



# UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

**MA Thesis  
in International Affairs**

**Defending Greenlandic Action Space**  
Analysing Greenland's Foreign Policy in the Arctic of Great  
Power Competition

**Eva Laufey Eggertsdóttir**

Supervisor: Dr. Page Wilson  
June 2023

**FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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School of Social Sciences, University of Iceland  
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This thesis counts as 30 credits towards an MA degree in International Affairs in the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland, School of Social Sciences

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## **Preface**

This is my final thesis towards a 120 credit (ECTS) master's degree in International Affairs from the University of Iceland. It counts for 30 credits and was written in the spring of 2023, for graduation in June 2023. I was advised by Dr. Page Wilson, whose support and guidance was invaluable to me during the process. I give her my sincerest thanks for believing in me more than I believed in me myself, for her patience and good humour, and for inspiring my interest in the politics of the Arctic in the first place, during my first semester of this master's program. I am also immensely grateful to the people I interviewed for this research. Their input was indispensable and without it, this research would look very different. Aside from inspiring me with their own work, they were kind, engaged interviewees who made themselves readily available to me for follow-up inquiries. The discussions we had were insightful and hugely beneficial for my analysis. On a personal note, I also thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout all five years of my university journey.

## Útdráttur

Alþjóðasamskipti einkennast í vaxandi mæli af baráttu milli stórvelda. Tvö þessara stórvelda, Bandaríkin og Rússland, eru Norðurslóðaríki og eitt þeirra, Kína, er að eigin sögn nær-Norðurslóðaríki (e. near-Arctic state). Þetta hefur áhrif á ástand öryggismála á Norðurslóðum. Þessi ritgerð kannar stöðu Grænlands í breyttu umhverfi milliríkjasamskipta á Norðurslóðum. Hún svarar spurningunni: hvernig, og að hvaða leyti, hefur athafnarymi Grænlands í utanríkismálum breyst í ljósi breytinganna sem nú eiga sér stað í stjórnmálaumhverfi Norðurslóða? Hún kemst að þeirri niðurstöðu að breytt umhverfi öryggismála á Norðurslóðum veitir Grænlandi mátt til áhrifa. Þessi máttur er tilkominn vegna hagsmuna Bandaríkjanna á Norðurslóðum og þess hve mikil áhrif þeir hagsmunir hafa á utanríkisstefnu Danmerkur. Að auki kemst ritgerðin að þeirri niðurstöðu að Grænland verður mjög ólíklega vettvangur fyrir stórveldabaráttu á Norðurslóðum vegna þess hve sterkt samband Bandaríkjanna, Danmerkur og Grænlands er í raun.

## **Abstract**

The narrative of Great Power competition is returning to global international relations. Two of these Great Powers, the US and Russia, are Arctic countries, and one of them, China, is, by its own definition, a near-Arctic country. This has consequences for the Arctic security environment. This thesis examines Greenland's position in a changing security environment, and answers the question of how, and to what extent, Greenland's foreign policy action space is changing in light of the changes taking place within the wider Arctic political environment. The thesis establishes that this changing Arctic security environment provides Greenland with leverage with which to defend its action space in the Arctic. This leverage consists of US interest in the Arctic, and the extent to which Danish foreign policy preferences are shaped by US interests. Additionally, this thesis concludes that Greenland is unlikely to be the scene of Great Power competition in the Arctic, given how extensive the relationship between the US, Greenland, and Denmark already is.

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# 1 Introduction

In the last decade or so, the Arctic as a region has steadily grown as a site of increased political attention. This is the result of numerous factors, with prominent ones being rising tensions between the US and Russia, and global warming. More specifically, global warming is causing the melting of Arctic sea ice which makes previously inaccessible resources accessible, and previously unnavigable sea lanes navigable.<sup>1</sup> Notably, the political and logical complications of both Arctic maritime traffic<sup>2</sup> and an Arctic scramble for resources<sup>3</sup> are significant. While the discourse surrounding these developments tends to simplify these trends, there has also been significant scholarly interest in the complexities of the Arctic geopolitical environment.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of varying sensitivities towards the complicated nature of these issues, the Arctic “has moved from the periphery to the center with regard to matters of global concern”.<sup>5</sup> Russia, considered to be the Arctic hegemon by many,<sup>6</sup> has alienated itself from the Western world with military aggression – a process which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea but then escalated rapidly in 2022 with the invasion of Ukraine. This has arguably resulted in levels of tension in the Arctic that have not been seen since the Cold War,<sup>7</sup> and these rising tensions between the US and Russia have re-introduced “old-fashioned great-power politics

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Gunnhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey, "Understanding Arctic Security: What has changed? What hasn't?," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunnhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 3.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Albert Buixadé Farré et al., "Commercial Arctic shipping through the Northeast Passage: routes, resources, governance, technology, and infrastructure," *Polar Geography* 37, no. 4 (2014), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1088937X.2014.965769>.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Philip E. Steinberg, Jeremy Tasch, and Hannes Gerhardt, *Contesting the Arctic - Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North* (London and New York: I.B Tauris, 2015), ch. 5.

<sup>4</sup> For example, entire volumes of *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020); *The Arctic and World Order*, ed. Kristina Spohr and Daniel S. Hamilton (Brookings Institution Press, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Oran R. Young, "Is It Time for a Reset in Arctic Governance?," *Sustainability* 11 (2019): 2, <https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su11164497>.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Maria L. Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2019), 24; Andrea Charron, Joël Plouffe, and Stéphane Roussel, "The Russian Arctic hegemon: Foreign policy implications for Canada," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no. 1 (2012): 38, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2012.674384>; Michael Paul and Göran Swistek, "Russia in the Arctic: Development Plans, Military Potential, and Conflict Prevention," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (February 2022): 7, <https://dx.doi.org/10.18449/2022RP03>.

<sup>7</sup> Gjørsv, Lanteigne, and Sam-Aggrey, "Understanding Arctic Security: What has changed? What hasn't?," 3.

into the Arctic".<sup>8</sup> The interest of non-Arctic countries in the region, notably China,<sup>9</sup> adds another level of complexity to the geopolitical environment in the Arctic. In short, the Arctic security environment is changing.

More specifically, in relation to the topic of this research, Greenland has been receiving increasing global attention over the past few years. As an example of this rising interest, we can look to former US President Donald Trump's offer to purchase Greenland.<sup>10</sup> While this example has become a somewhat amusing anecdote in conversations on the Arctic, it certainly displays one key fact about the Arctic security environment: the US is interested. Notably, Greenland's strategic position in the North Atlantic Ocean is significant for the US as its relationship with Russia has deteriorated during previous years.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Greenland finds itself strategically placed in a rapidly changing security environment. What are the implications of this changing environment for Greenland? It is no secret that Greenland aims to become a sovereign state,<sup>12</sup> but Greenland is the Kingdom of Denmark's only claim to Arctic status. Although there are quite a few hurdles in the way of complete Greenlandic sovereignty,<sup>13</sup> it is nonetheless an explicit long-term goal of the Government of Greenland. Were Greenland to become an independent state, Denmark would lose its "stake in the High North".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marc Lanteigne, "Considering the Arctic as a Security Region: The Roles of China and Russia," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 311.

<sup>9</sup> See Lanteigne, "Considering the Arctic as a Security Region: The Roles of China and Russia."; Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Martin Pengelly. "Trump confirms he is considering attempt to buy Greenland." *The Guardian*, August 18, 2019. Accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/18/trump-considering-buying-greenland>.

<sup>11</sup> Anders Henriksen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook*, ed. Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017), 77.

<sup>12</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2013), 1, Copy held by Inatsisartut: The Parliament of Greenland, received by author via email on request; Jens Heinrich, "Independence Through International Affairs: How foreign relations shaped Greenlandic identity before 1979," in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic*, ed. Kristian Søbby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Martin Breum. "Greenland's Premier: "We must work towards independence"." *High North News*, January 20, 2020. Accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/greenlands-premier-we-must-work-towards-independence>.

<sup>13</sup> Page Wilson, "An Arctic 'cold rush'? Understanding Greenland's (in)dependence question," *Polar Record* 53, no. 5 (2017), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S003224741700047X>.

<sup>14</sup> Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt, *Contesting the Arctic - Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North*, 82.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of Greenland's foreign policy action space to examine the country's position in a changing security environment. More specifically, it seeks to shine a light on Greenlandic agency as a small, sub-state actor in a region increasingly characterised by Great Power competition, with particular emphasis on the Greenland-US relationship. There are three main reasons for this emphasis: firstly, the way in which the US has "woken up" to its status as an Arctic state in recent years,<sup>15</sup> and its stake in the Great Power competition currently taking place in the Arctic and across the globe. Secondly, Greenlandic foreign policy documents frequently emphasise the evolving Greenland-US relationship,<sup>16</sup> and scholars have identified a shift in that relationship: away from trilateralism, where Denmark is heavily involved, and towards bilateralism, where Greenland increasingly deals directly with the US.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, the US has a long history of military presence in Greenland, and therefore a complex political relationship with the Kingdom of Denmark. This will be discussed further below.

This thesis aims to accomplish two interrelated goals; to describe the changing Greenlandic foreign policy action space; and to untangle the role played by Denmark and the US in that action space. Thus, the research question being answered by this thesis is: how, and

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<sup>15</sup> Jacob Gronholt-Pedersen and Gwladys Fouche. "NATO allies wake up to Russian supremacy in the Arctic." *Reuters*, November 16, 2022. Accessed April 13, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nato-allies-wake-up-russian-supremacy-arctic-2022-11-16/>; Sarah Cammarata. "U.S. reopens consulate in Greenland amid White House's Arctic push." *Politico*, October 6, 2020. Accessed January 14, 2023, [https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/10/us-reopens-greenland-consulate-310885?fbclid=IwAR16fbhby8eDfD0q7jyC2NQsAiNeywoORVPdI1jMAF85M3zytdVc\\_Y\\_Jfpg](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/10/us-reopens-greenland-consulate-310885?fbclid=IwAR16fbhby8eDfD0q7jyC2NQsAiNeywoORVPdI1jMAF85M3zytdVc_Y_Jfpg).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2018), 2. Accessed February 28, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/2534873/pkt14\\_em2018\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_redegoerelse\\_2018\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/2534873/pkt14_em2018_udenrigspolitisk_redegoerelse_2018_da.pdf); Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2017), 5, 34. Accessed February 28, 2023, [https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2017/pdf/media/2532203/pkt14\\_em2017\\_udenrigs\\_politisk\\_redegoerelse\\_2017\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2017/pdf/media/2532203/pkt14_em2017_udenrigs_politisk_redegoerelse_2017_da.pdf); Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2015), 14. Accessed February 27, 2023, [https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2015/pdf/media/2639392/pkt14\\_em2015\\_udenrigspolitiske\\_redeg\\_relse\\_dk.pdf](https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2015/pdf/media/2639392/pkt14_em2015_udenrigspolitiske_redeg_relse_dk.pdf); Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2014), 4. Accessed February 25, 2023, [https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2014/pdf/media/1901101/pkt14\\_em2014\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_redeg\\_relse\\_2014\\_dk.pdf](https://ina.gl/dvd/EM2014/pdf/media/1901101/pkt14_em2014_udenrigspolitisk_redeg_relse_2014_dk.pdf); Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2009), 10-11, Copy held by Inatsisartut: The Parliament of Greenland, received by author via email on request.

<sup>17</sup> Sara Olsvig, "Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country'). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US-Greenlandic bilateralism," in *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2022*, ed. Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2022); Maria Ackrén, "From bilateral to trilateral agreement: The case of Thule Air Base," *Arctic Yearbook* (2019), [https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/Scholarly-Papers/2\\_AY2019\\_Ackren.pdf](https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/Scholarly-Papers/2_AY2019_Ackren.pdf).

to what extent, is Greenland's foreign policy action space changing in light of the changes taking place within the wider Arctic political environment? The thesis argues that the Greenlandic Government uses its foreign policy instrumentally to further its national interests, despite the ambiguous nature of the Greenlandic action space. Greenlandic foreign policy documents describe the goals of Greenlandic foreign policy, notably those of strengthening Greenlandic foreign policy capabilities and of defending Greenlandic action space. The government is acutely aware of the changing security environment in the Arctic, and how it grants Greenland leverage in its relationship with Denmark. This leverage is, in essence, made up of US interests in the Arctic, and the extent to which Denmark's foreign policy priorities are influenced by those US interests. Therefore, this thesis concludes that a changing security environment provides the Government of Greenland with opportunities and leverage to reach its goals of strengthening its foreign policy capabilities and defending its action space. Further, it hypothesises that the government is now focusing on defending Greenlandic action space within the realm of security and defence issues, specifically. Additionally, the history of US presence in Greenland is found to be so tightly interwoven with Danish and Greenlandic interests that it is unlikely that an outside power will ever establish a notable presence in or relationship with Greenland. In other words, Greenland will not be the scene of Great Power competition in the Arctic.

The thesis is structured as follows. First, the theoretical framework of the research will be outlined, to describe the ontological foundations of this analysis. This chapter describes the tenets of neorealism and postcolonialism. Special attention will be given to how these two theories jointly form the basis of the analysis, in other words, how they form a holistic approach. Second, the methodology of the research is described. This is a case study where two cases of Greenlandic foreign policy are identified and analysed. Data acquisition and analysis is also described, as are the possible limitations of the methodological approach. Thereafter, a sub-chapter of the methodology overview is dedicated to locating Greenland as an actor within this analysis. Greenland is not a sovereign state, and so describing the approach of this analysis to Greenlandic agency is pertinent. The final sub-chapter of the methodology overview contains a definition of an "action space", as the term is central to this analysis.

We then move on to the main body of this research. The third chapter commences with an overview of Greenlandic action space, outlining the 2009 Self-Government Agreement to examine what the Government of Greenland *can* do, before moving onto Greenlandic foreign policy documents, to decipher what the Greenlandic Government *wants* to do. Two overarching and interconnected goals of Greenlandic foreign policy are identified: improving Greenland's foreign policy capabilities and defending Greenlandic action space. Finally, the assumption that Greenlandic FP is characterised by *realpolitik* is addressed, in a sub-chapter that briefly discusses the national interests that Greenlandic FP considers. The main consequences of this in the context of this research are then drawn together in the chapter conclusions.

Fourth, the goals identified in chapter three are then applied to an examination of Greenlandic foreign policy in practice. To understand Greenlandic foreign policy in practice, we must first understand the US as an Arctic actor. Two short chapters outline key elements of the US as an Arctic actor: one focuses on China and Russia in the Arctic, and the other on the trilateral relationship between the US, Denmark, and Greenland. The 2021 Arctic Capacity Package is briefly introduced as an examination of this trilateral relationship. Having laid the groundwork for examining Greenlandic foreign policy in action, the thesis moves towards doing exactly that. The two case studies featured in this analysis are presented in their respective chapters: the case of the airport constructions in 2017-2019, and the case of the mapping of Greenland, which was concluded in recent months. This chapter reaches the conclusion that Greenland leverages the limitations of Danish action space in the Arctic – namely, its relationship with the US – to defend its own foreign policy action space.

The fifth and final chapter of the main body of this research is devoted to examining present-day Greenlandic foreign policy. In other words, having described a particular method of operations regarding Greenlandic foreign policy, recent developments in Greenlandic foreign policy are then examined to determine whether this method also applies to those. First, the rejection of the previously discussed Arctic Capacity Package is discussed, before moving on to three recent developments in Greenland's foreign policy action space. This thesis finds that a changing security environment in the Arctic provides the Government of Greenland with leverage with which to pursue its foreign policy goals, and that the US is a central actor when considering Greenlandic and Danish policy preferences in the Arctic.

## 2 Theory and Methodology

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The argument within this thesis builds on the core foundations of neorealism. It shares neorealism's view of states as rational actors who seek to maximise their interests and whose actions are guided by the anarchy of the global system. More specifically, it uses the concept of "realpolitik" to explain Greenland's actions. In addition to neorealism, the argument considers the postcolonial element of the case at hand. Greenland has a colonial relationship with Denmark and its history as a colonised country is significant to the dynamic of the relationship today. This chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical paradigm of this research and explain some key concepts and assumptions within the theories employed. Firstly, realism will be identified at the most basic level, before moving on to neorealism and then realpolitik. Secondly, postcolonialism will be reviewed as appropriate for the case at hand. Finally, the application of these two theories together will be outlined, and the comprehensive theoretical paradigm underpinning this research is presented.

#### 2.1.1 Neorealism

As identified by William Wohlforth,<sup>18</sup> realism as a theory within International Relations is based on three core assumptions about the world: groupism, egoism, and power-centrism. Groupism is the assumption that politics are conducted within and between groups. Once past the subsistence level of human existence, people need the "cohesion provided by group solidarity",<sup>19</sup> but that group cohesion brings with it the possibility of conflict between groups. According to realists, the most important groups in today's international system are nation-states. Egoism is the assumption that people are first and foremost driven by self-interest. While realism does acknowledge the possibility of altruistic behaviour, egoism is an inescapable feature of the human experience, so it tends to trump altruism. Finally, power-centrism is the assumption that human affairs are characterised by great inequalities of power, both pertaining to control and to resources. In other words, some people and groups have access to decision-making and/or material goods, while others do not. Politics is what

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<sup>18</sup> William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and Security Studies," in *Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*, ed. Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Thierry Balzacq (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

happens when control and resources are being distributed.<sup>20</sup> In addition to these central assumptions, realism also emphasises the fact that there is no world government. In other words, that the global system is characterised by anarchy.<sup>21</sup>

As a response to some fundamental scholarly criticism levelled against realism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new strand of realism emerged: neorealism.<sup>22</sup> While classical realism, as it came to be known, was preoccupied with human nature as the cause of state behaviour, neorealism claims that the behaviour of states in an anarchic system is determined by the structure of the political system.<sup>23</sup> In other words, conflict does not occur because humans are designed to hungrily seek out power at every turn and this leads to clashes with other power-hungry states, but rather because the anarchy of the system means that to ensure the survival of the state, conflict is sometimes unavoidable.

