent Greenland, this article posits that the game playing out between Greenland (not yet an independent state but acting as a state-like polity) and the United States in 2020 was a new interlocking two-level game negotiation. In this game, Greenland and the United States engaged in direct negotiations, locking in the relationship with Denmark. This happened because win-sets occurred between all three actors; Greenland could communicate further benefits from U.S. military presence, as the new tender criteria for the Pituffik Space Base maintenance contract were now defined as Greenland wished them to be; Denmark could declare a continued good relationship to the United States; and the United States, itself, could continue its basing rights at Pituffik without much further effort or cost. If any one of these "wins" were lost, it would not be possible to interlock the win-sets.

Greenland continuously expressed its interests in engaging with the United States in many different ways, very publicly airing its wish for an increased U.S. military presence in Greenland while continuing its quieter diplomacy efforts through diplomatic representation in Washington.[2] At the same time, the United States paid increasing attention to maintaining good relations directly with Greenland as a way of avoiding several rounds of negotiations and preserving its basing rights on the island. These relations were interlocked through the United States' interest in making sure that Greenland aligned itself with the superpower, combined with the continuous push from Greenland and Denmark for a return to an arrangement where Greenlandic benefited from the U.S. presence in Greenland in more tangible and profitable fashion (Olsvig, 2022a). This new approach created new dynamics between Greenland, the United States, and Denmark; as this article argues, a new interlocking two-level game emerged from this.

An analysis of the processes leading to the interlocking two-level game and its win-sets, including a few thoughts on what the incitement to interlock each other would be, will be presented below, after an elaboration of the analysis's methods and the choice of materials.

METHOD AND CHOICE OF MATERIALS

The main empirical material in this paper is the 2020 set of agreements between Greenland and the United States that marked an end to a diplomatic crisis between Greenland, Denmark, and the U.S. They are highly interesting to analyse as they are a set, to be seen and understood

2 The Government of Greenland opened diplomatic representation in Washington, DC in 2014. Although each individual diplomat is technically part of the Danish foreign diplomatic corps, the representation refers to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Greenland, and answers to the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs.

in combination, and the four documents represent the culmination of a process of change in the trilateral relationship, and in ways of negotiating between Greenland, the United States, and Denmark.

The paper draws on 12 research interviews and several follow-up interviews with Greenlandic, Danish, and U.S. government officials conducted in 2021 and 2022. The interviews are used to understand both the nuances in the specific wording of the 2020 agreements and the processes and considerations informing who signed what and why. These research interviews were conducted for a broader study of the relationship between Greenland and the United States in the years 2018 and onwards – a period that was chosen because the U.S. Department of Defence issued a Statement of Intent in 2018 that drew attention to the country's desire to be involved in the development of critical infrastructure in Greenland. Thus, touching upon a range of developments, the significance of the 2020 agreements became clear in relation to the changed perception of Greenland's manoeuvres in its relationships to the United States and Denmark.

The research interviews were semi-structured, based on an interview guide with six overall themes that guided a conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview themes were about the role of the interviewee, the 2019 MoU's, a 2020 "USAID-package" of funding of initiatives the United States had introduced following the opening of the U.S. consulate in Nuuk, the United States's position in the Arctic, its presence in Greenland, and the Pituffik Space Base. Ten of the twelve interviews were recorded while note-taking; two were only documented through notetaking. Notes and transcripts of key passages were used in the analysis where focus was put on statements related to descriptions of the relationships between Greenland, the United States and Denmark. At follow-up interviews, specific questions related to the documents of the 2020 agreements were asked. Interviews were thereafter anonymised. The interviewees included two Danish government officials (interviewees A and D), four Danish parliamentarians, one of whom is a former minister (interviewees B, C, and F), two U.S. diplomats (interviewees E and G), three Greenlandic politicians, all of whom were ministers (interviewees H, I and J), and two Greenlandic government officials (interviewees K and L). Non-recorded follow-up interviews were done with many of the above-mentioned interviewees as well as other officials to triangulate the empirical data.

Furthermore, analyses of official documents, media outlets and parliamentary debates are used as equally important empirical data to further analyse the process and outcomes of the 2020 negotiations. In selecting official documents, such as new legislation and governmental reports, emphasis is put on the Greenlandic side of the negotiations in understanding the strategies behind, first, Greenland's push for a more direct relationship to the United States through the negotiations evolving around the question of future Pituffik maintenance contracts, and, second, the United States's incitement to strengthen direct negotiations with Greenland, within the constitutional construction of the Kingdom of Denmark. Also, the yearly reports on the foreign policy activities of the Government of Greenland offer an example of official documents specifically analysed with the loss of the Pituffik base maintenance contract and the consequences for relations with the United States in mind; the analysis of new tax legislation followed up on developments specifically mentioned in interviews. Analysis of these documents provides a clearer picture of the combination of effects from both the negotiations themselves and the outcomes of these negotiations.

The two-level analysis of this paper is explored in the above combination of empirical data. Following Putnam's theoretical suppositions, emphasis is put on identifying the interests of each party and the win-sets on Level I as expressed in interviews and documents, identifying the perception of the role of Greenland in the agreements, describe the circumstances of the negotiations, the strength of the state of Greenland during the proceedings, and how the win-sets were interlocked.

ANALYSIS: IDENTIFYING THE WIN-SETS OF EACH PARTY ON LEVEL I

For the United States, there seemed to be an interest in meeting Greenland's goals and in visibly positioning itself as a close and more direct partner and ally to Greenland, independently of

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Danish interest. For Denmark there was an interest in reassuring the United States of Greenland's alignment with the NATO alliance and of its own close relationship to the superpower. It was therefore important for Denmark that Greenland independently continued to develop a strong relationship with the United States, while continuing to be positioned closely to it through Greenland. The mutual interests in fixing each other into mutually beneficial positions became the interlocking factors in the new two-level game. As Danish and Greenlandic government officials expressed in interviews, there was a mutual understanding that it was in Denmark's interest that Greenland should develop a closer relationship with the United States, and that this was supported by Denmark (interviews A, H, I and L). Thus, the dashed line in Figure 3 illustrates the deliberate quality of Denmark and Greenland's intention to ensuring a high a degree of self-determination for Greenland in the 2020 decisions and negotiations.

As a reaction to the loss of the base maintenance contract, meetings of the trilateral Joint Committee were paused in 2014 at the initiative of Greenland, and were only restarted in 2021, after the conclusion of the 2020 agreements (Naalakkersuisut, 2022). It is important to note that the 2020 agreements were negotiated outside the Joint Committee, and thus not in a predetermined trilateral forum. The consensus among Greenlandic politicians was that while the benefits and income for Greenland from the U.S. military presence were insufficient and not tangible enough, there was also a growing questioning of Denmark's involvement. The clear messaging towards the United States about the loss of the maintenance contract, including the pausing of the Joint Committee, is referenced in the yearly foreign policy reports by Naalakkersuisut, the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019). It was clear that Greenlandic politicians were completely aligned and wanted to be the main negotiators towards the U.S. and to lay out the demands and principles of the negotiations without unnecessarily involving Denmark (Interviews I, J and L). When the meetings of the Joint Committee were resumed, the press release issued by Greenland and the United States mentioned only the two, while Greenland's then-Minister of Foreign Affairs referred to the meeting as a bilateral meeting (U.S. Embassy and Consulate in the Kingdom of Denmark, 2021). An interview with a Danish government official affirms that while Denmark took part in preparing the restart, it assumed a more passive role doing so and did not seek to be mentioned in the press release from the meeting (Interview A).

In the years 2019 and 2020, U.S. representatives increased their direct cooperation with Greenland, and two new bilateral Memoranda of Understanding were signed by the U.S. and Greenland (Fannon & Jensen, 2019; Fannon & Svane, 2019). The Memoranda were specific to legislative areas fully controlled by Greenland and were prepared as deliverables prior to a planned visit by then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in 2019 (Olsvig, 2022a). While the visit of the Secretary of State was cancelled, the Memoranda of Understanding were signed in May and June 2019 by other U.S. government officials; the other two signatories were Greenland's Minister for Mineral Resources and Labour and the Minister for Industry, Energy, and Research.

