



A Small Kingdom Caught in An Arctic Race

A CASESTUDY ON THE DANISH/GREENLANDIC
RELATIONSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER

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Abstract.

This dissertation sets out to answer “*How have Denmark and Greenland responded internally to a shift in the geopolitical interests of great powers such as China and the US, and to some extent Russia, in the Arctic region, based on neoclassical realism and Lobell’s (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model?*”

To do so, four cases have been chosen based on their influence on the Danish/Greenlandic relationship. These four cases have been analyzed with Lobell’s (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model to see if the Danish Foreign Policy Executive (FPE) and the Greenlandic FPE share similar threat assessments of primarily China but also the US and Russia. The underlying assumption here is that, if Denmark and Greenland share similar threat assessments, the ties will be strengthened. However, if their threat assessments diverge the ties between Denmark and Greenland are loosened and they will end further apart. This dissertation found that the general trend in these four cases was that the Greenlandic FPE’s threat assessments and the Danish FPE’s threat assessments diverged. It was only in the case of Chinese interest in mining rare earth elements, the Danish and the Greenlandic FPE made similar assessments. Except from Kvanefjeld, due to the nature of the minerals and the size of the project in light of the large-scale law. Here they diverged too. Furthermore, this dissertation poses the question that if we experience a return to great power rivalry, then should realism also reclaim its place in theories of international relations accordingly?

Resumé.

Denne afhandling går ud på at svare på dette spørgsmål: *"Hvordan har Danmark og Grønland internt reageret på et skift i de geopolitiske interesser fra stormagter som Kina og USA og til en vis grad Rusland i den arktiske region baseret på neoklassisk realisme og Lobells (2009) Kompleks Trussel Identifikations Model?"*. For at gøre det, er der valgt fire sager baseret på deres indflydelse på det dansk/grønlandske forhold. Disse fire sager er blevet analyseret med Lobells (2009) komplekse Trussel Identifikations Model for at se, om den danske udenrigspolitiske beslutningsinstans (FPE) og den grønlandske FPE deler lignende trusselvurderinger af primært Kina men også USA og Rusland. Den underliggende antagelse her er, at hvis Danmark og Grønland deler lignende trusselvurderinger, vil båndene blive styrket imellem dem. Men hvis deres trusselvurderinger afviger, løsnes båndene mellem Danmark og Grønland, og de ender yderligere distanceret fra hinanden. Denne afhandling fandt, at den generelle tendens i disse fire tilfælde var, at den grønlandske FPE's trusselvurderinger og den danske FPE's trusselvurderinger divergerede. Det var kun i tilfælde af kinesisk interesse for udvinding af sjældne jordelementer, at den danske og den grønlandske FPE foretog lignende vurderinger. Bortset fra Kvanefjeld på grund af mineralernes art og projektets størrelse i lys af storskala-loven. Her divergerede de også. Desuden stiller denne afhandling spørgsmålet om, at hvis vi oplever en tilbagevenden til stormagtsrivaliseringen, burde realismen ikke også genvende sin plads i teorier om internationale relationer?

1. Introduction

The history of Denmark and Greenland is long and complicated. In 1721, Denmark colonized Greenland. The following approximately 80 years, Denmark governed Greenland with no Greenlandic inclusion in any decision-making processes. Greenland was completely dictated by Danish law and culture. But in the middle of eighteenth century, “Forstanderskaber” was set up, which was small local councils comprised of local Greenlandic businessmen. Councils and political institutions might have been established and shut down again, just like these Forstanderskaber, which all had dissolved within the end of the century. But Greenlandic political institutions along with the political awareness in Greenland slowly developed over the years (Grønland-dansk selvstyrekommision 2008). For instance, the first law ever to be adopted in Greenland, was decreed in 1905 as part of the Danish mission to Christianize the Greenlandic people and became known as the ‘Law on Church and the School System’ (Petterson 2017). This was seen as a declaration of the obviousness of Greenlandic inclusion in Greenlandic matters (Gam 1968). In 1911 Greenland established municipal councils and two national congresses, representing the northern and eastern Greenland respectively. They were however not so representative to begin with, because women acquired rights to vote in 1948. Elections were held every sixth year (Grønland-dansk selvstyrekommision 2008). In 1975, in collaboration with Denmark, Greenland set up the Commission of Home Governance. The commission held five members chosen by the two National Congresses, two Greenlandic members of the Danish Parliament, as well as an expert as a chairman. The main job of this commission was to make suggestions for how this home governance should go about within the boundaries of the law of the Danish Realm. It meant defining within what areas Greenland could decide for itself, as well as making a plan for when these responsibilities should be handed over to Greenland. However, a little more than 20 years later, in 2009, almost all these areas were assigned to Greenland and in 2009 Greenland was acknowledged as an independent people by the Danish law and was assigned new areas of responsibility. Hence, Greenland was declared a “Selvstyre” or a Self-Government (Act on Greenland Self-Government 2009, Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017). However, Denmark still maintain sovereignty over decisions which regard Greenlandic foreign policy and issues that is regarded by Denmark as national security issues (Act on Greenland Self-Government 2009). And so, the history of Greenlandic/Danish relations became a continuing history of independence. However, Greenland lies in the disserted area of the Arctic, and was left alone by the world because of its rough climate. This had an impact on the power dynamics between Denmark and Greenland, leaving Greenland with no leverage to bargain with. But in recent years, also impacted by climate change, the situation is gradually changing, and the world is coming to the Arctic (Nord 2016).

Recent studies indicate that the ice in the Arctic Area is melting twice as fast as anywhere else on the planet, which most likely will influence the global ecosystem as well as have massive implications for all that lives in the Arctic. Hence the ice melting, new trade routes are opening up (Nord 2016). Recent studies also suggest that between 20% and 30% of the unused energy resources of the entire world are hiding in the Arctic Area (Ibid.). Hence, the Arctic is becoming a hotspot in international relations, and global warming is certainly reinforcing this tendency. Furthermore, a tendency in Arctic diplomacy have been to “Wave the flag”, like when Russia in 2007 planted a flag on the Northern Pole and claimed it to be Russian soil. Such actions create tensions and tensions means instability (Kristen and Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017). Denmark and Canada are also still disputing over who owns Hansø (Nord 2016).

On the 28th of may 2008, as a response to the tensions the Russian demonstration (flag planting) caused in the Arctic Region and a general worry that a “great game for resources and territory could be underway” (Ibid., p. 1), five high-level representatives from the Arctic coastal states met in Ilulissat, Greenland. These coastal states included Denmark/Greenland, Canada, Norway, Russia, and the US. This was also a response to a fear that there had been frequent requests from the international society for an Antarctic treaty, which could would internationalize the region, and thereby remove power away from the coastal states (Ibid.). In Ilulissat the five states went together to compose the Ilulissat Declaration, which ultimately presented a policy framework that placed issues regarding the Arctic Ocean in the hand of the five coastal states. It stated that regional institutions “such as the Arctic Council would remain crucial forums for facilitating regional inter-state cooperation” (Ibid.). This meeting was made possible by an initiative and invitation made by Denmark and Greenland, collectively. Greenland, a self-governing nation within Denmark, with an actual chance of independence could see itself in a structure that emphasizes states (Ibid.). Greenland participated in spite of a general distrust within Inuit groups in other Arctic states of the idea of centralizing power in the Arctic area even further (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, Greenlandic Paradiplomacy legitimized this Danish initiative of the Ilulissat Declaration, hence Greenland played a crucial role in how the political setting in the Arctic Region looks like today. This dissertation adheres to Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen’s (2017) definition of Paradiplomacy, which is “the diplomacy of sub-state regional entities vis-à-vis foreign actors” (Ibid.), as it defines the diplomatic entity in relation to foreign actors, but under the authority of another state as well as geographically belonging to a specific region. Since Greenland is the Denmark’s primary or only source of influence in the Arctic Area, close ties with Greenland arguably becomes more and more important for Denmark.

Denmark and the US have, in particular since the end of the Cold War, and especially since 2001 where Bush declared war on terror, been very close allies and the Danish foreign policy has to a large extent been defined by American interests, a super-atlanticist if you will (Pedersen 2018, Olesen 2017, Mouritzen

2007). An atlanticist “means a propensity to act in harmony with the US, notably in high politics” (Mouritzen 2007, p. 155).

In light of this close relationship between Denmark and the US, it gives rise to concerns for Denmark, when Chinese state owned corporations show interest in mining, construction and shipping construction in Greenland such as the Citronen base metal project, Isua iron ore, Wegener Halvø copper project, the expansion of airports in Nuuk, Ilulissat and Qaqortoq, and the Kvanefjeld rare earth project. This includes cooperations like CCCC, China Nonferrous Metal Industry’s Foreign Engineering and Construction (NFC), and Shenghe Resources, as well as private Chinese businesses such as Jiangxi Zhongrun and General Nice group. Jiangxi Zhongrun and General Nice have, since their attained license to invest in Greenlandic projects, become more attached to the Chinese government.

In general, it is difficult for Chinese mining, construction and shipping businesses to survive without close ties to the Chinese government, which arguably hints at a larger strategic intent from the Chinese FPE (Foreign Policy Executives) (Jiang 2018). According to Jiang (2018) several Chinese commentators have argued that political considerations were influencing General Nice’s 2015 investments in the Issua ore project. Hence, such investment would “pave way for more Chinese companies to enter Greenland” (Ibid., p. 3). According to China’s long-awaited Arctic strategy from 2018 it appears that there is a larger plan at stake as the strategy stipulates that China has increased their ambitions to establish strong and extensive relationships with Arctic players. Thus, a Chinese presence in the region parallels with China’s ambition to become a new great power. It is a far reaching and well-planned strategy that describe Chinese foreign policy until 2049 (Sørensen 2019). However, China needs to balance between own ambitions and the Arctic players, which include the US and Russia among others. And here Russia may also play a significant role as Putin’s Russia has a very strong position in terms of what status Arctic states have in the Arctic in general. Russia have the view that Arctic states have a special status when it comes to defining and setting up rules and also regulate access to the area as well as the development in the area (Ibid.). And, in spite of Russia’s growing dependence on Chinese trade caused by Western sanctions against Russia as a response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Russia are still not very intrigued by the idea of Chinese interference in the Arctic (Ibid.).

With the Chinese interest in the Arctic area, an alliance with the US that is fundamental to Danish security, and Russia’s strong political stance in the region, Denmark finds itself caught in a web of greater powers. Meanwhile, Greenland has since before 1975 - when Greenland acquired home-rule (Grønlandsk-Dansk Selvstyrekommision 2008) - been striving for independence. How is the relationship between Denmark and Greenland sustaining in this political environment? This question leads to the research question of this paper.

2. Research Question.

How have Denmark and Greenland responded internally to a shift in the geopolitical interests of great powers such as China and the US, and to some extent Russia, in the Arctic region, based on neoclassical realism and Lobell's (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model?

3. Methods

This chapter will guide the reader through the research design, choice of paradigm, a description of the chosen case study design, the method and methodology of conducted expert interviews, data selection, ethical considerations, as well as a small discussion on the limitations of this dissertation.

Research design.

In order to answer the research question '*How have Denmark and Greenland responded internally to a shift in the geopolitical interests of great powers such as China and the US, and to some extent Russia, in the Arctic region, based on neoclassical realism and Lobell's (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model?*

', four cases have been chosen. These cases have been chosen based on a predefined selection process. Each case contains elements of interaction between either Greenland or Denmark or both on the one side, and great powers (the US, China, and to some extent Russia) on the other. They interact in such a way that it has caused a reaction between the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE. Each case, however, has its own distinct characteristics, as it will be demonstrated in the analysis. I have chosen neoclassical realism as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis.

It should be mentioned that FPE is a concept deriving from neoclassical realism and is utilized in Lobell's (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model (CTIM), a neoclassical realist model to analyze states' foreign policy in international relations. CTIM is also applied here. However, the usage of FPE will be defined under the section on data selection, as FPE plays a larger part herein.

Neoclassical realism has been criticized for its ontological and epistemological incoherence. The problem derives from a neoclassical realist's attempt to combine a classical realist's focus on leaders, and a neorealist focus on the structure of the international state system when explaining state behavior. "[Neoclassical realist's] research agenda quickly became associated with both explaining anomalous outcomes and explaining specific state behavior" (Smith 2018, p. 742). This theoretical framework will be explained in depth in the chapter on theory. But, to encompass both anomalies in state behavior, because humans are unpredictable, and general state behavior, which are guided by power dynamics in an anarchic state system, many neoclassical realist's have decided to choose a middle way between rationalism and constructivism in terms of choice of ontology. Here acknowledging both a world consisting of features

existing outside human conception as well as the understanding that there is a world constructed by human ideas. The problem is that with this ontological composition, neoclassical realism attempts to “encompass nearly the entire universe of international relations theory,’ resulting in ‘its conceptual foundations... being ‘stretched beyond all recognition or utility” (Smith 2000 in Smith 2018, p. 743). However, to try to make up for this, instead of applying rationalism that argues that problems can be solved “by an appeal to reason, that is, to clear thought, experience, and argument” (Gadenne 2015, p. 271) this dissertation takes its epistemological outset in critical rationalism.

Karl Popper’s Critical rationalism conceives the real as, just like rationalism, “an objective world existing independently of mind and language, and that we can achieve knowledge about this world” (Ibid., p. 272). However, opposite rationalism knowledge is not conceived as “certain belief” (ibid.) but instead as tested and confirmed guesswork. It is the assumption that knowledge of the world can never be certain. “All hypotheses and theories – moreover, all human attempts of solving problems– are uncertain and fallible” (Ibid., p. 271). Because, there can be knowledge which has been neglected or simply not achievable at the time, which can be found later. A large sum of my data has been found by searching different news medias as well as journals. There are chances that important work has been overlooked. Thus, this paper humbly adheres to Popper’s definition of rationality. “Rationality is the readiness to listen to critical argument and to learn from experience. It is “an attitude of admitting that I may be wrong, and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth” (Popper in Ibid., p. 272).

Thus, as a research strategy in accordance with critical rationalism this dissertation denounces the inductive approach, because an inductive approach can easily be found fallible. Gadenne (2015) mentions the by now very used example of black swans in a lake. The assumption that all swans are black can easily be dismissed just by monitoring one white swan. So, the attempt here is not to provide a general theory on state behavior in international relations, but reveal behavior at specific point in time, in accordance with neoclassical realism (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009). To do so, this dissertation applies a hypothetic-deductive research strategy, as it proposes a method where you present a hypothesis and test it by experimenting (Ibid.). The underlying assumption is that, if Denmark and Greenland assess similar threats, the relationship will be strengthened, and if their threats assessments diverge the relationship will be weakened. To test it, Complex Threat Identification Model is applied, however in awareness of that the hypothesis might be wrong.