This leads us to the concept of self-help, another key term within the realist doctrine. As a result of the anarchy of the international system and the three underlying assumptions of realism – groupism, egoism, and power-centrism – realism maintains that states must ensure their own survival. The international system has built-in incentives for states to maximise their security, because if they do not keep themselves safe, no one else will. A notable divide of opinions exists within the school of realist thought, as proponents of the theory disagree as to whether the principle of self-help means that states maximise power or security. Classical realists generally argue that states maximise power, while neorealists maintain that states maximise security.<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, we will assume the latter.

Importantly, despite realism's focus on the nature of the global system, the internal characteristics of states are also important to their behaviour in the anarchic system. In other words, domestic politics are important, too. We cannot speak of state power without acknowledging what happens within states, as well as the environment in which they operate.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> For example, ibid. and Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism," *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 306, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410802098917>.

<sup>22</sup> Another name for neorealism is "structural realism", this paper will use the term neorealism but assume the terms to be interchangeable.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Wohlforth, "Realism and Security Studies," 13-14; Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism," 306.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Rathbun, "The Rarity of Realpolitik: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics," *International Security* 43, no. 1 (2018): 13, [https://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00323](https://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00323).

This is outlined by Rathbun,<sup>25</sup> who goes into further detail in arguing that domestic politics have a place within realist analyses. Building on Rathbun's argument, this analysis will assume that domestic politics and institutions play a role in the self-helping behaviour of states. Finally, it is important to affirm that although realism assumes that states act out of self-interest and are rational in their decision-making, it does not view states as possessing "perfect knowledge and wisdom".<sup>26</sup> Realism is a rationalist theory in the sense that it views the world as an objective phenomenon on which one can gather knowledge, but it does not assume ultimate rationality.

A key concept relating to the realist literature is that of *realpolitik*. Rathbun defines *realpolitik* as "the egoistic pursuit of the national interest under largely material structural constraints".<sup>27</sup> It is not a theoretical paradigm as much as it is a way of practicing politics, and it can be viewed as an extension of the earlier definition of rational self-help in an anarchic international system. Rathbun goes on to define *realpolitik* as being based on the ethical foundation that the ends justify the means.<sup>28</sup> In general, realism is not overly concerned with ethics, to the extent that critics have accused it of promoting amorality,<sup>29</sup> and *realpolitik* certainly fits snugly within the utilitarian pragmatism of realist theory. To be clear, amorality does not necessarily suggest immorality, so *realpolitik* is not inherently immoral or ruthless. It is just unconcerned with the morality of its methods. The term is used colloquially to denote a "no-nonsense" conducting of politics for the sake of the objectives at hand, instead of for the sake of ideals.<sup>30</sup>

### **2.1.2 Postcolonialism**

Postcolonialism was developed to challenge the hegemony of realism within the practice of International Relations theory. It is critical of realism's disaggregation of power, questioning the validity of separating power into military, economic, and political power. Instead, postcolonialism argues that it is vital to consider the context, history, culture, and ideology

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1st ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 92.

<sup>27</sup> Rathbun, "The Rarity of *Realpolitik*: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics," 12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Felix Rösch, "Realism, the War in the Ukraine, and the Limits of Diplomacy," 44, no. 2 (2022), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1515/auk-2022-2030>.

<sup>30</sup> For example, "Realpolitik," Britannica, updated September 29, 2022, accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/realpolitik>.



that power is created within and influenced by.<sup>31</sup> Postcolonialism is, as the name suggests, particularly concerned with colonialism and its legacy, seeking to unravel the racialised ideologies that characterised the colonial era. It argues that these very ideologies have influenced the values held by Western states to this day and affect the practice of international relations.<sup>32</sup> To understand the essential themes of political theory: power, hierarchy, and domination, one must first understand the legacy of colonialism.<sup>33</sup>

Importantly, postcolonialism is not a single theory, as realism is. While realism operates under certain principles, argues for the existence of causal mechanisms, and seeks to predict outcomes of events based on its foundational tenets, postcolonialism is a related set of perspectives. It can be better described as a project than a theory, a project whose goal is to deconstruct how we understand power and reorient the practice of IR so that power relations that had previously been ignored can be accommodated.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.1.3 Building a Holistic Approach**

Since postcolonialism was developed to challenge realism, some might think it odd to employ these two theories side by side. However, I argue that these two theories form a solid foundation for the case at hand. At the very basic level, the analysis views foreign policy (FP) as being conducted under the assumption that there is objective knowledge out in the world that can be attained. Furthermore, FP is conducted by a group driven first and foremost by self-interest, in an anarchic world where power is unequally distributed among groups. As the study is guided by neorealism, as opposed to classical realism, the analysis assumes that the actions of states are driven by a need to ensure their own safety in this anarchic world. It also assumes that states' actions in this anarchic world are guided by rational thinking, but as no one possesses perfect information, rationality is thus limited. Taken together, these assumptions build towards the practice of a FP characterised by *realpolitik*.

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<sup>31</sup> Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, "Introduction," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading race, gender and class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> Chowdhry and Nair, "Introduction," 11-12.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, 6.

Additionally, these assumptions are influenced by postcolonialism. This means that when exploring the “egoistic pursuit of the national interest”,<sup>35</sup> the national interest includes postcolonial ideas. While neorealism mainly considers material interests in its exploration of FP, postcolonialism can accommodate the importance of the colonial history of subjugation and a denial of self-determination. Since Greenland is not a sovereign state, considering colonial themes is not only important for the historical context of the Greenland-Denmark relationship, it is also necessary to describe its current status. This research assumes that postcolonial ideals influence FP, and that achieving the goal of self-determination and a recognition of nationhood can serve as an interest in its own right. To be clear, postcolonialism will not be used as a lens through which this analysis will be conducted. Rather, postcolonial ideals are regarded as the driving forces behind the conducting of Greenlandic FP, and this FP is then analysed within a neorealist paradigm. Therefore, this analysis will assume FP to have material interests as well as ones influenced by ideas, specifically the ideas of postcolonialism. FP is viewed as instrumental, with states operating within the system described above and driven by both the practical goals described in the neorealist doctrine, and the ideological goals of self-determination and recognition of nationhood.

## **2.2 Methodology**

This research is a qualitative examination of Greenlandic FP, where two cases are examined as examples of how Greenland uses its FP to achieve its goals within the Kingdom of Denmark (KoD). The causal mechanism of the development of these cases is examined, and then the meaning of these causal mechanisms is applied to present-day developments. The research primarily considers developments that took place from 2009, when Greenland was granted the rights to Self-Government, to March 2023, which is present day at the time of writing. Older developments are considered when the historical context is appropriate to properly describe more recent developments.

As noted by many scholars of the social sciences, the term “case study” is a thorny one, since there is no agreed-upon definition of the specific methodological characteristics of a case study.<sup>36</sup> This research has two of the five common characteristics of case studies, as

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<sup>35</sup> Rathbun, "The Rarity of Realpolitik: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics," 12.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield," *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (2007): 172, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296346>; John Gerring,

defined by Gerring:<sup>37</sup> its method is qualitative (small-N), and it analyses the characteristics of a single phenomenon, i.e., Greenlandic policymaking. However, in lieu of these common conceptions, Gerring argues that a case study should be defined as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units”.<sup>38</sup> This is also applicable to the research at hand, as it endeavours to analyse two cases of Greenlandic policymaking to understand the general trends of Greenlandic FP. However, since this is an idiographic case study, it mainly seeks to “describe, explain, interpret, and/or understand a single case as an end in itself”.<sup>39</sup> This research aims to systematically describe the FP of a single country, mostly for the purpose of building academic knowledge on the said policy.

### **2.2.1 Data: Collection and Analysis**

To realise the goals of this research, a detailed analysis of relevant policy documents and events is conducted. The analysis of the chosen data follows the method of qualitative content analysis, defined by Berg as the “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings”.<sup>40</sup>

Relevant policy documents from the governments of Greenland, Denmark, and the US were analysed, with special emphasis on Greenland. These documents mostly consisted of foreign and/or defence policies, press releases, remarks made by state officials, etc. Press releases and transcripts of public appearances are commonly sourced from the websites of the US Department of State, Danish Ministry of Defence, the embassies of either the US or Denmark in the other’s country, the webpages of different presidential administrations in the US, and the website of the Government of Greenland (GoG), etc. The foreign and defence policies are also published online, and the Danish ones are commonly available in both English and Danish. Greenlandic FP documents are only available in Greenlandic and Danish. Online media reports were also utilised when needed, most commonly to gauge the reactions of

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"What is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?," *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (May 2004): 342, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4145316>; Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 2, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07388940701860318>.

<sup>37</sup> Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?," 342.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," 4.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2009), 338.

relevant actors to the unfolding of events, and when policy documents were not readily available.

In addition to analysing the documents discussed above, interviews with experts in the field were also conducted. Three academics and one journalist were interviewed in the period between 7-16 March 2023. These respondents were chosen based on their fields of speciality, with one specialising in Danish security policy; two in the Arctic security environment; and one in Greenland as an international actor. In preparing for the interviews, Hermanowicz's writings on qualitative interviews were especially considered.<sup>41</sup> The analysis conducted and set out below does not use data from the interviews as a sole foundation for any lines of argument put forth, since this is not a research study into the views held by academics/specialists on Greenlandic FP. Rather, the interviews serve as guiding posts, and they occasionally bolster the arguments put forth. When used to bolster arguments made in the analysis, the interviews either serve as an additional source for a phenomenon already identified in published data, or for a trend that I have hypothesised. The input provided by the interviewees was invaluable to this research, both in terms of finding relevant data and in revealing insights concerning the analysis of the already available data.

### **2.2.2 Limitations**

There are a few limitations to the research design and in general, the case study has some well documented limitations that warrant specific mention in this regard. Firstly, there is the issue of case selection. There is always the risk of cases being selected specifically to demonstrate a certain trend, whether consciously or unconsciously.<sup>42</sup> In this analysis, that would mean choosing cases where US interests in the Arctic provide Greenland with leverage against Denmark. In other words, are the cases chosen representative of Greenlandic FP? On that topic, it is important to note that the cases in this analysis were chosen inductively. The data collection started out as a general analysis of Greenlandic FP and of notable cases through the years where Greenland conducted its own foreign relations. Upon examining these particular cases, a pattern of US influence began to emerge. This approach minimises the risk of the biased selection of cases. A second possible limitation is what Toshkov refers to as "the

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph C. Hermanowicz, "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed," *Qualitative Sociology* 25, no. 4 (2002), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1021062932081>.

<sup>42</sup> This is, for example, discussed by Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?," 348.

dubious possibility of generalization beyond the case being studied”,<sup>43</sup> i.e., the external validity of the research. In an attempt to counter this flaw, the research consists of two cases, which increases the external validity of the research. However, a possible lack of external validity is a flaw inherent to the case study method.

Lastly, a possible methodological limitation concerns language. I possess an intermediate understanding of the Danish language. Some Danish and Greenlandic policy documents are available in English, but some are only available in Danish and Greenlandic. If possible, I use English versions of documents. This is both to facilitate my own understanding of the text, and for the sake of convenience when referencing text in the analysis below, since this thesis is written in English. For example, the Foreign Policy Statements of the Government of Greenland are exclusively available in Danish and Greenlandic. Since I am not fluent in Danish, there is always the chance that I may not grasp the full meaning of terms, or that some concepts get lost in translation. This possible flaw can only be countered by reading such texts multiple times and doing it meticulously each time. Online translation mechanisms and dictionaries were also helpful during this research. Since I understand Danish, a Danish online dictionary was often enough to help me grasp the full meaning of words. Additionally, comprehensive Danish-Icelandic online dictionaries exist, which were of great help since Icelandic is my native language, as well as the English-Danish translation offered by Google Translate. Importantly, I was also aided in my translations by a Danish-speaking friend, with whom I could also seek advice to confirm the meaning of terms or phrases whenever I was uncertain. Everything within my power was done to ensure that my understanding of Danish text was accurate, and so this limitation should not impact the quality of the research in a significant way.

## **2.3 Greenland as an International Actor**

Greenland is not a sovereign state. So, how can the theoretical perspective outlined above be applied to Greenland? This analysis will assume that Greenland conducts its FP in the same manner as a state, and that it uses its FP as a means to an end, namely, the achievement of its desired goals. This assumption builds on the stated goals of the Greenlandic Government that Greenland will become a sovereign state in the future and is guided by the goals put forth in

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<sup>43</sup> Dimiter Toshkov, *Research Design in Political Science*, 1 ed., Political Analysis, (Red Globe Press, 2016), 304.

the Greenlandic FP documents. Additionally, this assumption builds on the fact that the Government of Greenland even publishes FP documents in the first place. The fact that Greenland is a sub-state actor is not incompatible with the realist doctrine, as realism ultimately emphasises groupism. Greenland is a nation, and is, as the below overview will demonstrate, conducting itself in the international arena. In essence, Greenland will be analysed as a “state-like” actor in this research. This is a common approach in research concerning Greenland, so this analysis builds on the foundation of researchers who have written on Greenland as an international actor.<sup>44</sup>

This does, however, create certain complications. That Greenland can both be viewed as a part of a whole, the KoD, where the entire unit has goals and interests; or as an actor in its own right, with its own goals and interests, adds a layer of complexity to the analysis. This is partly what makes this case so interesting, and the entire thesis is essentially dedicated to unravelling this puzzle of Greenland as an independent actor on an international level. This analysis will not consider the FP interests of the KoD as a whole.

### **2.3.1 Power: Action Space and Influence-Capability**

A key term in this regard is “action space”. Sara Olsvig has analysed what she calls “Greenland’s ambiguous action space”,<sup>45</sup> where she builds on Mouritzen’s work on Denmark’s action space.<sup>46</sup> Mouritzen identifies two aspects to state power: offensive power, or “influence-capability”, and defensive power, or action space. He defines influence-capability as “the ability to modify others’ behaviour”,<sup>47</sup> and action space as controlling one’s own behaviour. In other words, “the ability to prevent *others’* influence over” your behaviour.<sup>48</sup> He maintains that states seldom have complete influence over their own behaviour, i.e., they seldom have unlimited action space. He takes the example of a man who has a gun to his back. The man has the free will to ignore the demands of the gun-holder, but this might lead to an

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<sup>44</sup> For example, entire volume of *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic*, ed. Kristian Sjøby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> Sara Olsvig, “Greenland’s ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests,” *The Polar Journal* 12, no. 2 (2022), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2022.2137085>.

<sup>46</sup> Hans Mouritzen, “A Hundred Years of Danish Action Space” in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2006*, ed. Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 115

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

“unacceptable cost” for the man, i.e., death. His action space is close to non-existent in practice.<sup>49</sup>

Mouritzen’s definition of action space and influence capability expands traditional definitions of power by considering that actors do not always have full power over their own actions. In some ways, this is reminiscent of Joseph Nye’s definition of hard power and soft power as the two aspects of state power. However, Mouritzen’s definitions of action space and influence-capability differ fundamentally from Nye’s exploration of state power. Nye defines power as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want”,<sup>50</sup> and soft power as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want”,<sup>51</sup> with hard power defined as employing “threats or payments”.<sup>52</sup> Mouritzen’s definition of influence-capability, one of two aspects of state power, is thus similar to Nye’s general definition of power. Both Nye and Mouritzen expand the traditional understanding of state power beyond purely military aspects, but Mouritzen examines the inward dimension of power, so to speak, or the extent to which an actor can prevent others’ influence over their behaviour. Meanwhile, Nye continues to view power as being wielded against other actors, i.e., the outward element of state power. Additionally, Mouritzen does not seem to concern himself with the *methods* used, whereas the foundation of Nye’s theorising is the *type* of power used. This research will adhere to Mouritzen’s concepts, with Nye’s writings only brought into this discussion for comparison and to deepen our understanding of Mouritzen’s view of state power.

So, what does this mean for policymaking? Mouritzen claims that states are cautious and rational, and even a low probability of unacceptable costs is enough to discourage certain behaviour. The action space of non-Great Powers is constrained by two external factors: “first the balance of power between the strongest proximate powers and secondly the tension between them”.<sup>53</sup> Internal constraints to a states’ action space are also identified, such as opposing political forces, the press, public opinion, etc., but these are less relevant to the study’s purposes. In applying Mouritzen’s definition of state power to Greenland, I build on

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 115-16.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.

<sup>51</sup> Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 95.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Mouritzen, “A Hundred Years of Danish Action Space ” 117.

the works of both Olsvig and Mouritzen.<sup>54</sup> As has been established, this analysis regards Greenland as a state-like actor, and this also goes for the application of Mouritzen's definition of state power. Olsvig's ambiguous action space will be revisited below.