Furthermore, it was clearly messaged that there was a wish to solve the question of the Pituffik base maintenance contract. Pompeo stated on Danish national TV during a visit in the summer of 2020:

> We have Thule Air Force Base. We want to make sure we get that right for the people of Greenland. Everyone knows the challenges; they have been presented. … It is important that all three of us, the Kingdom of Denmark and the United States, work together to deliver that. That is our objective. (DR.DK, 2020)

At the same time, there was a sense of urgency in finalizing the agreements before the 2020 presidential election in the United States (interviews L and E). It was thus evident that, even before negotiations started, there was a shared understanding that a solution to the unsolved Pituffik base maintenance contract was necessary.

THE ROLE OF GREENLAND AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AGREEMENTS

The negotiations, finalized in late October 2020, resulted in four different and very specifically worded documents. Document 1, the "Common plan for US-Greenland Cooperation in Support of our Understanding for Pituffik (Thule Air Base)", was signed by then-premier of Greenland Kim Kielsen and then-U.S. Ambassador to Denmark Carla Sands (Sands & Kielsen, 2020). This

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document is highlighted by Greenlandic politicians and government officials as being the first agreement between the United States and Greenland specifically mentioning Pituffik, which would previously only be dealt with in a constellation including Denmark (interviews L and H). The "common plan", as the document is referred to by interviewees, does not directly relate to Pituffik and the U.S. military presence, but aims at ensuring a better cooperation on civilian matters, as well as ensuring a "common plan which supports our common understanding of a solution to the loss of the maintenance contract", as one interviewee put it (author's translation). Document 2, "Statement on Improved Cooperation in Greenland – Including at Pituffik (Thule Air Base)", is a verbal note. Document 3 is another verbal note on the criteria of awarding the base maintenance contract to a "Danish/Greenlandic source", referring to the agreement of 1991 on the use of Kangerlussuaq Airport. Finally, Document 4, a list of "Additional Initiatives for Improved Cooperation at Pituffik (Thule Air Base)", lays out the commitment of the U.S. Department of Defence to uphold promises of approving the use of Pituffik by the state-owned Air Greenland, while ensuring access to emergency care at the base for local people, outreach to local businesses concerning opportunities related to the military presence, search-and-rescue and research facilities, and improving attention to appropriate linguistic and cultural initiatives related to the base.

While the documents were different in nature, the combination of the four was highlighted by Greenlandic government officials as an important step for Greenland. They contained specific mention of "Greenland's key role in Greenlandic, U.S. and transatlantic security", with an emphasis on "Greenland's key role in Greenlandic, U.S., and transatlantic security" – which, according to the interviewee, had not previously been iterated with sufficient clearly (interview L). Further, in Document 3, "Statement on Improved Cooperation in Greenland Including at Pituffik" (signed "Embassy of the United States of America, Copenhagen October 27, 2020"), there was also specific mention of Greenland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a ministry in its own right. Mention of Greenland as an independent entity in relation to military issues, a new phenomenon, was considered by Greenlandic government officials as a recognition of Greenland as a political partner in its own right.

Agreement on the demand that the company contracted to maintain the base should be local was, clearly, a key factor (this was included in Document 3, the verbal note on the base maintenance tender criteria). As per 2020, prior to the October agreements, Greenlandic officials reached an understanding that they could not be assured by the United States that the maintenance contract would return to Greenlandic-Danish registered companies. There would, therefore, need to be another clear and tangible gain for Greenland related to the presence of the United States.

According to interviews with Greenlandic government officials, the four documents were negotiated over a relatively short period from July to October 2020. During his visit to Denmark in July 2020, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reiterated U.S. commitment to solving the issue of the base maintenance contract. At the same time, Greenlandic politicians and government officials had consistently made clear that solving the dispute and making sure that U.S. military presence in Greenland would again bring the greatest possible benefit, by ensuring the contract would be awarded to a Greenlandic-Danish company, was key to the further development of any relations with the United State. (interviews A, I, J, and L).

As there had previously been uncertainty about what constituted a "Greenlandic-Danish company" (Spiermann, 2015), Greenland investigated how its taxation laws could be strengthened to ensure as large an income from hosting foreign base maintenance companies in the country as possible (interview L). Following the October 2020 agreements, the government of Greenland initiated changes to Greenlandic tax legislation. The first change came in late 2020 with an amendment in the fiscal law for 2021. The second change came in 2021, with amendments to the tax law itself, including provisions ensuring "that companies that carry out work for foreign defence authorities in Greenland must be Greenlandic companies, with management in Greenland. The same applies to subcontractors, etc., to such companies." In its proposal to parliament, the government explained the purpose as ensuring Greenland's right to tax the profits and dividends of these companies. The government of Greenland further explained the proposal to be "a consequence of the understanding reached with the Government of the United States of America and the then-Government of Greenland in 2020",

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linking these changes directly to the October 2020 agreements (Naalakkersuisut, 2020, pp. 47–51; Naalakkersuisut, 2021b; author's translation).

A few things surrounding the 2020 negotiations between Greenland and the United States were seen by Greenlandic government officials as beneficial to their position. First, the more direct contact with the United States made it possible to reach a common understanding regarding issues of key importance for Greenland, namely that more direct and tangible benefits from the U.S. military presence were necessary, and that the base maintenance contract tender criteria had to include a demand for the company to be Greenlandic. In Naalakkersuisut's 2021 foreign policy report, the government of Greenland listed the criteria, noting that it was positive that the tender criteria returned to the originally intended obligations related to the Pituffik Space Base. It also noted, however, that Greenland did not fully achieve a clear prioritization of Greenlandic companies, as Danish companies would still be eligible. In the same paragraph, Naalakkersuisut highlighted the achievement of Greenland being officially recognized as important for U.S. homeland security (Naalakkersuisut, 2021a, p. 40).

Furthermore, there was momentum in 2020 because of the wish from the U.S. side to reach a solution before the presidential election. Second, the negotiations happened during Covid-19 restrictions, which resulted in the dialogue and the negotiations themselves happening online, which, according to one Greenlandic interviewee, made the unequal number of negotiators from each side less intimidating. Third, there was a broad consensus from both the Greenlandic parliament and government on the key importance of U.S. concessions on the issue of the base maintenance contract. Furthermore, several Greenlandic and Danish officials confirmed that, throughout the process, dialogue between the United States and Greenland took place without Denmark, and that this kind of "corridor" engagement was a positive for Greenland in detailing how to, for example, strengthen Greenlandic legislation to better ensure gains from the U.S presence. The "corridor talks" and meetings between Greenland and U.S. officials are well known by Danish officials. As one anonymously says: "There are lots of meetings between Greenland and the U.S. Is that a problem? No. Is it legally possible? No" – an allusion to the knowledge that these meetings concerned legislative areas that would lie under Danish authority, thus exemplifying the new Level II negotiations with the dashed line between Greenland and Denmark in Figure 2 (author's own translation).

As seen above, close and direct dialogue between Greenland and the United States increased during the years 2019–2020, and this dialogue did not always include Denmark. This left Greenland with greater room for manoeuvring and provided the United States with a position to engage with Greenland more directly.

GREENLAND DEMONSTRATES STATE STRENGTH AIMING FOR A MORE DIRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

Improved consensus across the Greenlandic parliament, government, and changing coalitions on how to approach the United States in the case of the Pituffik maintenance contract resulted in the possibility of bigger win-sets for Greenland and the United States. The government of Greenland continuously made sure that it had a clear mandate on which to negotiate. Interviewees all echo that a solution to the base maintenance contract issue was key for the further development of Greenland's relations to the United States. Greenland's position was, for the same reason, very transparent. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage for the chief negotiator. On one hand, the chief negotiator was in a strong position due to the high degree of consensus in Greenland; on the other, they were without the option to leave a round of negotiations to return to those they represent for consultations – both parliament and government took a hard line on the issue. The United States was thus clearly aware of Greenland's position, especially throughout the 2020 round of negotiations. Clear win-sets were made possible for the United States by their desire to finalize negotiations before the 2020 presidential election, thus avoiding further negotiation rounds.

