Greenland Case study design:

- Introduction (pp. 2-3)
- Environmental Impact (pp. 4-5)
- Political Aspirations (pp. 6-7)
- Economic Potential (pp. 8-13)
- Greenlandic Foreign Relations (pp. 14-18)
- Security (p. 19)
- Role of indigenous communities (p. 20)
- Conclusion (p. 21)

Map source: https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/greenland_map2.htm
1. Introduction

a. Geographically, Greenland is part of the North American continent; politically by way of Denmark, it is part of Europe. Greenlandic history and identity are shaped by its struggle for sovereignty. Greenland is the world’s largest island inhabited a millennia before the arrival of the first Europeans.1 Occupied by Vikings in the tenth century and made a Norwegian territory, it became officially Danish after the Treaty of Kiel following the Napoleonic wars.2 The native Greenlandic Inuit independence movement took shape in the 1970s with Home Rule achieved in 1979.3 Political aspirations for full independence from Denmark continue to gain momentum.

b. Greenland is home to 56,672 people according to 2019 estimates and with its expansive land mass, it has the smallest population density in the world.4

c. Physically, Greenland is an important research location to monitor climate change and its impacts. Three quarters of Greenland is an ice sheet. Glacier runoff has resulted in an annual ice mass loss since 1998, with the rate increasing six times since the 1980s.5 The unprecedented transformations will have a global effect, including long-term sea level rise.

d. Climate change increased access and interest of non-Arctic states to the region creating new opportunities for Greenland’s statehood aspirations. Greenland’s ambition for full independence from Denmark relies on strengthening its economic and political position.

e. Greenland’s political position depends on economic development to replace grants from Denmark. Greenland is therefore motivated to attract investment to extract and sell natural resources to attain economic independence allowing for political independence.

f. Realistically, for Greenland to achieve the self-sufficiency necessary to cover social expenses and state services, it would require realization of mining projects or for a real ‘Arctic scramble’6 to bring new foreign investments. Another option

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2 Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 4.


6 ‘Arctic scramble’ refers to the ‘scramble for Africa’ in the sense of an emerging region of the world attracting global powers to exploit natural resources.
is for Greenland to lease or sell land to foreign countries for military bases, or research outposts. In any case, it will take years to build the infrastructure and for enterprises to become operational.

g. 88% of Greenland’s population is Inuit. Inuit identity is a key component of Greenlandic identity. Sometimes mobilized for nationalistic purposes and other times down-played by those promoting the emergence of a modern nation-state. There is an internal social debate concerning the decline of traditional livelihoods amidst ever-present modern alternatives. The narrative of suppressed Inuit culture clashes with expectations for modern conveniences and social support.

h. This case study will consider not only economic and political opportunities and outcomes in Greenland, but also the environmental impact, security and the social impact.

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2. Environmental impact

a. Predictions are that by the 2030s the Arctic will be ice free in summer, which is expected to increase the rate of global warming for several reasons. Older, thicker ice is moving from the Arctic basin into the North Atlantic where it is further broken down. Also, less ice to reflect sunlight means darker ocean surfaces will absorb more heat. Further effects are melting permafrost destabilizing infrastructure while releasing possible toxins and trapped carbon gases which will further accelerate warming.

b. Greenland became a political focus for climate change observation in 2007. The German Chancellor, the Italian Prime Minister, and the EU Commissioner were some of the visitors to Greenland to observe the effects of climate change in person following the G8 Summit in June 2007.

c. Greenland’s icecap is a key location for climate researchers to measure the rate and effects of climate change. Because of this, Greenland is an important element of Denmark’s ‘climate diplomacy’ visible prior to and at the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit held in 2009. Climate diplomacy is a term to express influence on international political agendas by drawing the attention of political actors to climate issues. The EU as a regional organization is one such political actor interested in mitigating the effects of climate change and Denmark acts as a liaison to Greenland.

d. Greenland is experiencing glacial melt at an increasing rate which has an effect globally. The ice is melting from the ground below and the exposed ice above. It can now be proven that seventy percent of the Arctic’s contribution to sea-level rise comes from Greenland, which on average lost 375 gigatons of ice per year (equivalent to a block of ice measuring 7.5 kilometers or 4.6 miles on all sides) from 2011 to 2014. The rate of ice loss is almost twice the rate recorded over the period 2003–2008. A recent study found that the Greenlandic Ice Sheet added a quarter inch of water to global sea levels in the past eight years.