Case study design

“The case study is not a method in itself. Rather, it is a focus and the focus is on one thing, looked at in depth and from many angles” (Thomas 2011, p. 9). Thomas (2011) uses the word ‘thing’ very broadly as it

can mean all from a group, an institution and many other things, but in the example of this dissertation, the case is a relationship. This dissertation study the relationship between Denmark and Greenland in a changing world order. What makes this case so special is Greenland's paradiplomatic status and their wish to become fully independent combined with Denmark's attempt to balance between own, Greenlandic and the interests of the US and China in rivalry in a global setting, where Greenland lies in the center of the Arctic region, which is becoming more and more interesting due to the changing climate. In addition, the Arctic region is special because, as Wegge (2010) argues, within the Arctic region there exist a different interstate power relation and therefore the Arctic region should be viewed at independently from the power relations which comprise the power dynamics in the rest of the world. Here, there exists a different kind of power struggle. With these things in mind, what possibilities and limitations are this great power rivalry inflicting on the Danish Kingdom and what does that mean for the Danish/Greenlandic relationship? As Thomas (2011) puts it, "there can be no assumption that the case is in any way representative of a wider whole - it is a one-off, defined by peculiar circumstances that you, the researcher, describe" (p.13). And this case arguably fulfills these criteria.

In addition, before a case study can be of relevance, there is a need for a theoretical framework. As Wieviorka (1992) says: "For a 'case' to exist, we must be able to identify a characteristic unit... this unit must be observed, but it has no meaning in itself. [...] If you want to talk about a 'case', you also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context" (in Thomas 2011, p. 15). As the chapter on the chosen theoretical framework will describe and the analysis will show, in this dissertation neoclassical realism has been applied to analyze the Greenlandic FPE and the Danish FPE's threat assessment of a changing world order in four different cases.

The following section will describe how the data was selected.

Data selection

This dissertation includes qualitative interviews with representatives from the Greenlandic FPEs as well as statements commented in different news media from representatives of the Greenlandic and Danish FPE. These discourses are held up against actual events in four different cases where great powers, mostly China interfere, to find correlation between the Danish and Greenlandic FPE's assessments of threats and their actual responses acted out in reality.

Qualitative research is a research strategy that "tend to be concerned with words rather than numbers" (Bryman 2012, p. 380). This dissertation reaches its conclusion on the basis of an enquiry of exclusively qualitative data. It is a combination of firsthand and secondhand data. The firsthand data are comprised of qualitative expert interviews, which are a product of a field study in Nuuk. The designing and thematizing of these interviews are based on Brinkmann's (2009) seven stages of enquiry, where the application will be

described in the section on “Qualitative, Expert Interviews”. The secondhand data are peer-reviewed academic journals acquired through rub.ruc.dk, articles from the Danish magazine on international politics called Ræson, as well as online news media. The online news media were used as a way to collect statements from relevant actors, which aligns with the selection process described in the section on FPE and the section that defines experts.

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation applies a theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism is a general theory intended to explain states’ foreign policy. As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, neoclassical realism defines a state’s decision makers in foreign policy as the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE). The following section will define the use of FPE’s in terms of data selection.

Foreign Policy Executives (FPE).

Lobell (2009) defines FPE’s as different branches of top officials who have the responsibility of formulating the state’s grand strategy. Grand strategies contain several components, which include military, political as well as fiscal components. The FPE is the decision makers in the processes regarding foreign policy. Neoclassical realism relies on some general assumptions about FPE’s. In addition to act as an influencing unit-level variable existing at the nexus of domestic and foreign policy, the theory assumes that the FPE is a “unified central”, which as a consequence always behave as a symbiotic collective. But in reality, there can be many discrepancies within an FPE (Ibid.). A more in-depth description of the theoretical implications of FPE’s is included in the theoretical chapter. However, the intention with this section is to define the usage of FPE’s within this dissertation because the definition of FPE arguably influence who the relevant actors are, who I as a researcher can justify interviewing and collecting data from, when I try to answer the research question at hand.

When the concept of FPE is defined as loosely as it is, it becomes problematic because it leaves a conceptual void for each individual researcher to fill out with own interpretations. FPE’s can either be defined very strictly as those with the direct authority to implement foreign policy or respond/act internationally, or very loosely to also include actors who influence this decision-making process indirectly. In this dissertation I look at the FPE’s represented by top officials with direct authority but also officials who by virtue of their relevant work and the knowledge such work constitutes, can influence the decision makers. This means that statements from elected officials such as the Nalakkersuisoc Vittus Quijaqitsoc and the Premier of Greenland Kim Kielsen, and Danish Prime Ministers like Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Mette Frederiksen. However, officials like Liselotte Odgaard who is an expert in Chinese politics in the Danish Defense Academy, as well as Nils Wang the former rear admiral and leader of the Danish Defense Academy are also included and accounted for as part of the respective FPEs.

Furthermore, because FPE refers to “top officials” who formulate a state’s grand strategy in foreign policy, it becomes conceptually difficult to include the Greenlandic FPE, as they by this definition have no formal role to play as the Greenlandic foreign policy is dictated by Danish approval (Nord 2009, Act on Greenland Self-Government 2009). However, the literature on Danish Arctic policy has largely refrained from examining Greenland as a foreign policy actor which has been “effectively silencing any indigenous foreign policy significance” (Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, Greenland has been very outspoken about their position in the chosen cases, and they diverge from the Danish position in three out of four cases (Hannestad 2019b, Lindqvist 2019, Naalakkersuisut 2019, Turnowsky 2019, Lobell 2009). To recognize their role in foreign policy can provide insight into the Greenlandic influence on Danish foreign policy as well as the nuances in the Danish/Greenlandic relationship. Thus, within this dissertation it is deemed beneficial to see Greenland as its own independent actor.

To be able to conduct qualitative expert interviews, I went on a field study to Nuuk. Here I interviewed Vittus Quijaqitsoc who is Naalakkersuisoq (Minister) of Finances and Nordic Collaboration, Natuk Lund Olsen who is the leader of the Department of Independence, and two representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Greenland. Furthermore, I had several conversations with Danish citizens deployed and working in the Greenlandic self-governance. They however all wanted to maintain anonymous. These interviews are better described as casual but sudden conversations, thus there were made no specific methodical or methodological considerations in these instances. The following section will provide a description of the field study and also outline the methodological approach when conducting these interviews.

Conducting Qualitative Expert Interviews in Nuuk, Greenland.

Qualitative research has been criticized, because it is difficult to measure the quality of the data assembled from qualitative interviews. Thus, there is a need to design and strategize your interviews (Roulston 2010). According to Roulston (2010), when it comes to quality interviews many methodological considerations needs to be taken into consideration. For instance, a researcher needs to consider whether or not the usage of qualitative interview data is applicable to the research question one attempts to answer. Considerations concerning whether or not the interviewer facilitated the interview in such a way that it actually generated quality data. The communication between the interviewer and interviewee needs to be clear and precise so that there are no misunderstandings. If all of these considerations are neglected, the validity of the qualitative inquiries are jeopardized. Thus, this dissertation has applied Kvale and Brinkmann’s (2009) ‘Seven Stages of an Interview Investigation’ to thematize and design the qualitative elite interviews included in this dissertation.

Seven Stages of an Interview Investigation.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009a) suggests seven stages to be followed when conducting qualitative interviews. These seven stages compose *thematizing*, *designing*, *interviewing*, *transcribing*, *analyzing*, *verifying*, and then conclusively *reporting*. There are no standard procedure when conducting interviews, but there is however standard choices and relying on these seven stages enables the “interview researcher to make thoughtful decisions about method, based on knowledge of the topic of the study, the methodological options available, their analytical implications, and anticipated consequences of the choices of the entire interview project” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009a, pp. 99-100). The following will describe the application of these steps.

“*Thematizing* refers to the formulation of research questions and a theoretical clarification of the theme investigated” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009a, p. 105). Thus, three key questions are considered; the *why*, the *what*, and the *how* (Ibid.). So why are these interviews conducted?

In order to answer my research question: ‘*How has Denmark and Greenland responded internally to a shift in the geopolitical interest in the Arctic region?*’, I went to Greenland from 2nd of May to the 15th of May 2019. I went there to conduct qualitative expert interviews as the purpose of these interviews was to retrieve standpoints from the Greenland’s FPE on a changing world order, and how it might or might not influence their relationship with Denmark. Furthermore, I was interested in the Greenlandic FPE’s perspective on independence. In this dissertation I draw on Meuser & Nagel (2009) definition of an expert. An expert has an “institutionalized authority to construct reality” (Meuser & Nagel 2009, p. 19) and possess expert knowledge. “Expert knowledge is characterized by the chance “to become hegemonial in a certain organizational and functional context within a field of practice” and, thus, “to be influential in structuring the conditions of action for other actors [...] in a relevant way” (Ibid., p. 19). Applied here, it means that interviewees who have insight into Greenlandic politics and values in relation to foreign policy and independence and can influence others on these matters in a relevant way, are good interviewee subjects. Thus, combined with the prior definition of FPE’s, Vittus Quijaqitsoc, Natuk Lund Olsen, and the representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Greenland have been considered suitable as expert interviewees, because they all are influential on the Greenlandic perspective on foreign policy and/or independence. This is also why these interviewees arguably provide insights into the Greenlandic self-perception as well as account as a part of the Greenlandic FPE.

While I was in Greenland, I, after recommendations from the Representatives of the Department of Foreign affairs, managed to set up an interview with Natuk Lund Olsen, who is the head of the Department of Independence. The meeting was settled only a couple of days before the interview took place, which influenced the methodological process. This which will be further discussed later on.

When conducting interviews with elites, or experts (even though there still are discrepancies in distinct definitions between these two overlapping concepts they are used somewhat similarly here, as others have done (Kvale and Brinkman 2015, Meuser & Nagel 2009)), the assumption is that they know a lot on the subject and are used to being asked about their opinion. It obliges me as a researcher to have prepared knowledge and be able to confront the interviewee but also contribute to the conversation with own conceptions of the topic at hand in order to acquire new knowledge (Kvale and Brinkman 2015). An attempt to do so in the interview with e.g. Vittus Quijaqitsoc was when I, as a response to Vittus Quijaqitsoc's stance on Greenland independence (See appendix), asked whether or not there was a worry about Lars Løkke would feel insulted, and thereby questioning Vittus Quijaqitsoc's position. However, the purpose of the interview was not to uncover a hidden truth, but rather clarify the Greenlandic FPE's position on independence and the potential threat China could pose.

The *what* refers to acquiring pre-knowledge of the topic at hand, before conducting the interviews. It "entails developing a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be investigated in order to establish the base to which new knowledge will be added and integrated" (Meuser & Nagel 1994, p. 106). The *how* refers to the "different techniques of interviewing and analyzing, and deciding which to apply, why, what and how of the interview" (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, p. 105). Due to my research question, I decided to conduct these interviews with an underlying hypothesis that the world is changing, and China is challenging the current American hegemonic dominance in the region, and maybe even the whole world, which is further argued for in the section on 'A Potential Return of Realism'. First, and in accordance with my epistemological choice of critical rationalism, I openly asked if they thought this hypothesis is valid. Do they agree? For instance, I started the interview with Vittus Quijaqitsoc with the following question: "Do you agree with the narrative describing a changing world order? And is this something you worry about in Greenland?" (interview with Vittus Quijaqitsoc, see appendix) I did this for two reasons, to critically assess my own hypothesis (Gadette 2015), and also because the Greenlandic FPE's view on this matter influences their assessment of direct foreign investments coming from China. Thus, my questions revolved to a high extent around Chinese investments. Because if Greenland are too friendly with China, it influences the relationship with Denmark because Denmark are in an alliance with the US. This is also why the concept of independence has been prioritized in these interviews, as the Greenlandic wish for independence also might diverge from the Danish view of a Danish Kingdom in international relations. Drawing on Kvale and Brinkman (2015), a conceptual interview "want to chart the conceptual structure of a subject's [...] conceptions of phenomena" (Kvale and Brinkman 2015 p.176-177), but instead of defining independence as a concept, my aim was to gain insight into what kind of independence the Greenlandic FPE wants, what their definition on proper independence is.

Three interviews in Nuuk.

For this dissertation, three interviews have been conducted, where two had similar methodical processes. With the representatives of the Department of Foreign affairs and Vittus Quijaqitsoc, I followed Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) "Types of Interview Questions" (pp. 135-136) to guide my interview (See appendix). Nonetheless, these interviews were different. For instance, at the Department of Foreign Affairs, we had plenty of time to conduct the interviews, so I was able to go in depth with each question. We were not pressured by time, which arguably also allowed them to provide long well-founded answers. In the interview with Vittus Quijaqitsoc, there was some time pressure because he had to be elsewhere that made the interview feel rushed. Another difference is that, even though Vittus Quijaqitsoc was limited by his position as an elected official, Vittus Quijaqitsoc was more open about sharing his own opinion on the matter than the Representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs. They were very clear about their position, and their answers reflected that position. The representatives remain anonymous since I have not been able to get confirmation from them concerning whether I could publish their names.

My interview with Natuk Lund Olsen was scheduled after my arrival in Nuuk and was held after the other interviews. Thus, it was not possible to make the same preparations as the other interviews. Instead my approach here was more reflexive in the sense that it was structured on the basis of the experiences and the answers given in the two prior interviews. This interview was also semi-structured, but where I as a researcher to a larger extent guided the direction of the other two interviews, this was more open and guided by Natuk Lund Olsen's answers. This also meant that there were times where the interview led in interesting however less relevant directions, which could have been avoided, had I applied a more structured approach. Natuk's position as the Head of the Department of Independence in Greenland also had an impact on the nature of the interview. The interview was more about independence than the foreign policy, compared to the other interviews.

These qualitative interviews were, according to my epistemological choice of critical rationalism and theoretical framework of neoclassical realism tested within the chosen theoretical framework of CTIM and held up against actual events. I have applied this theoretical framework on four different cases, where these interviews added value to my analysis of a Greenlandic threat assessment and priorities when it comes to the Arctic, Denmark, the US, China, Russia and their own independence. This means, that all the responses in these interviews, as mentioned in the prior sections, accounts for a collective group; namely the Greenlandic FPE.

After I conducted the interviews, I transcribed all three interviews (see appendix). "There is no such thing as a 'natural' mechanism for the representation of speech" (Atkinson, 1992, p. 23 in Roberts 1997, p. 168). Because transcription is 'working with language in a social world', transcription will always maintain the transcribers representation of the interviews and thus will never be able to document the actual

interview. Therefore, transcribers need “to manage the tension between accuracy, readability, and representation-remembering that we are transcribing people when we transcribe talk” (Roberts 1997, p. 170). This is why I have included stutter, repetitions, and hesitations in the transcription to provide the closest representation of what was actually being said, and furthermore in the analysis make sure to present the answers in the right context as they have been given. Furthermore, when there were words, I was not able to understand I noted it in the transcription and left the point out of the dissertation as invalid. These reflections on representation in transcription lead me to my role as a researcher, when I meet with these participants. The following section shortly dives into the concept of reflexivity.

Reflexivity.