According to Putnam (1988, p. 449), "state strength" includes a certain degree of ambiguity; representatives of a state unencumbered by the need to consider domestic pressures (due either to authoritarian governance or because the Level I negotiator anticipates support from constituents through institutional ratification) can negotiate from a position of strength. The

Greenlandic chief negotiator, however, would need prior approval from either the collective government or from parliament.

Greenland's Foreign Policy and Security Committee, under which the issue of the Pituffik base maintenance contract was debated, has no legal right to be included in decision-making processes on these matters, meaning it does not hold a particularly strong position with regards to the government (Olsvig & Gad, 2021); the government, that is, can choose to singlehandedly decide its negotiating mandate without the involvement of parliament. In addition to the ambiguous question of "state strength", this can create various situations for the negotiator, since a blurred mandate can both be an advantage and a disadvantage: the negotiator can either claim it is necessary to return to their constituency for consultations, or they can reassure the other party of having a clear and solid mandate on their negotiating position (Putnam, 1988, pp. 456–457). Uncertainty of the win-sets can be part of the game, and needs a strategically balanced approach to, on one hand, ensure credibility with the other party, and on the other, ensure the best possible bargaining position (Putnam, 1988, pp. 452–453).

The case of the 2020 agreements between the United States and Greenland is therefore an example of a two-level game where Greenland, through clear decision-making and position-taking, made its negotiation strategy clear and, thus, impactful. The U.S.-Greenland win-sets did not materialize from the beginning, as the United States was not immediately responsive to Greenland's demands after the 2014 loss of the base maintenance contract. Win-sets only occurred when Greenlandic and U.S. negotiators made clear that they were eager to find a solution, which required the United States to realise the urgency for Greenland in solving the Pituffik base maintenance contract issue while avoiding more lengthy and complex negotiation rounds, which could be achieved by working directly with Greenland.

INTERLOCKING GREENLAND'S AND DENMARK'S LEVEL IIs

The extent to which Greenland and Denmark's interests coincide depends on the case. In situations in which their interests are mutually exclusive (those cases with security and defence implications, for example), it might be in Denmark's interest to maintain sovereignty by controlling the policy developed. Greenland's interest may lie in testing its room for manoeuvre, precisely because of these implications – any policy development within the area of security and defence would be a de facto widening of Greenland's room for decision-making. In those cases I argue that, rather than "intra-realm" relations, as described by Clive Archer (2003, p. 126) to designate Greenland-Denmark positioning, or being a separate third level in a three-level game, what we see in the 2020 negotiations is an interlocking domestic Level II. Here, the three interlocking factors are: (a) Greenland's domestic politics as they pertain to relations with the United States and the need for Greenlandic negotiators to demonstrate an interdependence in Greenlandic and U.S. security relations; (b) Greenland's domestic politics as they pertain to issues related to the Pituffik base maintenance contract and the Greenlandic domestic push to solve the matter with a clear and favourable economic outcome; and (c) Greenland's domestic politics as they pertain to political relations with Denmark and the need for Greenland to demonstrate that negotiations with the United States could be led by Greenlandic negotiators (see the overlapping circles in Figure 2's Level II). In the interlocking Level II, the win-sets interlock the relations in that specific negotiation within Level II, instead of creating another layer of domestic or "intra-realm" Level III negotiations between Greenland and Denmark (see Figure 1), as was demonstrated in Clive Archer's 2003 analysis.

For Greenland, the domestic political needs were met through the three factors laid out above. At the same time, those three factors created interlocked relations to Denmark on one side and the United States on the other. Denmark's relations with the United States, as its most powerful ally, were an important driver; this precondition created room for manoeuvre for Greenland and obliged Denmark to intervene in the name of security concerns. Denmark could choose to intervene in concerns related to decision-making powers – but this could result in a muddying of the waters regarding the United States. The need to demonstrate the ability to negotiate directly with the United States was, then, the cause of the interlocked state, making it possible for Greenland to be the principal signatory in negotiations with the United States on Level I.

Greenland actively plays on its relation to the United States in its negotiations on Level I; given the great political and diplomatic costs to Denmark's relations with Greenland that would

result, Denmark, in those situations, has not had the option to renege (Putnam 1988, p. 438). At the same time, an agreement would not harm Denmark's relation to the United States – quite the reverse, in fact; if seen as further establishing Greenlandic cohesion with U.S. Arctic and geopolitical policies, Denmark would consider this a win-win-win. Interviewees underscore that it is a "a positive for Greenland, of course also for the United States. But it is also a positive for Copenhagen, that a part of the Kingdom of Denmark is now of particular interest for the United States" and that "there is uncertainty [from the United States] about what the Self-Government Agreement might bring with it, how the future looks for Greenland, and in that perspective, the United States maintains an increased interest in Greenland in different ways."(Interviewee A and D, both Danish government officials.)

Greenlandic politicians have been in situations where the lack of consensus has affected Greenland's participation in international agreements. Most recently, Greenland's stance on the Paris Agreement on climate change has been subject to changing mandates: plans to participate in the agreement were rolled back with a change of coalition in 2022. Internal party disputes have also previously changed Greenland's external messaging, as with the issue of U.S. military presence, which was subject to debate in 2021 when the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs aired his idea of exchanging the Danish military in Greenland fully with U.S. military. Two-level game theory tells us more about the underlying mechanisms within the constituencies of the parties. In the 2020 negotiations, Greenland desired a stronger and more direct relationship with the United States; acting within agreed-upon legislative areas that did not unnecessarily involve Denmark, was also seen as a "win" too: this could be seen as the performance of self-governance.

In the case of the 2020 agreements, Greenland demonstrated itself as a relatively independent party in a two-level game negotiation. This is the main change from the previous three-level game, where Denmark would have been a main negotiator, or a gatekeeper, so to speak, that would need to supervise Greenland's every step. Symptomatically, the October 2020 agreements were a complex of several documents, where the main document, the "common plan", was signed only by Nuuk and Washington while the rest of the documents were supporting verbal notes and statements, which included Denmark only when necessary. The common and overlapping Greenlandic and U.S. wish for the negotiations to first and foremost take place between the two was a clear factor in making the two-level game possible. Furthermore, the case demonstrates a situation in which were Greenland increasingly created and used its own room for manoeuvre. This happened in response to the behaviour of the United States.

This is a case, therefore, demonstrating how important it has been for Greenland to know more about the role of a small state-like polity engaging in successful two-level game negotiations with a great power state. Greenland has become better able to define its structural power and norms for its own benefit. Future consequences will be recognizable in situations where the positions of Greenland and Denmark do not align: Danish involvement in Greenlandic decision-making can only be considered as a step back in the self-government powers Greenland has gained.

CONCLUSION

Whereas previous negotiations on issues surrounding Pituffik and the general U.S. military presence in Greenland have been made through Denmark or within the trilateral arrangements in the Joint Committee and the Permanent Committee, the 2020 negotiations sidelined Denmark, making negotiations and dialogue between Greenland and the United States more direct. This change has in this article been understood through the analytical framework of Putnam's two-level game theory, expanded not with an additional Level III, as had previously been suggested by others, but by interlocking the win-sets of three separate negotiators in what this article calls a new interlocking two-level game.