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e. The 2018 study can now compare ice levels in Greenland since 1972. The comprehensive study evaluates ice thickness, surface elevation, velocity and the surface mass balance of 260 glaciers.\(^\text{15}\) It found that the largest ice mass loss comes from tidewater glaciers, and the northern glaciers will likely have the greatest impact on sea level rise.\(^\text{16}\)

f. Mining and drilling in the Arctic region bring other environmental risks. Uranium mining requires technical expertise to comply with international standards and could have negative consequences on hunting and fishing in Greenland.\(^\text{17}\)

i. Due to fishing agreements with the EU, Greenland must comply with EU sustainability standards. It opens its waters to EU vessels in exchange for development funding.\(^\text{18}\)

g. Off-shore oil and natural gas drilling brings the risks of spills and leaks that would have an even greater impact in the Arctic. An oil spill in the Arctic is more difficult to clean and takes longer to dissipate when oil becomes trapped in ice.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^{15}\) Mouginot et al., 9239.

\(^{16}\) Mouginot et al., 9243.


\(^{18}\) Pelaudeix, 2017, 308.

3. Political aspirations

a. In 1972, the Kingdom of Denmark voted to join the EU, yet the decision was opposed by 70% of Greenlandic voters and led to the creation of the Home Rule commission in 1975. The vote represented a political awakening for Greenland towards future secession.

b. Greenland demanded Home Rule using the Faroes Islands as a precedent. The Greenland Home Rule Act (1979) gave legislative and executive power to Greenland for fishing and trade.

c. In a 1982 referendum, 53% of Greenlanders voted to leave the EC resulting in withdrawal in 1985 and the signing of the Greenland Treaty with a special status for Greenland as an Overseas Territory (OCT) within the EU.

d. The Subcommittee on Foreign and Security Policy of the unilateral Greenlandic commission led to the revised 2009 Self-Government Act. The Self-Government Act gave Greenland jurisdiction over mineral resources and the ability to manage economic resources independently.
   i. However, the 2009 Mineral Resources Law included a stipulation to pay Denmark 50% of all resource revenues beyond the first 11.46 million USD (75 million DKK) to offset the Danish block grant.

e. In 2014, the Greenlandic Government put forward a political agenda for independence but it lacks a time frame and economic and security plan.

f. A poll conducted in the summer of 2018 measured public attitudes and expectations of Greenland’s independence. The poll shows that 67.7 percent of respondents support an independent Greenland sometime in the future. Of that 67.7 percent, 43.5 percent believe that secession from Denmark will have “positive” or even “very positive” effects on Greenland’s economy. Statistically, that translates to 32.4 percent of the total electorate. However, the grant from Denmark to Greenland in 2018 covered about 52 percent of all public expenditures in Greenland. Analysis of public opinion by the author, surmises that

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21 Jacobsen and Gad, 17.
Greenlanders suspect Denmark benefits financially from processing and selling Greenland’s seafood and revenue from trade is kept from Greenland.  

g. Greenland’s ambitions are held back by its economic dependence on Denmark. Denmark provides 470 million euro in economic aid per year amounting to 40% of Greenland’s GDP (as of 2017).

h. Denmark continues to manage diplomatic and international relations for Greenland, excepting issues that concern solely Greenland. Greenland does put pressure on Denmark when it feels misrepresented and Denmark is sensitive to such pressure.

i. For example, Denmark made a territorial claim acquiescing to Greenland’s demands, to extend the EEZ of Greenland’s continental shelf all the way to the North Pole and the Russian EEZ.

ii. Although Denmark maintains the right to manage foreign affairs on behalf of Greenland, it increasingly allows Greenland to be more active and present in foreign policy. Naalakkersuisut, the Self Rule Government in Nuuk, opened an embassy and four consulates in China and has an office in Reykjavik, Iceland.