My epistemological position of critical rationalism dictates that I must remain critical towards my own approach, and a more confrontational approach might have presented further insights. Kvale and Brinkman (2015) pose that conducting interviews with elites or experts, sometimes a more confrontational approach towards the interviewee might give the participants the feeling that they are being challenged and as a consequence presented some more bold answers than those I got. However, I need to take my position as a researcher into consideration. “Reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political, and social context” (Bryman 2012, p. 393). I am from Denmark, visiting Greenland and “‘the fact [is] that we are part of the social world we study’ [...] and must therefore understand how we influence, and are influenced by, this world” (Hammersley and Atkinson in Maxwell 2018, p. 58). There is a majority in Greenland who have a wish for independence from Denmark, and the fact that I originate from the country that colonized Greenland might had an impact on the interviews I conducted in Nuuk. Roulston (2010) notes in her description of “A Decolonizing Conception of Interviewing” (p.222) that “western research practices that have objectified and endangered indigenous peoples throughout the world are an integral part of European colonialism. These practices [...] have largely been experienced negatively by those who have been the objects” (Smith in Roulston 2010, p. 222). However, reflexivity is a very far reaching concept, with multiple meanings, therefore this dissertation adopts a reflexive position to the extent that I needed to acknowledge my position as a researcher and take that into account when I conducted these interviews. Because, my nationality to some extent expresses the grip on the Greenlandic sovereignty they fight against and thus I play a part in co-producing the data acquired. Thus, I did not find it suiting to become too confrontational (Bryman 2012).

Ethical Consideration.

Diener and Crandall (in Bryman 2012, p. 135) have broken down the general discussion on ethical principles in social research into four main areas; Firstly, “whether there is *harm* to the participants”;

secondly, “whether there is a *lack of informed consent*”; thirdly “whether there is an *invasion of privacy*”; and forth, “whether *deception* is involved” (Ibid.).

There are many ways one can do *harm* to participants, both during the interview but also in the way they are represented in the research. There are many facets of harm, there are “physical harm; harm to participants’ development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and ‘inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts” (Ibid.). It goes without saying that none of my participants were exposed to any kind of physical harm during or after the interviews. I have assured the confidentiality of those who have not confirmed verbally that I can use their name in the research. This is also why the representatives of the Department of Foreign affairs have remained anonymous. I have tried to get confirmation by email, but I have not succeeded. Which leads on to whether there was a *lack of informed consent*.

Lack of informed consent is the principle that as much as possible should be disclosed to the interviewee before the interview is conducted, so that the interviewee decides to take part in the interview on an informed basis. To adhere to this overt approach, I contacted each participant on mail, where I in depth described my intentions with the interview. And I offered them to ask any questions if there were any insecurities about my project.

Where “covert methods violate the principles of informed consent and may invade the privacy of those being studied” (Ibid., p. 142), my overt approach honored the principle of informed consent without *invading the privacy* of the interviewee. More covert approaches, where I might just have showed up to a more or less unprepared interviewee might have provided me with different answers. With my overt approach, I might have enabled my interviewees to provide more standardized and rehearsed answers as they knew what I was asking about prior to the interview (Ibid.).

“Deception occurs when researchers represent their work as something other than what it is” (Bryman 2012). Bryman (2012) argues that there are at least two reasons why one should not deceive the interviewee. First one is simply “it is not nice” (Ibid., p. 143). The second reason is that it would damage my reputation as a researcher. Thus, in order to assure that my interviewee was fully aware of my project, I, as explained, described my narrative of a changing world order and how that might influence the Greenlandic/Danish relationship.

The following section discuss considered limitations.

Limitations

Even though I have limited myself to only gather comments from news articles with direct relevance to the topic at hand in this dissertation. However, even though I have attempted to maintain critical towards the different stories these articles have presented, my data collection could have been misguided by the frame of the articles.

Another limitation can be found in the chosen theoretical framework of neoclassical realism and my definition of FPE's. The attempt to find a correlation between statements from representatives from different FPE's and the different cases, does not account for the invisible processes between people when decisions are made in an FPE. Instead these possible correlations are just deduced based on context. Lobell (2009) describes neorealism's exclusion of the state apparatus in its theoretical framework as a 'black box'. One could argue that a black box of neoclassical realism in fact in part consist of these invisible processes or interactions between decisions-makers, which conclusively end up in a decision to act. It is the notion that FPE's are one large homogenic group that always agrees that is disputable.

4. Theory

This paper rest in the theoretical camp of neoclassical realism. Interwoven in a narrative of a changing world order, the following section clarify the distinction between two different features in the realist position, namely classical realism and neorealism, to underline the defining features of neoclassical realism, as well as presenting specific application of Lobell's (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model.

Before this paper digs into the different strands of realism, it should be mentioned that even though Weber's old, and by now well recognized definition of the state might seem sufficient, namely that "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use* of physical force within a given territory" (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2016, pp. 24-25) it does not encompass the state where the monopoly of the use of force is contested. Thus, this paper adheres to Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro's (2009) definition of a state. The "term "state" [is] a generic term for a variety of autonomous polities with different geographic scopes, internal attributes, and relative material capabilities that coexist and interact in an anarchic environment" (Lobell et. al 2009, p. 26).

A Potential Return of Realism?

Systemic liberalism theorizes that the most objective and efficient solutions mainly can be found through cooperative behavior (Ibid.). One could argue that this cooperative behavior to some extent has been enabled by the US. The United States has since the cold war managed to position itself as the 'defender of the free world', or as 'the world police' asserting justice in the name of democracy (Peterson 2018). By disposing over the most powerful and the most complex military in the world, and being the largest single market in the world, the United States has at least until recently, primarily in the West, preserved a hegemonic, rule-based state system since WW2 and then again after the cold war (Felbermayr, Steininger & Yalcin 2017). The question is, however, is that still the case? Or is the Western world order as we have known it for the last 30 years threatened (Lake 2018, Walker and Ludwig 2017)? In the mid-1990's 30

international trade agreements were approved each year. During the financial crisis that number reduced to 26, and since 2011 the average amount of sanctioned free trade agreements has fallen to 10 each year. Even though the nature of newer agreements is “deeper and farther reaching than their predecessors” (Felbermayr, Steininger & Yalcin 2017, p. 28) it does indicate protectionist tendencies in international trade in general and a move away from collaborative behavior in general (Ibid).

Classical realism, neorealism, and neoclassical realism builds on a philosophical position dating back 2,500 years to the writings of Thucydides and the Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu’s who wrote “The Art of War”. What all realist writings shares is a fundamentally pessimistic view on human behavior, namely that human beings act according to self-gain and that the chances of changing such behavior is close to zero. Thus, these tendencies which arguably culminates in Trump’s “America First” attitude can tempt one to suggest that a realist paradigm might deserve a revisit in future research despite the hardships it has been through since the end of the cold war (Smith 2015, Forsby 2019). Trump’s decision to pull out of the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) and other international arrangements and initiating so called trade wars, has arguably resonated in the international society and manifested an awareness, in e.g. EU, of the importance of open trade (Peterson 2018). When the US is pulling out of such free trade agreement (just to underline the magnitude of the agreement, it involved 12 nations and took seven years of negotiations) sends the signal that the US might pull out of other free-trade negotiations as well. One such agreement is the one between the US and EU better known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Madsen 2017).

Trump’s administration has furthermore raised tariffs on imports. Such economically protectionist policymaking makes it difficult for the US to portray itself as the protector of world justice. Especially, when a continuation of US protectionism most likely will result in a “world-wide policy retaliation” (Felbermayr, Steininger & Yalcin 2017, p. 35) against it (ibid., Shepherd & Martina 2018). This tendency will most likely spur and set in motion a great power competition between China and the US as it will weaken trading possibilities between the two (Lake 2018).

The realists emphasize tribalism and how this behavior is fundamental for human survival. No individual can survive on its own, but if the individual pledges loyalty to a larger group that can provide security from external threats, that would even out the odds (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009). You can say that “all kinds of realism are fundamentally group-centric” (ibid, p. 14). Furthermore, the realist understanding of politics is a never-ending struggle between independent self-concerned groups which all functions and acts under the condition of ‘famine’ and unpredictable outcomes. This condition of famine can be translated into the struggle over “material capabilities, or they might be social resources, such as prestige and status” (Ibid. p. 14) with other competing states. Power is therefore necessary for any group to achieve its goals, whether it be “universal domination or simply self-preservation” (Ibid. pp. 14-15).

Now, the economic rise of China has challenged the US position, and, in the future, even though both states might have the best intentions it seems difficult to prevent a bipolar power dynamic, which arguably may generate further economic as well as military competition (Lake 2018). In fact, China is already challenging the existing Western international institutions. For instance - having in mind that China is the second largest economy in the world - Chinese observers have expressed dissatisfaction with the incoherence between China's economic power and its voting power in institutions of international economic governance, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). To challenge these institutions, China have promoted the creation of new similar multilateral institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the new Development Bank of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) (Tekdal 2017).

Classical realism emphasizes a focus on the different obstacles a leader meet when conducting foreign policy. Such obstacles tend to lead scholars towards research subjects like "power distribution among states, as well as the character of states, and their relation to domestic society" (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009, p. 6). You can say that in classical realism the international society was somewhat important, but the primary focus was on state leaders. This unit-focused theoretical position lacked a methodological composition that described states in relation to each other in a larger system of states. Classical realism suffers from being a compilation of writings made by different authors spanning over 2500 years rather than being a "coherent research program" (Ibid., p. 6). Trump's America first attitude presents a new direction, as it constraints international institutions as well as limiting the political space to maneuver for weaker states in general. One could argue that this to some extent captures the classical realist/neorealist discussion. On one hand, the realist argument that state behavior can be answered by focusing on leaders to explain state behavior. That arguably makes sense in light of great power rivalries between charismatic leaders such as Putin, Trump and Xi Jinping arguably can result in power are balancing between very few people. On the other hand, the neorealist argument that one should focus on the structure of the anarchic state system to explain state behavior, arguably also make sense.



(economist.com)

Thus, China's efforts to create parallel international institutions is arguably an attempt to fight structure with structure. For instance, the AIIB, is not officially linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but the creation of AIIB is highly motivated by it. BRI stands "for the long-term plan for the construction of Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" (Tekdal 2017, p. 373). China Development Bank (CDB) has also been reported to have plans of investing hundreds of billions of dollars in the project. It is a strategy implemented to enhance "trade and investment connectivity between China and Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and South Asia" (Ibid., p. 373), which will place China in the center of the world market (Ibid.). The BRI has the possible effect to change the geo-economic conditions for the countries on the route. A hope for China with such initiative is also that it will help internationalize the Chinese RMB (Renminbi - the Chinese currency), as a response to Chinese foreign-exchange reserves have been primarily invested in US dollar-dominated assets. As a result of these investments, China find itself in a situation where it is too dollar dependent. Internationalizing the RMB and buying assets abroad not least in small nations/regions (like Greenland) are ways to acquire more economic independence and at the same time entice a stronger presence in the international society (Ibid.). China's heavy investment in Sri Lanka is an example of that. China has spent almost 2 billion dollars to further develop the strategic port in Hambantota in Sri Lanka, which Aneez (2017) say is "conceived as a key part of Beijing's ambition to create a modern-day "Silk Road" across Asia". China managed to get a 99-yearlong lease on 80 percent of the port, which has been met by protest and demonstrations from locals. This 99-yearlong lease has been heavily criticized because it imposes on Sri Lanka's sovereignty. Sri Lanka has in total received an estimate of US\$4 billion dollars in aid and investments since 2009. Such actions give China influence in ways the US can do very little about, where the developments in American foreign

trade policy rather secludes and weakens ties with its allies (Kumar 2017, Aneez 2017). China's rapid economic rise add to the implication that the current power dynamics are changing. Organski and Kugler (in Gentry 1981), argue that a 'fundamental circumstance' for a power transition between opposing great power states, and thus a change of the existing world order, is "difference in the rate of economic growth of the great powers" (Gentry 1981, p. 253). Even though Chinese growth rate might not be growing as fast as it has been, the trend still is that China has experienced an annual growth rate of 10% the last two decades (Kumar 2017). Compare this to the US, which share of the global BNP, have fallen since 1970 from 38% to 32%. Furthermore, the size of Chinese economy is estimated to match the US economy in 2035 (Møller in Kromann 2018). And, if the power shifts away from the West there is a high risk that the great power rivalry will end in conflict (Peterson 2018, Mazumdaru 2018).

Neorealism attempts to make up for some of the methodology that is lacking in classical realism in order to answer some of the big questions of state behavior in the international society. Questions like, why war takes place, why states have the habit of counterbalancing powerful states, and why states find cooperation difficult are all questions that indicate a wider focus than the motivation driven by single leaders. Classical realism on the one hand, draw on inductive theories that provide philosophical reflection on the nature of political behavior, in the form of historical analysis often drawn from western European history. Neorealism on the other hand, address these 'big' "questions in a self-consciously scientific manner, with an attempt to harness the positivist methodological rigor that the classical realists lacked" (Ibid., p. 17). Neorealism's critique of classical realism, put in more friendly words, is that classical realism fail to exhibit the interlinkage between states; namely, how states' actions are influenced and even bound by a power balancing interstate structure which obligate states to act in certain ways, which restrict the decision making process of the decision makers.

Additionally, the neorealist tradition argues that there is a need for a methodology to analyze this trend. Waltz theory "Balance of Power" provide such approach by applying "deductive theory to explain recurrent patterns of international outcomes, namely the recurrence of balances of power and the absence of sustained hegemonic international systems across history" (Ibid., p. 17). That is to say that, as history shows, a state's ability to maintain a hegemonic position, even if it is over a longer period of time, never last due to inherent counterbalancing measures brought about by an anarchic ordering principle in the international state system. An example of such counterbalancing could be Russia. In their attempt to once again claim the title as a great power, as well as assuring that Ukraine would not become part of the European system, Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014 has led to talks, even in academic circles, about a second Cold War (Ciolan 2016, Kristen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2018). Even though Russia is fully aware of its military capabilities "being outgunned and investing less on defense [than the US], its policy is trying to maximize its advantages and not to provoke a military confrontation" (Ciolan 2016, p. 635). One thing is certain, the

tension between the US and Russia seem to only have risen since, in spite of Trump's friendly association with Putin. These accounts make Russia but primarily China the two most powerful challengers to the liberal narrative of democratic world justice. Within this large description of a becoming multipolar state system, India is not even accounted for. India's status as a great power (Pardesi 2015) certainly add to a fundamental change in the conception of power relations in international politics and thus the world order we know.

To continue in this great power rivalry, Waltz argue that there is one independent variable, which is 'distribution of power'. Meaning, that the one thing the entire structure of the state system rely on is how many great powers there are. Thus, the number of great powers dictates the defining features of the state system, whether it is a unipolar (one great power), bipolar (two great powers) or a multipolar (several great powers) power structure. Debates within the neorealist camp concerns which of these power structures are the most war prone. Waltz hypothesizes, by looking at the distribution of power, that one can make two predictions. One is that "across different international systems, balances of power tend to form" (Ibid., p. 17). So, no matter if there are one or five great powers, power never becomes fixed but tend to balance between great powers or between one great power and the rest of the world, hence the survival of the group or the state relies on its strength relative to other states. The relative strengths and weaknesses between states is what Waltz calls "the attributes of the units" (Ibid. P. 17). This has the effect that states tend to imitate and act similar to the most successful state(s) (Ibid.), which Waltz describes as the result of an uneven "distribution of material capabilities" (Ibid., p. 17). Hence, the state system is guided by power and the intentions and actions carried out by the state(s) wielding that power. All these examples with China and Russia arguably challenging the US's narrative as the only great power, thus insinuate a future dispersion of power between several great powers (Walker and Ludwig 2017). Hence, one might ask, what does this instability between the great powers mean for smaller states?