The interlocking occurred through different win-sets. A "no-agreement" situation for Greenland would come with a high price domestically, as the loss would be twofold: first, a failure to solve the loss of the base maintenance contract in the form of securing increased and tangible benefits from the military presence of the United States, and second, failure to negotiate more directly with the United States, with Denmark continuing its supervisory, gatekeeping,

role, denying Greenland the opportunity to use the process to demonstrate a higher degree of self-determination. For the United States, the concessions made in the negotiation ensured that it could tangibly demonstrate a wish to be Greenland's main international partner in national and international security relations while ensuring continued access to basing rights in Greenland, without domestic quarrels threatening this position. Denmark's interest lay in supporting Greenland in reaching a solution to the issue of the lost base maintenance contract whilst ensuring Greenland would stay close to Denmark's main ally, the United States, without harming relations to either. The initial chaos created from each of the parties being caught in their domestic dynamics resulted in the loss of the base maintenance contract in 2014, from the Greenlandic perspective. This led to the loss of income taxes from activities at Pituffik; as this was related both to Danish constraints due to EU legislation and legislation (Spiermann, 2015), Denmark was forced into a position in which its negotiators were not able to renege if necessary. More, they did not want to further complicate matters, and it was in Denmark's interest to remain relatively silent and to let Greenland be the principal Level I negotiator.

All in all, this article argues that the 2020-agreements demonstrate how an interlocking two-level game can take shape when win-sets on each side become interdependent and interrelated, even if each of the three negotiators determines these win-states differently. The analysis demonstrates how nations that are greatly different in size, one being a small state-like nation, one a small state, and another a superpower, can engage in creating win-sets in spite of any asymmetry in size and constitutional positions as polities. The case adds a deeper understanding of the degree to which Greenland's foreign policy and its overall ambition to become independent of Denmark are interlinked, and how, step by step, Greenland takes every opportunity to assert its self-determination, without having the status of a full sovereign state. The article furthermore provides an addition to the distinct types of successful two-level games analysed in the relevant literature.

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The author of this paper gave up their position as an elected figure in Greenlandic politics in 2018 and analyse in this article developments that occurred thereafter.

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Part III: Reflection, Discussion, Contributions, Conclusion and Outlook

Reflection: The thin line of self-determination

In the second part of the thesis, I will reflect on the five publications, the methodological and theoretical approach applied in them, and relate their findings to the overall research question of the thesis: *How do relations between Greenland and the US affect Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic.* I will also discuss the theoretical and empirical findings of the publications, while a decolonial retrospect is included before the conclusion. The conclusion will be followed by an outlook on U.S. President Trump's new focus in 2025 of seeking "ownership and control" over Greenland.

Five interlinked publications

In this thesis, I mainly present empirical contributions and the thesis' strength lies within that regime. Nevertheless, the background chapters included in the thesis lay a foundation for the following rationalist analyses of the analytical articles. Such an approach could have been the main objective of the thesis and that would have required a much deeper analysis and discussion of the IR theories applied, their interrelations, weaknesses and strengths. Instead, my focus is on the empirical findings, and while the theoretical discussions will be laid out in the following, I will first summarize the publications with their empirical findings in focus.

The three analytical articles of the thesis explore key aspects of Greenland's evolving foreign relations, focusing on its interactions with the U.S. and Denmark. The first article utilizes process-tracing methods to examine the 2014 diplomatic crisis over the 'loss of the Pituffik Space Base maintenance contract'. This dispute led to negotiations between Greenland and the U.S., culminating in two Memoranda of Understanding and an economic growth package. The article investigates the factors driving Greenland and the U.S. toward deeper direct cooperation and examines how their relationship has evolved over the past two decades. The second article adopts a rationalist theoretical approach to analyze Greenland's action space based on three cases. It explores how the small State-like nation strategically maneuvers its relationships with Denmark, the U.S., and other great powers such as China and Russia. Through an examination of official documents, media reports, and elite interviews, the article illustrates how Greenland leverages its ambiguous position within Danish governance structures to shape policies and expand its autonomy. The third article

applies an interlocked, two-level game framework to assess the case of the 2020 agreements concerning the Pituffik Space Base. By analyzing the positioning of Greenland, Denmark, and the U.S. throughout the negotiation process and in the final agreements, the article argues that these talks marked a turning point in Greenland-U.S. relations, moving toward more direct bilateral engagement. Drawing on key interviews and media sources, the article highlights how this shift has redefined Greenland's diplomatic role.

In combination, these articles provide a comprehensive perspective on the evolution of Greenland's evolving geopolitical position as it unfolded in the years 2014 to 2021, emphasizing its increasing agency in foreign affairs and the complex dynamics shaping its relationships with Denmark, the U.S., and other global powers.

The three articles employ a rationalist analysis on a constructivist backdrop of two background chapters published in anthologies on north-Atlantic and Arctic security. The first background chapter challenges a purely neo-realist perspective on international relations, which focuses solely on military capabilities and economic power (Olsvig & Gad 2021a). From a neo-realist perspective, Greenland appears insignificant as a foreign and security policy actor, much like the small State of Denmark in the event of a great-power conflict. However, in practice, and in a constructivist perspective, U.S. military actions in Greenland are governed by agreements with Denmark, while Denmark, in turn, no longer dictates foreign and security policy over Greenland without its involvement. This suggests that international politics operates beyond mere power politics, creating space for even small actors to influence global affairs.

The chapter explores two key questions: first, how Greenland, despite its small size, has managed to carve out a role in international politics, and second, what tensions exist within the relationship with Denmark regarding foreign and security policy. To address the first question, the chapter applies sociological concepts of norms, roles, and legitimacy to analyze Greenland's gradual integration into the international community. This constructivist approach helps explain internal tensions within the Realm. By conceptualizing the Realm as a "society" where Greenland and Denmark generate legitimacy based on shared norms and roles, and by examining how Greenlandic policymakers navigate these dynamics, the chapter provides deeper insight into the tensions heightened by increased great-power interest in the region. The analysis focuses primarily on Greenland's relationship with the U.S., as this

partnership has been crucial in shaping the norms surrounding Greenland's role in foreign and security policy. Furthermore, the U.S.-Greenland relationship has previously been framed almost exclusively in security terms, an area of foreign policy where formalized norms have traditionally placed the greatest restrictions on Greenland's autonomy.

The second background chapter examines the securitization of Greenland by the U.S., analyzing how perceived threats have been used to justify extraordinary security measures at different points in history (Jacobsen & Olsvig 2024). Using the Copenhagen School of Securitization framework, the chapter focuses on three key aspects: the scale at which threats have been articulated (international, regional, or national), the intended audiences for these securitization acts, and their cascading effects. These perspectives help answer the core research question of the chapter: Why has the U.S. securitized Greenland, how have these securitization efforts been received, and what have been the consequences? The chapter finds that U.S. securitization of Greenland has historically been shaped by broader security concerns, positioning the island as a crucial geostrategic asset in protecting U.S. interests and maintaining the balance of power against shifting adversaries. The rationale for securitization has varied over time, with threats framed in different contexts, such as the "Western Hemisphere," "NATO area," or "international peace," in an attempt to legitimize extraordinary security measures. Denmark and Greenland's roles in this process have also evolved; at times, they have been viewed as passive observers, while at other times, Greenland and Denmark have been active participants, endorsing and enforcing U.S.-driven security measures—even when these conflicted with domestic laws or had negative local consequences.

The chapter highlights the unequal power dynamics at play. In some instances, the U.S. has implemented security measures before formally justifying them through securitization rhetoric, revealing the limitations of Denmark and Greenland's agency in these decisions. Examples include storing nuclear munition, and Camp Century – a nuclear powered 'city under the ice' (Petersen 2011, Nielsen & Nielsen 2016). Furthermore, for much of the historical period examined, Greenland was a colony of Denmark, meaning it had little to no say in U.S.-Denmark security deliberations until the introduction of Greenlandic home rule in 1979. By examining the cascading effects of U.S. securitization in Greenland, the chapter sheds light on often-overlooked consequences of U.S. security interests in the Arctic,

emphasizing how these measures have shaped Greenland's geopolitical position and the broader Arctic security landscape.

The role of the constructivist backdrop

The background chapters take a top-down constructivist view, analyzing Greenland's ties with the U.S. and Denmark through norms and legitimacy. In contrast, the analytical articles use a rationalist game-theory approach to examine Greenland's decision-making. In line with Fearon and Wendt (2002), this thesis treats rationalism and constructivism as complementary rather than conflicting. Constructivism explores actions perceived as appropriate, while rationalism assesses pragmatic choices. Rather than a theoretical contest, it highlights the interplay between perception and strategy in Greenlandic foreign policy.