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29 Breum.
30 Pelaudeix, 2017, 309.
4. Economic potential

a. Background

i. Colonialization in the eighteenth century introduced a formal economy to Greenland based on seal hunting and whaling. By the 1920s, fishing became the dominant industry. After WWII, Denmark invested in a modernization project with the first public power station in Nuuk in 1949. The Danish modernization process featured oil for energy development. Greenland started exploring hydropower in 1981 and gradually expanded its use so that by 2012, 70 percent of Greenland’s energy came from hydropower.

ii. Greenland’s natural resources include fish, ore, rare earth elements (REEs), uranium, rubies, diamonds, offshore and onshore hydrocarbons.

iii. The map below shows Greenland’s natural resources and licenses.

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34 Bertelsen and Hansen, 123.

35 Pelaudeix, “EU-Greenland relations and sustainable development in the Arctic,” 309.

36 Map source: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jul/31/europe-greenland-natural-resources
iv. Economic estimates show that by 2040 economic aid from Denmark will not be enough to cover public expenses.\textsuperscript{37} Since obtaining Home Rule and control over resources, Greenland has looked for foreign investment to achieve economic independence.

   1. Greenland’s economic development strategy still depends on the development of a mining industry.\textsuperscript{38}

   2. Greenland uses general legislation to be flexible in licensing and invite foreign investment.\textsuperscript{39}

v. Greenland sought Chinese financing and engineering for mining. After the global recession, China was the only active investor in major mining projects overseas.\textsuperscript{40}

   1. The mining project that was proposed would require foreign labor during the construction phase, a politically sensitive topic for Greenland.

   2. In 2012, the Government of Greenland passed legislation for foreign companies to contract foreign workers on collective agreements for mineral and hydropower projects exceeding DKK 5 billion (760 million USD in 2016)\textsuperscript{41} arousing controversy in Greenland and Denmark.

   3. In response to the controversy, London Mining published a plan in 2013 that they would train Greenlandic workers so that they could represent 55\% of the workforce, however, a deal was not reached.\textsuperscript{42}

vi. The 2009 Mineral Resources Law included an agreement to pay Denmark 50\% of all resource revenues beyond the first 11.46 million US (75 million DKK) to offset the Danish block grant.\textsuperscript{43}

vii. 90\% of Greenland’s exports are fish. The economy lacks diversification and is vulnerable to price fluctuations.\textsuperscript{44} Japan is Greenland’s most important seafood export market outside of Denmark and the EU.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{37} Pelaudeix, 2017, 118.


\textsuperscript{39} Pelaudeix, 2017, 118.

\textsuperscript{40} Foley, 102.

\textsuperscript{41} Foley, 102.

\textsuperscript{42} Foley, 102.

\textsuperscript{43} Foley, 101.

\textsuperscript{44} Cécile Pelaudeix, “Governance of offshore hydrocarbon activities in the Arctic and energy policies: a comparative approach between Norway, Canada, Greenland/Denmark,” in \textit{Governance of Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas}, edited by Cécile Pelaudeix and Ellen Basse, Routledge: London, 2018, 118.

\textsuperscript{45} Jacobsen and Gad, 20.
b. Economic relations between Greenland and the EU:
   i. The EU is Greenland’s main trade partner representing 92.7% of exports. The EU buys fishing quotas with development funding primarily allotted to education.46

   ii. The Greenland-EU fisheries agreement between 1985 and 2006 provided 42.8 million euros per year for opening Greenlandic waters to the EU fleet.47

   iii. The EU became increasingly interested in Greenland’s mineral resources during the period when prices spiked on the world market, reflected in the EP Resolution 2011 that has an increased focus on Greenland and its resources.48

   iv. Article 1 of the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement between Greenland, the EU and Denmark acknowledges the geo-strategic position of Greenland and interest in the exploration and the exploitation of natural resources.49

   v. Former Liberal Party Finance Minister Claus Frederiksen issued a proposal in 2013 for a Danish fund that would promote Nordic and European investment in Greenland’s mining sector and prevent non-European investment in Greenland for mining.50

c. Oil, REEs, Shipping
   i. In Greenland, oil exploration started in 1975. There are currently 15 wells drilled, and the Greenlandic government continues exploration.51 Despite promising leads in foreign investment for offshore oil, low oil and gas prices cancelled several plans for further exploratory drilling.

   ii. REEs are 17 elements with lanthanides, scandium and yttrium essential for new technologies (solar panels, wind turbines, smartphones, hybrid cars and smart weapons).52 Greenland has an estimated 9% of global REE reserves.53 REEs in the Kvanefjeld deposit south of Greenland are bound to uranium which would have to also be extracted to exploit.54