### **3 Greenlandic Action Space**

This chapter discusses Greenlandic FP in a rather general way, with the goal of examining Greenlandic action space. What does the GoG *want* to do, according to FP documents, and what *can* it do, according to its constitutional status within the KoD? Firstly, the Self-Government Agreement (SGA) of 2009 will be reviewed, as appropriate for this research. It outlines the position of Greenland within the KoD and legally defines Greenland's action space. However, as will be discussed further below, this legal definition leaves room for interpretation – creating Olsvig's ambiguous action space. Secondly, Greenlandic FP will be discussed by analysing the Greenlandic Foreign Policy Statements (FPS) of the years 2009-2022. Finally, the goals of the GoG will be summarised so that an examination can be made as to whether and how the GoG is working towards achieving these goals. Based on Mouritzen's definition of what influences the action space of non-Great Powers, the action space of both Greenland and Denmark in the Arctic is shaped by the tension between the US and Russia, since these are the two strongest proximate powers. Because of Chinese interest in the Arctic, and China's status as an international power on the rise, US-Chinese tensions are also relevant. The details of this will be examined further below.

#### **3.1 The 2009 Self-Government Act**

The 2009 SGA is a fundamental document when considering the position of Greenland within the KoD. With the Home Rule Act of 1979, Greenland established its own parliament, Inatsisartut, and Government, Naalakkersuisut, but the 2009 SGA opened up the possibility of expanding Greenland's autonomy into policy issues previously administered exclusively by Copenhagen.<sup>55</sup> Greenland first received the power to enter into international agreements in 2005, with the so-called "Authorisation Act" (d. Fuldmagtsloven).<sup>56</sup> The Authorisation Act was

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<sup>54</sup> Olsvig, "Greenland's ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests."; Mouritzen, "A Hundred Years of Danish Action Space".

<sup>55</sup> Olsvig, "Greenland's ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests," 218.

<sup>56</sup> Lov om Grønlands landsstyes indgåelse af folkeretlige aftaler [Act on Greenland's national government entering into agreements under international law] (2005, no. 577 of 24/06/2005). The Prime Minister's Office. Accessed March 20, 2023, <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2005/577>.



then incorporated into the 2009 SGA in its entirety, with some changes in wording. An English version of the SGA is available on the website of the Danish Prime Minister's Office, appendant to Denmark's official notification of the SGA to the Secretary General of the UN at the time, Ban Ki-moon.<sup>57</sup> This English version of the text will be used in this analysis.

The SGA recognises the people of Greenland as "a people pursuant to international law with the right of self-determination", and the GoG and Government of Denmark (GoD) as "equal partners".<sup>58</sup> It lists fields of responsibility that the GoG is free to assume in two separate lists,<sup>59</sup> for a grand total of 33 fields of responsibility, and states that the GoG is free to decide when and whether to assume these responsibilities. In addition, any field of responsibility that exclusively concerns Greenland may be assumed by the GoG, even if it is not recorded in either list.<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that at this point in time, Greenland had already assumed responsibility for several policy areas with the Home Rule Act, such as taxes, fisheries, social welfare, education, culture, and more.<sup>61</sup>

Notably, neither list contains foreign affairs, but chapter 4 of the SGA is dedicated in its entirety to the conducting of Greenlandic foreign affairs. It states that "The Government [of Denmark] and Naalakkersuisut [The GoG] shall cooperate in international affairs as laid down in this Chapter with a view to safeguarding the interests of Greenland as well as the general interests of the Kingdom of Denmark."<sup>62</sup> The autonomy granted to the GoG may not limit the "constitutional responsibility and powers" of the GoD,<sup>63</sup> but the GoG may negotiate, conclude, and terminate on behalf of the Realm agreements that "exclusively concern Greenland and entirely relate to fields of responsibility taken over".<sup>64</sup> The GoG is to inform the GoD before

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<sup>57</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government (2009, no. 473 of 12/06/2009). The Danish Prime Minister's Office. Accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.stm.dk/media/11338/10-notifikation-af-7-oktober-2009-til-fn-s-generalsekretaer-om-selvstyreløven.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, 2009, preamble.

<sup>59</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, Schedule.

<sup>60</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 2 § 4.

<sup>61</sup> *The Greenland-Danish Self-Government Commission's Report on Self-Government in Greenland: Executive Summary*. The Danish Prime Minister's Office (April 2008), 2-3. Accessed March 20, 2023, <https://www.stm.dk/media/11338/10-notifikation-af-7-oktober-2009-til-fn-s-generalsekretaer-om-selvstyreløven.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(2).

<sup>63</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(3).

<sup>64</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 12(1).

any negotiations take place and keep the GoD informed as to their progression and how they are to be concluded.<sup>65</sup>

Agreements concerning defence and security policy are specifically mentioned and should be negotiated and concluded according to Section 13 of the chapter. Section 13 states that, in general, the GoD should notify the GoG on negotiations regarding agreements which are “of particular importance to Greenland”.<sup>66</sup> The two governments may jointly produce a framework on the cooperation rules of conducting these specific agreements. In other words, the GoD should always tell the GoG if it is about to enter into discussions on anything that particularly concerns Greenland or on anything concerning the security and defence of the KoD, and the GoG should be given the chance to stipulate its expectations and lay out some ground rules for these discussions. Additionally, the GoG should be notified and consulted for comments on these agreements before they are concluded or terminated. If these agreements exclusively concern Greenland, the GoD may authorise the GoG to conduct these negotiations by itself, with the cooperation of the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA).<sup>67</sup> In summary, security and defence remain within the purview of Denmark, but the GoD should notify the GoG on anything that particularly concerns Greenland and allow the GoG to participate in the proceedings as it wishes.

So, what does this mean for Greenland’s action space? The SGA both delimits Greenland’s action space and leaves plenty of space for ambiguity. The policy issues that are outlined on the list are clear enough, as is the fact that the GoG is free to assume responsibility for any policy issues that exclusively concern Greenland. As for FP, the SGA gets trickier to decipher, and this is important for our analysis. Essentially, the SGA recognises no other FP than that of the KoD, and the GoG is welcome to cooperate with the GoD on affairs relating to that FP. Nonetheless, the GoD possesses the ultimate “constitutional responsibility and powers”.<sup>68</sup>

The SGA does not explicitly forbid such a thing as Greenlandic FP, it just assumes that the only FP to discuss is that of the KoD in its entirety. It clearly states that “foreign and security policy matters are affairs of the Realm”.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, Greenland is free to negotiate and

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<sup>65</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 12(5).

<sup>66</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 13(1).

<sup>67</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 13(2).

<sup>68</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(3).

<sup>69</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(3).

conclude agreements which “exclusively concern Greenland and entirely relate to fields of responsibility taken over”.<sup>70</sup> Negotiating and concluding agreements with foreign countries is certainly, in most cases, considered to be FP. In the official notification of the SGA to the UN, where the English language version of the SGA can be found, the executive summary of the Greenland-Danish Self-Government Commission’s Report on Self-Government in Greenland can also be found. It clearly states that:

The Self-Government authorities may take over all fields of responsibility that have not already been assumed by the Home Rule Government, with the exemption of the following: the constitution, foreign affairs, defence and security policy, the Supreme Court, nationality, and exchange rate and monetary policy.<sup>71</sup>

In summary, Denmark remains responsible for conducting the foreign and security policy of the KoD. Even to this day, various types of literature commonly claim that Greenland is, in fact, not responsible for FP issues. In their book on various imaginaries of the Arctic, Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt state that “Greenland remains a part of the Danish Kingdom, subject to the Danish crown and Danish foreign policy”.<sup>72</sup> In a recently released report on Indigenous issues in Greenland, the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights stated that “Since 2009, the Act on Greenland’s Self-government has given the possibility of self-governance within most areas except e.g. foreign, defense and security policy”.<sup>73</sup> However, judging by the FPSs published annually by the GoG, the SGA is understood by the GoG as allowing Greenland to pursue its own goals on an international level. We can assume this interpretation to be built upon several sections of the SGA. Firstly, the Greenlandic people are defined as “a people pursuant to international law with the right of self-determination”.<sup>74</sup> Already, this provides the GoG with significant room for manoeuvre, since the right to self-determination can be interpreted rather broadly. Secondly, combining this recognition with the authority granted to the GoG to make agreements that “exclusively concern Greenland and entirely relate to

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<sup>70</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 12(1)

<sup>71</sup> *The Greenland-Danish Self-Government Commission's Report on Self-Government in Greenland: Executive Summary*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt, *Contesting the Arctic - Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> Francisco Cali-Tzay. *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Mr. Francisco Cali-Tzay: Visit to Denmark and Greenland 1-10 February 2023 End of Mission Statement*. United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures (2023), 2. Accessed April 9, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/sr/statements/eom-statement-denmark-greenland-sr-indigenous-2023-02-10.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, preamble.

fields of responsibility taken over”,<sup>75</sup> the official parameters of Greenlandic action space start to become clear. Thirdly, as has been discussed above, the very concept of a Greenlandic FP is simply not addressed in the SGA. Greenland remains subject to the GoD’s FP,<sup>76</sup> but that does not eliminate the rights granted by the SGA regarding Greenlandic self-determination and the conducting of agreements relating to relevant fields of responsibility. As has been stated, this creates Olsvig’s ambiguous action space.<sup>77</sup>

To conclude, the GoG considers itself to have the capacity to pursue its own goals internationally, based on the 2009 SGA. To outline these goals and the path towards pursuing them, the GoG publishes one FPS every year, resulting in what can only be described as a Greenlandic FP.

### 3.2 Foreign Policy Statements

Before diving into an exploration of relevant themes of Greenlandic FP through the years, it is relevant to ground the discussion in the GoG’s 10-year vision for Greenland put forth in the 2011 FPS. It reads as follows:

Greenland has become one of three independent states in a constitutionally reworked Realm<sup>78</sup> based on solidarity, community and a strong historical bond. Greenland’s GDP per capita is comparable to other Nordic countries. [It is] A robust society with a high degree of solidarity and an equal distribution of income and opportunities.<sup>79</sup>

According to the 2011 FPS, this is the 10-year goal that Greenlandic FP was working towards, from 2011-2021. Notably, this vision contains both ideological and material goals. The material goals concerning Greenland’s GDP, and the ideological goals of an independent state in a Realm based on solidarity and community. The following two sub-chapters each identify

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<sup>75</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 12(1).

<sup>76</sup> Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt, *Contesting the Arctic - Politics and Imaginaries in the Circumpolar North*, 82.

<sup>77</sup> See Olsvig, "Greenland’s ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests."

<sup>78</sup> A note on translation: The Danish term that is most often used to refer to the Kingdom of Denmark in its entirety is "Rigsfællesskabet", which is often translated as "The Unity of the Realm". I have chosen to translate this term simply as "the Realm". Another possible translation would be "the Commonwealth", but the Danish Prime Minister’s office seems to favour "the Unity of the Realm". For example, "The Unity of the Realm," The Danish Prime Minister’s Office, accessed March 23, 2023, <https://english.stm.dk/the-prime-ministers-office/the-unity-of-the-realm/>.

<sup>79</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2011), 4, Copy held by Inatsisartut: The Parliament of Greenland, received by author via email on request.

an overarching goal of the Greenlandic FPSs: the ambition of strengthening Greenlandic FP capabilities, and of increasing Greenlandic FP action space.

### 3.2.1 Stronger Foreign Policy Capabilities

Greenland is on a mission to strengthen its FP capabilities. This is commonly framed as being instrumental for one of two purposes, for the sake of the self-determination of the Greenlandic people on the one hand,<sup>80</sup> and for the economic development of Greenland on the other.<sup>81</sup> The self-determination of the Greenlandic people is frequently framed as being important to ensure that Greenlandic interests are being looked out for.<sup>82</sup> This can be seen in passages such as this one from the 2019 FPS: “It continues to be important to secure our country’s visibility and interests internationally. Therefore, it is meaningful that our country is an active actor in international politics”.<sup>83</sup> This can be put in context with the widespread sentiment in Greenlandic politics that Denmark is not vigilant enough when it comes to safeguarding Greenland’s interests. This leads to the feeling that if Greenlandic politicians want what is best for Greenland, they have to work towards it themselves, instead of leaving it up to Danish politicians in Copenhagen.<sup>84</sup>

Another example of this sentiment appeared in the introduction to the 2020 FPS by Steen Lyng, the then Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs and Energy. It reads: “We will continue to engage and make a mark on international meetings, fora, and conferences, to express our viewpoints, thereby influencing the decisions made as much as possible”.<sup>85</sup> Later in that same introduction, it says that “the Greenlandic people are and will be the Kingdom’s

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<sup>80</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2020), 9. Accessed March 1, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/2547562/pkt14\\_em2020\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_redegoerelse\\_rg\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/2547562/pkt14_em2020_udenrigspolitisk_redegoerelse_rg_da.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2014, 3; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2017, 9; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2016), 18. Accessed February 27, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/samlingsfiler/2895974/pkt14\\_em2016\\_udenrigs\\_politisk\\_redegoerelse\\_2016\\_rg\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/samlingsfiler/2895974/pkt14_em2016_udenrigs_politisk_redegoerelse_2016_rg_da.pdf); Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2014, 3.

<sup>83</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2019), 7. Accessed February 28, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/2542145/pkt14\\_em2019\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_redegoerelse\\_2019\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/2542145/pkt14_em2019_udenrigspolitisk_redegoerelse_2019_da.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Mikkel Runge Olesen, “Lightning Rod: US, Greenlandic and Danish relations in the shadow of postcolonial reputations,” in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic*, ed. Kristian Sjøby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 73-74.

<sup>85</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 9.

Arctic people, as it is our country that is at stake”.<sup>86</sup> The introduction to the 2017 FPS, signed by then Minister for Independence, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, Suka K. Frederiksen, contains a similar message. It specifies that “to ensure Greenland’s interests internationally it is important that Greenland acts visibly on the international scene”.<sup>87</sup> However, there are also instances of cooperation with Denmark being emphasised, such as in the 2014 FPS, where it reads: “together with Denmark we can ... stand strong when we defend our interests”.<sup>88</sup> The goal of safeguarding Greenland’s self-determination also relates to the second theme of the FPSs, discussed in chapter 3.2.2, and therefore is revisited below.

Regarding economic development, such sentiments can, for example, again be found in Steen Lynge’s 2020 FPS introduction. It says that “further, it is also important, that we are represented in the countries with which we primarily collaborate ... By developing our natural cooperation with other countries, the foreign affairs sector wants to help secure Greenland’s political and economic development”.<sup>89</sup> All FPSs are very clear on the importance of attracting foreign investment to strengthen the domestic economy, and foreign diplomacy is identified as an important factor in that development.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, the introduction to the 2009 FPS discusses how important it is that Greenland is mindful of growing global interest in the Arctic. It mentions developments such as the 2008 Ilulissat declaration,<sup>91</sup> the planting of a Russian flag on the Arctic seabed,<sup>92</sup> China’s application to be an observer to the Arctic Council, and the EU’s recently released Arctic policy. The FPS notes how Greenland should be very mindful of these developments in the coming years, both to seize any opportunities and point to any problems that may arise.<sup>93</sup> This sentiment, the importance of being aware and making use of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>87</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2017, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2014, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 9.

<sup>90</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2017, 32-33; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2011, 5.

<sup>91</sup> The declaration stipulated the obligations of Arctic coastal states and committed them to existing international law with regards to the Arctic Ocean, see “The Ilulissat Declaration,” Arctic Ocean Conference, 2008, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://arcticportal.org/images/stories/pdf/Ilulissat-declaration.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> For example, Kari Roberts, “Jets, Flags, and a New Cold War? Demystifying Russia’s Arctic Intentions,” *International Journal* 65, no. 4 (2010), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002070201006500422>; Tom Parfitt, “Russia plants flag on North Pole seabed,” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2007. Accessed April 13, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/aug/02/russia.arctic>.

<sup>93</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2009, vii.

increasing global interest in the Arctic, is a frequent topic of discussion,<sup>94</sup> although the documents do not identify any specific ways in which this can be done. However, as I will argue in detail below, Greenlandic FP in action has proved itself to be highly alert to utilising opportunities arising from interest in the Arctic.

### **3.2.2 Defending the Action Space**

Greenland is systematically and purposefully defending its action space. I argue that this mission is rooted in a sentiment repeated throughout many FPSs, and explicitly expressed in the very first FPS, the 2009 one, which reads:

It is worth underlining, that it is only us who set the limits for what it is we want to handle in terms of foreign and security policy. It is clear that there are limits on resources and manpower, but one should also keep in mind, that a country under development must inevitably also continue to expand its competences in the field of foreign policy. The new Self-Rule Act places no limitations in this regard.<sup>95</sup>

To recap, the SGA states that in security and defence, the GoD should cooperate with the GoG on anything concerning Greenland specifically,<sup>96</sup> and the message from Nuuk is clear: we decide what those issues are. The issue of Greenlandic self-determination is, as has been discussed previously, a recurring theme throughout all documents. For example, the 2013 FPS notes how Greenlanders are the only Indigenous peoples in the Arctic who have the power of self-government and a “recognised access to independence”.<sup>97</sup> In general, one can identify a growing sense of autonomy throughout these documents. The earlier documents surely emphasise the importance of Greenland’s voice being heard, but in a rather general way, as per the quote from the 2011 FPS at the start of this chapter. Being “one of three independent states in a constitutionally reworked Realm”<sup>98</sup> certainly sounds like wanting more autonomy, but what would that look like? As we move closer to the present in these documents, the GoG begins identifying specific areas where it feels it should have more autonomy, i.e., areas where the GoG is defending its action space.

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<sup>94</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2015, 8, 13; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2013, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2009, vii.

<sup>96</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 13(1).

<sup>97</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2013, 1.

<sup>98</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2011, 4.