This thesis takes the point of departure that Greenland *is* an actor and has legitimacy in its own right, as laid out in the first background chapter. The second background chapter in part explains how that role as an actor in its own right, and the legitimacy of Greenland's actions, have changed over time, entering into a higher degree of recognition since Home Rule and Self-Government were introduced. The constructivist approaches of the two background chapters thus serve as a good backdrop to understand Greenland's current actions and room for maneuverings and helped me in entering the rationalist analyses. The constructivist top-down analyses provided a useful platform for further analysis of the bottom-up events in the five case-units.

Discussion

The three analytical articles include a selection of methodological and theoretical tools, and although I emphasize discussion of the empirical findings, they include theoretical discussions building on existing literature within those fields. I will elaborate on the methods within both the empirical and theoretical approaches in the following section.

Process tracing – the causal mechanisms

Based on the processes and related events around case-unit III, the MoUs signed in 2019, I provide a process tracing analysis of the changes and development of the Greenland-U.S.

relationship (Olsvig 2022a). I first and foremost contributed to empirical findings by conducting the process tracing analysis but also provide insight into how Greenland conducted its foreign negotiation in this case. My findings thus serve as a steppingstone to further understanding and analyzing the more theoretical two-level game approaches in the continued analysis (Olsvig 2022b, Olsvig 2024).

The causal mechanism concluded from the process tracing analysis, being 1) Greenland implementing self-determination, 2) the self-determining powers of Greenland becoming evident to the U.S., 3) Denmark accepting that Greenland acts on its own behalf, resulting in 4) a direct and bilateral process between Greenland and the U.S. being possible, was a characteristic I found in the overall development of the Greenland and the U.S relationship (Olsvig 2022a). In the case of the 2019 MoUs time and space for discussions with Denmark prior to the signing of the MoUs were limited and *de facto* the agreements were sealed without Denmark's involvement. Therefore, from a Greenlandic perspective, leaving out mechanism 3 would probably seem most appropriate because the outcome of engaging with the U.S. bilaterally would likely be the same regardless of Danish involvement since the areas being negotiated are under Greenlandic jurisdiction. From a U.S. perspective, inviting Danish involvement would likely help maintain good relations with Denmark, but the U.S. also had an interest in demonstrating a willingness to engage directly with Greenland. However, seen from a Danish perspective – especially that of a strict legal Danish constitutional perspective - the mechanism would be needed to *de jure* justify the *act* of bilateralism.

Just like there was no time for Greenland to conduct proper decision-making in the case of the Arctic Capacity Package, the MoU process did not leave time for Denmark to properly conduct a decision-making process internally and thus the 'nod' to the MoUs was done immediately. On the contrary, in the case of the Arctic Capacity Package, there was a year's long delay before Greenland consented to the agreement after securing the changes to the Package identified through its internal deliberations. In both cases, the lack of inclusion of the counterpart in the Danish Realm created political turmoil.

Understanding the development in a three-step causal mechanism that does not include Danish approval of an agreement between Greenland and the U.S., or in four step causal mechanism that includes Danish approval thus depends on the case, and on how one understands the formality (*de jure*) vs. the practical (*de facto*) role of Denmark's approvals.

Seen from a Danish perspective, a *de jure* approach would entail Denmark asserting its jurisdiction over foreign affairs and the military under the Constitution, while a *de facto* approach would recognize that Greenland, in practice, conducted its own decision-making in these cases.

In the case of the 2019 MoUs, one can thus argue, that the causal mechanism three could have been left out depending on whether one sees the inclusion or approval by Denmark as a mere formality or in fact a necessary political step. If Greenland had not asserted its right to self-determination in this case, the causal mechanism would have included an invitation or notice from Greenland to Denmark requesting their involvement. However, Greenland chose to only inform Denmark at a very late stage, prompting the 'nod' to the agreements with no decision-making process in Denmark (Olsvig 2024).

In the analyses of the process of agreeing on the 2019 MoUs, I include a follow-up on Clive Archer's two-level game analysis from 2003, arguing that the MoUs are an example of what Archer called 'side-payments' from the U.S. to obtain acceptance of their military presence in Greenland (Olsvig 2022a). I argued that the MoU and the subsequent USAID funding are a 'civilian means to security goals'. The side-payments were defined by a shared understanding between Greenland and the U.S. as well as between the U.S., Greenland, and Denmark that if the U.S. and Greenland delimited their areas of doing business to areas under Greenland's jurisdiction, they would have a larger action space to achieve their shared objectives (Olsvig 2022a). On one hand, the MoUs are an example of Greenland expanding its action space and thus asserting its self-determination yet depending on how one views the *de facto* vs. *de jure* role of Denmark, Greenland's actions were still contingent on Danish acceptance.

Forbidden policy options

In the analysis of how Greenland tested its action space, I argue that the action space itself is ambiguous (Olsvig 2022b). Mouritzen explains that action space is a tool that is particularly useful for analyzing asymmetrical relationships between large and small States, and that a small State's action space usually decreases in times of tension, meaning in times when great power rivalry and State security issues spill over into areas under their jurisdiction (Mouritzen 2006: 117). I argue that instead of automatically decreasing in response to such developments, Greenland's action space becomes ambiguous (Olsvig 2022b). It does so for

several reasons. First, Greenland seems to be out of category within IR; on the one hand it is not a sovereign State but on the other hand its jurisdiction extends beyond that of a self-governing territory or enclave bound by rigid legal authorities. It is therefore helpful to conceive of Greenland as a State-like polity.

To better understand and analyze the actions of this State-like polity, I thus took a two-fold approach. First, Petersen's approach was used to *characterize* the action space, concluding that the grey zones – meaning how far Greenland could 'push' its jurisdictional boundaries - were used actively as a tool, while Mouritzen's approach was used to analyze the methods used by decision-makers to identify their action space, increasing and decreasing the permitted policy option in a back and forth play with Denmark.

I thus examined what Greenland *can* do and *why* Greenland (and the U.S. and Denmark) chooses specific courses of action (Olsvig 2022b, Olsvig 2024). In my action space analysis, I explored the permitted and forbidden policy options based on Hans Mouritzen's model (2006) as well as the triangle of action space provided by Nikolaj Petersen in his model of external and internal factors, as well as level of ambition of a State (2005). In my analyses, it became clear that there are forbidden options for Greenland, and that these forbidden options are clearly defined by the external great power, the U.S. It also became clear that U.S. diplomacy with Greenland and Denmark is to a large degree shaped by great power rivalry and thus the U.S.' perceptions of other States such as China and Russia. Whereas the decision-making power between Greenland and Denmark is ambiguous, the forbidden policy options are unambiguously clear - meaning, the message from the U.S. to Greenland is 'choose a side and choose us, not China or Russia'.

The ambiguity of Greenland's action space

As Mouritzen makes clear, small States are at risk of confusing their action space, or influence over their own behavior, with the capability of influencing the behavior of other States (Mouritzen 2006: 115). In analyzing the five cases, I conclude that Greenland has increasingly learned to differentiate between influence capability and action space over the time span of these cases (Olsvig2022b). This can also be seen as a natural development of implementing greater self-determination. I discuss how Greenland seemingly knows how to 'fly trial balloons', for example, when Greenland's then Minister of Foreign Affairs

suggested that the U.S. military replace the Danish military presence in Greenland, while being well aware that this would cause Denmark and the U.S. to react. The question is whether Greenland did so to test the reactions of both the U.S. and Denmark. If so, this would be risky, as trial balloons can be misinterpreted by others as formal policy positions (Mouritzen 2022).
Similar trial balloons are indeed risky in light of the current Trump administration's stated intentions to own and control Greenland. Regardless, the cases analyzed seem to serve as lessons for Greenland to increase its understanding of its own action space and characterizing Greenland as a State-like polity has helped me to better understand and describe Greenland's foreign policy and conduct towards the U.S.