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46 Jacobsen and Gad, 19.
49 Pelaudeix, 2017, 311.
50 Foley, 107-108.
51 Pelaudeix, 2018, 110.
52 P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Adam Lajeunesse, James Manicom, and Frédéric Lasserre, China’s Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada, University of Calgary Press: Calgary, 2018, 111-112.
54 Pelaudeix, 2017, 316.
Since 2014, uranium mining is a legal possibility. However, it demands technical expertise, equipment and environmental protections that are not currently in place. China no longer has a monopoly on REEs and the price on the world market is down, so actual mining operations remain possibilities only on paper agreements. The tide would turn if any of the following occur:

1. The demand for Greenland’s mineral resources increases to the point of covering the cost of infrastructure and extraction.

2. If the price of petroleum rises, and Greenland taps into a major offshore oil or gas reserve.

Arctic shipping increases and Greenland profits from transit fees.

The only active mining operations are a ruby mine in 2017 and an anorthosite mine (used in fiberglass) in 2018.\(^5\)

**d. Chinese interests in Greenland are manifold:**

i. Chinese interest and involvement in Greenland are consistent with its growing presence in the Arctic. The inclusion of the Arctic into China’s Belt and Road Initiative in 2017 is telling of how Greenland would be a convenient base for commercial and strategic purposes.

ii. Chinese research partnerships with Arctic states are often termed ‘dual purpose’. Science and research are the original stated interests for Chinese presence throughout the Arctic, to include Greenland.\(^5\) In 2016, China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Greenland on scientific cooperation. The MoU included closer collaboration on Arctic research mentioning establishing a Chinese research station in Greenland and exchanging students and researchers.

iii. China also started tourism promotion to visit Greenland.\(^5\)

iv. China is interested in potentially investing in mining. In 2016, Shenghe Resources established a strategic partnership with Greenland Minerals and Energy with a mining project (potentially REEs, uranium and zinc).\(^5\) In


\(^{58}\) Sørensen, 84.
2016, Shenghe Mining purchased 12.5% of Greenland Minerals and Energy Limited with the option to acquire up to 60% in the future.\textsuperscript{59}

v. Additionally, Ironbark (an Australian mining company) signed a non-binding MoU with a Chinese company (China Non-Ferrous Mining Group (NFC)) to construct and finance the in Citronen Zinc Project Greenland.\textsuperscript{60}

vi. Chinese General Nice Group business conglomerate took over London Mining Greenland in December 2014 with exploration rights at Isua iron mine, north of Nuuk.\textsuperscript{61}

vii. Greenland signed two Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs) with a Chinese company for a REE project in southern Greenland. The downstream separation of REEs would occur at a separation facility under construction in China.\textsuperscript{62}

viii. In 2016, a Chinese government-owned company tried to buy an abandoned naval base in Greenland after which Denmark stationed four sailors to discourage Chinese interest.\textsuperscript{63} There is no recent reporting of renewed Chinese interest, or economic developments in Greenland since 2016.

ix. South Korea is another Asian actor with increasing interest and presence in the Arctic for resources and shipping opportunities. In 2012, South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak visited Greenland and signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) related to resource development.\textsuperscript{64}

e. Greenland’s internal economic development challenges:

i. Establishing the safeguards necessary to protect the environment while also trying to foster an attractive investment climate.

ii. Greenland’s harsh climate and long distances between settlements creates infrastructural and logistical challenges for developers.

iii. The government of Greenland faces serious administrative bottlenecks when dealing with large, complex projects.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{59} Lackenbauer et al., 112.

\textsuperscript{60} Sørensen, 87.

\textsuperscript{61} Sørensen, 88.

\textsuperscript{62} Foley, 104.


\textsuperscript{64} Foley, 104.