An example of this is the 2016 FPS. In the introduction, the then Minister for the Environment, Labour Market, Trade, and Foreign Relations, Vittus Qujaukitsoq, identified the issue with Denmark's presence on the Joint Committee (JC). The JC is a cooperative forum between Greenland, Denmark, and the US, intended to facilitate cooperation between the US and Greenland in the fields of "research, technology and energy cooperation, environmental issues, education, development, tourism, air traffic planning and trade".<sup>99</sup> Qujaukitsoq points out how the 2009 SGA transferred the management of most issues addressed by the JC from Denmark to Greenland. This means that Denmark has a somewhat awkward role to play in this forum as there is no direct need for Danish involvement on these issues. Therefore, according to Qujaukitsoq, there are no constraints to the JC being a bilateral forum between the US and Greenland. He framed Denmark's presence in the JC as putting "constraints on Greenland's direct cooperation with the USA, which today cannot be found in any of our foreign relations with other countries". He goes on to say:

it is paradoxical that Greenland cannot partake in direct dialogue with the USA on such essential topics as education, research and economic cooperation, when Greenland is hosting Thule Air Base and is at the same time free to negotiate with all other countries on these and all other issues Greenland has taken over.<sup>100</sup>

The practicalities of this suggestion are complicated, as the trilateral relationship between the US, Denmark, and Greenland is nuanced. The details and complexities of this relationship are addressed in chapter 4.1.2.

Another example of Greenland systematically defending its action space concerns the Arctic policymaking of the KoD and the Arctic Council. In the introduction to the 2019 FPS by the then Minister for Education, Culture, Church, and Foreign Affairs, Ane Lone Bagger, the concerning lack of Greenlandic contributions to the Arctic policies of the Danish Kingdom are discussed. She stated:

our position as the Realm's Arctic people is still not reflected in our influence within the Arctic Council ... it continues to be Danish politicians and bureaucrats, who write the

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<sup>99</sup> Agreement between the United States of America and Denmark: Amending and Supplementing the Agreement of April 27, 1951 (The United States of America Department of State, 2004). Accessed February 2, 2023, [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/04-806-Denmark-Defense.done\\_.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/04-806-Denmark-Defense.done_.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2016, 10.



Realm's Arctic Policies. That fact represents a democratic deficit within the Kingdom, a problem that should be addressed in the coming years.<sup>101</sup>

In the 2020 FPS, then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Energy, Steen L ynge, reiterated this sentiment,<sup>102</sup> and Bagger and L ynge's successor, Pele Broberg, took this argument a step further in the 2021 FPS. Instead of flagging the fact that Danish politicians and bureaucrats are the ones creating the KoD's Arctic policies, he directly stated that "It should ... be Greenlandic politicians and officials, who create our Arctic policy".<sup>103</sup> He argues that since "it is the Greenlandic people whose land, environment, and society is on the line",<sup>104</sup> it is only natural that they should be the ones designing the policies. The two most recent FPSs, from 2021 and 2022, are similarly steadfast in their emphasis on Greenlandic autonomy. In the introduction to the 2022 FPS, Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Business, and Trade, Vivian Motzfeldt opens with the phrase "nothing about us, without us",<sup>105</sup> stating that this principle should be kept in mind even when dealing with topics that fall outside Greenlandic powers of autonomy.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, she stresses the importance of Greenland being involved in determining its own foreign and security policy emphases.<sup>107</sup>

In summary, the GoG's safeguarding of Greenland's action space has become more targeted throughout the years, evolving from general statements concerning the importance of Greenlandic self-determination to identifying specific areas where the government feels Greenland should have more political space to operate. Notably, the 2022 FPS suddenly gives weight to the Greenlandic Representation Office in Washington D.C. as an avenue for security and defence cooperation. In previous years, the office was primarily discussed in the context of commercial, cultural, economic, and research interests, and security and defence was never

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<sup>101</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2019, 7.

<sup>102</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020.

<sup>103</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2021), 9. Accessed March 1, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/2549901/pkt14\\_em2021\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_rg2021\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/2549901/pkt14_em2021_udenrigspolitisk_rg2021_da.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement] (Naalakkersuisut: Government of Greenland, 2022), 10. Accessed March 8, 2023, [https://ina.gl/media/2553525/pkt14\\_em2022\\_udenrigspolitisk\\_redegoerelse\\_2022\\_da.pdf](https://ina.gl/media/2553525/pkt14_em2022_udenrigspolitisk_redegoerelse_2022_da.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

even mentioned in the context of Greenland's representation in the US.<sup>108</sup> In 2022, the chapter on the Washington office states that it "especially assists in relation to common areas of concern between Denmark and Greenland, including the security and defence cooperation between the Realm and the USA."<sup>109</sup> It goes on to say that the office should "participate actively and on equal terms in the ongoing contact"<sup>110</sup> the Danish MFA has with Washington on anything related to the Arctic and/or Greenland. This should also apply to the US Department of State and the Pentagon/Department of Defense. This emphasis on Greenland's participation in this cooperation being equal to that of the US and the GoD is especially interesting. I argue that this as an indication that the GoG has set its sights on defending its action space specifically regarding hard security issues.

### 3.2.3 Realpolitik: Material or ideational?

Having explored the GoG's action space and its FP goals, we can shortly examine the implications of applying the concept of realpolitik to Greenlandic FP. Since realpolitik assumes "the egoistic pursuit of the national interest under largely material structural constraints",<sup>111</sup> a notable question is: what, then, is Greenland's national interest? Notably, some of the GoG's goals are material, such as attracting foreign investments to develop the Greenlandic economy. Crucially, these goals are commonly put forth *alongside* the more ideational goals of Greenlandic national self-determination. As briefly discussed, research has identified a sentiment in Greenland that the GoD cannot be trusted to look out for Greenland's best interest. This can further be put in the context of colonial grievances in Greenland towards Denmark. As an example, Danish authorities allowed the construction of Thule Air Base without consulting with Greenlandic authorities, so the very existence of the base is in some ways a symbol of the lack of a Greenlandic input into the defence and security policy of the KoD.<sup>112</sup> To make matters worse, the Indigenous population of Pituffik, where Thule Air Base

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<sup>108</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2021, 19; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 18; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2019, 13.

<sup>109</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2022, 16.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Rathbun, "The Rarity of Realpolitik: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics," 12.

<sup>112</sup> Marc Jacobsen and Ulrik Pram Gad, "Setting the scene in Nuuk: introducing the cast of characters in Greenlandic foreign policy narratives," in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic*, ed. Kristian Søby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 16.

was expanded in 1953, was forcibly relocated to make room for the base.<sup>113</sup> This controversy has been the subject of heavy political debate since the 1980s, with official investigations launched, lawsuits filed, and negotiations taking place between the GoG and GoD.<sup>114</sup> Further details of this case are not pertinent to the analysis at hand, but it is important to emphasise the underlying emotions of demands for Greenlandic self-determination, and how they are influenced by cases such as this one.

For a recent notable example of colonial discussions in the KoD, we can look to the February 2023 visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples to Greenland and Denmark. The goal of the visit was to gauge the current status of the rights of the Indigenous peoples of the KoD. The end of mission statement discusses issues such as lack of access to education, healthcare, and adequate social programs in Greenland, leading to Indigenous Greenlanders having to go to Denmark for these services. Thus, Indigenous Greenlanders do not always have access to culturally appropriate social services. Further issues are also identified, such as how a disproportionate share of people suffering homelessness in Denmark are Indigenous; that data on the number of Indigenous children living in Denmark and whether or not they have access to education in their mother tongue is lacking; and that Inuit children in Denmark are seven times more likely than Danish children to be placed in foster care away from their parents.<sup>115</sup> These are just some examples of the issues discussed in the statement. In general, it identifies several problems facing Indigenous peoples in the KoD and encourages the governments of both Greenland and Denmark to address the lingering effects of colonialism that prevail in their societies.<sup>116</sup>

I call attention to this report simply to highlight the fact that the relationship between Denmark and Greenland is undeniably influenced by colonialism. Therefore, the issue of Greenlandic self-determination is similarly influenced by those themes. This is where the postcolonial paradigm comes into play. While the GoG's fight for its action space is certainly

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<sup>113</sup> Kristian Sjøby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, "Introduction: Greenland and the international politics of a changing Arctic: postcolonial paradiplomacy between high and low politics," in *Greenland and the International Politics of a Changing Arctic*, ed. Kristian Sjøby Kristensen and Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>114</sup> Svend Aage Christensen, "Greenlanders Displaced by the Cold War: Relocation and Compensation," Danish Institute for International Studies, accessed April 9, 2023, <https://www.diis.dk/node/18714>.

<sup>115</sup> Cali-Tzay, *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Mr. Francisco Cali-Tzay: Visit to Denmark and Greenland 1-10 February 2023 End of Mission Statement*, 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

material in nature, it is also influenced by postcolonial ideologies. This analysis assumes that the national interest of Greenland is in part influenced by material goals and in part by ideational ones.

### 3.3 Chapter Conclusions

The 2009 SGA creates an ambiguous action space for Greenland, and it is in that ambiguity that Greenland conducts its FP. Anything affecting the foreign affairs position of the KoD is still firmly within the purview of the GoD, so the exact parameters of Greenland's autonomy are not always clear. Arguably, the foreign relations of Greenland certainly affect the KoD, so the SGA could very well be wielded in a much more unforgiving way than it currently is. I argue that the 2009-2022 FPSs from the GoG showcase an increasingly capable and focused Greenlandic foreign service, and an increasing awareness of how Greenland can expand its FP action space.

Returning to the questions posed at the start of this chapter, what does the GoG *want* to do, and what *can* it do? The answer to the latter part of this question is complicated. The GoG *cannot* limit the GoD's "constitutional responsibility and powers",<sup>117</sup> but at the same time, the people of Greenland have the right to self-determination, and the GoG and the GoD are "equal partners".<sup>118</sup> The GoG *can* initiate and conclude negotiations on issues "exclusively" concerning Greenland.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, the GoD should make sure to notify and cooperate with the GoG on anything that is "of particular importance to Greenland".<sup>120</sup> Judging by the FPSs, the GoG has taken any leeway offered by these ambiguities and run with it.

Regarding the first part of the question, looking at what the GoG wants, I highlight the goals laid out in the FPSs of developing the Greenlandic economy, utilising rising interest in the Arctic and in Greenland for the benefit of Greenland, and maintaining and expanding Greenlandic autonomy, i.e., defending Greenland's action space. These goals are interlinked and are made possible with the expansion of Greenlandic FP competences. Expanding FP competences enables these goals to be reached in the first place. In the 2022 FPS, the concept

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<sup>117</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(3).

<sup>118</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government (2009, no. 473 of 12/06/2009). The Danish Prime Minister's Office. Accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.stm.dk/media/11338/10-notifikation-af-7-oktober-2009-til-fn-s-generalsekretaer-om-selvstyreløven.pdf>

<sup>119</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 12(1).

<sup>120</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 13(1).

of Greenlandic input into the security and defence cooperation between Denmark and the US is not-so-subtly introduced. Both when discussing the Greenlandic Representation Office in Washington,<sup>121</sup> and also in the introductory remarks, when Motzfeldt stresses the importance of Greenland deciding its own foreign and security policy emphases.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the FP emphases of Greenland are inescapably influenced by postcolonial ideals, so the national interest of Greenland can be considered to be driven by both material and ideational goals. So, how does this FP manifest in action? How has the GoG worked towards the goals I have identified? I introduce the first two cases of this study to showcase Greenlandic FP in action: the case of the airport constructions and the case of the mapping of Greenland.

## **4 Understanding Greenlandic Foreign Policy in Action**

By outlining the first two cases of this case study, the mapping of Greenland and the airport constructions, I will attempt to show Greenlandic FP in action. Having already established some prominent goals of Greenlandic FP, this chapter will examine how the GoG goes about *achieving* these goals. However, in order to accomplish this, it is first necessary to consider the wider political setting within which Greenlandic FP is located. This chapter therefore starts with an overview of the US as an Arctic actor, before moving on to the trilateral relationship between the US, Greenland, and Denmark. The 2021 Arctic Capacity Package will be examined to explore the intricacies of this trilateral relationship. This chapter finds that Greenland is highly aware of how Danish action space in the Arctic is constrained by US interests. This gives the GoG influence-capability towards the GoD, which it uses to achieve the goals put forth in its FP documents. Those are the goals of developing the Greenlandic economy; utilising rising interest in the Arctic and in Greenland for the benefit of Greenland; and defending Greenlandic action space.

### **4.1 The United States in the Arctic**

The U.S is an Arctic country by virtue of the state of Alaska. Despite having held that title since acquiring Alaska from Russia in 1867,<sup>123</sup> and having been a global superpower since the end

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<sup>121</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2022, 16.

<sup>122</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2022, 10.

<sup>123</sup> For example, Roy M. Huhndorf and Shari M. Huhndorf, "Alaska Native Politics since the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (2011): 388, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1162507>.

of the Cold War, the U.S has not been known for engaging with the Arctic in any significant way. In fact, this “reluctant Arctic power” has shown very little interest in the Arctic and its policies towards the region have been called “reactive, piecemeal, and rigid”.<sup>124</sup> It is a widely accepted fact that, up until the time of writing, the US has not been a great Arctic power.<sup>125</sup> However, around 2010, the eyes of Washington policymakers began to turn towards the far north.<sup>126</sup> The exact chronology of this rising US interest in the Arctic is not vital for our purposes, but overviews are provided by Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen<sup>127</sup> and Corgan,<sup>128</sup> for example.

Notably, for the purpose of this research, 2020 saw significant US engagement in the Arctic, and in Greenland, specifically. To name some key developments, the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region was established to “develop, integrate, coordinate, and implement the Department [of State]’s strategic approach in the Arctic and on all Arctic-related issues”;<sup>129</sup> the Trump Administration launched an icebreaker acquisition program to “retain a strong Arctic security presence”;<sup>130</sup> the US reopened its consulate in Nuuk;<sup>131</sup> and the US Government provided Greenland with a grant of \$21.1 million for civil projects.<sup>132</sup> An advisor on Arctic issues to the US Congress and Administration called the reopening of the Nuuk Consulate and the icebreaker acquisition program “the most monumental things we’ve

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<sup>124</sup> Rob Huebert, "United States Arctic Policy: The Reluctant Arctic Power," *The School of Public Policy Publications* 2 (2009): 2, <https://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.11575/sppp.v2i0.42321>.

<sup>125</sup> For example, Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," 82; Michael T. Corgan, "US Security Policy in the American Arctic," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjörv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 152.

<sup>126</sup> The lack of US engagement with the Arctic as a region has been widely researched, For example, Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington"; Corgan, "US Security Policy in the American Arctic".

<sup>127</sup> Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington."

<sup>128</sup> Corgan, "US Security Policy in the American Arctic."

<sup>129</sup> "State Department Establishes New Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region to Lead Arctic Strategy," U.S. Embassy in Norway news release, January 1, 2020, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://no.usembassy.gov/state-department-establishes-new-office-of-the-u-s-coordinator-for-the-arctic-region-to-lead-arctic-strategy-and-engagement/>.

<sup>130</sup> "Memorandum on Safeguarding United States National Interests in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions," Administration of Donald J. Trump (June 9, 2020), 1. Accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-202000434/pdf/DCPD-202000434.pdf>.

<sup>131</sup> Cammarata, "U.S. reopens consulate in Greenland amid White House's Arctic push."

<sup>132</sup> Oliver Batchelor. "USA giver 83 millioner kroner til projekter i Grønland [USA gives 83 million DKK to projects in Greenland]." *DR*, April 23, 2020. Accessed January 14, 2023, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/usa-giver-83-millioner-kroner-til-projekter-i-groenland>.

done in Arctic policy in the last 40 years.” Stating that it was “a massive first step for the United States and for the Arctic.”<sup>133</sup> In short, US policymaking has, in recent years, been more attentive of the Arctic as a region and of Greenland specifically. Putting this rising US engagement in Greenland into perspective, scholars have noted that the worse the US-Russia relationship is, the more important the US-Greenland one becomes. As Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen put it, Greenland’s “strategic importance to the United States is closely related to the latter’s relationship with Russia”.<sup>134</sup>

While domestic factors have certainly played a part in Washington’s growing attention to the Arctic, this analysis will highlight the influence of international factors. Namely, Chinese interest in the region, Russian capabilities, and, importantly, the cooperation between these two Great Powers.

#### **4.1.1 China and Russia**

A speech given by then US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, at the 2019 Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, highlights the importance of international developments for US engagement in the Arctic. In the speech, he discussed how previously, the AC had the luxury of being allowed to focus almost exclusively on scientific cooperation, culture, and the environment, but that this was about to change. “We’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.”<sup>135</sup> He discussed increasing interest and activity in the region, brought about by climate change and the melting of sea ice. He claimed that the Arctic Ocean was “rapidly taking on new strategic significance”,<sup>136</sup> prophesising that the Arctic Sea routes could become the Suez and Panama canals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These opportunities of the future should be available to all those who play by the rules, with “respect and transparency” being the “price of admission”.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Cammarata, "U.S. reopens consulate in Greenland amid White House's Arctic push."

<sup>134</sup> Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," 77.