Interlocking two-level games

While the action space analysis focused on analyzing the rationale of the internal as well as the external factors influencing Greenland's action space, I dug further into a two-level game analysis of the internal rationale of both the U.S. and Greenland behind the aims for win-sets and bilateral agreements (Olsvig 2024).

The catalyst of Greenland's ability to engage in a two-level game with the U.S. is on one hand the action space Greenland has created *and* gained a greater understanding of. On the other hand, Greenland has understood that there can be more than one issue at stake in a negotiation. As Putnam writes, "Relaxing [the assumption that negotiations involve only one issue] has powerful consequences for the play at both levels. Various groups at Level II are likely to have quite different preferences on the several issues involved in a multi-issue negotiation" (Putnam 1988: 446).

By knowing exactly where the grey zones end and the limits of the action space are, Greenland was able to engage both Denmark and the U.S. in what I introduce as an interlocking two-level game. The level two domestic politics factors in Greenland that made the interlocking possible were based on the interdependence between Greenland and the U.S. in terms of security. Here, there is a distinction between what is a need and what is a preference. Greenland needs the U.S. and vice versa for security concerns, and within that space, the Greenlandic preference was to solve the loss of the base maintenance contract to re-establish benefit from the U.S. presence. Furthermore, Greenland's preference was to lead

its own negotiations and by doing so asserts its self-determination and autonomy. All these factors mattered for Greenland, maybe more than they mattered for Denmark.

The factors that were drivers for Denmark were not needs as such. Denmark's preference to meet Greenland's demands were driven by a desire to avoid unnecessary quarrels – quarrels that the U.S. had earlier pointed to as muddying the waters. For the U.S., the need was to ensure continued access to having military bases, with a preference for avoiding further renegotiations with Greenland (Olsvig 2024). The U.S.' positioning itself as Greenland's 'new best friend' and alternative partner to Denmark was thus another factor resulting in the interlocking two-level game, as the U.S. and Greenland knew each other's needs and preferences and were thus able to play these preferences in a way that interlocked Denmark to approve this approach.

In the most recent events of early 2025, the waters seem to continue being 'muddy' for the U.S., as doubt about who 'owns' and 'controls' Greenland have clearly been expressed by the Trump administration. I will discuss this further in the 'outlook' following the conclusion of this thesis. The question is whether we will see more 'interlocking two level-games' between Greenland, the U.S. and Denmark in the future, or if the trilateral relationship has now been so disrupted that a whole new model for understanding the power play and games between them will be needed. Nevertheless, the example of how an interlocking two-level game can occur between odd couples, or 'throuples', serves as an example of how a State-like entity engaged in a two-level game can advance its interest amidst multiple external factors while widening its own action space.

Following up on the three hypotheses

The three hypotheses presented in the methodology chapter, being 1) increased bilateral and diversified cooperation between Greenland and the U.S. expands Greenland's self-determination, 2) U.S. diversification of cooperation with Greenland primarily serves its homeland security interests, and 3) heightened U.S. focus on military security may constrain Greenland's self-determination, all have truth to them.

Greenland has, in the particular cases of the MoUs, the 2020 agreements and to some extent the airports and the Arctic Capacity Package, increased self-determination in the decision-

making processes. But the hypothesis that the U.S. is diversifying its relationship to Greenland to uphold its basing rights is also true, and it is especially true seen from the perspective of the case of the Kangilinnguit naval base, where Greenland's action space was simply eliminated due to great power interests, and a unilateral decision made by Denmark. The question is thus whether or not the hypothesis that Greenland is expanding its self-determination is correct. It is only true when Greenland chooses to act within the greater framework of action space that satisfies the U.S. The hypothesis that the heightened U.S. presence limits Greenland's self-determination is thus also true, as demonstrated in the Kangilinnguit case, and we are seeing a similar development in 2025, where we see the U.S. seeking to assert dominance over Greenland and Denmark.

The fact that the three hypotheses all have truth to them point to the U.S.' actions being steered by great power interests to maintain power over and access to Greenland, even through negotiations that will ease this access through either cooperation with Denmark or direct accept from Greenland. In the cases analyzed in this thesis, the U.S. employs a defensive realism, continuing its international position and acting on a security dilemma created by predominantly Russian and Chinese actions. The U.S. does leave space for negotiations as understood in the rationalist theoretical approach applied in the three analytical articles and allows for a constructivist understanding in acknowledging Greenland's agency as a negotiator. Relating this to the most recent events, further discussed in the outlook at the end of this thesis, the 2025 U.S. talks of 'ownership and control' seems to represent an offensive realist approach motivated by hegemonic and expansionist goals (Wivel 2002).

A decolonial retrospect

A further analysis of what Greenland is and where it came from – or where its people came from – could have been helpful to the discussion of power relations in this study. Several historians and other scholars point to the decolonization process of Greenland not always being accurately described, and in many postcolonial studies, the point of departure tends to be colonization itself (Heinrich 2012, Scarpa 2024). But Greenland was inhabited before colonization and for centuries and millennia Inuit used and occupied Greenland, Arctic Canada and Alaska, and parts of Chukotka (Russia). As a semi-nomadic people, Inuit followed the game and weather changes, and only within the past 100-300 years, people

settled in towns and settlements (Gulløv 2004). In my family, we only need to go two generations back to my *aanaa*, my grandmother, who as a child grew up in a traditional turf house.

So, who and what defines our point of departure, when we analyze political development, and what does the conventional Western scientific approach to analyzing self-determination and actions space limit us from seeing? My point of departure is that Inuit have the inherent right to exercise self-determination, and that Greenland inherently exercises that right. Greenland is seldomly viewed from that perspective in political science literature, and I have wondered what the default point of departure of colonization does to the approach of many analyses.

Often, scholars have viewed the public governance system as a juxtaposition to Indigeneity, portraying the broader international law regimes as contradictory to the status, rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples in international law (Strandsbjerg 2014; Jacobsen 2020). Some scholars have analyzed how postcolonial governance lies implicitly in the Greenlandic governance systems (Gad 2017, Olesen 2018, Østergaard & Arnaut 2023). Rauna Kuokkanen is one of the few scholars who argues that "[there] are two Inuit discourses in Greenland: the discourse of shared, overlapping sovereignties emerging from the global Indigenous self-determination movement, and the Westphalian conception of sovereignty". She contends that "Greenland poses yet another Indigenous challenge to Westphalian sovereignty – Indigenous Westphalian Sovereignty where the two Inuit discourses of sovereignty converge" (2021: 316). I agree with this perspective and could have employed these perspectives more clearly in introducing my point of departure in the analytical articles. But seen in isolation, rationalist analyses do what they do, regardless of characterization of government regime or broader legal regime – in a rationalist analysis, the acts of self-determination are the same, and thus this approach works in analyzing Greenland as a State-like polity.

In contrary to my experiences in conducting this study, Robbie Shilliam argues with a sociological perspective, that "IR has experienced the greatest "decolonizing" impulse" (2021: 147), as "you can visualize [..] international politics in terms of the intersection of two kinds of lines. One line is horizontal and comprised, in principle, of equitable relations between polities. The other lines are vertical, comprising each empire's hierarchical governing structure. Empires civilized by creating a hierarchical order comprised of the metropolitan society, then self-governing white settler colonies, and then at the bottom,

dependencies comprised of non-white, "native" populations. Outside of the family of civilized politics and outside their empires - beyond the intersecting lines – lay disorder" (Ibid.: 123). I agree in principle with Shilliam but note that many non-Indigenous researchers do not include this aspect.

When Danish citizens voted to amend the Danish Constitution in 1953 to end Greenland's formal designation as a colony and re-cast it as a county within Denmark, the citizens of Greenland were excluded from voting. The UN decolonization processes which enabled former colonies to declare independence and then pursue development based on an unambiguous political independence was a choice that historians argue was not presented to Greenlandic politicians at the time (Heinrich 2012). Regardless of the fact that the people of Greenland did not formally have decision-making power as their governance bodies legally only had consultative status, it would be an incredibly disrespectful approach to think that Greenlanders were not capable of making decisions themselves. Other colonized peoples across the globe did.