\textsuperscript{65} Boersma and Foley, vi.
iv. Neutral NGOs have expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in Greenland’s political decision-making process.66

v. The complex and changing constitutional set-up between Denmark and Greenland can be confusing to third party investors. China is hesitant to pursue more involvement with Greenland because of the difficulty navigating the complex relationship between Denmark and Greenland.67

vi. Greenlandic politicians questioned the legitimacy of the repeal of the uranium ban in 2013 because:68
    1. The expert report appeared late
    2. The law passed by a narrow majority without passing through parliamentary committees
    3. It may have violated indigenous inclusion rights under international conventions
    4. uranium experts doubted that the Greenlandic administration was ready to manage uranium mining according to international safety standards

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66 Boersma and Foley, vii.
67 Sørensen, 94.
5. Greenlandic Foreign Relations

a. The relationship with Denmark:
   i. Since the ‘Arctic turn’ of 2008, Denmark is more invested in its Arctic territory. Denmark’s Arctic focus was apparent by its initiation of the Ilulissat Declaration in 2009 which boldly asserted the rights of the Arctic 5 (Arctic states bordering the Arctic Ocean) over the previously recognized Arctic 8 (hence excluding Iceland, Sweden and Finland). The Ilulissat agreement included a commitment by Arctic states to handle their interests in the region through negotiations and continued cooperation.

   ii. In 2019, Denmark put Greenland on the top of its national security agenda (Danish Intelligence Risk Assessment, 2019) for the first time because of increased great power interest in the Arctic at large, and Greenland’s strategic location in it. Denmark has responded with increased naval vessel presence around the island.

   iii. Denmark is respectful of Greenlandic demands, yet it also does not want to lose its position in Arctic affairs.

   iv. Greenland is critical of Danish involvement in Arctic affairs, and blames Denmark for scandals related to the US base. Denmark and Greenland take different approaches to international relations. Denmark is a staunch NATO ally and prefers the transatlantic partnership as a security guarantee. Greenland is neutral and has expressed interest in building ties with any allies respecting its autonomy and willing to invest economically.

   v. Denmark rejects Greenland’s decision to repeal the uranium ban for possible future mining.

   vi. Greenland pushes for equal representation with Denmark at Arctic fora and events. Greenland’s Premier boycotted Arctic Council meetings in 2013 because Greenland was not considered a separate delegation.

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70 Intelligence Risk Assessment 2019, *Danish Defence Intelligence Service*, 20 November 2019, Copenhagen, accessed at https://feddis.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/FE/EfterretningsmaessigeRisikovurderinger/Intelligence%20Risk%20Assessment%202019.pdf


73 Intelligence Risk Assessment 2019.

74 Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 43.

75 Gerhardt, 120.
vii. Greenland is dependent on Denmark for all security and defense, including search and rescue (SAR) and external military protection.
   1. Denmark’s 1st naval squadron provides for search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, security, sovereignty enforcement, fisheries inspections and environmental protection.  
   2. The Danish Navy has four inspection ships built to operate along the coast of Greenland for SAR and crisis response, with light ice-breaking capabilities and two offshore patrol vessels strengthened with an ice breaker stem.

viii. During a recent interview in 2020, Greenlandic Premier Kielsen spoke of a desire to continue strong relations with Denmark after eventual independence. He expressed that it is not in Greenland’s interest to be isolated, and the partnership in many domains with Denmark should continue.

b. Relations with the EU:
   i. The EU is Greenland’s primary trade partner. The EU pays Greenland for access to its fisheries with generous financial packages used for social development.
   
   ii. Greenland remains an EU OCT, and Greenlandic citizens are likewise considered EU citizens. The actions of Greenland’s government indicate that if presented with an alternative enabling independence it would give up its OCT benefits and forge new external partnerships.

   iii. Greenland does diverge from the EU politically and will put its economic interests (for future secession) above EU interests. It asserted its neutrality when rejecting the EU requests to stop Chinese REE investment.

   iv. Greenland opposes certain sustainable development constraints, particularly the former seal hunting ban.

   v. Another point of contention is the repeal of the uranium ban which is counter to EU agreements, although the EURATOM Treaty does not apply to Greenland.

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77 Østhagan, 15.