<sup>135</sup> Michael R. Pompeo, "Looking North: Sharpening America’s Arctic Focus," Speech given at Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting (Rovaniemi, Finland, May 6, 2019). Accessed January 17, 2023, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/looking-north-sharpening-americas-arctic-focus/index.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

He explicitly denied China's claims of near-Arctic status, stating that "there are only Arctic States and Non-Arctic States. No third category exists, and claiming otherwise entitles China to exactly nothing."<sup>138</sup> He welcomed "transparent Chinese investments"<sup>139</sup> in the Arctic but called for a close monitoring of the role of the Arctic region in the Belt and Road Initiative. He also discussed Russia, expressing concern about Russian and Chinese cooperation, and touching on the significance of the Northern Sea Route. He addressed the "provocative actions" taken by an aggressive Russia, further discussing the extent of Russian militarisation in the Arctic, and maintaining that Russia was unique and deserving of special monitoring. Lastly, he pledged increased US engagement in the Arctic, admitting that the region has not been a top priority for Washington policymakers over the past decades. He highlighted the Trump Administration's willingness to be a more present and proactive Arctic partner, and framed this as a response to Russian aggressiveness.<sup>140</sup>

Russia is considered by many to be the Arctic hegemon,<sup>141</sup> presenting numerous credentials in that regard. Many of those credentials are simply a question of geographical facts, although some are the result of policymaking. The geographical facts are that Russia is by far the largest Arctic territory, with 40% of the region classified as the Arctic belonging to Russia. The second-largest Arctic territory, Canada, only makes up 25% of the Arctic. Additionally, the Russian Arctic is comprised of no less than 3.1 million square kilometres, or 18% of all Russian land,<sup>142</sup> and Russia also has the longest coastline in the Arctic.<sup>143</sup> As for policymaking, a logical consequence of some of these geographical characteristics of the Russian Arctic is for the Russian Central Government to devote at least some attention to the region. Ignoring the region would mean ignoring 18% of the country. An important fact in this regard is that the Russian Arctic is rich in mineral resources, and high priority has been given to developing infrastructure for the extraction of those resources. Russia also has the most populated Arctic region.<sup>144</sup> Regarding military infrastructure, Russia has the largest icebreaker

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Pompeo, "Looking North: Sharpening America's Arctic Focus."

<sup>141</sup> For example, Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, 24; Charron, Plouffe, and Roussel, "The Russian Arctic hegemon: Foreign policy implications for Canada," 38; Paul and Swistek, "Russia in the Arctic: Development Plans, Military Potential, and Conflict Prevention," 7.

<sup>142</sup> Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, 21.

<sup>143</sup> Charron, Plouffe, and Roussel, "The Russian Arctic hegemon: Foreign policy implications for Canada," 38.

<sup>144</sup> Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, 23.



fleet in the world,<sup>145</sup> operating more than forty active vessels compared to the two owned by the US Coast Guard,<sup>146</sup> as well as the biggest year-round port in the Arctic.<sup>147</sup>

That is not to say that Russian Arctic policymaking is infallible, on the contrary. Maria Lagutina discusses the Russian Arctic in detail, identifying a number of socio-economic issues in the region and various problems the Soviet and later Russian governments have faced.<sup>148</sup> For our purposes, it suffices to say that Russia has a considerable Arctic presence and notable competencies, and this helps explain the extent of US preoccupation with Russia in its Arctic policymaking. This trend was inflated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent dramatic deepening of the “East-West divide” in global politics. Even before the Russian invasion, security concerns in the Arctic geopolitical environment had reached levels not seen since the Cold War.<sup>149</sup> Some years earlier, Russia had begun reopening Arctic military bases along its northern coastline, as well as signing a number of energy cooperation agreements with China.<sup>150</sup> Mere weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine, China and Russia announced that their partnership was one of “no limits”.<sup>151</sup>

This brings us to US policymakers’ worries about China in the Arctic. The close working relationship between Russia and China has caused concern in Washington, with specific areas of worry being the aforementioned energy cooperation and the Chinese “Polar Silk Road”. The Polar Silk Road involves developing Chinese shipping lanes through the Arctic Sea, as a part of its grand strategy of the Belt and Road Initiative. The US had openly criticised aspects of the implementation of the initiative. It was especially wary of what the Trump Administration called “debt-trap diplomacy”,<sup>152</sup> wherein China provides loans for the development of

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<sup>145</sup> Charron, Plouffe, and Roussel, "The Russian Arctic hegemon: Foreign policy implications for Canada," 38.

<sup>146</sup> For example, Zamone Perez. "US Coast Guard calls for larger icebreaker fleet to compete in the Arctic." *Defense News*, July 14, 2022. Accessed January 31, 2023, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2022/07/14/us-coast-guard-calls-for-larger-icebreaker-fleet-to-compete-in-the-arctic/>; Ron R. Wallace, "Canada and Russia in an Evolving Circumpolar Arctic," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>147</sup> Charron, Plouffe, and Roussel, "The Russian Arctic hegemon: Foreign policy implications for Canada," 38.

<sup>148</sup> Lagutina, *Russia's Arctic Policy in the Twenty-First Century*.

<sup>149</sup> Gjörv, Lanteigne, and Sam-Aggrey, "Understanding Arctic Security: What has changed? What hasn't?," 3.

<sup>150</sup> Lanteigne, "Considering the Arctic as a Security Region: The Roles of China and Russia," 313.

<sup>151</sup> "Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development," President of Russia news release, February 4, 2022, accessed March 24, 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>.

<sup>152</sup> Michael Pence, "Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration's Policy Toward China," The White House news release, October 4, 2018, accessed March 24, 2023,

infrastructure which poorer countries are unable to repay, resulting in China gaining political and military leverage over these countries. Additionally, Russian intentions for regulating the Northern Sea Route, which largely runs across the Russian northern coastline, are unclear to Western policymakers. The route would be the only major waterway that would not be controlled at least partially by the US Navy,<sup>153</sup> and so the implications of a Chinese-Russian partnership in the Arctic are complex.<sup>154</sup>

In summary, the US Administration is keeping a close eye on Russia and China in the Arctic. As stated, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has rapidly escalated US security concerns regarding Russia, and this means the Arctic now occupies a position of greater priority than it did previously in US FP. In other words, the stakes, seen from the perspective of US officials, are high in the Arctic.

#### **4.1.2 Denmark, Greenland, and the US: The Greenland Card**

The trilateral relationship between Denmark, Greenland, and the US is a nuanced one. A very brief historical overview of this trilateral relationship is necessary for a better understanding of the Greenlandic FP action space. In 1940, Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany, causing concern among US officials. Greenland's geographical position between the North American and Eurasian continents meant that a German presence in Greenland would be a big problem for the US. In a controversial move at the time, the then Ambassador of Denmark to the US, Henrik Kaufmann, signed an agreement with the US Government on the defence of Greenland in 1941, authorising the US to "construct, maintain and operate such landing fields, sea-plane facilities and radio and meteorological installation" that may be necessary for the defence of Greenland.<sup>155</sup> Scholars have observed that the agreement granted the US "extensive rights to

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<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/>.

<sup>153</sup> Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen, "Arctic Security in International Security," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 66.

<sup>154</sup> For example, Gjørsv, Lanteigne, and Sam-Aggrey, "Understanding Arctic Security: What has changed? What hasn't?," 2-3.

<sup>155</sup> "Denmark-United States: Agreement Relating to the Defense of Greenland," *The American Journal of International Law* 35, no. 3 (1941): Art. II, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2213493>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2213493>.

the use of Greenlandic territory for military purposes".<sup>156</sup> The agreement was considered to be a Danish contribution to allied efforts during the Second World War,<sup>157</sup> and when the war concluded, there were 17 US defence installations in Greenland.<sup>158</sup> Notably, this means that Greenland has been a significant variable in the Danish-US relationship for decades.

Greenland's strategic importance for US homeland defence did not wane after the Second World War. On the contrary, the Cold War meant that a US military presence in Greenland continued to be of vital importance, notably for the US's early warning system for intercontinental missiles from hostile Soviet forces.<sup>159</sup> Thule Air Base, or Pituffik, is the most prominent US Air Base in Greenland,<sup>2</sup> and is still operational to this day.<sup>160</sup> It was built in 1953,<sup>161</sup> after Denmark and the US had revised their defence agreement concerning Greenland in 1951. The renegotiations were formally initiated by NATO,<sup>162</sup> which brings us to an essential part of the Danish-US relationship: the so-called "Greenland Card".

The term refers to the Danish FP strategy of using Greenland to further its interests in Washington, to extract benefits out of its bilateral relationship with the US, and to improve its position within NATO.<sup>163</sup> This strategy was most prominently used during the Cold War. Scholars disagree as to how much weight the Greenland card carried within NATO, but it is widely accepted that Greenland helped secure Denmark's position within NATO despite

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<sup>156</sup> Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen and Line Jedig Nielsen, "The Middleman—The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy," in *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: The High North Between Cooperation and Confrontation*, ed. Joachim Weber, Frontiers in International Relations (Springer, 2020), 78. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45005-2>.

<sup>157</sup> Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," 77.

<sup>158</sup> Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen, "The Middleman—The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy," 79.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Since the writing of this text, the name of the base has been officially changed to Pituffik Space Base. Since the thesis was close to being finalised at the time of the change, and to avoid any confusion, the name Thule Air Base will be used throughout this text. See news report on name-change in Thomas Munk Veirum and Merete Lindstrøm. "Stilhed for tvangsflyttede beboere under navne-ceremoni på Pituffik [A minute's silence for forcibly relocated residents during naming ceremony at Pituffik]." *Sermitsiaq*, April 6, 2023. Accessed April 7, 2023, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/stilhed-tvangsflyttede-beboere-navne-ceremoni-pituffik>.

<sup>161</sup> Ackrén, "From bilateral to trilateral agreement: The case of Thule Air Base," 1.

<sup>162</sup> See "Defense of Greenland: Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark," The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark (Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library, 1951). Accessed March 27, 2023 [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/den001.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/den001.asp).

<sup>163</sup> Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen, "Preface," in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2017*, ed. Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017).

Denmark's modest contribution to the alliance. Danish policymakers consistently demanded that the calculation of Denmark's NATO contributions should take into account the yearly block grant it provides to Greenland, and this speaks volumes as to how Danish policymakers viewed the Danish contribution to NATO. The goodwill Denmark extends to the US by letting the superpower "operate more or less freely in Greenland"<sup>164</sup> is considered by Danish policymakers to be highly relevant to Denmark's position as a NATO ally. As to Greenland's opinion on this strategy, Greenlandic policymakers were vocal about their demands that Denmark should reimburse Greenland an amount corresponding to the discount Denmark received on its contributions to NATO. So far, these demands have never been met.<sup>165</sup>

The Greenland card was less frequently used after the Cold War ended, partly because Greenland's strategic importance to US defence had decreased sharply, and partly because Denmark changed its approach to NATO cooperation. Since the turn of the millennium, Denmark has prioritised contributing extensively to various NATO operations in the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa.<sup>166</sup> Notably, these are regions that the US concerned itself greatly with during this period. This brings us to the last key element that will be considered in this sub-chapter: the extent to which Danish FP is shaped by US interests. As US FP priorities shifted away from the trans-Atlantic security threat of the Cold War to other regions of the world, Denmark followed suit.

It is important not to overemphasise the extent to which Danish FP is influenced by US interests. The influencing factors of a country's FP are of course numerous and multi-faceted, but there is general academic consensus that Denmark is notably preoccupied by the US FP and by maintaining its status as an important US ally. This is discussed by Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen,<sup>167</sup> who refer to Denmark's relationship with the US as one of the most important driving forces behind Danish Arctic policy, alongside its relationship with Greenland.<sup>168</sup> This was also emphasised by Kristian Sjøby Kristensen. When discussing how US interest in the region is brought about by increasingly tense Great Power competition, he said:

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<sup>164</sup> Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," 84.

<sup>165</sup> Henriksen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, "The Greenland Card: Prospects for and Barriers to Danish Arctic Diplomacy in Washington," 84-85.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 86

<sup>167</sup> See "The Middleman—The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy."

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

Danish Security Policy has always ... [been] more oriented towards our allies than towards our enemies. So, in a sense, the driving factor is not the Russian threat, the driving factor is the American perception of the Russian threat.<sup>169</sup>

The essence of both Kristensen's words and Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen's writing is: the GoD cares deeply about what the US Administration thinks should happen in the Arctic. In other words, *Denmark's action space in the Arctic is constrained by US interests in the region*. This complicates Denmark's relationship with Greenland within the KoD. Greenland is dependent on the GoG for decisions concerning the FP and the security and defence policy of the KoD; and the GoD is, in turn, guided in that decision-making by its relationship with the US and whatever interests the US currently emphasises in the Arctic. To demonstrate how attentive Copenhagen policymakers are to Washington's FP emphases, we will now look to the Danish Ministry of Defence's 2021 Arctic capacity package (ACP).

#### **4.1.3 The 2021 Arctic Capacity Package**

At the time, the 2018-2023 Defence Agreement of the Danish Ministry of Defence (MoD) was in force,<sup>170</sup> and a policy renewal was therefore not due until 2023. The 2018 agreement declared a 20% increase in Danish defence spending, and specifically mentions increasing the Danish Armed Forces' presence in the Arctic.<sup>171</sup> A whole chapter of the policy document is dedicated to ensuring "a relevant Danish defence in the Arctic",<sup>172</sup> and it pledges DKK 245 million (ca. \$39 million in 2018) in funding for the nine projects in Greenland defined in the document.<sup>173</sup> This amount is additional to the yearly budget of ca \$20 million allocated by the 2016 Agreement on the Arctic.<sup>174</sup> In summary, the 2018 agreement did not ignore the Arctic

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<sup>169</sup> Kristian Sjøby Kristensen, interviewed by author, Copenhagen, March 7, 2023.

<sup>170</sup> Defence Agreement 2018 - 2023 (Danish Ministry of Defence, 2018). Accessed January 13, 2023, <https://www.fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-danish-defence-agreement-2018-2023-pdf-2018.pdf>.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 10-11. The projects are: Cleaning up abandoned US military stations in Greenland; investing in anti-pollution equipment for Greenlandic waters; the launching of civil preparedness and contingency education in Greenland; assessment programs on the recruitment of Greenlandic volunteers for national service; subsidised travel schemes for Greenlandic military personnel to travel to and from Denmark to serve in the DAF; an increase in internship positions within the Armed Services for secondary school students in Greenland; contributing to the mapping of the ice chart north of 62°N; contributing to the mapping of land in Greenland; the operation of a radio room at the maritime emergency radio in Greenland.

<sup>174</sup> See Aftale om styrkelse af Forsvarsministeriets fremtidige opgaveløsning i Arktis [Agreement on the strengthening of the Defence Ministry's future problem solving capabilities in the Arctic] (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defence, 2016). Accessed January 13, 2023,

as a region. On the contrary, it signalled heightened interest in and engagement with Greenland and the Arctic in general, and defined developments in the region as being of “vital importance to Denmark”.<sup>175</sup> This was, apparently, not quite enough Arctic engagement.

In February 2021, the GoD entered into another framework agreement, the ACP, to supplement the existing defence agreement. The ACP was essentially an ad-hoc amendment to an existing Defence Agreement, a move which is rare in Denmark. When interviewed for this research, Kristensen spoke of the 2021 ACP, saying:

Lo and behold, the Americans find that the Arctic is more important than we [the Danes/GoD] perhaps thought, then we all of the sudden can make [an] additional defence spending bill on 1.5 billion Danish crowns, showing that we in Denmark also think that the Arctic is important. Opening a defence agreement ... goes against convention. The fact that the Danish Government ... decided to find these additional funds is not something that happens every day. Opening a defence agreement is not something you do lightly.<sup>176</sup>

As for the official reasons for this *ad hoc* defence agreement, the ACP itself cites the “rapid changes” currently ongoing in the region, with global warming increasing the accessibility of raw materials and resources, as well as making previously inaccessible sea lanes available. It goes on to say that this is attracting the attention of numerous actors interested in the region, including a more active and militarily engaged Russia; that the KoD has a vital security and defence role to play in the region; and that the ACP is intended to strengthen the MoD’s ability to accomplish this role.<sup>177</sup>

Bearing in mind how rare it is to revisit a Defence Agreement currently serving as a policy document for the Danish Ministry of Defence, it is interesting to look at the response of the US to this agreement. It should be noted that the US is mentioned in the agreement, and it is the only country (apart from the Faroe Islands and Greenland) to be mentioned by name. The agreement emphasises that the vital security and defence role played by the KoD is not one it

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<https://www.fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-aftale-om-implementering-af-arktisanalysen-8dec2016-.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> Aftale om styrkelse af Forsvarsministeriets fremtidige opgaveløsning i Arktis [Agreement on the strengthening of the Defence Ministry’s future problem solving capabilities in the Arctic], 2016, 10.

<sup>176</sup> Kristian Søby Kristensen, interviewed by author, Copenhagen, March 7, 2023.

<sup>177</sup> Aftale om en Arktis-Kapacitetspakke [Agreement on an Arctic Capacity Package] (Danish Ministry of Defence, 2021), 1. Accessed January 31, 2023, <https://www.fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/nyheder/2021/-aftale-om-en-arktis-kapacitetspakke-.pdf>.

assumes unilaterally; rather it is performed “in tight dialogue and cooperation with the USA and other close allied coastal states,<sup>178</sup> anchored by NATO”.<sup>179</sup>

In April 2021, two months after the release of the ACP, the US Embassy in Copenhagen released a factsheet on Danish-US relations on the occasion of an upcoming visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the KoD. The factsheet celebrates this important agreement and discusses how the US and Denmark share a “mutual commitment to keeping the Arctic stable and secure”.<sup>180</sup> It emphasises concerns about increased Russian military activity in the Arctic, touches briefly on the reopening of the US Consulate in Nuuk, and stresses the shared desire of the US and Greenland to broaden and deepen their relationship. During Blinken’s visit in Copenhagen, he met bilaterally with the then Foreign Minister of Denmark, Jeppe Kofod. In a press conference following the meeting, Blinken welcomed the recently announced capacity package, speaking fondly of US-Danish cooperation in the Arctic.<sup>181</sup>

In summary, the US is engaging with the Arctic, and with Greenland, in a much more serious way than it had done during the past decades. Denmark takes note of this and increases its own strategic engagement in the Arctic, partially by publishing the ACP. A factsheet from the US embassy in Copenhagen celebrates this package and announced a visit to the KoD from the US Secretary of State. During that visit, in a joint press conference with the Danish Prime Minister, the US Secretary of State mentioned the package again, celebrating it and Denmark’s commitment to a joint Arctic defence – a public “pat on the back” for Denmark’s growing Arctic engagement from US officials.<sup>182</sup> Notably, the causal relationship between these events should not be overemphasised. I am not suggesting that Blinken’s visit to the KoD was solely in celebration of this package and, based solely on the data at hand at this moment, it is impossible to state with complete certainty that the ACP was released only to “keep up” with the US in the Arctic. What has been established, however, is that Denmark’s

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<sup>178</sup> The five Arctic coastal states being Canada, Denmark via Greenland, Norway, US, and Russia. “Allied coastal states”, presumably, being all those states except Russia.