Lamoreaux (2014) argues that small states and large states think alike, hence such distinction is unimportant due to the abstract definition of what a small state and a large state is. Lamoreaux (2014) argues that even when large and small states find themselves in conflict with each other, they act similar according to self-interest. An example of a smaller state acting according to self-interest when met by a great power's demand is Denmark. When Trump threatened to pull out of NATO if the fellow member states did not live up to their promise of paying the settled 2% of the respective state's BNP on military expenses, Trump strongly criticized the Danish government for its lacking prioritization of this promise. For Denmark, a US presence in NATO is determining for Danish security (Olesen 2017). But Denmark have shown keen to buy this type of security as cheap as possible, which also became evident in the Danish economic support of the US during the arms race in the Cold War, and it is also evident here (Jakobsen 2018). However, in recent years, Denmark have been willing to participate in very risky military operations and it has been

argued that this should in part compensate for the below 2% budget. Trump's multiple threats arguably come off a bit hollow in light of the Trump administration's decision to increase the US' military and economic contribution to the NATO defense of Europe. Nonetheless, these threats including developing threats from Russia helped to motivate the Danish government to raise its defense budget so that Denmark will get closer to the 2% of BNP before 2024, Denmark does not aim to live up to the 2%. Instead Denmark raised the level of the defense budget to 1.3% of BNP and then promised to compensate for the last 0.7% by sending incomparable large contributions (per inhabitant) to NATO and US military operations, but not until after a five years of stalling giving the reason that budgets were locked due to democratic processes (Jakobsen 2018). Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's clear rejection of Trump's offer to buy Greenland is another example of such autonomous thinking. However, the disadvantage not living up to the agreed 2% target which has been agreed by the member states can be, as mentioned earlier, that it may end up actually reinforcing the anarchic system. If states do not follow the initiatives of other stronger states, they will lose their "competitive advantage and probability of survival" (ibid. p.18) and ultimately fail to survive (Ibid., Politiken.dk 2019a). These examples contribute to Lamoreaux's argument of how states act according to self-interest no matter the relative size as Denmark continuously acts towards what is best for Denmark rather than towards upholding their obligations to NATO commitments.

Neoclassical realists criticize Waltz's theory of balance of power for its simplifying depiction of states' actual material power, because domestic factors are left out of the theoretical frame, the state itself, the interaction between decision-makers becomes a "black box" (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009, p.17). Thus, it assumes that states possess an ability to endlessly collect and transform domestic resources so that all domestic resources count as "actual military and economic power and international influences" (Ibid., p. 18). Neorealism thereby neglects domestic factors that limits a state leader's freedom to carry out such conversion of economic power into military power or foreign policy actions (Ibid.). Neoclassical realism combines and builds on these two approaches on international politics and create a theoretical framework that investigate domestic as well as international factors when examining state behavior (Ibid.).

Even though Lamoreaux's (2014) argument of similar mentalities in spite of size can be seen valid, then economy, military, numeral as well as geographical size are somewhat indisputable and such example as given above indicate a space to maneuver politically for less powerful states. So, even though Trump might have managed to infuse a general mistrust into the established Western alliances, the US are still the only great power with a long history of liberal democratic values, which Denmark very easily identify itself with. There still is a systematic order or structure, which Denmark more or less can rely on, for some time. But what happens when small states find themselves in the middle of a Great Power rivalry, where the known rule-based world order is contested? How does that scenario influence the role of small states in an anarchic state system? In cases with such enormous economic and military imbalance, in sizes and in

numbers as well, then is it not rather tempting to return to Thucydides' known words "the strong do what they will, the weak suffer what they must"?

Neoclassical Realism

Neoclassical realism argues that the goals and aspirations of a state's foreign policy is primarily guided by its relative material power, that is to say, a state's military and economic power relative to other states (Ibid.). However, even though a state might be economically and/or militarily better equipped than another state, the impact of its material power is complex and indirect because state behavior also are heavily influenced by "unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure" (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro 2009, p. 5).

The underlying assumption of this paper is that China's rapid rise over the last decades as well as Trump's 'America first' rhetoric and policy, threatens the US's hegemony, thus the existing world order. With the rising interest in Greenland, it will be fruitful - in order to determine how this new power dynamic, influence the Danish/Greenlandic relationship - to investigate what Greenland and what Denmark perceives as threats in the light of this American and Chinese interest. On one hand, if they assess the same tendencies as threats, then there arguably is a greater chance that the salvation from these threats lies in collaboration and unity. On the other hand, if they disagree on what should be perceived as a potential threat, it would arguably push Greenland and Denmark further away from each other. Thus, this paper will apply Lobell's (2009) *Complex Threat Identification Model* to analyze and identify Greenland's and Denmark's assessment of threats in light of a changing world order.

In contrast to the neorealist Balance of power theory, Lobell (2009) argues, that state behavior is not just a question of the distribution of power, but also a question of who the leaders or decision makers are. Leaders be different branches of top officials who have the responsibility of formulating the state's grand strategy, what Lobell calls foreign policy executives (FPE). A fundamental assumption in neoclassical realism is that the "state, and especially the FPE, exists at the nexus of domestic and international politics" (Ibid., p. 46). Meaning that the general focus of the FPE is external on the systemic and sub-systemic power dynamics - the competition between states - as well as internally on the domestic power dynamics - where the societal groupings compete for influence. Thus, great powers face threats that appears from a change in either the domestic system or in the international system or both simultaneously. From an American perspective, this is arguably evident in the rapid rise of China, with its imperial state/capitalist economy. Domestically, the Trump administration's economic nationalism exemplified in the 'America first' rhetoric is arguably an attempt to please a large segment of American voters and thereby strengthen his position domestically. Hence, FPE's can carry out foreign policy for domestic reasons and act domestically for international gain (Ibid., Lake 2018, Møller in Kromann 2018).

Another assumption in neoclassical realism is that FPE's are primarily committed to act to improve the security and power for the entire nation and not for a selective few. Meanwhile, it is still acknowledged that there are factors "such as political and social cohesion, public support for foreign policy objectives, and the quality of a government and administrative competence affect whether the state can harness the nation's power" (Lobell 2009, p.56).

The FPE, together with societal key actors, can influence the threat assessment process and ultimately change how a state decides to respond to a specific threat. So, you can say that neoclassical realism combines the classical realism's unit-level focus with neorealism's focus on structure.

Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro (2009) may emphasize the influence of society, but it should be mentioned that the role of society - or societal key actors - in terms of assessing and defining threats that ultimately drives foreign policy is still disputed in neoclassical realism. Some think, like Randall Schweeler, that society is "episodic and rare, accounting only for surprising deviations from systemic requirements" (Ibid., p. 32). Others like Coling Dueck argue that society plays a regular role in influencing how policy is presented, rather than the actual substance of the policy. Then, there are scholars like Steven Lobell, Mark Brawley and Benjamin Fordham, who view the role of society as a very influential factor, when foreign policy is implemented. And then there are scholars like Norrin Ripsman, Jeffrey Taliaferro, and Jennifer Sterling-Folker who create theories that aim to find out *when* society in fact influence foreign policy choices (Ibid.). This paper adheres to Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro's (2009) emphasis on the role of society when states define what national threat is. Because even though the FPEs "conduct foreign policy based on their assessment of relative powers and other states' intentions [...] the leaders are always subject to domestic constraints" (Ib p. 26). Even though this argument of domestic constraints is presented to describe the influence of societal key actors, this logic is also followed when applying the very broad definition of FPE. Because in a democracy, it is not only societal elites, but also politicians in the opposition as well as experts who works in the relevant field that influence each other.

Additionally, where neorealism seeks to describe behavioral patterns in international society *over time*, neoclassical realism analyzes specific grand strategies of great powers at a specific *point in time* (Lobell et al., 2009). Different from liberalism and Marxism, neoclassical realism does not see states as a representation of different societal interest groups or economic classes but is in itself an institution with own interests. Thus, states can be strong or weak relative to society. This also means that states occasionally will make decisions that is not motivated by survival of the nation but instead the survival of the regime (Ibid.).

Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro (2009) list three subject groups which describe the focus, or the nature of the questions that one strives to answer in neoclassical realism. Firstly, *threat assessment*; how does decision-makers and "key institutions that acts on behalf of states assess international threats and

opportunities?” (Ibid., p. 31). Another aspect when attempting to understand a state’s ability to assess threats is looking into who the relevant actors are. Who make the final call in the specific situation when a foreign policy is implemented? In addition, maybe these relevant actors disagree on what a threat actually is. How are discrepancies resolved? Secondly, *strategic adjustment*; When a threat has been detected and agreed upon by the relevant actors, then who decides how to actually act on these threats? Are leaders exclusively in charge of how to deal with a recognized threat or are domestic actors able to bargain with the state, and actually influence foreign security policy? And if so, in what way? Thirdly, is the question of *resource extraction, domestic mobilization, and policy implementation*, which concerns a state’s ability to mobilize the resources necessary to pursue and achieve the goals a state set. But also, the interplay between the state and societal groups, when attempting to mobilize resources in certain settings as well as looking into what factors indicate who won the bargaining game between the state and relevant societal groups.

This dissertation, however, only apply the first step, as the aim is to uncover if Greenland’s and Denmark’s threat assessment converges, stays the same, or diverges after being caught in the middle between China, the US and to some extent Russia. The assumption of this dissertation is that if Denmark and Greenland’s threat assessment converges, the ties between Denmark and Greenland are reinforced. And if their threat assessment diverges, their ties are weakened.

Complex Threat Identification Model (CTIM).

A distinction is made between the role of the actor and the role of the observer. The role of the observer is to observe a specific political scenario, while the actor is taking part in the political game. The observer is only concerned with, what George Tsebelis refer to as ‘one game’ where “the actor is involved in a whole network of games... What appears suboptimal from the perspective of only one game is in fact optimal when the whole network of games is considered” (George Tsebelis in Lobell 2009, p. 46). More simply put, the motivation for a leader to act in a certain way in a specific situation might be driven by an aim to influence the outcome on different levels. It will be difficult for “FPEs such as diplomats, intelligence officers, and policy-makers” to fully assess the level of threat imposed by another state if they have only limited information about the other state’s intentions and motives. Thus, FPEs must take on a more holistic approach and therefore the researcher must do the same.

The CTIM sheds light on different ways FPE’s assess threats and how states can act to secure either state or regime security. It tells us that FPE’s “can act externally with the intention of manipulating the political and economic power within their society” (Lobell 2009, p. 52). A strict foreign policy with a definite warning and concern for interstate conflict can redirect attention and create consensus among domestic actors. An example could be the increased security measures provided by the Danish Kingdom to respond to the Russian threat in the Arctic area along with the conditions a changing climate might cause

in the region. Here Greenland and Denmark both see Russia as a potential threat, in terms of hard power, where Denmark has devoted 120 mil. Danish crowns every year from 2016 to 2023 to secure the Arctic. That is 720 mills. Danish crowns over six years to strengthen the Danish military in the Arctic (Department of foreign affairs representatives' interview, Danish Foreign policy review 2018, Agreement on the Danish Defense 2018-2023). In addition, it sends a signal to the US that the Danish Realm contains the Russian threat.

Furthermore, CTIM say that FPE's "can implement a foreign policy with the intention of manipulating domestic actors and interest groups in other states" (Ibid., 52). So, if a state aids a group in a foreign state through foreign policies, it might encourage that group to pressure its own government to support the grand strategy of the helping state. As the cases will show in the analysis, it has been a general tendency that in moments when China's FPE has shown interest in investing in Greenland, Greenland's FPE has become more and more positive towards such an idea. Denmark's FPE have been equally eager but are now starting to understand that NATO is "the cornerstone of Danish security" (Danish Minister of Defense, Frederiksen 2018), and thus must comply with American wishes, hence the US are worried that Denmark and Greenland becomes too close and let China take over the area through FDI's (Jiang 2018, Nord 2016, Jakobsen 2018).

Thirdly, CTIM show that states can act locally "with the intention of pulling reluctant extra-regional great powers into the conflict until all are involved" (Lobell 2009, p. 53). Greenland's geographical position and its natural resources have enabled Greenland to draw in China, and as a consequence the US has further enticed their interest (Jiang 2018, Sørensen 2019a, Hannestad 2016a, Hannestad 2016b, Sermitsiaq.ag 2016).

The last point CTIM tells us, is that less powerful states, however regional strong states can act on the global level, by disputing great powers and thereby gain status among its regional competitors.

CTIM highlights that FPE's assess threats from a systemic level, but also from a sub-systemic as well as domestic levels. This is why the CTIM indexes three different complex threat identifiers, namely; *systemic threats (interstate competition)*, *sub-systemic threats (interstate competition)*, and *domestic threats*.

Systemic threats

"The international systemic level is characterized by interstate competition" (Lobell 2009, p. 47). In the neorealist camp, there is a discussion between the defensive realist and the offensive realist. The discussion concerns whether the anarchic structure of the state system engage "FPE to maximize security or to maximize relative power" (Ibid., p. 47). On the one hand, the defensive realist argues that a state's general aim is to maximize security by maintaining the existing balance of power. They argue that the anarchic nature of the international system encourages states to seek "moderate behavior to ensure survival and

safety” (Ibid., p. 47). The rationale being that if a state seeks hegemony or just more relative power, it will encourage counterbalancing behavior, which evidently will prevent the state to succeed in its attempt to gain more power. States only expand when the environment forces them to do so, for instance if a state see that their security is threatened. The offensive realist on the other hand, argues that anarchy creates conditions that not only encourage states to pursue maximization of relative power but conceive states as ‘misguided’ if they pass up opportunities to do so. The logic here is that the more power a state has the less prone they are to be attacked or threatened by other states, hence the safer they are. “For offensive realists, threatening states are identified as those that can expand - states that possess a combination of latent and land power” (Ibid., p. 48). This paper will not delve into this discussion or attempt to create general assumptions on state behavior. Rather, this paper, as mentioned, aims to understand and identify the motivation and the intentions of specific states at a specific point in time, where motives and reactions to external circumstances might differ depending on the condition of that specific state (Ibid. 2009). In this case how a global power dynamic can influence the relationship between Denmark and Greenland.

Sub-systemic threats

The relative power of states within regional power dynamics are dependent on domestic politics as well as influenced by the overarching great power system. However, regions have their own semi-autonomous power dynamics as well. Lobell (2009) mentions that competition may arise between major regional players for leadership or regional hegemony, which can challenge the current power dynamic in the region. The Arctic region harbor some very powerful nations such as the US, Canada, and Russia and China that want in too, which to some extent makes the region a very unique geopolitical situation, which can evolve into one of global size (Nord 2009, Jiang 2008, Jakobsen 2019).

The case under investigation is a very specific case. The continuously growing international interest in the Arctic area, mainly caused by the changing climate has introduced new opportunities for Greenland that might change the, compared to Denmark, Greenlandic deficit in relative power. With the growing interest in Greenland, Greenland might be able to a higher extent pressure Denmark to follow Greenlandic demands. An example, also included in the analysis, is the CCCC’s offer to invest in Greenlandic airports, where Lars Løkke vetoed the collaboration (Jiang 2018). Another point, which also is shortly mentioned in the introduction, is that because global warming is widening the access to the region, the establishment of the Arctic Council have played an important role in calming the area through diplomatic channels evident in the establishment of the Ilulissat Declaration, also shortly mentioned in the introduction (Nord 2016). Both Russia and Canada especially are eager to claim the title as the new arctic great powers (Nord 2016). Thus, including sub-systemic potential threats in the analysis will arguably add to answer the problem formulation.