79 Jacobsen and Gad, 19.

80 Lackenbauer et al., 111-112.

81 Jacobsen and Gad, 19.

82 Pelaudeix, 2017, 316.
c. Relations with the US:

i. The US has a long-standing presence on Greenland with Thule Air Base. In addition to the ballistic missile early warning system and space surveillance at Thule, the US conducts climate research on Greenland’s icecap.\textsuperscript{83}

ii. In September 2018, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy John Rood visited Thule Air Base where he issued a “statement of intent” announcing forthcoming U.S. plans for further investments in Greenland’s airports tied to “to the changing security environment in the Arctic.”\textsuperscript{84} The extent of such investments was not openly discussed.

iii. Greenlandic politicians have mixed opinions on the future of US relations. There is discontent with the lack of US investment and frustration with the presence of Thule Air Base without remuneration.\textsuperscript{85}

iv. The past incidents with the US that are causes for distrust:

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] the forced relocation of inhabitants at the establishment of Thule Air Base in 1953\textsuperscript{86}
\item[2.] the crash of a plane with nuclear bombs in 1968
\item[3.] a suspected rendition flight over Greenland in the 2000s\textsuperscript{87}
\end{itemize}

v. There’s a fear that abandoned Cold War outposts have nuclear waste that could leak into the environment with the warming temperatures. The US army corps of engineers excavated Camp Century in 1959 about 200km (124 miles) from the coast of Greenland. It was powered by the world’s first mobile nuclear generator and contained a three kilometer network of tunnels, eight meters under ice. Its personnel were officially stationed there to test Arctic construction methods and carry out research. It also served as a nuclear missile testing site. Camp Century was abandoned in 1967, the departing soldiers removed the reaction chamber of the nuclear generator. However, the rest of the camp’s infrastructure including biological, chemical and radioactive waste was buried under the ice. Current climate models show that in a couple of decades, the ice covering the old camp will start melting and the waste will become an environmental concern. No plan for removal is in place yet, but the US government agreed to “work with the Danish government and the

\begin{itemize}
\item Breum, 2019.
\item Kristen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 5.
\item Olesen, 70.
\end{itemize}
Greenland authorities to settle questions of mutual security”.\textsuperscript{88} The map below shows the locations of Thule Air Base and the former Camp Century.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{map.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Map source: The Guardian}

vi. Greenland, Denmark and the US formed a Joint Committee because Greenland preferred direct communication with the US due to their presence on the subcontinent. It was supposed to coordinate deeper economic cooperation however, the lack of materializing investments from the US disappointed Greenland.\textsuperscript{89}

vii. Denmark is highly compliant with US requests due to the NATO partnership. An independent Greenland would likely be less accommodating to US interests. \textsuperscript{90}

viii. Greenlandic politicians are critical of Denmark’s relationship with the US, expecting NATO concessions. \textsuperscript{91}

ix. Greenlandic politicians shift blame to Denmark for having allowed the US to set up Thule, and even hold Denmark responsible for accidents and the outrage over the suspected rendition flight. \textsuperscript{92}

x. Greenlanders were reproachful towards the President Trump offer to purchase Greenland from Denmark, and approved of the Danish Prime Minister’s response that Greenland was not for sale. Prime Minister Frederiksen won support in Nuuk, when she replied that “Greenland is not


\textsuperscript{89} Olesen, 72.

\textsuperscript{90} Olesen, 72-77.

\textsuperscript{91} Olesen, 74.

\textsuperscript{92} Olesen, 70-75.
Danish. Greenland is Greenlandic”.  

The eventual plan to build a US consulate is met with a generally receptive response. Greenland’s representative to the US said the consulate is a way to improve commercial prospects, educational, environmental and trade relations.

However, there is not growing anti-American sentiment. Greenland’s Premier Kim Kielsen recently said when asked about foreign relations, “It is beyond discussion that we will remain part of the western world and part of the NATO domain. That contributes to our own safety, but any military expansion or change that involves Greenland can only happen if we are part of the decision making. Our people do not want installations in Greenland that would make us a prime target in the case of larger conflicts”. This statement is surprising given the historic neutral stance Greenland has taken towards NATO.

d. Greenlandic relations with China:
   i. Relations with China are mostly centered on economic prospects.
      
   ii. China is interested in investing in Greenland’s REE deposits and minerals, if the expense of mining in the austere environment should become profitable.

   iii. China has exploration rights for iron mining north of the capital and a non-binding agreement for the Citronen Zinc Project in Greenland.

   iv. China has a partnership with Greenland for scientific cooperation and has also started tourism promotion to visit Greenland.

   v. Establishing strong bilateral relations with Arctic states is part of China’s Arctic strategy to gradually increase its presence and influence. Denmark perceives China’s actions as supporting its goal to become a recognized Polar nation and maritime great power. However, China is hesitant to put itself between Denmark and Greenland. It can be expected that China would strengthen its partnership with a newly independent state of Greenland.