Without going much further into the specifics of these historical processes, I am including this here to draw attention to the need for not just 'postcolonial' studies, but 'decoloniz*ing*' studies and approaches within IR. The point of departure must be that Greenland already in 1953 had agency and an inherent right to self-determination, recognized by the UN but not implemented by Denmark when the Constitution was changed to assimilate Greenland into being a county within Denmark.

This thesis (or more specifically, the three analytical articles) is not a post-colonial study, and it did not - from the outset - attempt to be a decolonizing study. I have studied how Greenland acts, taking the stance of analyzing Greenland *as if* it was a State, i.e. a *de jure* legalistic approach as opposed to Shilliam's sociological approach. In the legalistic IR approach, I do not see IR as having gone through the greatest 'decolonizing impulse'. In fact, I see quite the contrary, as Western imperialistic understandings of power, hierarchies, coloniality and legal regimes still reign within IR literature. Thus, this thesis offers another kind of decolonial answer than if I had approached analyzing these cases with a paradiplomacy lens or another more sociological theoretical framework in analyzing non-State actors.

Contributions of the thesis

As detailed above, the thesis first and foremost provides new empirical insights, including into previously unknown decision-making processes surrounding agreements with the U.S. and between Greenland and Denmark. Through interviews and case studies, the thesis also contributes new knowledge by providing insight into the thinking behind Greenlandic decision-making and political aspirations. While empirical insights remain the most important aspect of the thesis, it also contributes to advancing our understanding of how international politics works, particularly in highly asymmetrical relations.

The theoretical contributions revolve around analyzing Greenland as a State-like polity with legitimacy in its own right. I analyze how Greenland has navigated negotiations with a great power while moving away from Denmark into a more independent action space for foreign policy development. Here, one significant contribution is an addition to Putnam's two-level game analysis apparatus with an interlocking two-level game analysis serving as a tool to understand how several states, of which not all need to be sovereign States, can interlock each other in the negotiations through identifying the factors that create win-sets for each of them, and lock each other in positions that secure benefits for all, regardless of asymmetrical polity size. This is important because IR involves more and more States, and in a multipolar world, relations will rarely be symmetrical. The significance of small States may increase globally, and in the Arctic in particular, non-State actors have long been part of its institutions and governance structures yet are seldomly assigned significance in analyses of geopolitical developments in the region.

Another theoretical contribution is the expansion of Nikolaj Petersen's triangle of action space, where Greenland's use of its undefinable grey zones within both the internal and external limitations as well as its ambitions, serve as an advantage in negotiations, because the *ambiguity* creates the action space. Furthermore, relating Greenland to Hans Mouritzen's model of permitted and forbidden policy options, I have shown how Greenland, like other small States, employs a range of methods to test its grey zones of action space, thereby learning more about its permitted and forbidden policy options. This is important because it is important to better understand how small States, by knowing their action space, can contribute to - and increasingly influence - the overall IR development, especially in eras of multipolarity.

The thesis thus contributes new knowledge to the field about how and why Greenland conducts foreign policy. It also contributes to ways to apply and further develop existing theoretical tools to analyze non-State actors in their pursuit of legitimacy and influence in specific negotiations.

Conclusion

This Ph.D.-project grew out of a desire to learn and discover the why's and how's of Greenland's path to widen its own say in its relationship with Denmark. Greenland's relationship with the U.S. is changing, and events and agreements over the past 10-15 years serve as good cases to analyze that relationship. The U.S. and Greenland have a longstanding relationship not only defined by sharing a continent but through defense agreements signed by Denmark when Greenland was still a colony. Greenland quite literally delivers an indispensable part of U.S. homeland security through the current Pituffik Space Base, and whereas earlier geopolitical interests of the U.S. were embodied by various military installations established throughout the past century, U.S. interests took other forms. These include Memoranda of Understanding, re-establishment of a consulate, bilateral negotiations, and participation in a power play that serves Greenland's interests to become more self-determining from Denmark.

The answers to the main research question of this thesis: *How do relations between Greenland and the U.S. affect Greenland's self-determination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic,* are threefold:

1) The overall geopolitical developments, and the U.S. attention to these developments and their effects on a global scale, delimit Greenland's self-determination. But within that delimitation, Greenland has at times increased its self-determination towards Denmark. The level to which the U.S. relationship to Greenland affect Greenland's decision-making and self-determination depends on how well Greenland has identified its own action space (internal limitation), and how the U.S. positions itself in relation to other great powers and their overall influence in Greenland and in the Arctic at large (external limitation).

2) There is a thin and delicate line between greater self-determination on the one hand and the loss of hard-won rights on the other. If Greenland steps outside of what is a permitted policy option within the interest sphere of the U.S. by, for example, choosing a closer relationship with China or Russia, Greenland will be limited by the U.S. in its policy options and thus its self-determination. Greenland's ambitions also play a role, and in this thesis, cases of Greenland deploying high ambitions to act on its own behalf toward the U.S. are included, contributing to the understanding of how small State-like polities can engage in negotiations with great power States.

3) The U.S. interest in Greenland has increased due to increased tension and great power rivalry (or conflict) overspill into the Arctic, but paradoxically also because Greenland is pursuing greater self-determination and is changing its relationship with Denmark. The U.S. has grappled with understanding what the Greenland-Denmark relationship is and how it works and certainly continues (as of January 2025) to grapple with how to approach a State-like polity with a high degree of self-determination in the Arctic.

Greenland's importance to the U.S. homeland security has probably been more obvious to U.S. government officials, both in current times and for almost two centuries, than for Greenlandic government officials. In the meantime, Danish government officials have at times been forced to balance the intra-realm development and maneuvered their way through the changing conditions. Danish and U.S. actions in and about Greenland have been surrounded by secrecy and only in recent years, since the end of the 1980s, beginning of the 90s, more clear information and deliberations on Greenland's positions have been communicated.

During the period between 2014-2021 – with the knowledge of its own significance to the U.S. - Greenland tested its action space towards the U.S. and towards Denmark. In that game, the U.S. was first and foremost a partner for Greenland's push to gain more self-determination from Denmark. It is important to reiterate that the U.S. is an inevitable partner for Greenland, and that Greenland is today absolutely and acutely aware of its own significance for U.S. homeland security and great power rivalry. Therefore, Greenland finds itself in a paradox: if Greenland finds ways to work with the U.S., its self-determination can increase toward Denmark.

The conclusion is thus that while the cases and analysis in this thesis demonstrate how Greenland can navigate and assert self-determination, there is a certain limit to where that self-determination ends in the eyes of the U.S. However, the U.S., at least up until the end of 2024, has demonstrated that it wants to take Greenland seriously, and partner with the small State-like polity in a respectful and equal manner, to meet its own desire of ensuring continued access to basing and military presence in Greenland. Denmark has similarly expressed support for Greenland pursuing self-determination within the existing relationship and reiterated that with the Self-Government Agreement at hand, it is up the people of Greenland to declare independence.

In Greenland, one change in language showcases that the Greenlandic politicians have seen and understood the geopolitical reality and limits of what was previously called 'independence'. Among the current five national political parties, as well as in the draft Constitution for a future independent Greenland, it is now specified that Greenland's aim is statehood rather than 'independence' (Tunngavik 2023). This underscores Greenland's increased awareness of how a small State-like polity, or a future small State, will need to engage in clear alliances, especially in an increasingly multipolar world order.

In recent years, Greenlandic politicians have become clearer in their communications about positioning Greenland clearly in the overall world geopolitics. During the first weeks of 2022 amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Greenlandic politicians expressed a clear position – including expectations of forming future alliances - within the Western and NATO alliance. That Greenland will pursue future partnerships in State-to-State relations - in the form of a union, commonwealth or association - within the Western alliance is thus clear, and as of spring 2025, all political parties in Greenland have expressed, that that partner will most likely continue to be Denmark. The question is whether and how the U.S. will react to Greenlandic statehood if and when it is achieved. As we see in 2025, the U.S. is not only monitoring the developments in Greenland, but also in Denmark in terms of Danish military presence in Greenland. Greenland's action space and room for maneuvering its self-determination thus continues to evolve around the broader geopolitical development on one hand, and the specific U.S. interests on the other.