Domestic Threats.

The classical understanding of a nation-state where a group of people share a sense of belonging, or a shared identity, which aligns with a geographical territory is of course not law. There are instances of “intra-state competition” (Lobell 2009, p. 50) where the population is divided and where subnational groups plea their loyalties to different leaders based on “ethnic, religious, or regional groupings other than state government” (Ibid., pp. 50-51). Lobell (2009) argues that with such high stakes in domestic politics and a regime under such internal pressure, neighboring states poses only as secondary threat in comparison.

Greenland is self-governed but attached to the Danish kingdom and thereby the Danish constitution (Grøndlandsk-Dansk selvstyrekommision 2008, Act on Greenland Self-Government 2009). As this dissertation is written, Greenland has issued a commission that shall prepare a draft for a Greenlandic constitution, which define Greenlandic law independent from the Danish constitution. A complete rethinking of Greenlandic governance and Greenlandic national identity without Danish interference. (Naalakkersuisut.gl 2019). The former Danish prime minister Lars Løkke has warned about this commission and see that such constitution as a very strong signal and has stated that if it happens to be democratically adopted in Greenland, it will be conceived as a de-facto withdrawal from the Danish Kingdom (Lindqvist 2019). Thus, there are tensions between Denmark and Greenland, and both parties show their muscles. However, Denmark is only a part of the Arctic region, and thus have a say in arctic matters by virtue of Greenland. Greenland thereby empowers Denmark and provide the influence Denmark would otherwise never have on the international political scene in the region. Thus, the specific power dynamic between Denmark and Greenland is complicated and with a strong Greenlandic wish for independence, Denmark also have value to lose. At the same time, economic and social circumstances make such wish difficult for Greenland even though Denmark might want to comply (Ibid.). It is therefore central to include domestic disputes in the analysis.

Like any general theory of neorealism, power plays a central role in the neoclassical conception of state behavior. Lobell (Ibid.) less surprisingly adhere to this conception, but in contrast the original neorealist idea of power balancing where it is presumed that states act in response to an opposing state’s collective relative power, Lobell (Ibid.) suggest a different focus when it comes to power balancing, “instead they also define threats based on specific components of a foreign state’s power”.

Component power versus aggregate power.

When it comes to balancing, Lobell (Ibid.) argues that rather than exclusively take into account a rising state’s grand strategy, FPE’s also act on specific components of the rising state’s grand strategy. These components are those which might impose a threat to the FPE’s own specific strategic interests. This also means that a state’s threat assessment of a foreign state is partly a question of which components of power

of that foreign state is rising. These specific components might include “shifts in territory, population, ideology, industry, land-based military, or naval and air power” (Ibid., p. 55). This point adds a nuance to the relationship between states, because, depending on the societal actors and the FPE within each state, specific components of relative power might compliment the relationship between two states equally while others might impose a threat, maybe even simultaneously.

The intention of this analysis is to identify the FPE’s of Denmark and Greenland, as well as their carried-out actions, based on four cases of how FPE’s can act in times of threats. In addition, this paper will assess the threats Denmark and Greenland has, based on the three levels; Systemic, sub-systemic, and domestic threats. If Denmark and Greenland find themselves in a situation where their individual threat assessment aligns, the chances of a changing world order posing a threat on the ties between Denmark and Greenland are smaller, than if their individual threat assessment differs.

5. Analysis.

Using the framework of CTIM, the following chapter highlights four cases where great powers have shown interest in Greenland, namely the US and China, and to some extent Russia, which have had an impact on the relationship between Denmark and Greenland.

This framework provides several underlying assumptions of how state’s FPE behave, however with the cases at hand only four was identified; namely that FPE’s “can implement a foreign policy with the intention of manipulating domestic actors and interest groups in other states” (Ibid., p. 52), and that less powerful states, however regional strong, can act on the global level, by disputing great powers and thereby gain status among its regional competitors, and that “states assess threats on a systemic, sub-systemic and domestic level” (Ibid., p. 52). In addition, for a state to perceive a rising power as a threat it is not necessarily the entire grand strategy that needs to be threatening, but rather components of that strategy that directly challenge the states own specific components of its own grand strategy.

The first case is about Chinese investments in several mining companies in Greenland during the last ten to eleven years. Digging into this general interest in Greenland’s natural resources provide insights into the general threat China poses the US position in the Arctic and how the Danish Realm find itself caught in the middle.

The second case revolves around Kangilinnguit (Grønnedal), which is a Danish navy base. The former Danish prime minister, Lars Løkke, announced that the navy base should be sold by Greenland to the

highest bidder. China showed interest, and then shortly after Lars Løkke expressed a need for the navy base and declared the base “not for sale” (Bianco 2019, Hannestad 2016b, Sermitsiaq.ag 2016).

The third case concern a Greenlandic wish in 2017 to let China invest in three airports. Greenland wants to build three airports; one in Nuuk, one in Ilulissat, and one in Qaqortoq. Lars Løkke once again intervened and offered to finance the contracts for the airports. For now, two of the airport deals have been signed and ready to launch, in Nuuk and Ilulisat. The deal on Qaqortoq are still being negotiated (Jiang 2018, Jiang 2017, 2019).

The fourth case regards Trump’s very contemporary offer to buy Greenland earlier this year (2019), where Denmark and Greenland collectively and decisively rejected the American offer and responded that “Greenland is not for sale” (Politiken.dk 2019a).

Each case will be viewed from the perspective of the relevant actors, as the size in power and geographical position automatically will provide insight into the threats on a Systemic level, Sub-systemic level, and on a Domestic level in order to understand the “whole network of games” (George Tsebelis in Lobell 2009, p. 46) and understand the dynamics that interfere with the Danish/Greenlandic relationship.

China Wants Greenland’s Rare Earth Elements.

In spite of Denmark’s close alliance with the US, Denmark has been the most consistent backer of China in their quest to gain observer status in the Arctic Council (Kluth and Lynggaard 2017). However, as it has been briefly mentioned in the introduction, China has in January 2018 published its first Arctic strategy, an “Arctic policy white paper” (Jiang 2018, p. 5) so to speak (Jiang 2018, Sørensen 2019a). With this new strategy, the Chinese FPE argues that due to their size, status and geographical position near the Arctic, China has legitimate interests in the region and thus should be “respected and included as an important ‘stakeholder’” (Sørensen 2019a, p. 51) in Arctic matters (ibid.). Already in 2017 China’s FPE publicly announced that Arctic sea routes should be implemented in the future and incorporated in the new silk road. This ambition has led China’s FPE to pursue collaborations with Arctic actors within the maritime area (Sørensen 2019a). Furthermore, China’s FPE argues that the Arctic region should not be conceived as a bordered area, which more specifically means that it should not only be up to Arctic states to decide the rules in regard to future developments and access to the Arctic region and its resources (Ibid.). In addition, Xi Jinping has for a longer time shown a growing interest in Arctic countries and in a speech in 2014 he revealed that “China itself wanted to become a “polar great power” (economist.com 2018), which then four years later was confirmed in the white paper (Ibid.).

Xi Jinping’s notion to become a “polar great power” in 2014 was not just a spoken promise but also evident in China’s FPE’s foreign policy leading all the way back to 2014 and maybe even further. NFC was invited to invest in the Australian owned mining company called Ironbark, to carry out the Citronen Base

metal project. NFC and Ironbark are now helping each other to obtain debt financing through Chinese banks. The aim is to finance 70% of the whole project, which will give NFC the option to buy 19.9% of the project. It should be mentioned that most mining corporations are either owned or partly owned by the Chinese government. Privately owned Chinese mining businesses depends heavily on the Chinese government's approvals and thus one could argue that the Chinese FPE's policies and strategic planning on the mining area becomes noticeable through these companies' actions (Jiang 2018). This example is one out four projects concerning rare earth element in Greenland with Chinese interference.

The first Chinese project licensed for mining in Greenland was initiated in 2008 by the company called Jiangxi Zhongrun, which is the largest copper producer in China. Jiangxi Zhongrun signed an agreement with Nordic Mining to be granted a license to mine for copper on Wegener Halvø. The license was granted in 2009. Jiangxi Zhongrun has now "transferred its ownership of the project to a joint venture between Nordic Mining and Jiangxi Union Mining, a company established by Zhongrun" (Jiang 2018, p. 3) together with the provincial state-owned enterprise (SOE) called Jiangxi Copper which is an investment company (Ibid.). This means that Zhongrun has helped China's FPE to carry out its goal to develop Chinese copper industry in Greenland since 2008, which arguably indicate that China's FPE's planning process when it comes to Arctic arguably rooted already in 2008 (Ibid.).

Additionally, according to Vittus Quijaqitsoc the Danish Kingdom has been promoting Greenland in China at least for the last 8 years, with Greenland's full support and awareness:

During the last 8 years... Greenland has been promoted in China among changing governments. And that is something that happens with the Greenlandic parliament's full awareness and acceptance that Greenland should be promoted out in the big world eh.. Exactly in recognition of the too few investments in the mining industry, Greenland shall promote itself and attract external investments, whether it is from China, Australia, the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, that is beside the point, as long as there are some trustworthy business partners out there"

- Vittus Quijaqitsoc (interviewed 6/5/2019).

You could argue that the Danish FPE's friendly attitude towards China is an attempt to *carry out foreign policy to change the opinions of people* or in this regard, to the FPE in China, so that China would be more open to invest in Denmark. Denmark is a small liberal market that is heavily reliant on foreign investments (Lobell 2009, Jiang 2017), and such conditions motivate to create an open and liberal market that entice and attracts investors. One way to attract investors is only conducting foreign investment screenings when "there are monopoly concerns (in any sector), not for security reasons" (Jiang 2017, p. 49). Even though questions like whether or not Denmark as a democratic society that values human rights should make trade

or allow foreign direct investments (FDI) from an authoritarian led country such as China sometimes appear in newspapers and are addressed by political actors, it is very rare. Held against China, the fastest growing economy in the world with a growing interest in Greenland, it is an obvious business partner that would make the Danish domestic market thrive (Ibid.). In addition, the US have maintained passive and allowed these investments to take place without interfering, which might be even more decisive for the realization of these investments, as the following cases arguably will show. Thus, one could argue that the Danish and Greenlandic FPE have had a shared hope for external investments in rare earth elements during the last eight to nine years and have seen China as a profitable advocate. Hence, Denmark have made no objections on Chinese bids, arguably because of its market conditions and the US silent position on the matter (Lucht 2018) which indicate that Denmark and Greenland share a similar threat identification when it comes to China and rare earth elements. Thus, it is fair to say that mining for now can be found on the list of foreign trade with China, which might strengthen Greenlandic and Danish ties. However, only if the Greenlandic FPE, and Greenland in general feels listened to in this process (Lucht 2017, Lobell 2009, Interview with representatives from the Greenlandic department of foreign affairs).

The third project concerns investments in the Isua iron ore project made by the Chinese private owned cooperation called General Nice Group. It has formed two main business chains where one of them is “based on iron ore mining and iron ore import” (generalnice.com.hk). General Nice Group managed to acquire the rights from London Mining in 2015 so that they could be part of the Isua iron ore project. There are stipulations among Chinese commentators that General Nice Group entering this project was politically driven by Chinese FPE with an ambition “to pave the way for more Chinese companies to enter Greenland” (Jiang 2018, p. 3).

On one hand Greenlandic FPE see the possibilities with the positive influences Chinese investments would have on Greenlandic economy as a way to gain more independence. According to Natuk Lund Olsen, head of the Department of Independence, when it comes to Greenlandic independence, Naalakkersuisut see economic independence as the first priority, and from here everything progress:

“I would say, among, among Naalakkersuisut, who are the ones we are under now, here there is a heavy focus on economic independence, that you need to have an economic background to become independent. [...] it is the economic independence that is decisive for when Greenland can become independent. If that is what We choose. It is the public who shall decide...”

- Natuk Lund Olsen
(interviewed 9/5/2019)

On the other hand, one could argue that is an indirect attempt to *carry out foreign policy to change the opinions of people in other societies* (Lobell 2009) or in this case, get the US to listen when it comes to the service contracts on the Thule Base. Because, the Greenlandic FPE is angry with the way that the US has turned Greenlandic companies down, when it comes to the service contracts on the Thule Base, as Vittus Quijaqitsoc argues:

“If they [The US] value the relation with Greenland as important, which I doubt with those service contracts regarding the servicing of the Thule Base, which shows this American selfishness as a sign that they actually are not taking Greenland really serious”

- Vittus Quijaqitsoc (interviewed 6/5/2019)

And, even though there might be some security measures that need to be taken into consideration, as Vittus further states, they find that collaboration with China might make the US listen to some of the demands that Greenlandic FPE have for the US, for instance in terms of giving these service contracts back to Greenland, which they lost in 2014. Because cleaning and managing the Thule airbase has been a Greenlandic since the WWII, and dealing with China is way to get their way with the US (Krog 2018):

“You know, by principle, then we do not make distinctions whether investments derive from China or not. But practically eh, then it does have a significance, and that is something we need to deal with to what extent Greenland eh, can collaborate with China. We can’t avoid that, and I think that will depend a lot on what the US poses as an alternative [...] What they bring to the table that can satisfy and maybe eh settle our eh... our discontent. Because there are many considerations to make”

- Vittus Quijaqitsoc (interviewed 6/5/2019)

You could argue that Greenlandic motivation for collaborating with China is thus two folded. It is a means to position itself economically stronger and thus closer to their ambition to become independent as well as get the US to take them seriously and give back the service contracts for the Thule Base back to Greenlandic owned companies and in general get the US to listen to Greenlandic interests.

The last project in Greenland with Chinese interference, and probably the most important one, is the Kvanefjeld Rare Earth project. Kvanefjeld is estimated to contain between 221000 and 228000 tons of recoverable uranium.

The Chinese company called Shenghe, which just like NFC and CCCC is a state-owned enterprise. Shenghe was excluded “from China’s Domestic Rare Earth Industry Development Plan in 2016-2020, which was overseen by the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT)” (Jiang 2018,

p. 3). This meant that Shenghe had to look for projects abroad and bought 12.5 percent of the Australian-based company called Greenland Minerals and Energy (GME) (Hannestad 2016a, Jiang 2017). According Jiang (2018) it was later stated by Shenghe's largest shareholder "Chengdu Institute for the Multipurpose Utilization of Mineral Resources" (Ibid.), a local research institute under the Ministry of Land and Resources in China, that the exclusion of Shenghe was a part of the implementation of China's "going-out strategy". Which arguably means that Shenghe's investment in Kvanefjeld most likely was, just like Isua iron ore project, politically driven.