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94 Nagesh.
95 Breum, 2020.
96 Boersma and Foley, viii.
97 Sørensen, 87.
98 Sørensen, 84.
99 Intelligence Risk Assessment 2019, 17.
100 Sørensen, 94.
6. Security
   a. As Arctic tensions between NATO and Russia rise, the GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom) gap is again discussed in national security assessments as a strategic zone.¹⁰¹

   b. Greenland relies on Denmark for security needs such as search and rescue, Coast Guard and maritime protection.¹⁰² Denmark has increased naval patrols around Greenland and blocked Chinese designs for a potential future base on Greenland. The Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, called for a tripling of the budget of Denmark’s Arctic Command.¹⁰³

   c. The necessity of security functions and lack of current capacity may cause the longest delay for Greenland to achieve independence.

   d. An additional security aspect would come into play if Greenland does mine and sell uranium.
      i. Greenland is politically neutral and overturned the uranium ban by parliamentary vote in 2013.¹⁰⁴
      ii. Greenland is not signatory to EURATOM and has the possibility and political will to sell uranium, which may become a future concern if not explicitly for energy development.

¹⁰¹ Intelligence Risk Assessment 2019, 13.
¹⁰⁴ Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 42.
7. **Role of indigenous communities**

a. According to some accounts, the motivation to pursue independence started with the resurrection of Inuit Greenlandic nationalism.\(^{105}\)

b. Greenland finds itself in a contradicting position, actively seeking to exploit natural resources which threaten the traditional livelihoods of native communities that it claims to represent.\(^{106}\)

c. Greenland advances its political position using the Inuit Circumpolar Council and The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People (EMRIP) for an international voice.\(^{107}\)

i. There are some complaints that Greenlandic politicians use the ICC to their own political benefit given the contradiction between ICC values of shared territory and Greenlandic attempts at national sovereignty.

ii. In response, moderate Greenlandic parties Atassut and Demokraatit are reluctant to define their political projects in ethnic terms.\(^{108}\)

iii. Greenland only appeals to Inuit rights in situations where it is not represented as a separate entity.

   1. This strategy is strained when Greenland’s political interests diverge from Inuit interests.
   2. For example, the ICC was excluded from the Ilulissat deliberations hosted in Greenland.\(^{109}\)

iv. It is likely that if Greenland becomes sovereign it will strengthen its geostategic position ahead of protecting Inuit lands because that is the approach it is taking currently.

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\(^{105}\) Jacobsen and Gad, 13.

\(^{106}\) Gerhardt, 121.

\(^{107}\) Jacobsen and Gad, 13.

\(^{108}\) Jacobsen and Gad, 14.

\(^{109}\) Gerhardt, 115.
8. Conclusion
   a. Greenland’s future political status relies on its economic situation. If Greenland can develop a sustainable financial plan using its resources and foreign investments, then perhaps independence could occur but not in the near future. Leasing or selling land would be another alternative. China and possibly other Asian states would be interested, however, Denmark is not likely to allow that to happen.

   b. Greenland’s independence also relies on its security capabilities. If Greenland cannot abide by international standards for SAR and crisis response, then it cannot claim full independence.

   c. Greenlanders have grown accustomed to a socialized system with generous citizen benefits, it is unlikely that Greenlandic politicians would cut those programs in order to economize to support independence. Although all but one political party in Greenland support eventual independence, they do not agree on a plan nor timeline.

   d. Greenland has its doors open to any willing international economic partner. Although it does have to respect international and EU sustainability and environmental agreements, Greenland is open to allowing Chinese and other potential Asian partners to mine. A potential struggle between environmentalists, Inuit leaders and politicians may occur in the future if mining mineral resources or if off-shore oil become feasible.

   e. An independent Greenland would likely remain politically neutral, and may not become party to NATO which could become a cause for concern for the US and Denmark. However, the current Greenlandic Premier stated Greenland indicated that Greenland would stay within NATO.110

   f. If independent, Greenland may extend its support to other national Inuit communities in an appeal for leadership of Arctic indigenous peoples that would also strengthen its position politically at international fora.

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