<sup>179</sup> Aftale om en Arktis-Kapacitetspakke [Agreement on an Arctic Capacity Package], 2021, 1.

<sup>180</sup> “The United States and the Kingdom of Denmark: Strengthening Our Alliance,” U.S. Department of State news release, May 16, 2021, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-the-kingdom-of-denmark-strengthening-our-alliance/>.

<sup>181</sup> “Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod at a Joint Press Availability,” U.S. Department of State news release, May 17, 2021, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-danish-foreign-minister-jeppe-kofod-at-a-joint-press-availability/>.

<sup>182</sup> As remarked by Kristian Søby Kristensen, interviewed by author, Copenhagen, March 7, 2023.

action space in the Arctic is to a large extent constrained by US interests in the region, and by Danish ambitions to maintain its status as a US ally. With this examination of the ACP, I suggest that Denmark considers US policy towards the Arctic in its own Arctic policymaking. This has also been observed by other scholars.<sup>183</sup>

## 4.2 The Case of the Airport Constructions

Now that we have examined the position of two key players influencing the Greenlandic FP action space, we can finally move on to examining the cases at hand – cases chosen to analyse the Greenlandic FP action space in practice. As has been established, the GoG is well aware of the rising global interest in the Arctic as a region and intends to be mindful of seizing any opportunity that may arise in that regard.<sup>184</sup> The GoG also intends to focus on developing the Greenlandic economy through foreign diplomacy.<sup>185</sup> Conveniently, both two cases at hand reflect those goals and showcase how the GoG is working towards them. They also demonstrate that the GoG is highly aware of its influence-capabilities towards Denmark.

In 2017-2019, the planned expansion of three airports in Greenland became a hot topic in both Copenhagen and Washington D.C. The purpose of the expansion was to strengthen Greenlandic capacity for international flights and capitalise on increased interest and activity in the Arctic, i.e., developing the Greenlandic economy. Soon after the GoG opened up a bidding process for the constructions, the Chinese construction giant, China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), majority-owned by the Chinese state, showed its interest in securing the tender.<sup>186</sup> The issue technically concerns the development and infrastructure of Greenlandic society, which is firmly within the self-determination powers of the GoG. But it was perceived by many as being more related to foreign policy and security, policy issues that fall within Denmark's sovereign powers.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> For example, as previously discussed, Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen, "The Middleman—The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy."

<sup>184</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2009, vii.

<sup>185</sup> For example, Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2017, 32-33; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2011, 5.

<sup>186</sup> Erik Matzen and Tom Daly. "Greenland's courting of China for airport projects worries Denmark." *Reuters*, 2018, March 22. Accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-arctic-greenland-idUSKBN1GY25Y>.

<sup>187</sup> Hans Lucht. *Strictly business? Chinese Investments in Greenland Raise US Concerns*. Danish Institute for International Studies (November 1, 2018). Accessed February 1, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21343>.



Greenlandic officials were unafraid to show their interest in this possible cooperation. The Prime Minister of Greenland at the time, Kim Kielsen, visited Beijing in 2017 to meet with representatives of Chinese companies, and CCCC was placed on a shortlist for possible investors.<sup>188</sup> In preparation for the meeting, Kielsen and the Greenlandic delegation met with the Chinese Ambassador to Denmark at the Chinese Embassy in Copenhagen. According to a news release from the Embassy, the two delegations discussed “deepening the cooperation in fields such as trade, culture, tourism and consular protection”, and “the great importance that China attaches to the exchanges and cooperation with Greenland”.<sup>189</sup> Kielsen supposedly emphasised how much Greenlanders value Chinese cooperation, and that he was excited for the visit, which he believed would be fruitful.<sup>190</sup>

On September 16, 2018, the then US Under Secretary of Defence for Policy, John Rood, visited Thule Air Base and signed a statement of intent on behalf of the Department of Defense (DoD). According to the statement, which can currently only be found in a tweet published by the US Embassy in Denmark,<sup>191</sup> the DoD “intends to pursue potential strategic investments [in Greenland] vigorously, including investments that may serve dual military and civilian purposes”.<sup>192</sup> This is put in the context of “the increasing importance of the Arctic region to the global economy and to regional security”,<sup>193</sup> and the shared interest of Denmark and the US in “strengthening security, improving situational awareness, and maintaining low-tension in the region”.<sup>194</sup> It specifically mentions the DoD’s intention to “strategically invest in projects related to the airport infrastructure in Greenland”.<sup>195</sup> The statement never mentions China directly, but when the timing of this visit and the airport developments are considered, the Greenlandic visit to China cannot be ignored.

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<sup>188</sup> Matzen and Daly, "Greenland's courting of China for airport projects worries Denmark."

<sup>189</sup> “Ambassador Deng Ying meets Premier of Greenland Self-Government,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of Denmark, updated October 31, 2017, accessed February 1, 2023, [http://dk.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/201710/t20171031\\_2554840.htm](http://dk.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/201710/t20171031_2554840.htm).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> U.S. Embassy in the Kingdom of Denmark (@usembdenmark), "Statement of Intent on Defense Investments in Greenland by the Department of Defense of the United States of America," Twitter post, September 17, 2018, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://twitter.com/usembdenmark/status/1041695240686632960/photo/1>.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

In October 2018, the then Assistant Secretary of Defence in the US, Katie Wheelbarger, publicly communicated Washington's misgivings about Chinese involvement in the airport process. According to Danish media, she said that the Chinese were using economic investments to establish a military presence in Greenland. She went on to say that these developments were worrying, and they were the reason why China was the top priority of US defence policy.<sup>196</sup> The then Minister for Defence for Denmark, Claus Hjort Frederiksen, was not as deeply worried as Wheelbarger. When interviewed by Danish media, he said that the GoD was not opposed to China funding the construction of the runways, since that was a very limited project. However, he would have to re-evaluate matters if the issue were to become a question of who funded the day-to-day running of the airports.<sup>197</sup>

Reflecting on the dynamics of the Danish-US relationship as described in the preceding chapter, the great concern shown by the US regarding Chinese investments in Greenland is noteworthy, as is the conclusion of this case. In March 2019, the Danish state announced it would be funding and co-owning two of the new airports, investing DKK 700 million (ca. \$105 million in 2019) in exchange for a 33.3% ownership. The remaining 66.6% is held by the company Kalaallit Airports Holding, wholly owned by the GoG.<sup>198</sup> In June 2019, CCCC withdrew its bid for the construction projects.<sup>199</sup> A month later, the Nordic Investment Bank announced that it would finance the developments of the airports, providing Kalaallit Airports Holding with a DKK 450 million (ca. \$67.5 million in 2019) loan. The Nordic Investment Bank is an international institution owned by its eight member states: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> "USA vil holde Kina væk fra lufthavnsbyggeri i Grønland [USA wants to keep China away from airport constructions in Greenland]." *DR*, October 12, 2018. Accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/usa-vil-holde-kina-vaek-fra-lufthavnsbyggeri-i-gronland>.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Stephen Gadd. "Danish state agrees co-ownership of two new international airports in Greenland." *CPH Post* March 26, 2019. Accessed February 1, 2023, <https://cphpost.dk/2019-03-26/news/danish-state-agrees-co-ownership-of-two-new-international-airports-in-greenland/#:~:text=Denmark's%20finance%20committee%20has%20approved,to%20a%2033.3%20percent%20ownership>.

<sup>199</sup> "China withdraws bid for Greenland airport projects: Sermitsiaq newspaper." *Reuters*, June 4, 2019. Accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-silkroad-greenland-idUSKCN1T5191>.

<sup>200</sup> See "NIB finances the development of Greenland airports," Nordic Investment Bank news release, July 19, 2019, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.nib.int/releases/nib-finances-the-development-of-greenland-airports>.

This case is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, the US has a history of opposing any “non-allied” presence in Greenland. The very foundations of the US-Greenlandic relationship lie in US policymaker’s fears of a hostile presence on the North American continent, as reflected in both the 1941 and 1951 Defence Agreements between Denmark and the US. The fact that CCCC is a *Chinese, state-owned* company is of consequence in this regard due to the fractious relationship between China and the US. The developments of the airports are important to the economic development of Greenlandic society and for Greenland to be able to capitalise on rising interest in the Arctic. To appreciate just how unhappy US officials were with these developments, we can look to the fact that US officials publicly announced their reservations, and that the US Under Secretary of Defence travelled to Thule Air Base to declare the willingness of the US to invest in Greenlandic infrastructure. Secondly, as has been established, Denmark’s action space in the Arctic is limited by US interests.

This case demonstrates that the GoG is acutely aware of these two factors and is using them to further its own FP goals of strengthening the Greenlandic economy. In other words, US interests in the region constrain Danish action space, which in turn provides the GoG with influence-capability towards the GoD. In summary, the GoG’s awareness of the limits and opportunities of its own powers is demonstrated by this case, as is the GoG’s use of FP as an instrument to achieve its goals for developing the Greenlandic economy.

### **4.3 The Case of the Mapping of Greenland**

The case of the mapping of Greenland shares three key characteristics with the case of the airport constructions. It shows Greenlandic FP in practice; it concerns the developments of Greenlandic infrastructure and economy; and the US is a key player to take into consideration when examining the conclusion of the case. The case has been examined thoroughly in a recent report; the facts included here will draw heavily from this source.<sup>201</sup>

Historically, the interests of three different countries have influenced the driving factors behind the mapping of Greenland: US interests, Danish, and Greenlandic. Based on Strandsbjerg’s overview, Danish interests dominated the first historical period (reaching from the 1600s to the 1940s) which was characterised by Danish interest in mapping Greenland for

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<sup>201</sup> See Jeppe Strandsbjerg. *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*. Danish Institute for International Studies (September 13, 2022). Accessed March 27, 2023, <https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/kortlaegning-suveraeinitet-groenland>.

the sake of claiming, and later maintaining, Danish sovereignty over the region.<sup>202</sup> US interests enter the equation in the second historical period, during the Second World War, after Denmark and the US signed Defence Agreements concerning Greenland.<sup>203</sup> Interestingly, the 1951 Defence Agreement allows for extensive US-Danish cooperation in mapping efforts, while still emphasising the ultimate sovereignty Denmark has over Greenlandic. It allows US authorities to map Greenlandic territory if the GoD is “unable to furnish the required data”.<sup>204</sup> Given Danish efforts to map Greenland for the sake of Danish sovereignty over the island in the first three decades of the 1900s, it is notable that the US was granted such an extensive permission to map Greenlandic territory by the 1951 agreement.<sup>205</sup> The Greenlandic voice starts to influence the proceedings in the third and most recent period (late 1950s and onwards) and this was escalated by the 2009 SGA. Recognising the Greenlandic people as possessing the right to self-determination had wide-reaching consequences. Importantly for this discussion, it raised the issue of the mapping of Greenland encouraging the development of Greenland *for the sake of Greenlandic interests*,<sup>206</sup> not from a Danish perspective.

Keeping this historical overview in mind, we move on to the year 2013. At that point, no efforts had been made to map Greenlandic territory since the 1980s,<sup>207</sup> despite repeated demands for improvements from Greenlandic officials.<sup>208</sup> Notably, this timing coincides with the sharp decline in US interest in the Arctic and the subsequent lack of Danish engagement with the region. As has been discussed above, the end of the Cold War shifted US priorities away from the Arctic and, correspondingly, away from Greenland. Strandsbjerg reviews in detail how Greenlandic authorities consistently called attention to the lack of updated maps and requested that the situation be improved, to no avail.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 35-37.

<sup>204</sup> See Defense of Greenland: Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark, 1951, art. V (2).

<sup>205</sup> Strandsbjerg, *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*, 30-34.

<sup>206</sup> See Ibid., 37.

<sup>207</sup> "Grønland er kortlagt på ny [Greenland is mapped again]," Danish Ministry for Climate, Energy, and Utilities news release, February 6, 2023, accessed April 7, 2023, <https://kefm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/2023/feb/groenland-er-kortlagt-paa-ny>.

<sup>208</sup> Strandsbjerg, *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*, 11, 38.

<sup>209</sup> See Ibid., 35-37.

In November 2013, Siverth K. Heilmann, a then Minister of the GoG, attended an international conference on geospatial issues in Seoul, South Korea. During the conference, Heilmann met bilaterally with a minister in the South Korean Ministry for Land, Infrastructure, and Transport. The South Korean Minister officially offered to assist Greenland in the mapping of Greenlandic territory.<sup>210</sup> When interviewed on the subject for a Greenlandic news report, Heilmann called these developments “incredibly positive”.<sup>211</sup> He said that everyone knew how outdated and imprecise maps of Greenland were, and that these inadequate maps stood in the way of the industrial development of the country.<sup>212</sup> As highlighted by both Heilmann in his interview and by Strandsbjerg, the mapping of Greenland was the responsibility of Denmark at the time, so these mapping efforts would have to take place with close Danish cooperation. Conveniently, the KoD’s Arctic strategy for 2011-2020 announced an agreement between the Danish Geodata Agency (GST) and the GoG. The agreement was to work together on finding new methods for the topographic mapping of Greenland, since traditional mapping methods had proved to be too costly due to the vast size of Greenland. The strategy suggests the use of satellite imagery, among other things. The South Korean offer included the use of satellite imagery for the mapping of Greenland, and so it fitted quite snugly within the strategy that the GoD and the GoG had already agreed upon.<sup>213</sup>

However, as has been stated, the mapping of Greenland was within the purview of the GoD at the time, with the GST, a Danish governmental agency, being officially responsible for the issue.<sup>214</sup> This meant that Greenland was not free to negotiate bilaterally with South Korea on the mapping of Greenland, and Greenlandic officials were of course aware of this fact. In the previously mentioned interview with Heilmann, he called attention to this himself, saying that these developments would all have to happen in close cooperation with Denmark.<sup>215</sup> A

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<sup>210</sup> "Sydkorea vil hjælpe med kortlægning [South Korea wants to help with mapping]." *Sermitsiaq*, November 17, 2013. Accessed March 27, 2023, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/node/160932>.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Kongeriget Danmarks Strategi for Arktis 2011–2020 [The Kingdom of Denmark’s Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020] (The Danish Parliament 2010), 37. Accessed March 27, 2023, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20101/almDEL/UPN/bilag/235/1025863.pdf>.

<sup>214</sup> Strandsbjerg, *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*, 38.

<sup>215</sup> "Sydkorea vil hjælpe med kortlægning [South Korea wants to help with mapping]."

trilateral meeting between Greenland, Denmark, and South Korean representatives took place in Nuuk in March 2014, but this cooperation never came to fruition.<sup>216</sup>

Instead, an agreement was signed between the GoG and the GoD in September 2018, which stated that a project for the complete mapping of Greenland would be completed by 2021, with financing from the Danish State Budget, a Danish charity, and the procurement agency of the Danish MoD.<sup>217</sup> Strandsbjerg reviews the complicated patchwork of governing agencies currently responsible for the mapping of Greenland. He highlights a 2017 legislation that officially declared the issue of the mapping of the entire KoD to be the responsibility of the Danish Ministry for Climate, Energy, and Utilities. Interestingly, Greenland has not ratified the law yet, but authorities involved with mapping efforts in both Greenland and Denmark operate according to them regardless of that. In addition to the ministry, other key players when it comes to the mapping of Greenland are the GST, the Greenlandic Asiaq Greenland Survey, among others.<sup>218</sup> Notably, the mapping of Greenland was one of the issues cited on list 2 of the 2009 SGA, meaning that the GoG can assume responsibility for it at any time, but it must coordinate accordingly with the GoD. According to a news release from the Danish Ministry for Climate, Energy, and Utilities, published on February 2, 2023, the mapping of Greenland has now been completed. The maps were created using satellite imagery and are available online in open access format.<sup>219</sup>

To summarise, the GoG needed accurate maps of Greenland for the development of the Greenlandic economy and society, having been vocal on that issue for several years, and a foreign country showed interest in assisting with the mapping of Greenland, but that cooperation never came about. Instead, the GoD entered into an agreement with the GoG on mapping Greenland, in a project that has since been concluded. The history of the mapping of Greenland involves another actor with whom we have become especially familiar throughout the course of this analysis: the US. US strategic interests in Greenland once again come into play in this case study, as the 1951 Defence Agreement regarding Greenland permits the US to conduct mapping of Greenlandic territory if the GoD is unable to provide the needed

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<sup>216</sup> Strandsbjerg, *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*, 38.

<sup>217</sup> Schultz-Nielsen. "Aftale: Kortlægning af Grønland går i gang [Agreement: Mapping of Greenland begins]." *Sermitsiaq*, September 21, 2018. Accessed March 28, 2023, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/node/208422>.

<sup>218</sup> Strandsbjerg, *Kortlægning og Suverænitæt i Grønland [Mapping and sovereignty in Greenland]*, 13-14.