GME estimates that during a life span of 37 years the mine would process a total of 111 million tonnes of ore" (Leeuwen 2017, p. 5). In order to attract and encourage foreign mining and industrial companies to perform large scale project, the large-scale law was implemented in 2013. It says that companies performing large-scale construction and mining projects can hire foreign labor in the construction phase cheaper than you can hire local labor. Large-scale construction projects mean that the expenditures must exceed 5 billion dollars as it is now. There are however negotiations underway, because the Greenlandic FPE finds that the 5-billion-dollar restriction is too high, thus Naalakkersuisut has put forth a suggestion to lower the 5 billion-dollar requirements to 1 billion dollars. However, it raises some concerns for the Danish FPE. As mentioned, Denmark are in still in charge of Greenland's foreign policy, and having foreign large-scale companies placed in Greenland and hire a great number of foreign workers can present security risks, especially if it is China (Wallach 2018, Hammond & Kirkegaard 2014):

Such an investment raises some questions in terms of security which makes it problematic to say yes to an investor that is a strategic opponent of one of our main allies, the US"

- Liselotte Odgaard, expert in Chinese politics in the Danish Defense Academy
(Hannestad 2016a).

When there is no basis for how to decide what kind of FDI's are actually against national interests, it arguably leaves room for discrepancies and thus add to a conflict that might divide the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE even further.

Nils Wang who was rear admiral and leader of the Danish Defense Academy adhere to the understanding of larger Chinese strategy, but argues that China's investments in Kvanefjeld and the Isua project hint at a Chinese strategy that apply soft power rather than hard power:

"It is very easy to interpret this [the investments in Isua and Kvanefjeld] not just as the classical Chinese way to think long-term, but it is also two examples of China slowly are creating the same soft power influence on Greenland, as they already have on Iceland"

- Nils Wang (Hannestad 2016a)

The Kvanefjeld project was set in motion after a meeting between Chinese and Greenlandic officials in 2015. This has brought China's FPE and Greenland's FPE closer, but the deal with Kvanefjeld has raised local concerns, because of the environmental hazards it might bring when you mine for uranium in an open pit. Kvanefjeld lies in a small area called Narsaq. Here lives 1500 people and is known for its sheep production and vegetables. This means a small society that is very reliant on a healthy soil (Lucht 2018). This has let locals to make a stand, and demonstrations have been set in motion. However, the societal elite is too weak and if GME are hindered at mining for uranium, it is probably because of an American concern that the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE let China come to close (Lobell 2009, Jiang 2017, Leeuwen 2017, Hammond & Kirkegaard 2014). The former Prime Minister Lars Løkke argues that uranium and a few of the other raw material can pose foreign, defense and security threats if they are mined for. Prime Minister Lars Løkke did veto this, however, emphasizes the necessity that the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE maintain a close collaboration and exchange of information between both parties. The Greenlandic FPE disagree, because the responsibility for the raw material area was given to Greenland in 2010 (Hammond & Kirkegaard 2014). It should be added to the point that over the last couple of years, a general pro-uranium mining attitude has spurred in the rest of Greenland, and Greenland has been through, what Bjørst (2017) refers to as a change of paradigm. The conversation has changed from being a conversation about mining *in* Greenland to be a conversation about mining *for* Greenland. Mining for Uranium are now being seen as a possibility for Greenland to pursue independence (Bjørst 2017). There is clear understanding, if economic independence should be achieved, it is with these mines (Breum 2014). Furthermore, it arguably illuminates another case where the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE differs in their respective threat assessment, when it comes to China and Kvanefjeld (Hammond & Kirkegaard 2014).

It is difficult to measure soft power, but the Chinese interest in establishing diplomatic ties with Greenland is an indication of the use of soft power. An example is the agreement signed in May 2016 called the 'Memorandum of Understanding'. The agreement was signed between the 'Chinese State Oceanic Administration' (SOA) and the Greenlandic Department for Education, Culture, Research and Church. SOA is just like 'Chengdu Institute for the Multipurpose Utilisation of Mineral Resources', a unit under China's Ministry of Land and Resources. The purpose is to create research networks as well as research exchange between Greenland and China (Sørensen 2019a). This tendency is something the Danish FPE is aware of and find, in light of the American alliance, that upholding the balance between Chinese business opportunities and the American alliance is something Denmark and Greenland need to handle in

collaboration. Because the increasing collaboration with China, makes the US FPE more nervous. For instance, Venstre's Spokesperson for Foreign Policy states:

"I fear that the Americans become more and more active and will go straight to the line. In this regard, of course we have to be ready in Denmark, but Greenland have to be so as well"

- Michael Aastrup Jensen, Venstre's spokesperson
(Svendsen & Skov 2019)

To conclude, investments in mining rare earth elements is dependent on the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE's ability to balance, collectively, between increasing Chinese interest and the US FPE's threat assessment of the Danish Kingdom's handling of such Chinese interest (Lobell 2009). For now, it seems that the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE shares the same threat assessment when it comes to Chinese FDI's in mining on Greenland. However, Kvanefjeld is the exception because of the nature of the raw materials, uranium especially but also others, and the potential dangers connected to mining them. Another, and maybe the main aspect is the size of the project and the large-scale law adopted to attract foreign investors to invest in such big size projects. The law allows large companies to hire a great amount of foreign labor cheaper than local labor. A general trend has been that these Chinese FDI's all have been politically driven because these companies either are owned by the Chinese government or are subject to the Chinese government's authoritative style. And the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE have maintained the position that they do not differentiate between possible collaborators. Until now, the US FPE have remained calm in regard to Chinese interests in Greenlandic raw materials, which arguably is why the Danish FPE support the Greenlandic FPE's efforts to receive FDI's, also from China. But then again, Kvanefjeld is the exception and it is probably here a further disagreement between the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE will arise. Because, as the following case with the Danish military base named Grønnedal will show, it is when the Danish FPE disregard Greenlandic wishes, that Greenland are reminded of their lack of independence.

Grønnedal, a Danish Military Base.

Around 1942 in the middle of WW2 the United States made a secret agreement with Henrik Kaufmann, the Danish envoy in Washington, to protect Greenland from German threats and thus create several military constellations around Arsuk fjord in Greenland. Later on, the United States gathered all these military activities in Kangilinnuit (Grønnedal) and hence the base was called "Naval Base Groennedal". The base was installed close by a cryolite mine, and extraction from cryolite was important for the manufacture of aluminum, which was very important for the fabrication of planes during the war. Hence, the main purpose

of Grønnedal was to “protect the out shipment of the mineral cryolite from Ivigtut cryolite mine and provide support in the form of repair as well as provide ammunition and fuel for the ships” (translated from SLK).

In 1951, Denmark and the United States signed an agreement to give back the base to Denmark. Denmark handed the control of the base over to Greenland, and by the first of August, 1951 the base was named “Grønlands Kommando”, which is its name today. In 2014, Denmark's FPE decided to close the navy base down and put it on sale and instead create an Arctic command central in Nuuk. The base was no longer considered important by the Danish navy and the base was left empty for two years. Since then, the future of the base was uncertain (Hannestad 2016b).

Grønnedal is located in the south of Greenland and is very important for China “given its position along shipping routes in the Arctic” (Jiang 2017, p. 51). Suddenly in 2016, the Danish government decided to re-open the base, and they did so even though Grønnedal is not mentioned once in a 250 pages long rapport made by the Danish Ministry of Defense called ‘Ministry of Defense’s Future Solution to Arctic Issues’ (Forsvarsministeriets Fremtidige Opgaveløsning i Arktis) just a week before the re-opening. The rapport describes in depth how the Danish FPE are going to handle the rising tensions in the Arctic. Several news medias (Hannestad 2016b, Breum 2016, Krog 2016, Sermitsiaq.ag 2016), referred to the news media called Defensewatch.dk that argues that the Danish FPE’s sudden interest in re-opening the base, is a consequence of a Chinese offer to buy Grønnedal. Once again, General Nice Group are eager to invest, but the former Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen personally blocked the deal “as an extraordinary measure” (Jiang 2017, p. 51). The argument is that Lars Løkke made the move to avoid a situation that could have offended China’s FPE, thus Denmark re-opened the base and decided to use it as a supply and training post. Denmark has become more and more critical towards China, but this is the first time that Denmark actually blocked a deal. This might have something to do with a worry that it will potentially destabilize the alliance with the United States (Sørensen 2019a). In addition, Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod says that the extent to which both great powers are present on the island, the possible risk for a great power rivalry to spur on the island becomes bigger, and right now, other geopolitical situations are more likely to initiate such a scenario, thus one of the two main objectives for the Arctic strategy in the near future becomes:

“to maintain the Arctic as an area of low political intensity, and thereby avoid importing the great power rivalry, which is happening in other places in the world than in the Arctic area”

- Jeppe Kofod, Danish Foreign Minister

(Bostrup 2019).

In regard to the blockade, the Danish Defense minister Claus Hjort-Frederiksen have refrained from commenting on the case, but Nikolaj Villumsen, Enhedslisten's (Danish left-wing party, in opposition at the time) spokesperson states:

"I don't think in any way, that We should sell this base to the Chinese. We see that the Chinese are acting very aggressively. There is no doubt, it is a dangerous path to walk in terms of security policy, if We suddenly have great Chinese interests here in Greenland"

- Nikolaj Villumsen
(Hannestad 2016b).

Søren Espersen, the spokesperson for Danish Folk Party, agrees with Nikolaj Villumsen when it comes to keeping the base. However, he was not interested in answering to the potential threat China might pose:

"Grønnedal is located fantastically central and strategically well. It is an excellent place to store, the training terrain is amazing, and it is a splendid place for big navy ships"

- Søren Espersen
(Hannestad 2016b.)

Claus Hjort-Frederiksen and the rest of the Danish FPE's silence, along with the American alliance and General Nice Groups offer to invest, arguably indicate that even though national interests and strategic positioning is a great argument, the potential threat from China is arguably the motivation for re-opening the base. Greenland's FPE are less expressive in their concern. Aleqa Hammond, who was elected as the head of the Greenland Committee in 2016 at the time, agrees with the Danish FPE in that of course it is better to see the base in Danish hands than in Chinese hands, but the Danish FPE should not automatically reject China as a possible investor (Ibid):

"My view on the Chinese is probably not the same as the Danish view on the Chinese. Greenland appeals to collaboration with all nations"

- Aleqa Hammond (Hannestad 2016b)

However, this different threat assessment of China, indicate that Greenland focus more on the aim to achieve independence. However, according to Natuk Lund Olsen, then Greenland take systemic factors into consideration. She argues that Greenland have a:

“global focus. And what is happening in global politics are followed closely. And the Greenlandic FPE do have its worries about the three countries, you’ve mentioned, China, Russia, ehm the US”

- Natuk Lund Olsen
(interviewed 9/5/2019)

Lobell (2009) argues that *states assess threats on a systemic, sub-systemic and domestic level*, but the Greenlandic FPE and the Danish FPE arguably pays less attention to a systemic threat but focus its attention to sub-systemic threats. Greenland and Denmark however assess sub-systemic threats differently. Vittus Quijaqitsoc confirm that the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE have a different view on the potential threat China poses. When asked about the narrative this dissertation have so thoroughly described in section on ‘A Potential Return of Realism?’, a narrative of a rising China and a changing world order, then according to the Greenlandic FPE, the global level of threat is of less concern in comparison to their sub-systemic and domestic issues, more precisely their wish to achieve more independence and influence on their own foreign policy. Because even though the Greenlandic FPE acknowledge the narrative, it is not life threatening. Thus, the Greenlandic FPE arguably have a global focus and follow international politics, but according to Vittus Quijaqitsoc, then it is not a prioritized concern:

“It is there. I don’t think we worry about the concern [the story of a changing world order] in itself ehm.. Out in the big world. On the contrary, I think that it is our lack of influence on foreign policy ehm that worries us. Via the home governing law that is the foundation of our current system, then Greenland is under a very restrictive ehm, constellation in the regards to form its own foreign policy, cf. the Danish constitution”

- Vittus Quijaqitsoc (interviewed 6/5/2019).

Representatives of the department of foreign affairs in Greenland agrees, the threat from China is there, but he argues that there is also a general misunderstanding of the perception of an increasing threat from China. It is not as evident as we should think. Rather Russia imposes a threat that really matters:

“There is a misunderstanding of what China is doing, because China is interested in an economic and cultural world domination, you can call it. And that is not, not in itself a life-threatening thing”

- Representative from the of Foreign Affairs in Greenland
(interviewed 3/5/2019).

There seems to be a general mistrust in Greenland about the Danish incentive to make these blockades and in general a mistrust towards Danish warnings about China. So, even though Chinese aggregate power has startled up a general worry among Western alliances, and mostly the US (Sørensen 2019a), it is China's strategy to become an Arctic great power through the utilization of soft power. Or to continue in Lobell's (2009) terms, it is Chinese component power that has the potential to influence the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, because it is here their threat assessment differs. It is China's component power and not aggregate power, as the Chinese interest in the Arctic area is only a part of the Chinese FPE's grand plan to culturally reform the world. The Greenlandic FPE are not finding China's component power as threatening as the Danish FPE are trying to describe it as (Lobell 2009). According to Natuk Lund Olsen, in Greenland when Danish researchers say that China will come and take over Greenland, it is perceived as Danish scare tactics, as propaganda. One could argue that this different assessment of global threats adds to the divide between the Greenlandic FPE and the Danish FPE. When Denmark attempt to balance between two great powers and benefit on their interests, it demonstrates both a regional and a domestic focus, which for instance was evident in the prior case, where Danish FPE and Greenlandic FPE agrees on collaboration with China in regard to rare elements. However, the rising critical attitude towards China, as such a blocking made by Lars Løkke illustrate, demonstrate a Danish awareness of a potential threat an authoritarian great power such as China might pose in the region. In addition, the worry of a great power rivalry taking place in the area also add to this point. In contrast, the Greenlandic FPE's focus is arguably on utilizing Danish efforts, along with Chinese and American interests to promote economic independence. However, the Danish FPE and Denmark in general have often restrained from sticking up and listened to Greenland and their wishes when larger actors such the US found usage of the area, which also explains the Greenlandic priority to become independent. The Thule Base is an example of that. Maybe it is actions, such as current Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen denying Trump to sell Greenland that can bring Denmark and Greenland closer. This dissertation will dive into that later but before that, Grønneidal was not the last blockade Lars Løkke made when it comes to Chinese interest in Greenland. Lars Løkke blocked CCCC to invest in a project to build three airports in Greenland. This dissertation will now dive into that.

Greenland wants three airports.

As briefly mentioned earlier, Denmark and the Danish FPE have, at least since the establishment of the Arctic Council, been keeping a very open attitude towards China. An example of the Danish Chinese-friendly line shows by their great willingness, far greater than other member states, to include and support China in the Arctic Council as a regular observer member in 2014. Another example is the Danish openness towards Chinese investments, exemplified in the previous cases included in this dissertation (Kluth and

Lynggaard 2017). In spite of the total value of Chinese investments is far less than in Sweden and Norway, the amount of Chinese investments between 2005 and 2014 exceeds any other in the Arctic region. It counts 13 deals, which indicates a very active association between Denmark and China (Jiang 2017). In fall 2017, Kim Kielsen alongside 24 representatives of the Greenlandic delegation visited Beijing to talk about potential new investments in international airports (Rasmussen 2019). But something has changed in the latest years, because even though Lars Løkke has replied in an interview with Berlingske Tidende that:

“In relation to China, I just want to say that We do not have any problems with Chinese engagement”

- Lars Løkke

(Laursen 2018).