Outlook: From ‘win the hearts and minds’ to ‘divide and conquer’?

December 2024 and early 2025 marked a new turn in the U.S. approach to Greenland when President Trump, as he took office in his second term, introduced new and more dramatic rhetoric towards Greenland. In December 2024, President Trump expressed the need for U.S. ‘ownership and control’ of Greenland without ruling out the potential use of military force to gain U.S. control of Greenland (Hutzler 2024, Weissert & Miller 2025). On January 7, 2025, Trump’s son, Donald Jr., arrived in Nuuk on a “personal visit”, drawing extensive international media attention. Claiming to be a tourist, he falsely reported back to right-wing U.S. media that Greenland wanted to become part of the U.S. (Nilsson-Julien 2025). These claims were quickly countered by an opinion poll showing that the vast majority of Greenlanders do not want to become Americans (Reuters 2025). The controversies sparked new international attention, and together with President Trump’s expressed interests in Canada, the Panama Canal, and Palestine, posed the bigger question of whether the U.S. will abandon the international rules-based order.

While the incentive behind these moves might have been the same as the incentive behind the 2018 U.S. DoD Statement of Intent introduced on the first pages of this thesis, the change in rhetoric was significant. The SoI expressing U.S. military interests in Greenland’s new critical airports was a subtle way to express a U.S. need for interference in how Greenland develops its infrastructure and who Greenland does business with. In 2021, shortly after the Biden administration took office, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken visited Greenland, “to demonstrate that the way we see the relationship is as a partnership” (McGwin 2021). The mutually respectful way of communicating continued at the renaming ceremony of the Pituffik Space Base in April 2023, where the U.S. Ambassador to Denmark reiterated the “significance of [the partnership] with the entire Kingdom of Denmark” (Leventhal 2023).

The change of rhetoric from the U.S. President happened amid developing dynamics between Greenland and Denmark, as the Greenlandic Prime Minister in December spoke out on Denmark’s possible genocide through prevention of births in Greenland in the 1960s and 70s continuing Danish human rights violations towards Greenlanders (Arndt 2023). The U.S. clearly used the media attention around this in their early January 2025 media campaigns, portraying Greenlanders as wanting to become part of the U.S. rather than Denmark, due to gross human rights violations.

Greenland's previous and new government clearly rejected the expressed desires of the U.S. president to control or take over Greenland by force. In early 2025, the Greenlandic government seemed engaged in a silent diplomatic effort to address the underlying interests of the U.S. in terms of partnerships on resource development, building on the already established relationship. Personnel from Greenland's diplomatic representations in China and Brussels travelled to Washington D.C. to contribute to the diplomatic work on the ground.

The acts of the U.S. President resulted in clearer unity between Greenland and Denmark, as all party leaders rejected the notion of Greenland being absorbed into the U.S. prior to and after the March 11, 2025, general election in Greenland (Henriksen et.al. 2025). The relationship with the U.S. did become a hot topic in Greenland's 2025 election campaign and shortly after the election, Greenlanders organized one of the largest demonstrations in its history to unequivocally reject the U.S.' new policy toward Greenland (Holm 2025). Four of five parties representing a historic 75 percent of the voters agreed to form a new coalition, and although one party stayed in opposition, they joined the other parties elected to be represented in parliament in expressing that President Trump's talk of ownership and control was 'unacceptable' (Hyldal 2025).

These recent developments underscore the 'muddy waters' created by Greenland's ambiguous action space, which may also be what either sparked actual doubt by President Trump as to who 'controls' Greenland or was used as an excuse to 'legitimize' his dramatic rhetoric. If Trump's aggressive rhetoric about ownership and control was meant as propaganda, it is unclear what it is meant to achieve. One guess would be to create a sense of urgency in domestic Greenlandic politics ensuring support of further military presence. Another guess would be to use Greenland in an attempt to repair years of U.S. inactivity in the Arctic. A third guess could be to prompt further Danish military investments avoiding further U.S. investments to cover the – seen from a U.S. perspective - lack of military presence in Greenland.

If the aim was to drag Greenland closer to the U.S. in an attempt to control it itself, the effect was the opposite. Rather than 'win the hearts and minds' of Greenlanders, which seemed to be the strategy around the Blinken visit, and reopening the U.S. Consulate in Nuuk, the 2025 strategy seemed to be 'divide and conquer'. Paradoxically, the result seemed to be that

Greenland was further distanced from the U.S., and not from Denmark. Regardless of the aim, the result was that Greenland was pushed closer to Denmark, and that Denmark was prepared to emphasize Greenland's right of self-determination.

The broader international agenda expressed by the U.S. in 2025, questioning international rules-based order put Greenland in a new and unexplored position of sensitivity, as the self-government and constitutional arrangement – its blurriness the incentive behind Trump's categorical demands of control – risked being a governance vacuum that could be attempted filled by external powers, including the U.S. itself.

If the U.S. indeed abandons the international rules-based order and uses military force to annex Greenland, clearly, Greenland would be losing action space for self-determination. If an abandonment of rules-based order is not the case, the further increased interest expressed in less elegant ways could pave the way for a continued widening of Greenland's influence with Denmark. Greenland would in that case need to decipher the U.S. call to increase Danish military spending in the Arctic, which basically entails Denmark asserting and exercising its sovereignty over Greenland – unless Greenland claims sovereignty over itself, declares statehood and delegates a military presence to its closest ally, Denmark. In a future scenario where Greenland do not declare independence and establish independent statehood, further Danish military presence in Greenland could also be seen as Denmark exercising more control over Greenland – a paradox in Greenland's pursuit of increased self-determination. In either case, and to avoid creating a situation where Greenland loses its hard-won rights of self-determination, Greenland will need to be – and not least keep itself - well informed to increase its policy-making capability and not just participate in decision-making processes related to military and security matters on a national, regional and global scale, but also exercise self-determination on those areas.

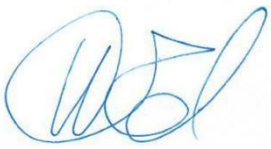
Looking ahead, the broader great power rivalry will continue to delimit and shape the overall development, as the U.S. President's expressed concerns over lack of control over Greenland are supposedly linked to Russian and Chinese Arctic interests. This thesis' analysis of external factors delimiting Greenland's action space will therefore continue to be relevant, and Greenlandic politicians will need to continue balancing and understanding their room for maneuverings to uphold Greenland's self-determination.

Declarations of co-authorship

Declaration of co-authorship

Sara Olsvig and Ulrik Pram co-authored the book chapter “Grønland som udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitisk aktør”. The chapter is published in Sikkerhedspolitik i Arktis og Nordatlanten, edited by Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Camilla T.N. Sørensen, published by DJØF Forlag (2021).

Ulrik Pram Gad presented the idea to the chapter. Sara Olsvig did the initial drafting of the decisionmaking structures analyzed, and collected the most recent empirical data, while Ulrik Pram Gad conceived of the idea for the theoretical approach.
The analysis was co-authored and both authors were responsible for preparing the chapter for submission.



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Declaration of co-authorship

Marc Jacobsen and Sara Olsvig have written the following book chapter together: *From Peary to Pompeo: The history of United States' securitizations of Greenland.*

Together we have spent time discussing the empirical analysis and how we should present it in the article. We have both contributed with ideas and cooperated on rewriting parts of the chapter during this process. Jacobsen conceived the idea behind the chapter and has been the leading author, especially on parts regarding the use and development of securitization theory, while he was also responsible for the final editing. Olsvig mainly contributed to the analysis of the post-Cold War periods of which she wrote first draft, while she also contributed with empirical inputs to the first analytical part.

Finally, both have been responsible for the work in preparation as well as the submission of the paper to the anthology *Greenland in Arctic security: (de)securitization dynamics under climatic thaw and geopolitical freeze*, edited by Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver and Ulrik Pram Gad and published by University of Michigan Press (2022).

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