<sup>219</sup> "Grønland er kortlagt på ny [Greenland is mapped again]."

information to US authorities. Keeping this in mind when considering South Korean offers to assist Greenland in mapping efforts, an interesting dilemma appears.

Denmark retains the rights and responsibility to map Greenland. This brings to mind the early rhetoric surrounding mapping efforts during the first period identified by Strandsbjerg, that of Danish sovereignty over Greenland. While the discourse has of course evolved significantly since the 1900s, the fact remains that Greenland is a part of the KoD. Possessing knowledge on the territory of the Realm is, in its essence, related to sovereignty. Introducing a third party into that issue is complicated, although far from impossible. A trilateral agreement between the GoG, the GoD, and South Korean authorities could have been created, with the practicalities of such a cooperation being worked out according to international law with the principle of territorial sovereignty held in mind. However, the plot thickens when one considers that *there was already a third party* involved in the mapping of Greenland: the US, which raises important questions. What would the procedure have been if the US military at Thule Air Base were to request access to maps created by South Korean satellites, according to a trilateral agreement between Danish, Greenlandic, and South Korean authorities? How do US interests at Thule Air Base align with South Korean satellite activities?

Again, this hypothetical trilateral agreement between Denmark, South Korea, and Greenland is not unthinkable, and the practicalities of how this would apply to Thule Air Base could have been sorted out and settled. But the fact remains that Denmark's relationship with the US was an influencing factor regarding the mapping of Greenland. However, it is difficult to state with full certainty whether this directly influenced the decision to reject South Korean offers of assistance and launch a Greenlandic-Danish mapping project instead. This means that a causal relationship between US involvement in Greenland and Danish reluctance to accept South Korean assistance cannot be stated with absolute certainty. This equally applies to a causal relationship between South Korean interest in assisting Greenland, and the Danish decision to launch a mapping project. When interviewed for this research, Jeppe Strandsbjerg called this line of argument "a bit controversial".<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, he stated:

The Danish agency says that I'm misreading it, but nothing happens until Greenland signs a Memorandum of Understanding with South Korea in 2013 ... sometimes it helps to get

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<sup>220</sup> Jeppe Strandsbjerg, interviewed by author via VTC, March 13, 2023.

Danish authorities to do something if you have South Korea, China, or [the] US or somebody else that they can say: if you don't want to do it, they can do it.<sup>221</sup>

Strandsbjerg also called attention to the US Arctic Strategy of 2013. In the chapter "Pursue Responsible Arctic Region Stewardship", the strategy discusses the importance of possessing accurate information on a changing Arctic environment. It reads: "together, Arctic nations can responsibly meet new demands – including maintaining open sea lanes for global commerce and scientific research, charting and mapping ... – by increasing knowledge and integrating Arctic management".<sup>222</sup> This at least indicates some US preoccupation with the concept of possessing accurate information on Arctic territory. To be clear, aside from this mention of how "Arctic nations" can "responsibly meet new demands"<sup>223</sup> by mapping Arctic territory, the US strategy as a whole mainly speaks of mapping *US Arctic territory*, not the Arctic in general.

#### 4.4 Chapter Conclusions

With this chapter, I have endeavoured to examine Greenlandic FP in practice. These two cases demonstrate that Greenland, having a limited action space itself, is highly aware of *Denmark's* action space in the Arctic, and leverages rising interest in the Arctic to achieve its goals of economic development. In other words, the fact that Danish action space is constricted by US interests in the Arctic grants the GoG influence-capabilities. To recap, Mouritzen defines influence-capability as "the ability to modify others' behaviour",<sup>224</sup> and Greenland managed to do just that in both cases observed.

To Denmark, US displeasure is an undesirable cost, and that limits Denmark's action space in the Arctic and allows Greenland to use its influence-capability as a crowbar to achieve its FP goals. A key variable in these cases is US interests in the region, and the GoG's abilities to use them as leverage. We have already established that the GoG has expressed that it wants to develop the Greenlandic economy; utilise rising interest in the Arctic and in Greenland for the benefit of Greenland; and maintain and expand Greenlandic autonomy, i.e., defend Greenland's action space. I argue that these cases show that the GoG is actively pursuing these goals, and, arguably, reaching them, by wielding its influence-capability against Denmark. This

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* (Washington: The White House, 2013), 7. Accessed April 7, 2023, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat\\_arctic\\_strategy.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Mouritzen, "A Hundred Years of Danish Action Space " 115.



is made possible by Danish action space being constrained by US interests in the Arctic, and US interests, in turn, are influenced by the changing security environment in the Arctic. Therefore, Greenland's influence-capabilities originally derive from rising Great Power tensions in the Arctic and are transformed into leverage towards Denmark within the nuanced web of interests in the trilateral relationship between Denmark, Greenland, and the US described in the preceding chapters.

This brings us to the final chapter of this analysis, as we turn to the topic of defence issues. As was discussed earlier, the GoG has also expressed its desire to be involved in shaping its own security policy emphases. Although the cases above both relate to the security and defence of the KoD, I argue that present-day developments are more blatantly focused on expanding Greenlandic action space regarding the security and defence policy of the KoD.

## **5 Understanding Present-Day Greenlandic Foreign Policy**

I hypothesise that the GoG is currently working towards expanding its action space vis-à-vis security and defence, utilising the limitations of Danish action space in the Arctic in much the same way as has been argued with the two cases above: by using the influence-capability provided to it by changes in the Arctic security environment. As evidence of this, I present a continued discussion of the previously introduced 2021 ACP, and specifically the GoG's rejection of the ACP. The following chapter will outline this, before moving on to recent developments. I examine evidence that the GoG is indeed succeeding in utilising its influence-capability to defend its action space in the realm of security and defence.

### **5.1 Defending the Action Space: Rejecting the Arctic Capacity Package**

As previously stated, I suggest that the ACP was at least partially influenced by US interests, and that the GoD introduced it to keep up with US ambitions in the Arctic. In light of that, it is interesting to consider the Greenlandic response to the ACP. Four months after the ACP was published, the Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pele Broberg, publicly rejected the ACP in a television interview. When the package was originally announced, Broberg had not been a minister, but he undertook that position following the Greenlandic general election of April 2021. The following were among the scheduled developments that Broberg claimed to take issue with: the increased presence of Danish Armed Forces in Greenland; increased use

of drone and satellite surveillance in Greenland; and defence training for Greenlanders to facilitate their voluntary enlistment in the Danish Armed Forces.<sup>225</sup>

A few days after Broberg rejected the package, the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, said that it was “completely natural” for the defence package to be discussed again, especially given the fact that in between its drafting and its approval, there had been a change of Government in Greenland. She was certain that they would find a good solution together,<sup>226</sup> with the “they” in question presumably being the GoG and the GoD. Just over a year after Broberg rejected the package on behalf of the GoG, the Danish Foreign Minister Morten Bødskov, and Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Business, and Trade, Vivian Motzfeldt, signed an agreement confirming the ACP.<sup>227</sup> Notably, the agreement did not include significant changes from the original version.<sup>228</sup> This leads one to the conclusion that the GoG was primarily vexed about the lack of consultation during the original drafting of the package, and not necessarily its contents.

To summarise, the GoG did not feel it was consulted on the ACP. As stated in the 2009 SGA, the GoD should make sure to consult the GoG on anything relating directly to Greenlandic interests or to the security and defence of the KoD. Apart from the fact that the ACP concerned both, Greenlandic FPSs have previously expressed the sentiment that the GoG should have the opportunity to decide which issues concern Greenland, rather than the GoD. Additionally, the GoG has been clear in its ambitions to be included in the decision-making process, even when the topic at hand is outside Greenlandic jurisdiction. In other words,

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<sup>225</sup> Thomas Munk Veirum. "Pele undersiger dansk milliard-aftale [Pele rejects Danish military-agreement]." *Sermitsiaq*, June 7, 2021. Accessed March 28, 2023, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/pele-undersiger-dansk-milliard-aftale>.

<sup>226</sup> Christine Hyldal. "Mette Frederiksen efter Broberg-ballade: Helt naturligt at diskutere forsvarspakken igen [Mette Frederiksen after Broberg mess: completely natural to discuss the defence package again]." *KNR*, June 11, 2021. Accessed April 7, 2023, <https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/mette-frederiksen-efter-broberg-ballade-helt-naturligt-diskutere-forsvarspakken-igen>.

<sup>227</sup> Christine Hyldal. "Endelig enige: Danmark og Grønland underskriver forsvarsaftale efter mere end et år og uden mange ændringer [Finally in agreement: Denmark and Greenland sign defence agreement after more than a year and without many changes]." *KNR*, May 10, 2023, 2022. Accessed March 28, 2023, <https://knr.gl/da/nyheder/endelig-enige-danmark-og-gr%C3%B8nland-underskriver-forsvarsaftale-efter-mere-end-et-%C3%A5r-og-uden>; "Enighed om principperne for Arktis Kapacitetspakke i Grønland [Agreement on the principles for the Arctic Capacity Package in Greenland]," Danish Ministry of Defence news release, May 10, 2022, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2022/enighed-om-principperne-for-arktis-kapacitetspakke-i-gronland/>.

<sup>228</sup> Hyldal, "Endelig enige: Danmark og Grønland underskriver forsvarsaftale efter mere end et år og uden mange ændringer [Finally in agreement: Denmark and Greenland sign defence agreement after more than a year and without many changes]."

Greenland wants to defend its FP action space. The two cases reviewed above, the airports and the mapping, both involved Greenland leveraging Danish sensitivities to US interests to achieve its goals within the KoD. I suggest that this case shares that characteristic with the two cases of this research study. The GoD had already received its “pat on the back” from Washington for the ACP. Washington was pleased, so Copenhagen was pleased. The GoG utilised that by compromising the ACP, again, using its influence-capabilities in the Arctic as a crowbar to defend its action space. Significantly, the ACP is more obviously connected to the security and defence of the KoD than the previous two cases were, being a defence policy document. I take this as an indicator that the GoG is indeed focusing on defending its action space in security and defence issues, specifically.

However, due to the limited scope of this research, all I can do is suggest this. The ACP was a curious addition to a pre-existing defence agreement, and the analysis above suggests that the GoD was trying to please the US administration by signalling its Arctic ambitions. The US reaction to the ACP supports that hypothesis, but that, and Kristensen’s words cited above, is the only evidence of a causal relationship between the existence of the ACP and US interests in the Arctic. This suggestion should therefore be taken as tentative.

## **5.2 A Safeguarded Greenlandic Action Space?**

At the time of writing, there have been several developments of note in recent months relating to the question of Greenlandic influence-capacity and action space, i.e., to the question of Greenland’s “state” power within the KoD. These will now be recounted to examine whether, as is argued above, Greenland continues to use the influence-capabilities it derives from a changing Arctic security environment to defend its action space. Specifically, this chapter is interested in examining whether the GoG is now turning towards security and defence and wielding Greenlandic influence-capabilities to defend its action space in that realm, given the fact that the most recent FPS of the GoG specifically discusses Greenland’s security and defence action space.

### **5.2.1 The Contact Committee**

In October 2021, the Danish, Faroese, and Greenlandic Prime Ministers signed an agreement outlining the terms of reference for a “Contact Committee” (d. Kontaktudvalg) on foreign,

security, and defence policy.<sup>229</sup> The terms of reference state that the three governments share “a wish of a tight, respectful, and equal cooperation on foreign policy, security, and defence politics of special concern to the Faroe Islands and Greenland”.<sup>230</sup> The committee is established to further this common goal, and it seeks to “enable a broad, structured, exchange of information, coordination and dialogue” on issues of foreign, security, and defence policy that concern the Faroe Islands and Greenland specifically.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, it will discuss issues that relate to policy issues taken over by the governments of Greenland and the Faroe Islands and relate in some way to foreign, security, and defence policy. The three countries take turns chairing the committee for one year at a time, and the committee meets once every year, following the “meetings of the Realm” (d. rigsmøde).<sup>232</sup> The meetings of the Realm are attended by the Prime Ministers of all three countries and take place once a year to discuss various policy issues of the KoD.

Greenland holds the chairmanship of the Contact Committee at the time of writing. In an interview in January 2023, the Greenlandic Prime Minister, Múte B. Egede, emphasised the importance of Greenland having a say in the security and defence policy of Greenland. Additionally, he said active participation in the committee would expand Greenland’s competences moving forward.<sup>233</sup> However, the Contact Committee could also, rather paradoxically, be seen as restricting Greenlandic action space, i.e., as increasing Danish influence over Greenlandic FP. By creating a forum for foreign, security, and defence policy consisting of government representatives from Greenland, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands,

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<sup>229</sup> "Kommissorium for Udenrigs-, Sikkerheds- og Forsvarspolitisk Kontaktudvalg er underskrevet [Terms of Reference for Foreign policy, Security, and Defence Contact Committee signed]," The Danish Government news release, October 4, 2021, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.stm.dk/presse/pressemeddelelser/kommissorium-for-udenrigs-sikkerheds-og-forsvarspolitisk-kontaktudvalg-er-underskrevet/>.

<sup>230</sup> Kommissorium for Udenrigs-, Sikkerheds- og Forsvarspolitisk Kontaktudvalg mellem Danmarks regering, Færøernes landsstyre og Grønlands Naalakkersuisut [Terms of reference for Foreign policy, Security and Defence Contact Committee between the Government of Denmark, Government of the Faroe Islands and Government of Greenland] (The Governments of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland, 2021), 1. Accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.stm.dk/media/10669/kommissorium-for-usfp-kontaktudvalg-underskrevet.pdf>.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Kommissorium for Udenrigs-, Sikkerheds- og Forsvarspolitisk Kontaktudvalg mellem Danmarks regering, Færøernes landsstyre og Grønlands Naalakkersuisut [Terms of reference for Foreign policy, Security and Defence Contact Committee between the Government of Denmark, Government of the Faroe Islands and Government of Greenland], 2021.

<sup>233</sup> Anders Rytøft. "Formandsskab skal styrke landets udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitiske profil [Chairmanship will strengthen the country's foreign and security policy profile]." *Sermitsiaq*, January 18, 2023. Accessed March 29, 2023, <https://sermitsiaq.ag/formandsskab-styrke-landets-udenrigs-sikkerhedspolitiske-profil>.

the ambiguities of Greenlandic action space are somewhat reduced, and Greenland's position within the KoD's FP confirmed. When interviewed for this research, Sara Olsvig called attention to this fact, stating:

I actually was a bit critical towards the Kontaktudvalg [e. Contact Committee]. Because I see the need to have a further ... coordination in relation to defence and security, but I was surprised that they included foreign policy ... There was already the authorisation act [d. Fulmagtsloven] from 2005, it's already been debated and sealed in the Self-Government Agreement, so why have a new layer ... specifically on foreign policy? ... That could also make it a risk for Greenland to have a step-back on Greenland's self-determination on foreign policy.<sup>234</sup>

Olsvig identifies this very issue: Greenland's action space is potentially curbed by the Contact Committee. Due to how recent these developments are, the consequences of this development cannot be evaluated at this time, but it is nonetheless important to consider this interesting development in Greenlandic action space.

### 5.2.2 The Arctic Council

Following a meeting of the Realm in June 2021, the Prime Ministers of the three countries held a short press meeting outside the Danish Prime Minister's Office. During this press meeting, Mette Frederiksen, the Danish Prime Minister, announced that Greenland and the Faroe Islands would receive a more prominent role in the Arctic Council moving forward. In practice, this means that Greenland will speak first at the council's meetings, followed by the Faroe Islands, and then Denmark. Similarly, Greenland will also be the main signatory of any declarations produced by the council. Frederiksen said that the KoD wanted to give "a more prominent and active role to Greenland and the Faroe Islands" in the Arctic Council.<sup>235</sup> Múte B. Egede celebrated this decision, saying that the GoG had been pushing for a larger role within the Arctic Council for a long time.<sup>236</sup> During this occasion, the establishment of the Contact Committee was also announced.

The GoG has called attention to the lack of Greenlandic involvement in the KoD's Arctic policies and role in the Arctic Council for years, as has been described above. Therefore, this

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<sup>234</sup> Sara Olsvig, interviewed by author via VTC, March 16, 2023.

<sup>235</sup> "Denmark agrees to give Greenland front seat at Arctic table." *Arctic Today*, June 10, 2021. Accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.arctictoday.com/denmark-agrees-to-give-greenland-front-seat-at-arctic-table/>.

<sup>236</sup> "Grønland og Færøerne får større rolle i Arktisk Råd [Greenland and the Faroe Islands get a bigger role in the Arctic Council]." *Berlingske*, June 10, 2021. Accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/groenland-og-faeroerne-faar-stoerre-rolle-i-arktisk-raad-0>.

development can be considered a significant instance of the GoD giving in to the GoG's demands for defending Greenlandic action space. Since the 2019 FPS, every FPS document has called attention to the issue of Greenlandic representation in the Arctic Council,<sup>237</sup> and it seems that these demands finally paid off, at least in some form. The practicalities of these developments have yet to be seen, since the Arctic Council has been largely dormant since the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

### 5.2.3 NATO HQ

In March 2023, the GoG announced that an agreement had been reached with the Danish MFA to deploy a "senior Greenlandic diplomat" to the KoD's permanent representation at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. According to the announcement, this diplomat will be part of the KoD's representation at NATO and will contribute insight and expertise into Arctic defence. In the GoG's press release on the issue, Greenland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vivian Motzfeldt, said that it is "important that Greenland increases its insight into the security policy developments in the High North and NATO's focus on the region".<sup>238</sup> The diplomat is identified as Lida Skifte Lennert. As to Lennert's exact mandate, the press release refers to her as a diplomat for the GoG, but the KoD's interests are also consistently referred to.<sup>239</sup>

The March 28 issue of a local Greenlandic newspaper contained a detailed feature article on this new posting. The article quotes Lennert as saying she looks forward to being "the daily Greenlandic voice" at NATO.<sup>240</sup> A researcher and director at the University of Greenland's Centre for Foreign and Security Policy, Rasmus Leander Nielsen, is interviewed in the article, and he stated that this development was not a surprise:

This has been in the works for a year now, at the request of Naalakkersuisut [GoG], that Greenland be represented in NATO-headquarters ... because the defence and security

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<sup>237</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2021, 9; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2022, 11; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 9; Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2019, 7

<sup>238</sup> "Første grønlandske medarbejder til Kongeriget Danmarks faste repræsentation ved NATO [The first Greenlandic employee of the Kingdom of Denmark's permanent representation at NATO]," The Government of Greenland news release, March 20, 2023, accessed March 29, 2023, [https://naalakkersuisut.gl/nyheder/2023/03/2003\\_nato?sc\\_lang=da](https://naalakkersuisut.gl/nyheder/2023/03/2003_nato?sc_lang=da).