Lars Løkke has now blocked not only one but two deals between Greenland and China. Grønnedal, and now the airport project (Jiang 2017, Krogh 2018). China's efforts to invest in the Arctic area have, as mentioned, resulted in an American urge to follow the developments in the area very closely. Russia perceive themselves as an Arctic great power, and is enhancing their military presence in the area, which also provoke further American awareness. Russia re-enforcing their military capabilities will be further discussed in the next and last case, which concerns Trump's offer to buy Greenland (Jakobsen 2019, Svendsen 2019, Rasmussen 2019).

The Airport package has been underway for the last 10 years. A transport commission was established in 2009 to investigate possible options for transport and infrastructure in the future. Throughout these years, the process of building these airports ends with Naalakkersuisut establishes a government owned company called Kalaallit Airports in 2016, created to build, own and operate these airports (Lihn 2019). The ambition with this project is to expand the two already existing airports in Nuuk and Ilulissat to allow larger planes to land, and thus allow international traffic. Such expansion more concretely means that the runway in Nuuk is extended with 950 meters and the runway in Ilulissat are extended with 854 meters, so they are 2200 meters each. Additionally, the hopes are that a new domestic airport in Qaqortoq are being built, with the intended length of 1500 meters and the collective cost is expected to be around 3.6 billion dkr. This “Airport Package” is by Greenlandic FPE perceived as a gateway into financial independence, as the hope with these airports is that Greenland can take part in the arctic tourism, which is booming right now, evident in e.g. Iceland and Northern Norway (Andersen 2018). Whether or not the airports are the solution Greenland needs to succeed in their attempts to acquire independence is another discussion. However, the project is deemed very important for Greenlandic development by the Greenlandic government. Simon Simonsen, the Greenlandic Naalakkersuisoq (Minister) for infrastructure argues in a discussion on Radio24syv in the summer 2018 that:

“it is too difficult to reach Greenland. We need more tourists and develop the private sector. We need to give it a lift - rather than continue to be dependent on fishing”

- Simon Simonsen

(Andersen 2018).

Greenland tried to attract investors and contractors in 2017 for the airport project and shortlisted the Chinese CCCC as a potential contractor in March 2018 (Jiang 2017, p. 5). Maybe it was this Greenlandic courting to China that made the American FPE react. No matter if this specific action made the American FPE react or not, the idea that China could possibly sit on Greenlandic infrastructure, which also could be used for military purposes, was not something the US' FPE would risk. According to Rasmussen (2019) Wall Street journal revealed that the current American minister of defense James Mattis pressured the Danish government early 2018. Allegedly, James Mattis should have told Claus Hjort Frederiksen, who is the Danish Minister of defense that: *“Beijing cannot be allowed to militarize this part of Arctis”* (Rasmussen 2019).

In June 2018 Lars Løkke intervened the possible investment from CCCC and in extension offered to help finance the project. The intense political situation prolonged the process, which conclusively resulted in three of the six pre-approved contractors refrained from offering on the projects and it ended with a contract being signed between the Danish consortium called the Munck Group and Kalaallit Airports (Politiken 2019b). Such complications arguably add to a rising Greenlandic frustration over Danish intervention (Politiken.dk 2019b).

Lars Løkke signed an agreement with Kim Kielsen, the leader of Naalakkersuisut, to have the Danish government invest 700 million Danish Crowns (dkr) against an ownership of 33.33% of the airports in Nuuk and Ilulissat. Furthermore, the Danish Government will provide a guarantee to apply for a loan in the Nordic Investment Bank for an extra 450 million dkr. In addition, the Danish state provides a low interest rate loan on 450 million dkr, to finance the rest of the investment needs, which in total counts 1.6 billion dkr and around 33.33% of the total cost of the project on 3.6 billion (Breum 2018, Sørensen 2019b, Olsen 2018).

Where the blockade of Chinese investments in Grønnedal arguably only led to small discrepancies in the idea of how a potential Chinese threat should be conceived also evident in the somewhat vague response made by Hammond, the blockade of the Airport has led to direct criticism of Danish interference.

Martin Breum (2018) interviewed former Prime Minister Lars Løkke and asked him about his motivations for intervening with the airport project. According to Lars Løkke, the Danish interference with the project was for him a question of a sense of connectivity to the islands in the Danish Kingdom, more

precisely Greenland and the Faroe Islands (Breum 2018). The question is however whether the Danish initiative really matters, no matter how altruistic it might seem. Because in the end, the Greenlandic FPE is left with the same question; why can Denmark trade with China when Greenland cannot?

“It’s a bit like a big brother saying to his little brother: “you cannot, but I can”

- Natuk Lund Olsen

(interviewed 9/5/2019).

Lars Løkke’s blockade of a possible Chinese investment created a deep divide in the Inatsisartut and in September it resulted in a contemporary resolution of the Greenlandic government coalition. Kim Kielsen was under heavy pressure and many wanted to see him leave his position. Six out of ten members of Inatsisartut as well as members in Narlakkersuisut publicly announced their distrust in Kim Kielsen as their leader (Politiken 2019b).

The airport project is now adopted through a minority coalition with support from the liberal party called “Demokraterne” (the Democrats), but without the support from the very separatist party called Partii Naleraq and without the support from the larger opposition party called Inuit Ataqatigiit. Thus, the governmental coalition ended only five months after its establishment (Breum 2018, Jørgensen 2018). Kim Kielsen however, managed to maintain his position with the help from the socialist party called Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA). There are 31 seats in Inatsisartut and you therefore need 16 seats to gain the majority. Siumut had 10 seats and IA had 8, which meant that by forming a coalition they were able to vote for Danish investments. Hence, it is arguably fair to say that Lars Løkke’s or the Danish FPE’s interference caused a divide in Greenland, and thus it created a divide between Denmark and Greenland.

This shows that the Danish FPE implements a political aspect in their decision-making when it comes to Chinese investments in Greenland. The Danish FPE focus on the rising great power rivalry in area, where the Greenlandic FPE maintains a focus on independence. In addition, the rising interest in Greenland introduce a hope to bring Greenlandic interest on the US’ agenda as well:

“In general, the Greenlandic government does not differentiate between whether the investments derive from one place or the other. Of course, there are some considerations to be made about where and to what extent collaborations with China should be organized. Nothing invidious about that and I also think that it is decisive to make the US listen to a larger extent, in the light of what investment projects we got on the infrastructure but also in general to develop our economy”

- with Vittus 2019

(interviewed 6/5/2019).

According to Lobell (2009) one could argue that the Greenlandic FPE's openness towards China is thus also an attempt to *carry out foreign policy to change the opinions of people in other societies* in this regard the US FPE. Chinese authorities have since the beginning tried to downplay the geostrategic implications of BRI and speak into the discourse of furthering globalization, the interest in a strong market and in general neoliberal elements. What has been a general trend in all the cases has been a Greenlandic FPE buying into this narrative, and a Danish FPE that is arguably starting reject it (Jones 2019).

Lars Løkke reply to KNR, a Greenlandic newspaper, that the project is executed by Greenlandic initiative, that it is the Greenlandic government that is in charge as this project concern Greenlandic infrastructure (Sørensen 2019). The reason why Partii Naleraq pulled out of the coalition, was because of a frustration over the consequent attachment to Denmark, such an agreement would mean for Greenland. Because, a Danish investment does not come for free and Lars Løkke and the Danish FPE makes that clear. With the ownership of 33.33% of the project, they want to make sure that if the airport project is carried out in a way that is bad for the Danish investment, then the Danish FPE will have a say:

“It is Greenland that shall be developed. But I do of course have a responsibility to make sure that we as a minority shareholder has a possibility to say something if something develops in a such a way that we think: “here, our investment is in danger””

- Lars Løkke
(Sørensen 2019b)

When comparing with the previous case of Grønvedal, it is some of the same mechanisms that are at play, Greenland does not find China as threatening as Denmark does and thus is less concerned with the idea of trading with China in the hope of acquiring an economic boost and get the American FPE to listen. The difference here, is arguably the Greenlandic attachment to the airport project. As mentioned, the project has been underway for the last 10 years, and symbolizes to some extent the hope of independence, and with Denmark as a part owner, it arguably delays the prospects of accomplishing such independence. Hans Enoksen's (party leader of Partii Naleroq) share his concern in a reply to Jyllandsposten in a press release, stating that:

“The state (Denmark, edited by Jyllandsposten) are interfering with politics directly, and are thereby questioning the Greenlandic ability to do something by itself. That is not something We want to be part of. Our goal has been Greenlandic independence for years, and when this is how it's done, then We can see that We are weakened. And that is not something We will not be a part of”

- Hans Enoksen.
(Jørgensen 2018).

One could argue that it is exactly the Danish FPE's overruling of Greenlandic interest that is central to the Greenlandic FPE's miscondolance of the current Danish-Greenlandic relationship and brings Lars Løkke's blockade up to a general discussion on Greenlandic independence. However, it is arguably also this issue that divides actors within the Greenlandic FPE. Kim Kielsen who is the leader of Greenland, was one of the driving forces and signed the deal with Lars Løkke for Danish investments in the airport project, and he says shortly after signing the deal:

"I see Denmark as a team player for Greenland, also when it comes to business development and financing of infrastructure in Greenland"

- Kim Kielsen (Berlingske 2018)

Kim Kielsen further describe the collaboration with Denmark as "open and positive" (Laursen 2019), and such perspectives can make opportunities for a close collaboration in the future. One could argue that this divide on the question of independence, is not only creating a gap between the Danish/Greenlandic relationship, but also what is creating a gap within the Greenlandic government and in Greenland in general. However, the Danish and the Greenlandic FPE seem to agree on the notion that Greenlandic independence is dictated by Greenlandic economy (Politiken 2018, Natuk Lund Olsen interviewed 9/11/2019):

"In Naalakkersuisut, which is who We are under now [the department of independence], the focus is primarily on economic independence [...] it is the economic independence that is decisive for when Greenland can become independent"

- Natuk Lund Olsen
(interviewed 9/11/2019).

Lars Løkke agrees with Natuk Lund Olsen:

"Overall, it is a situation where Greenland find itself in very large economic challenge, if Greenland is to be independent"

- Lars Løkke
(Politiken 2018).

The Danish Government cannot see a constellation where the Danish government continue to pay the yearly contribution on 3.857 billion Danish crowns each year, if Greenland decides to act on their wish for independence (Politiken 2018, Breum 2019). And even though the ultimate independence from Danish strings to some extent require that they are not economically reliant on Denmark, several interviews with Danish people deployed to Greenland, who would like to remain anonymous, indicate a Danish entanglement in the Greenlandic state system that does not limit itself to economic concerns, which Natuk Lund Olsen confirms:

“I think people (Danes) come up here to make an effort. And that they do it because they want to do some good for Greenland. But the consequence is just that the administration and stuff like that is very much like Denmark”

- Natuk Lund Olsen
(interviewed 9/5/2019)

The problem is arguably that Greenland is still in the middle of the process of defining its independence. However, Natuk Lund Olsen argues that even though they are in the middle of writing their own constitution Greenland does not necessarily have a wish to cut all ties to Denmark. There is a “political wish is to meet Denmark on equal terms... and collaborate” (Natuk Lund Olsen interviewed 9/5/2019). On the international scene, the political wish in terms of independence is that Greenland wants to be able to “trade on their own, on behalf of Greenland” (Natuk Lund Olsen interviewed 9/5/2019). Even though the Danish FPE, after the Danish interventions of Grønnedal and the Airport project, have announced that Greenland will have more influence, it is even a “clear ambition” they have more influence (Bostrup 2019), Greenlandic trade should be screened by Denmark to assure the safety of the Danish Kingdom:

“Investments shall be screened so that we are sure that they are in compliance with the rules, norms, and laws in the Danish Kingdom. That is important [...] It primarily regards new technology. Technology can be used for a lot of good, but it can also be used for surveillance and espionage. That is something you should always be aware of, so We assure the safety and the interests of the whole kingdom”

- Jeppe Kofod, Danish Foreign Minister
(Bostrup 2019)

Whether or not Jeppe Kofod’s suggestion becomes a reality it indicates a Danish attitude that maintain sovereignty over Greenland. Even though Jeppe Kofod and the Danish FPE promise more independence,

Danish supervision is maintained and presented as an important and necessary precaution. According to the Greenlandic FPE, this is exactly what they attempt to resist:

“It makes no sense discussing independence and a constitution within the boundaries of the Danish constitution, be the constitution eh, does not provide the possibilities for us to conduct our own foreign policy and security policy. So, it is a futile discussion eh and discuss extended power and influence within the boundaries of the Danish constitution because, then the Danish constitution needs to be changed”

- Vittus Quijaqitsoc
(interviewed 6/5/2019).

To conclude, The Danish FPE has under American pressure, intervened a possible FDI between Greenland and China, which resulted in a divide between the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE. The airport project arguably comprises a hope of independence, which startled that responsive Greenlandic reaction. Even though the Greenlandic FPE has been very outspoken about their non-political position when it comes to foreign investments, the openness Greenland shows towards China, can also be, staying in Lobell's (2009) terminology, an example of a Greenlandic FPE that attempts to conduct foreign policy *to change the opinions of people in other societies* in this regard the US FPE. However, even though Kim Kielsen was under a lot of pressure and that he will resign in the next election because of that, it ended in a consensus as Siumut and IA engaged in a coalition and thus an agreement between Denmark and Greenland was signed. You could argue that the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE are now closer than before with this coalition. However, it seems like there is, put in Lobell's (2009) terms, a domestic threat where different groups identify and fights for different kinds of independence, as well as strong individuals such as Vittus Quijaqitsoc in the current Greenlandic government who see no reason to maintain the current relationship with Denmark. The following, last case, will dive into Trump's offer to buy Greenland as this case introduce how the Russian threat also influence the very delicate relationship between Denmark and Greenland.

What does Trump's offer to buy Greenland mean?

In August 2019, there were rumors of American interest in buying Greenland. These rumors came about leading up to a meeting between the Danish Kingdom and the US. It was suddenly planned to be held on the 2nd and 3rd of September after Trump rather surprisingly announced his interest in Greenland. Trump expressed his concern for Denmark and argued that Greenland is a heavy financial burden for Denmark in yearly expenses and thus found it was a good way to help an ally, as well as a lucrative investment. He compared it to buying a large property:

“A lot can be done. In reality, this is all about one big real estate deal. It is tough for Denmark, because they lose 700 million a year on Greenland”

- President Trump
(Sermitsiaq 2019)

Mette Frederiksen, the current Danish Prime Minister, was however very clear in her response. This is never going to happen:

“Greenland is not for sale. Greenland is not Danish. Greenland is Greenlandic. I sincerely hope that this is not something that is meant in all seriousness”

- Mette Frederiksen
(Sermitsiaq 2019b)

Mette Frederiksen called Trump’s notion to buy Greenland “absurd”, which Trump thought as a “nasty” comment and decided to cancel the scheduled meeting in September (Sermitsiaq 2019a). This has arguably set in motion a Greenlandic awareness of Greenland’s importance in international politics. For instance, Aaja Chemnitz Larsen who is member of IA’s replies to Sermitsiaq (2019) on Trump’s offer:

“It shows the US’ clear interests, as well as how valuable Greenland is for the US [...] When it returns to the everyday life here at the Danish Parliament, then they have to remember how valuable Greenland is, both internationally and within the Danish Kingdom. It has to be coined in concrete results” - Aaja

Chemnitz Larsen
(Turnowsky 2019).