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Trine Juncher Jørgensen. "Grønland med ved NATO's forhandlingsbord [Greenland at NATO's negotiating table]." *Sermitsiaq*, March 28, 2023, 18.

political situation in the Arctic takes up more and more space in NATO's work. The goal is that Greenland has a better opportunity to further its viewpoints.<sup>241</sup>

Nielsen also references the newly established Contact Committee as an important forum in this regard. He goes on to hint at the slight controversy this decision has caused, saying that "you probably don't have to look for long within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs before you find someone who is critical of the deployment of a Greenlandic diplomat at Denmark's representation at NATO".<sup>242</sup>

### 5.3 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has focused on recent developments in Greenland's position within the KoD. The GoG continues to work towards strengthening its FP capabilities, showing continued commitment to the goals put forth in the FPSs. Additionally, I hypothesise that the GoG has set its sights on defending Greenlandic action space in security and defence issues, since all these developments concern the security and defence of the KoD. The GoG has called for a larger role within the Arctic Council cooperation for several years, as discussed above, and although these developments are largely symbolic, they are nonetheless significant because they are a direct response to the GoG's demands. As to the Greenlandic NATO official, the details of this development remain elusive as the exact mandate of this official is unclear. It seems to be, officially, the same as that of any other KoD representative at NATO HQ, but she is still spoken of as a "Greenlandic representative" by both herself and by the Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs. In some ways, this nomination is a continuation of the ambiguities that characterise Greenlandic action space.

However, I also note that the Contact Committee institutionalises the previously ambiguous FP action space of the GoG in a way that can possibly inhibit that action space. Greenland already has its own FP emphases, but the committee draws attention to the fact that despite the freedom currently enjoyed by the GoG, Greenland is still officially subject to the FP of the KoD, as per the 2009 SGA. The very existence of the committee suggests that the three countries of the KoD share a FP, but what of Greenland's individual FP emphases? The implications of this will be explored further in the following chapter, where the conclusions of

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Trine Juncher Jørgensen. "Grønland med ved NATO's forhandlingsbord [Greenland at NATO's negotiating table]." *Sermitsiaq*, March 28, 2023, 18.

this analysis are explored. Importantly, it should also be noted that due to how recent these developments are, any hypotheses put forth as to their meaning are tentative, and these will need to be tested over time and looked at with the benefit of hindsight.

## 6 Conclusions

When the theoretical paradigm of neorealism is applied to Greenlandic foreign policy, the three core tenets of realism: groupism, egoism, and power-centrism, can easily be identified. Within the KoD, the Greenlandic nation struggles to increase its share of the power vis-à-vis the Danish nation. This conflict within the KoD is not motivated by Greenlandic malice towards Denmark, or because the Greenlandic people are inherently power-hungry, but because the GoG is looking out for Greenland's own interests. I argue that the Greenlandic approach to its FP is characterised by *realpolitik*, and view the FP of the GoG as instrumental towards the goals put forth in Greenlandic FP documents. Despite the fact that Greenlandic FP documents frequently highlight material goals such as attracting foreign investment, strengthening the Greenlandic economy, etc., these material goals can be seen as coexisting with the overarching ideal of Greenlandic self-determination for the sake of the Greenlandic national identity. Those ideals are also highlighted in Greenlandic FP documents. In other words, the national interest of Greenland includes postcolonial ideals. The consequence of this in practice can be seen most clearly in the Greenlandic rejection of the 2021 ACP. Notably, this suggests that Greenlandic FP is moving towards a postcolonial situation on the ground, which is interesting given the fact that Greenland and Denmark's relationship is currently colonial, not *post-colonial*.

Greenlandic FP documents, the FPSs, contain the goals and ambitions of the GoG. They identify ways in which the Greenlandic action space could be safeguarded, but do not identify the means by which this can be achieved. The most recent FPS, from 2022, explicitly states that Greenland should be involved in the decision-making when it comes to the security and defence of the KoD, even on issues that the GoG does not have authority over. I hypothesise that the GoG has become increasingly focused on ensuring that its voice be heard on security and defence issues. The FPSs show that the GoG is aware of the restraints put upon Greenlandic action space, but the cases studying Greenlandic FP *in practice* showed that the GoG is also highly aware of the limitations to *Danish action space*, and the subsequent influence-capability that the GoG possesses towards the GoD.



A key variable in the GoG's influence-capability towards the GoD is the US, which is engaging with the Arctic in a more meaningful way than it has in the past years, driven by Great Power competition with Russia and China. The governments of both Denmark and Greenland are aware of this increased engagement, but this has different consequences for these respective countries' action space. For Denmark, US interest in the Arctic means that the GoD must be prepared to engage with the Arctic in proportion to US interests, and navigate its relationship with an increasingly assertive Greenland. In other words, US interests determine, to an extent, Danish action space in the Arctic. For Greenland, this means increased influence-capabilities towards Denmark. In the cases outlined in this analysis, the GoG utilises Danish sensitivities to US interests in the Arctic as leverage to defend its action space. In other words, the original source of rising Greenlandic influence-capabilities within the KoD is the changing security environment in the Arctic. This change causes a ripple effect of sorts and – due to the US' strategic interests in the Arctic, and the intricacies of the trilateral relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the US – results in more influence-capabilities for Greenland.

However, the ACP also demonstrates that Denmark is unafraid of asserting itself, on the global stage as well as within the KoD. It is important to keep in mind that the SGA does stress the ultimate sovereignty of the GoD and stipulates that “foreign and security policy matters are affairs of the Realm”.<sup>243</sup> Whether intentionally or not, the ACP showed the GoG that its action space is perhaps not always as “ambiguous” as it would like it to be, since Greenland's autonomy does come with some parameters. While this research has viewed the ACP as a case of Greenland defending its action space, given the GoG's reaction to it, it could also be viewed as Denmark asserting its importance as a US-ally and an Arctic player. This side of this case could be the subject of a whole new analysis, and the US-Danish relationship has indeed been the subject of many academic analyses.<sup>244</sup>

The research question put forth at the very start of this analysis was: how, and to what extent, is Greenland's foreign policy action space changing in light of the changes taking place

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<sup>243</sup> Act on Greenland Self-Government, ch. 4 § 11(3).

<sup>244</sup> For example, Rahbek-Clemmensen and Nielsen, "The Middleman—The Driving Forces Behind Denmark's Arctic Policy."; Daniel S. Hamilton, "A new Atlanticism? Transatlantic relations in an era of persistent confrontation and ongoing disruption," in *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: The High North Between Cooperation and Confrontation*, ed. Joachim Weber, Frontiers in International Relations (Springer, 2020). <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45005-2>.

within the wider Arctic political environment? In conclusion to this analysis, and to answer this research question, a changing security environment in the Arctic has expanded Greenland's influence-capability towards Denmark, allowing the GoG to defend its action space in the Arctic. The logical conclusion of this is curious. Since influence-capability is, by Mouritzen's definition, one aspect of state power, with action space being the other, this analysis suggests that Greenlandic FP has been successful in using one aspect of state power to defend the other. Importantly, this is made possible by the changing security environment, since it grants Greenland with *more* of one aspect of state power. Therefore, this analysis suggests that a changing Arctic security environment increases Greenland's "state power". This suggestion is presented with a sizeable disclaimer: Greenland is, importantly, not a state. Adjusting these conclusions to that fact, we might say that this thesis suggests that this changing security environment is facilitating Greenland's move towards increased autonomy, and its move towards exercising the full range of state power *in practice*. At this stage, it is important to touch on the fact this thesis does not suggest that Greenland is necessarily moving objectively closer to sovereignty, despite these conclusions. The matter of Greenlandic sovereignty has not been addressed at all in the analysis above, and it is a comprehensive one. Perhaps these conclusions could be used to address the question of Greenlandic sovereignty, but this thesis does not do that.

Since *Greenland* is the territory that is strategically significant for the US in its Great Power rivalry with Russia (and China), Greenland can use rising tensions in the Arctic as leverage; while Denmark has these rising tensions leveraged against it. To be clear, this is not to suggest that the GoD is completely incapacitated. This analysis has focused on Greenlandic FP capabilities, and as a natural consequence of that, not much has been said about Danish FP capabilities. Importantly, that is not due to a lack thereof, but simply because they are outside the scope of this analysis. What this analysis *does* have to say about Danish FP is how it is influenced by US interests.

An aspect of this conclusion that has not yet been discussed concerns the so-called Greenland card. I argue that this leverage granted to Greenland by a changing Arctic security environment is essentially the very same Greenland card that was used by the GoD during the Cold War, now wielded by a different hand. As stated above, since *Greenland* is the territory that is strategically significant for the US, it is the GoG that gets to leverage this strategic

position, not the GoD. Interestingly, within the context of this research, the Greenland card as a phenomenon could also be identified simply as a part of the influence-capabilities of formerly the GoD and presently of the GoG. If we examine the logic of the concept of the Cold war era Greenland card, scholars maintain that a worse US-Russia relationship resulted in a tighter US-Greenland one, because of Greenland's strategic position in the North Atlantic Ocean. Since US-Russian tensions were at an all-time high during the Cold war, Greenland, and the US military presence in the country, became a strategic priority for the US Administration. Denmark used this situation as leverage to gain clout in its relationship with the US and improve its standing within NATO. Simply put, a worse US-Russia relationship is an important prerequisite for the existence of a Greenland card in the first place.

Moving closer to the present, tensions between US and Russia have been rising in recent years, arguably reaching a crescendo with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. However, what has changed within the KoD since the Cold War, is the level of Greenlandic autonomy. Greenlandic influence-capabilities mean that Greenland gets to wield its own card these days. The cases of the airport constructions and the mapping of Greenland both demonstrate that the GoG wields that card within the KoD to facilitate a desirable outcome. This hypothesis, that the leverage once held by the GoD is now held by the GoG, has implications for the future of the KoD, for Danish-US cooperation, and for the wider Arctic security environment. This should also be examined by further research studies to be tested.

An important aspect of this argument that is not discussed in this analysis is *how* this leverage came to be held by the GoG, instead of the GoD. If the Greenland card was once held by the GoD but is now wielded by the GoG, what has changed to allow this? What is different, this time around? The answer to these questions is made up of a complex combination of several factors. A few factors can be presented as prominent in this regard: Greenlandic demands for increased self-determination; a wider growing demand for and recognition of Indigenous self-determination, especially in the Arctic;<sup>245</sup> and last but not least, the governing capacity of the GoG. These factors are not explored in this analysis. Regarding the GoG's

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<sup>245</sup> For example, Wilfrid Greaves, "Indigenous Peoples," in *Routledge Handbook of Arctic Security*, ed. Gunnhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Marc Lanteigne, and Horatio Sam-Aggrey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020); Ken S. Coates and Else Grete Broderstad, "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: Re-taking Control of the Far North," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, ed. Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

capacity, the GoG has been assuming more and more issues of responsibility ever since the 1979 Home Rule Act, and notably since the 2009 SGA. Assuming these responsibilities demands administrative capacities, governing know-how and skills, institutional memory, experience, etc., and Greenland's capacity for self-governance is rather taken for granted in this analysis. This is because the focus of this research is wider in scope and is therefore largely unable to account for domestic factors in Greenland relating to administrative capacities. As for the two former factors: Greenlandic and Indigenous demands for self-determination and a growing recognition of those demands, to examine them would require a different approach – one that emphasises ideals and social constructs to a larger degree than the present analysis. The theoretical framework of this research is neorealism, and postcolonial ideals are considered only as driving forces of FP, not as theoretical paradigms in their own right. This means that this analysis cannot easily accommodate for the *normative* shift that needed to take place, from colonial ideals towards postcolonial ones, to facilitate Greenlandic, and Indigenous, self-determination. These issues are vital for this analysis, since they concern the question of *why* the GoG has been able to use its influence-capability to defend its action space.

An additional puzzle that remains somewhat underexplored relates to the most recent developments, discussed in chapter 5. They all concern the whole of the KoD, not just Greenland, and this is noteworthy. As has been reviewed above, the SGA considers Greenland to fall under the FP of the KoD, whereas the GoG has obviously interpreted the SGA as allowing Greenland some leeway in that regard. The leeway to conduct its own FP. This is a fair assumption for reasons previously outlined. The Nuuk position on this is clear: the GoG should decide what issues concern Greenland, not the GoD. However, the *official* situation remains the same: Greenland falls under the FP of the KoD. This is emphasised by both academic and more practical sources. In some ways, the recent developments *emphasise* this fact, and highlight that Greenland belongs to a larger unit of actors. This is especially true for the Contact Committee, as is discussed above. The committee could be viewed as erasing some of the ambiguities of Greenlandic FP by institutionalising the FP cooperation of the three countries in the KoD. Since this is such a recent development, this analysis is not able to make any conclusions as to *why* these developments have taken place. Did the GoG feel it had exhausted the possibilities of its so-called ambiguous action space? Perhaps the GoG views Greenland's action space as being better protected by institutionalising cooperation in foreign

affairs. Perhaps the Contact Committee covers foreign affairs at the initiative of the GoD, not the GoG. These are only speculations, and this issue will have to be examined further at a later time.

As for the Arctic Council developments, these are largely symbolic but nevertheless significant. Greenlandic FPSs have consistently criticised Denmark's large role within the Arctic Council cooperation, and pressed for increased Greenlandic involvement, since "the Greenlandic people are and will be the Kingdom's Arctic people".<sup>246</sup> Enlarging Greenland's role within the Arctic Council is, in my view, yet another example of Greenland protecting its action space in FP issues, and Denmark recognising that. Finally, the NATO developments are also interesting, but too recent to reach any conclusive findings. Notably, the exact mandate of the Greenlandic official is not clarified in existing coverage of this development. Does this person answer to the GoD, GoG, or both? This development seems to fit into the heart of the ambiguous Greenlandic action space, something that is curious given the previously identified consequences of the Contact Committee, and assumptions that it might erase some of these ambiguities. Regardless, I argue that these developments represent Danish acknowledgments of Greenlandic action space. The GoD "giving in" to Greenlandic demands of a say in security and defence issues.

As a final note on these recent developments, I draw attention to the fact that a notable characteristic of the two cases of this research study seems to be missing from them: US involvement. These developments *do not seem to involve* Greenland leveraging US interests against the GoD. This analysis has identified US interests as a key causal mechanism in Greenland's influence-capabilities towards Denmark, but this causal mechanism cannot be said to exist in these recent developments. This lack of US entanglement in these cases is curious. Have the influence-capabilities of the GoG perhaps moved past the need to use the US as a conductor? Have cases such as the two examined in this analysis established Greenland's FP competencies so firmly that the US no longer needs to be directly involved? Do Danish officials perhaps regard the security situation in the Arctic as so urgent that, in light of US interests in Greenland, they prioritise streamlining the FP structure of the KoD? In other words, is the literal involvement of the US not necessary for the influence of US interests on Danish FP to be noticeable? These are just some of the questions left unanswered by this

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<sup>246</sup> Udenrigspolitisk Redegørelse [Foreign Policy Statement], 2020, 10.

analysis. Perhaps later, with the benefit of hindsight, these developments could be analysed using the framework provided by this research to both test the endurance of the causal mechanisms identified above and possibly to gain a better understanding of these recent events.

Finally, now that the intricacies of the Greenlandic action space and influence-capabilities in the Arctic have been examined, another key conclusion of this analysis should be addressed. As the two cases outlined in this study show, the US is indivisibly entangled in the defence policies of Greenland and Denmark. These cases demonstrate that when an “outsider” shows interest in establishing a relationship with and/or a presence in Greenland, these advances are blocked by either the US or Danish government (or both).<sup>247</sup> If we were to generalise, based on the tendencies evident in these cases, we could state that no outsider can realistically establish a notable presence in Greenland, due to the weight of US influence in the country. The path dependency of US involvement in Greenland is too great. This has implications for the supposed Great Power war currently taking place in the Arctic. Notably that Greenland will not, realistically, be the setting of that struggle. The triad that is Greenland, Denmark, and the US is well established, and is unlikely to be dismantled. Coupled with the main conclusion of this thesis: that the changing security environment is facilitating Greenland’s move towards increased autonomy and towards exercising the full range of state power in practice, the conclusions of this thesis imply that Greenland is surely a noteworthy player to observe in the political environment of the Arctic in the coming years.

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<sup>247</sup> As for which countries are considered as outsiders, it is difficult to generalise based on this analysis. While the two countries in the cases considered, China and South Korea, are both located in East Asia, they are vastly different in terms of their administrative structures, political environment, relationship with the US, etc.

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