But this lifted finger is not only pointing at the Danish FPE. If the US’ FPE wants to deal with Greenland, and if the US wants to position itself stronger in the Arctic, Greenlandic interests needs to be taken seriously:

“If the Americans want to have something out of Greenland and position itself stronger in the Arctic, then it is important that they ensure that Greenland on the other end also gets something out of it”

- Aaja Chemnitz Larsen
(Sermitsiaq.ag 2019a)

The question is however if Trump's offer is initiated by a sudden lucrative business opportunity disguised as an altruistic act, or if there is something larger at stake, on the global level? It is probably something larger and that "something" is as the prior cases have illustrated; keeping Beijing out of the Arctic. Because, in light of the case of Sri Lanka, the US arguably fear that Denmark is going to fulfil its promise on Greenlandic independence. Thus, an independent Greenland is arguably, on the systemic level a relative weak state, and China might take over.

But Russia is also showing teeth. In the American Ministry of Defense's national defense strategy from 2018, China and Russia are described as 'revisionist' great powers. This means that the US' FPE see China and Russia as great powers that actively tries to counteract the US' values and interests. They are attempting to create a new world order where the US is not favored, as we see today (Sermitsiaq 2019, Malmvig 2019, Nord 2016, Jakobsen 2019). The prior cases have to some extent illustrated the Chinese interest in the Arctic, or more concretely Greenland. What has been the general tendency, when it comes to Chinese interference is that the Chinese FPE has limited itself to economic investments and to some extent attempts to culturally influence Greenland e.g. through agreements on research exchange and networks as mentioned earlier. However, Greenland see Russia in a different way compared to China:

It might be a cultural thing [the Chinese threat], you have to adapt to, where Russia is more the threat of immediate war"

- Representative from the of Foreign Affairs in Greenland

(interviewed 3/5/2019).

As of right now Russia are enhancing their military presence in the arctic area, more precisely they are asphaltting a 2500-meter-long runway close to their military base on the island called Nagurskoye in the archipelago called Franz Joseph just east of Greenland. It will allow Russia to have fighter jets land on the base. The increasing temperatures have as mentioned allowed access to prior unattainable sea routes and in general made the environment more accessible. This tendency has automatically raised questions about the premise under which international politics should be conducted in the Arctic, an uncertainty that is further intensified by the military possibilities that comes with easier access in the area (Nord 2016). This means that Russia is now within a very short amount of time able to strike the Thule Base located in north eastern Greenland. When Russia's base in Nagurskoye is ready, Russia can have fighter jets ease from there and strike the Thule Base by using long distance missiles or if they get fueled on the way they can fly close and attack. This is rather upsetting for the US because Greenland is positioned in the North American region but primarily because a US' radar is placed there. The radar is an important part of the US defense system

used to detect if Russia decides to fire their atomic bombs. This will give the US the ability to know in due to time and thus will give them a chance to retaliate before the Russians attack hits and thereby eliminate the threat of a Russian atomic bomb strike because of the repercussions (Jakobsen 2019, Svendsen 2019a). The Danish FPE seem to share this analysis of the potential threats of more Russian military:

“Just the fact that Russia has the potential possibility to reach the Thule Base create instability and uncertainty”

- Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, lector at the Danish Defense academy
(Svendsen 2019a).

However, the Danish Intelligence (Dansk Efterretningstjeneste) are not as concerned as the US FPE. Where Denmark hold a more conservative position towards Russia, the US in general see critically towards Russia but also in the light of the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The US' foreign minister Pompeo have declared the Arctic a high intensity area, the US FPE are therefore seeing Russia as both willing and now capable of attacking the Thule Base (Jakobsen 2019). But what does this mean for the relationship between Denmark and Greenland?

Denmark's alliance with the US is not unconditional. Since the launch of the war on terror in 2001, Denmark have followed the US's footsteps without hesitation, Denmark being a 'super atlanticist' (Mouritzen 2007). Thus, one could assume that the US would find Denmark as very close allies and take into consideration Danish interests. But, if the US' FPE see that the Russians are threatening American security, Danish interests will arguably very soon mean very little. It will ultimately mean that the US will enhance their military presence in Greenland, maybe even without Danish sanctions, which would now raise any eyebrows, as the US is allowed by US/Danish agreement (Jakobsen 2019).

A tendency in Danish politics in the Arctic area has been that Denmark have been making their decisions at the last minute. And such behavior creates uncertainty from an American perspective, especially when the Danish Kingdom promote a market that is so open that it welcomes China to the extent it has:

“Denmark has always been patchworking, and that is one of the reasons why the US are talking about buying Greenland. Then they [the US] could just make law, and everything would be sorted”

- Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen
(Svendsen 2019b).

That the Russians enhance their military presence on their base on Nagurskoye arguably provokes the US, which evidently leaves the Danish Kingdom caught in the crossfire. This means that the Danish FPE have to find ways to make sure that the American response to the rising Russian threat is not overly exaggerated so that Russian will feel threatened to attack. At the same time, in acknowledgement of Denmark's very small size, the Danish FPE should not assume that American presence in Greenland can be avoided (Jakobsen 2019). However, even though this case has been included to also encompass a Russian narrative in this active arctic race, because Russia has a role to play, it should not take focus away from China. If Greenland is left alone, the Chinese approach, illustrated in the prior cases, arguably can very easily send Greenland in the same position as we have seen with Sri Lanka. Such economic take over is very difficult for the US to retaliate, especially compared to the Russian military threat, where the US have no limits when it comes to increase its military presence on Greenland as well as the US' military dominance over Russia, which Russia is aware of (Aneez 2017, Kumar 2017, Jakobsen 2019). One of the primary goals for Denmark is thus to make sure that Greenland and the Arctic in general are not becoming a high intensity zone. Ways to do that is to help the US to the extent the Danish FPE can:

“Denmark shall not defend Greenland against invasion, but we have to be better to discover especially ships and submarines in our waters”

- John Rahbek-Clemmensen

(Svendsen 2019a).

At the moment, Denmark have very little awareness of what is going on in Greenlandic waters and also on land for that matter. It adds to the American concern of the potential threats from Russia and China in the area. According to Jakobsen (2019) and Rahbek Clemmensen (Svendsen 2019a) Denmark should become better, for instance by using satellites, to monitor the Greenlandic borders and in that way help out the American FPE to dissolve the Russian threat. Jakobsen (2019) brings three suggestions on how Denmark should tackle this scenario. First, Denmark needs to keep NATO out of the area. Any NATO representative will send a signal to the Russian FPE that most likely will escalate the situation because the Russian FPE most likely will feel surrounded. Secondly, The Danish FPE needs to take the initiative to make an agreement on military conduct in the Arctic between the five Arctic coast states; Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the US. Such initiative will create the needed transparency between the different states' and their behavior and thus contribute to fewer misunderstandings and potential escalations. The third suggestion is that the Danish FPE needs to take initiative to setup an institution where the five coastal states can meet regularly to discuss defense and security politics. All these suggestions depict an, as Wegge (2010) calls it, activist small state behavior. An example of such activist initiative is arguably that Denmark

are upgrading 17 of their 27 fighter jets with break pods, so they are able to land and participate if problems should arise in the Arctic. The Danish Minister of Defense Trine Bramsen replies to Altinget.dk:

“I think it would be a shame to have a whole fleet of new planes, which we cannot use if problems should arise in the Arctic”

- Trine Bramsen, the Danish Minister of Defense
(Krog 2019)

Wegge (2010) argues that the Arctic is already its own closed multipolar state system, and thus small states must accept to adapt to the will of stronger states. Hence, one could argue that the Danish FPE's actions are to some extent dictated by more powerful states, and thus Greenlandic interests might be further down prioritized, simply due to a Danish attempt to meddle between great power interests. That might have implications on the Danish/Greenlandic relations, because it will force the Danish FPE to undermine Greenlandic sovereignty.

To conclude, the American interest in Greenland, has arguably created an awareness in the Greenlandic FPE of the importance of Greenland in international politics. Thus, due to this increased interest, Greenland demand something in return for their collaboration, with the hope that such collaboration would promote the Greenlandic cause of independence. Meanwhile, the Danish FPE are concerned with the rising Russian and Chinese threat as well as the obligations connected with an alliance with the US, and in general the great power rivalry that is slowly escalating in the area. Because Denmark needs to take measure of this great power rivalry, the Danish FPE might down prioritize Greenlandic wishes, in order to make sure that Greenland and the Arctic are not becoming a high intensity area, where three great powers compete for influence and resources (Jakobsen 2019).

6. Conclusion.

This dissertation has put forth the hypothesis that the world order as we know it are changing. China has been the fastest-growing economy over the last twenty years and have invested in strategic places all over the world with the intent to create China's Belt and Road Initiative and in general create ties to countries all over the world. Russia, as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 showed, is also willing to flex muscles to maintain their position. All these tendencies pressure the American discourse that presented the US, primarily in the West, as the world police asserting justice in the name of democracy, which evidently pressures the current liberal state system with strong international institutions. Within this liberal system, small states have been given an amount of political space to maneuver, and that luxury is now pressured.

In the meantime, the Arctic has become a hotspot in international politics, and great powers such as the US, Russia, and China all have interests there. Wegge (2010) argues that the Arctic is already its own closed multipolar state system, and thus small states must accept to adapt to the will of stronger states. Meanwhile, the largest island in the world are caught in the juncture of it.

This dissertation attempts to answer the question: “*How have Denmark and Greenland responded internally to a shift in the geopolitical interests of great powers such as China and the US, and to some extent Russia, in the Arctic region, based on neoclassical realism and Lobell’s (2009) Complex Threat Identification Model?*”. To answer the research question, this dissertation has applied Lobell’s (2009) neoclassical realist Complex Threat Identification Model (CTIM) to analyze how the great power rivalry in the Arctic influence the nuanced relationship between Denmark and Greenland. In accordance with the neoclassical realist conception that specific grand strategies of great powers should be analyzed at a specific *point in time*, rather than *over time* the analysis is structured in four specific cases taking place at specific points in time; ‘China Wants Greenland’s Rare Earth Elements’, ‘Grønnedal, a Danish Military Base...’, ‘Greenland Want Three Airports’, and ‘What Does Trump’s Offer to Buy Greenland Mean?’

A general trend in these four cases, is that the Chinese FPE has refrained from utilizing any kind of hard power. China’s FPE has acted in accordance with the agreements of international trade and have offered to invest in projects when they had the chance. The Danish FPE and Greenlandic FPE have always had a very open attitude when it comes to international trade and FDI’s, and rarely questioned political motivations. When it comes to rare earth elements, the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE agreed to allow Chinese investments. In this regard the US’ FPE did not intervene. Except from the case of Kvanefjeld, due to the nature of the raw materials and the and the size of the project, the Danish FPE are acting carefully. They are worried that such a large project because of the large-scale law, a foreign company would now have the right to hire a lot of foreign people, for very little money. The US FPE worries that Greenland is going to become another Sri Lanka case.

When it comes to the Greenlandic FPE’s motivation to trade and allow Chinese FDI’s, this dissertation finds that the motivation is two folded. First, collaboration with China would pave the way for economic independence. Secondly, to follow Lobell’s (2009) idea of state behavior, there is a hope that conducting such trade and allowing such FDI from China might get the US FPE listen to Greenland. The Danish FPE is arguably equally driven by the hopes of economic outcome as Greenland, because Denmark is a small state dependent on external investments, which trading with China most likely will ensure.

However, when it comes to Grønnedal military base and the airport project, the Danish FPE intervenes. This dissertation concludes that, the Danish FPE is pressured by an American worry over the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE’s openness towards China. The Danish FPE needs to take the American concern very seriously because Danish security depends on the American alliance. The

Greenlandic FPE agree that there are concerns that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with China. However, the Greenlandic FPE assess the Chinese threat less compromising compared to the Danish FPE, and thus the Greenlandic FPE see that they should be allowed to continue to deal with China. The Chinese threat is merely cultural, which is adaptable and is not, from a Greenlandic perspective, life threatening. Not compared to Russia. The blockade of Grønnedal created disagreements between the Danish FPE and Greenlandic FPE about how to perceive China. When the Danish FPE blocked the Chinese investment in the airport project, it created a deep divide in the Greenlandic home governance, both in Inatsisartut and in the Naalakkersuisut about whether or not Greenland should accept Denmark's offer to fund 33.33 percent of the airports for approximately 700 million Danish crowns. Kim Kielsen, the leader of Siumut, paid the high price to give up his position as Premier of Greenland at the next election in exchange for a signed deal with Lars Løkke for the airport project. Kim Kielsen and Siumut made a minority coalition with IA, where Partii Naleraq and the large opposition party called Inuit Ataqatigiit's left Inatsisartut instead. The frame of this discussion was independence. Natuk Lund Olsen Olesen, the leader of the Department of Independence, say that there is a general consensus within Nalaakersuisut that economic independence is the primary focus. The Danish FPE see economic independence as a necessity. With the Danish funding, Greenland continue to depend on Danish investments and economy, which is exactly what these parties wants to resist. However, you could argue, with the current Greenlandic coalition, the Danish FPE and the Greenlandic FPE continue to find common ground, and until the next election a strong collaboration still holds between the two.

Jeppe Kofod, the current Danish Foreign Minister, in light of the two blockades, replies to the Danish newspaper Politiken in October 2019, that even though it is a clear ambition that Greenland gets more influence, investments should be screened by Denmark. This is arguably a continuation of the existing relationship, which Vittus, the Greenlandic Naalakkersuisoq of Finance and Northern Relations, clearly states that such relationship is not in Greenland's interests.

In August, Trump offered to buy Greenland, which Mette Frederiksen firmly rejected. The Greenlandic FPE saw this as an expression of how important Greenland is in international politics, and therefore Greenland should be heard in Arctic matters. Furthermore, if the US wants to talk, they should come to Greenland and not to Denmark. However, this dissertation argues that, from the US' FPE's perspective, it is a question of security because the US' FPE wants to keep Beijing out of Greenland. The prior cases have illustrated the potential Chinese threat, but as of right now, Russia is asphaltting a 2500-meter-long runway near their military base on Nagurskoye in the archipelago of Franz Joseph just east of Greenland. From there, with the use of fighter jets, Russia will be able to attack the Thule Base either with long distance missiles or if the jets get fueled in the air on the way, they can fly close and attack. It will

arguably become the Danish FPE's priority to balance between complying with the US' demands as an ally and balance the Russian and Chinese threat.

This dissertation finds that the domestic divide in Greenland in the question of independence presents a domestic threat, which contributed by the Danish attitude towards Greenlandic independence potentially can harm their relationship. Furthermore, the Greenlandic FPE and the Danish FPE might agree on China's aggregate power but disagree on components of China's power and thus do not find the same safety precautions as the Danish FPE necessary. They do however seem to agree on Russia's component power in the Arctic. The changing world order, and the increasing tensions in the Arctic, might cause the Danish FPE to down prioritize Greenlandic interests, due to their commitment to the US and the threats Russia and China poses. Thus, the Danish attitude towards Greenlandic independence arguably becomes less accommodating, because Denmark has less political space to maneuver.

This arguably starts a discussion on how such great power rivalry changes the world order as we know it. In such case, I wonder if international relations will experience a potential return of realism, as new and more constraint conditions are seeming to be the reality for smaller states.

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